



**PERMANENT MISSION OF THAILAND
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

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STATEMENT

BY

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FIRST SECRETARY,

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TO THE UNITED NATIONS,

AT THE GENERAL DEBATE OF

THE FIRST COMMITTEE

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GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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Mr. Chairman,

1. On behalf of the delegation of Thailand, I should like to join other distinguished speakers before me in congratulating you on your election as Chairman of the First Committee. I am confident that, under your dynamic and wise leadership, the First Committee will be able to achieve concrete results and contribute to promoting disarmament and international security.
2. May I take this opportunity to pay tribute to your predecessor, Ambassador Kiwanuka of Uganda, and to Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala, the former Under-Secretary General for Disarmament Affairs, for their tireless contributions to multilateral disarmament. I should also like to welcome and congratulate Mr. Nobuyasu Abe, a fellow Asian, on his appointment as the new Under Secretary General for Disarmament Affairs.
3. Thailand would like to associate itself with the ASEAN Statement to be delivered by Myanmar.

Challenges to Disarmament and Non-Proliferation

Mr. Chairman,

4. It is unfortunate that, despite all of our combined efforts at promoting disarmament and non-proliferation, the world is not a safer place today than it was a year ago when we last convened. The challenges to disarmament and non-proliferation, and indeed to international security which is the ultimate goal of disarmament and non-proliferation, have grown.
5. New threats or, as the Secretary-General calls it, "old threats in new and dangerous combinations: new forms of terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction", show no signs of abating. Old threats, from the presence of nuclear weapons to the excessive accumulation of small arms and light weapons, from weapons of mass destruction to anti-personnel mines, remain unresolved.
6. In parallel with this rise in threats and challenges to disarmament and non-proliferation is a gradual erosion in the foundation of multilateralism and multilateral disarmament frameworks.
7. Despite recent accessions to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the announced withdrawal of a State Party from the NPT clearly goes against the trend towards universality of the NPT which has long served as the cornerstone for promoting nuclear disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation and the peaceful use of nuclear energy.
8. The continued impasse in the Conference on Disarmament, the failure of the United Nations Disarmament Commission to agree to any recommendations this past spring, and the inability of the Open-Ended Working Group on the Fourth Special Session on Disarmament (SSOD IV) to agree on the objectives and agenda of the SSOD IV shows signs of strain in multilateral disarmament frameworks.

Multilateralism and Multilateral Disarmament Frameworks

9. These developments, Mr. Chairman, raise the question: Is there a fundamental flaw in the existing multilateral frameworks, and if so, should we search for other alternatives?

10. It is the firm belief of my delegation that, despite the perceived shortcomings, multilateralism and multilateral disarmament frameworks have served as a strong foundation for disarmament and non-proliferation efforts for decades, thus contributing to international security. Indeed, in a globalized world, where the security of all States are ultimately intertwined, meeting the challenges of disarmament and non-proliferation is too heavy a burden for any one State or group of States to bear alone.

11. Multilateralism and multilateral disarmament frameworks, thus, are realistically the only viable long-term alternative to address disarmament and non-proliferation challenges globally and effectively. Therefore, rather than discard multilateralism, we should work together to make the best of what we have.

12. Granted, the international community will have to strive to strengthen multilateral disarmament frameworks and instruments. Here, the issue of compliance is central to the effective functioning of multilateral disarmament regimes. But compliance must be applied to all aspects of multilateral disarmament agreements. Universalization of the multilateral disarmament instruments is also important. And cooperation between States, including appropriate technical and financial assistance, is essential to enable all States to have the requisite capability to help fulfill their obligations.

Nuclear Disarmament and Non-Proliferation

Mr. Chairman,

13. Nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation should be addressed with a renewed sense of urgency. We wish to see the measures adopted in the Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference pursued effectively by the Nuclear Weapons States (NWS) and look forward to substantive preparations in the upcoming Third Session of the Preparatory Committee to lay the groundwork for a results-oriented 2005 NPT Review Conference.

14. Thailand welcomes the recent ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) by Algeria and other states, and is accelerating efforts to ratify the CTBT, hopefully by 2004. In the meantime, Thailand is committed to the development of the CTBT verification regime and is in intensive consultations to establish two monitoring stations in the country.

15. Thailand supports the Strengthened Safeguard System of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and is considering to conclude and sign the Additional Protocol to the Safeguards Agreement with the IAEA in 2004. On the issue of nuclear safety and security, Thailand is prepared to cooperate fully with the IAEA and Member States in implementing the IAEA's activities in this field, especially on capacity building and preparedness in Southeast Asia.

16. Nuclear weapon free zones (NWFZ) are an important instrument in disarmament and non-proliferation efforts. We, therefore, renew our call on all States, particularly the Nuclear Weapons States (NWS) to support and respect the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon Free Zone (SEANWFZ) and similar nuclear weapon free zones elsewhere.

Weapons of Mass Destruction

Mr. Chairman,

17. In view of the heightened threat that weapons of mass destruction pose to all peoples, especially if they are in the hands of terrorist groups, States should strengthen their cooperation particularly through the existing relevant international conventions. In this connection, Thailand ratified the Chemical Weapons Convention at the end of last year and participated in First Review Conference in May as a State Party. To promote universality of the CWC particularly in the Asia Pacific region, Thailand hosted the "Regional Workshop on the Universality of the CWC" in March this year. We are also preparing with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to co-host the "Regional Workshop on Assistance and Protection" in Bangkok in March 2004.

18. Thailand is also concerned with the threat posed by the transshipment of weapons of mass destruction, their delivery systems and dual use goods. We are therefore dealing with this threat through existing stringent import-export laws and other measures, including the Container Security Initiative (CSI) undertaken in cooperation with key partners and which should become effective by 2004.

Small Arms and Light Weapons

Mr. Chairman,

19. Small arms and light weapons (SALW) kill more than half a million people each year according to the Department for Disarmament Affairs. Thailand therefore supports the active implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, and has undertaken many measures at the national, regional and global levels to help combat the threat posed by the excessive accumulation and spread of SALW. Thailand welcomes the successful conclusion of the First Biennial Meeting chaired by Japan. In recognition of the importance of this issue, Thailand therefore participated in the UN Group of Experts on the Tracing of Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons and hopes that the Group's recommendations will be taken up in this Committee.

Anti-Personnel Mines

Mr. Chairman,

20. The human security of people across the globe is threatened daily by anti-personnel mines. In addition to the toll on human life and well being, anti-personnel mines are also an obstacle to sustainable development, as they exclude people from access to areas of potential economic benefit. It is thus in the interests of humanity that we should redouble our efforts to create a mine-free world and assist mine victims through partnerships between States, international, regional and non-governmental organizations and civil society. In this regard, Thailand is proud to have hosted the Fifth Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction last month in Bangkok, the first time ever in Asia.

21. As the current President of the Convention, we look forward to working closely with States and all relevant actors in achieving the Convention's core humanitarian objectives, namely mine clearance, stockpile destruction, victim assistance and universalization. We hope that the

momentum created by the Fifth Meeting in Bangkok will result in yet another success at the First Review Conference to be held next year in Nairobi, Kenya.

22. This year, Thailand will be tabling the traditional resolution “Implementation of the Convention on the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction” (Item 73, p). We sincerely hope that this draft resolution will continue to receive the overwhelming support of the First Committee and therefore take this opportunity to invite all States that have not already done so to co-sponsor this draft resolution.

Working Methods of the First Committee

23. Lastly, Mr. Chairman, my delegation supports the initiative of the Chairman to engage in an informal exchange of views on how to improve the working methods of the First Committee. An interactive dialogue amongst all stakeholders on how to make our Committee more effective and relevant to address the rising challenges to disarmament and non-proliferation and even to multilateralism itself, is in all our interests. At the same time, we should realise that this exercise is only a means to an end, namely, the acceleration of the momentum for disarmament and non-proliferation. We therefore hope that all delegations will approach this initiative with an open mind and work together so that this initiative will bear fruit.

Thank you.