



**PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF  
SIERRA LEONE TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

245 East 49th Street • New York, NY 10017

**Fifty-eighth Session of the General Assembly**

*Statement by*

**H.E. Dr. Sylvester Ekundayo Rowe  
Deputy Permanent Representative to the United Nations**

*in the*

**First Committee  
(Disarmament and International Security)**

**New York, Friday, 10<sup>th</sup> October 2003**

*Check Against Delivery*

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation would like to join others in formally extending our warmest congratulations to you on your election to direct the affairs of this Committee. Following on the saying you quoted last Monday, I would like to assure you that we will not attempt to offer you any advise. However, be assured that my delegation is willing and ready to assist you and members of the bureau in fulfilling your responsibilities. I would also like to welcome the new Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Nobuyasu Abe, who, in his statement on Monday has set the scene for this general debate on all disarmament issues.

### **The status of disarmament and arms control**

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Abe and the Secretary-General in his report on the work of the Organization, have provided a lucid account of the current state of affairs in the area of disarmament and arms control. In my delegation's view the situation is not encouraging. Previous speakers in this debate have already identified the major elements, mainly procedural, that continue to cast a thick cloud over the entire multilateral disarmament process. These elements comprise a series of failures in and by the Committee on Disarmament and the Disarmament Commission, and in efforts concerning the objectives and agenda for the Fourth Session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.

Some say, these failures are attributable to a lack of political will. Others say it is a matter of trust. Whatever the causes of the current stalemate, my delegation believes that it is pertinent to ask where do we go from here? How do we get out of this impasse? What is the way forward?

### **The NPT**

Mr. Chairman,

In the view of my delegation we must first of all understand that in the current international environment disarmament is no longer a choice but an absolute necessity; a necessity not just for a few states, but also for all states. It appears that we have still not yet grasped the true nature and gravity of the nuclear threat. We have yet to understand that disarmament is not a game of political chess, but a vital shield against self-destruction, or total annihilation.

Secondly, we must erase the misperception that the NPT is solely directed at non-nuclear and potential nuclear-weapons states. Public attention is being focused on the spread of nuclear weapons and attempts by certain states to acquire nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction. On the other hand, the mutual obligations and responsibilities of both nuclear and non-nuclear states under the Treaty have been virtually submerged in the issues of verification and compliance.

In searching for the way forward we need to focus on both horizontal and vertical proliferation. My delegation shares the view of the Secretary-General that nuclear

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation would like to join others in formally extending our warmest congratulations to you on your election to direct the affairs of this Committee. Following on the saying you quoted last Monday, I would like to assure you that we will not attempt to offer you any advise. However, be assured that my delegation is willing and ready to assist you and members of the burcau in fulfilling your responsibilities. I would also like to welcome the new Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Nobuyasu Abe, who, in his statement on Monday has set the scene for this general debate on all disarmament issues.

### **The status of disarmament and arms control**

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Abe and the Secretary-General in his report on the work of the Organization, have provided a lucid account of the current state of affairs in the area of disarmament and arms control. In my delegation's view the situation is not encouraging. Previous speakers in this debate have already identified the major elements, mainly procedural, that continue to cast a thick cloud over the entire multilateral disarmament process. These elements comprise a series of failures in and by the Committee on Disarmament and the Disarmament Commission, and in efforts concerning the objectives and agenda for the Fourth Session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.

Some say, these failures are attributable to a lack of political will. Others say it is a matter of trust. Whatever the causes of the current stalemate, my delegation believes that it is pertinent to ask where do we go from here? How do we get out of this impasse? What is the way forward?

### **The NPT**

Mr. Chairman,

In the view of my delegation we must first of all understand that in the current international environment disarmament is no longer a choice but an absolute necessity; a necessity not just for a few states, but also for all states. It appears that we have still not yet grasped the true nature and gravity of the nuclear threat. We have yet to understand that disarmament is not a game of political chess, but a vital shield against self-destruction, or total annihilation.

Secondly, we must erase the misperception that the NPT is solely directed at non-nuclear and potential nuclear-weapons states. Public attention is being focused on the spread of nuclear weapons and attempts by certain states to acquire nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction. On the other hand, the mutual obligations and responsibilities of both nuclear and non-nuclear states under the Treaty have been virtually submerged in the issues of verification and compliance.

In searching for the way forward we need to focus on both horizontal and vertical proliferation. My delegation shares the view of the Secretary-General that nuclear

### **Non-state actors and weapons of mass destruction**

Mr. Chairman, we share the universal concern, legitimate concern, about the growing fear that non-state actors may acquire weapons of mass destruction – chemical, biological and even nuclear. Efforts are underway to deal with this new challenge to the mankind. However, we believe that the most effective way of alleviating that fear and ensuring that terrorists do not have access to weapons of mass destruction is to eliminate these weapons.

### **Non-state actors and illicit trade in small arms**

The devastation that the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons has caused in several parts of the world including my own country is well known. Mr. Chairman, while our attention is being drawn to the threat of the possible access to weapons of mass destruction by non-state actors (terrorists), we fail to understand why the issue of access by non-state actors to illicit small arms and light weapons -- the so-called issue of civilian possession -- remains a controversial issue. These weapons in the hands of non-state actors such as rebels, bandits and mercenaries engaged in terrorist activities in areas such as West Africa have killed thousands of people and continue to pose a serious threat to peace and security.

We recall that the issue of these weapons in the hands of non-state actors almost wrecked the 2001 UN Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons. The Programme of Action of the Conference contains nothing on this issue. We maintain our concern that small arms and light weapons should be transferred only to states or their authorized agents, and not to non-state actors, most of whom are engaged in terrorist activities that continue to claim the lives of thousands of our people, and to destabilize our countries.

We note that the Chair of the First Biennial Meeting on implementation of the Programme of Action held in New York recently, Ambassador Inoguchi of Japan, in her summary highlighted the linkage between terrorism and illicit small arms and light weapons. We agree that to prevent terrorists and other criminal organizations from acquiring small arms and light weapons, states should be encouraged to develop relevant norms and standards to regulate the illegal circulation of these weapons. We endorse the findings and conclusions in the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on the feasibility of developing an international instrument to enable states to identify, mark and trace illicit small arms and light weapons.

### **Disarmament and development**

Mr. Chairman,

And yet another way forward to break the current stalemate in our multilateral disarmament process is for us to consider disarmament not for its own sake but as a vital

means of enhancing human security for all in all its aspects. Specifically, we must bring the question of disarmament and development to the top of our agenda. Is it not unconscionable that while billions of dollars are being wasted on the development of weapons of mass destruction and measures to verify their existence, we have still not accepted the moral imperative to find adequate financial resources to fight the war against the pandemic HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis that are already creating massive destruction of human lives in the world? Is there not a link between the cost of development of weapons of mass destruction and the prospects for achieving the development goals of the Millennium Declaration?

We must revisit the whole question of the relationship between disarmament and development. My delegation therefore welcomes the Secretary-General's proposal for the establishment of a group of governmental experts to undertake an appraisal of the relationship between disarmament and development in the current international context.

I thank you Mr. Chairman.