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**ASSEMBLY GENERAL
58th session**

First Committee

STATEMENT

**by Ambassador Christian Faessler
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Conference on Disarmament**

(General Debate)

New York, 6 October 2003

Mr Chairman,

Let me begin by congratulating you on behalf of the Swiss delegation on your appointment to the Presidency of the First Committee and by wishing you success in this difficult task. The long experience and important commitment of your country and of you personally in the area of arms control and disarmament will undoubtedly prove to be significant assets in ensuring the success of our work. I would like to assure you that you can count on the full cooperation of my delegation at all times.

Mr Chairman,

Over the past years, the international peace and security environment has changed considerably. The case of Iraq in particular has not only underlined the importance of multilateral institutions and instruments for maintaining international peace and security but it has also exposed the limitations of these mechanisms. As a result, we are compelled to reflect on the possibility of revising these mechanisms or of complementing them with other instruments which are capable of taking into account the new challenges such those posed by international terrorism.

The multilateral institutions and instruments in the area of disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation remain vital for ensuring our security. Now, in order to do this, they need to acquire a truly universal character. However, in the area of weapons of mass destruction, the existing instruments do not have this universal character, a deficiency which is further aggravated by the fact that certain States which are not parties to the instruments in question are continuing to develop weapons of mass destruction.

In this context, my country calls on all states which have not already done so to ratify as soon as possible the following agreements: the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and to support actively the corresponding institutions: the

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty Organisation (CTBTO). As for the delivery vehicles for weapons of mass destruction, Switzerland invites all countries who have not already done so to subscribe to The Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation (HCOC). However, as the HCOC provides only a partial solution to the problem of delivery systems, it needs to be complemented by a legally binding agreement.

Mr Chairman,

Recent months have amply demonstrated that failure to respect commitments and obligations in the area of weapons of mass destruction threatens to seriously jeopardise international peace and security.

Switzerland deplored the announcement by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to withdraw from the NPT and urges it to revoke its decision and to return to the NPT. In the meantime, we also call on the DPRK to immediately resume cooperation with the IAEA and to provide total transparency in compliance with the obligations set out in the NPT. Furthermore, Switzerland urges the DPRK to cooperate closely with the IAEA with a view to completely and irreversibly dismantling its military nuclear programme. Switzerland supports the current diplomatic process and is willing to contribute to it.

Iran's nuclear policy is also a source of concern. My country takes the view that in order to re-establish confidence and to reassure the international community as to the strictly peaceful and civilian nature of its nuclear programme, Iran should unconditionally and without delay sign and implement an additional protocol to its safeguard agreement with the IAEA. In the meantime, before such a protocol is finalised, Switzerland calls on Iran to demonstrate its good will by cooperating more promptly and ensuring complete transparency.

The strengthening of the institutions and instruments of disarmament relating to weapons of mass destruction and complete respect for their implementation are also the best means of preventing terrorist organisations from gaining access to these arms. In addition, there is clearly a need to implement at the national level effective measures to protect nuclear, chemical and biological installations and materials, in order to prevent them from becoming accessible for terrorist organisations.

Mr Chairman,

In the matter of nuclear disarmament, the commitments by the nuclear weapon states are also indispensable. The lack of progress in this area at the multilateral level, continuing research efforts with a view to the development of new nuclear weapons and the emergence of new military doctrines are causes of grave concern to my country. It is disappointing to note that in this area there has been only one positive development in recent years, that is to say the ratification of the Moscow Treaty between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on the reduction of strategic nuclear warheads. This treaty is very welcome. However, the efforts by the nuclear weapon states need to encompass all the components of their nuclear arsenal, including the reduction, even the elimination, of all their tactical weapons. My country favours a multilateral and universal agreement to totally ban these weapons.

Switzerland also attaches great importance to the implementation of the Programme of action and the "Thirteen Steps" adopted at the 2000 NPT Review Conference. An important element in this Programme of action is the necessity of negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices (FMCT). Unfortunately, the prospects for such negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament - the world's sole multilateral forum for disarmament negotiations - are not encouraging. For the fifth year in succession, the Conference on Disarmament has not yet managed to adopt a programme of work, despite the laudable efforts of five ambassadors representing different regional groupings. My country supports these proposals and calls on all the

member states at the Conference to adopt them as a programme of work so that the negotiations can finally get started.

Mr Chairman,

Biological weapons also pose a real and serious threat. Bio-technology is developing rapidly both in the civilian and the military spheres and as a result the risks of abuse are becoming ever greater. Even though our efforts to negotiate an instrument to strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention have not yet borne fruit, Switzerland is confident that the follow-up process that emerged from the last Review Conference will make it possible to improve compliance with this Convention both on a national and on an international level. My country also welcomes the ICRC's proposal to launch an international appeal at ministerial level against the abuses of bio-technology. This initiative would have to be based on humanitarian law and be complementary to the BWC follow-up process. Since 2002 Switzerland has funded a World Health Organisation project in the area of communicable diseases that are not of natural origin. This project, which also aims to combat bio-terrorism, has proven to be a success, and the time appears to be right to invite other interested states to participate.

Mr Chairman,

I would also like to mention the first Review Conference of the Chemical Weapons Convention, which took place in The Hague this year. My country is satisfied with the progress that has been made since this Convention came into force. However, the time has now come to tackle the final obstacles such as the inadequate degree of national implementation of this instrument, which has impeded its universality, or even inadequate exchange of information about on-site inspections. As for the destruction of weapons, I would like to inform you that my country will contribute substantial sums to finance chemical weapons destruction programmes in the Russian Federation.

Mr Chairman,

Within the framework of the 1980 Convention on Certain Classical Weapons, my country attaches great importance to negotiations on explosive remnants of war and hopes that an agreement can be reached on a substantial and legally-binding instrument.

Switzerland also hopes that all the States Parties will be ready to accept regulations on sub-munitions. These regulations would include preventive technical measures aiming to reducing the risk of failure rates for such munitions. Such a solution would undoubtedly have a positive impact on the humanitarian situations in regions affected by the use of these munitions. Similarly, Switzerland hopes that it will be possible to find a solution that would satisfy humanitarian concerns to the problem of mines other than antipersonnel mines.

As for the Mine Ban Treaty, Switzerland is pleased with the success of the Fifth Conference of States Parties which took place in Bangkok. This conference noted that considerable progress has been made since the Treaty came into force and it has given a new impetus to efforts to achieve universality in Asia. Switzerland calls on all countries that have not already done so to ratify this Treaty without delay.

Small arms and light weapons (SALW) are the conventional arms that cause the greatest number of deaths and injuries. The results of their excessive use are devastating both in terms of economic and social development and of political stability. If we wish to ensure stability and to promote human security, we must commit ourselves wholeheartedly to establishing effective instruments to regulate the uncontrolled traffic of SALW and we must contribute to the implementation of the 2001 United Nations' Programme of Action, whose first biennial meeting in New York in July was a success. Switzerland in particular has worked in conjunction with France to prepare a draft of an international instrument for tracing and marking these weapons. We hope that in the course of this session the General Assembly will be in a position to launch the negotiation process for an international instrument for

tracing small arms and light weapons in accordance with the conclusions of the group of experts appointed by the UN Secretary General. If such a process could be initiated, Switzerland would be willing to chair the working group that would be formed as a result.

Mr Chairman,

My country is willing to participate in deliberations on the better use and on improvements to multilateral institutions in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation such as the First Committee, the Conference on Disarmament and the Disarmament Commission. In this connection we welcome the initiative of the Chairman of the First Committee to hold a special session on this issue. We also welcome the initiatives and the proposals that have already been put forward on this subject by a number of states. Finally, we are looking forward to participating actively in these discussions and to making our contribution to them.

Thank you for your attention.