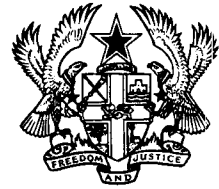


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First Committee

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STATEMENT BY

H.E. NANA EFFAH-APENTENG
AMBASSADOR AND PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
PERMANENT MISSION OF GHANA TO THE UN

ON THE

GENERAL DEBATE ON ALL DISARMAMENT AND
RELATED INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AGENDA ITEMS

New York
Monday, October 11, 2004

Mr. Chairman,

Taking the floor for the first time, permit me to associate my delegation with the warm sentiments expressed by others regarding your election as chairman of this Committee. I am confident that under your guidance, the work of this Committee will proceed smoothly to a successful conclusion. Of course, our congratulations are naturally extended to other members of the Bureau as well, who will be assisting you in your delicate and challenging work. You can rest assured of the support and cooperation of my delegation in the task ahead.

Mr. Chairman, the euphoria that greeted the end of the Cold War with regard to disarmament has long waned. Despite the collective efforts towards disarmament and non-proliferation, this global village is as unsafe as it was decades ago, if not worse. The old threat has been exacerbated by the alarming rise of new challenges. This has placed an unparalleled responsibility on the community of nations to rededicate themselves to the quest for comprehensive global security. We, therefore, urge member states to eschew parochial interests in order to attain an amicable and constructive consensus. After all, no country or region is insulated from the dire security challenges of the 21st century.

In the face of such threats and challenges, we cannot but be concerned at the gradual gravitation towards unilateralism in disarmament and continue to hold the principled position that multilaterally concluded solutions are the only means of achieving a comprehensive and sustainable agreement.

In this context, Mr. Chairman, my delegation is concerned about the inability of the Conference on Disarmament to reach an accord on its programme of work. This is an indictment on our collective responsibility and would undermine the CD's position as the single multilateral forum in the field of disarmament. The importance of the UN Disarmament Commission has been lucidly and eloquently stated over the years, I cannot, but re-echo this position. The difficulties confronting the UNDC are also indicative of growing uncertainties of the whole disarmament agenda of the post Cold War era. Unless concrete efforts are taken to address the stalemate, the UNDC could be plunged into an irredeemable abyss. The attainment of a consensus, on the other hand, would rekindle confidence in the work of the Commission for the efficient execution of its mandated functions as a universal deliberative body of the General Assembly.

Mr. Chairman,

The Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is the cornerstone of the global non-proliferation regime, and in juxtaposition with disarmament, constitutes an indispensable element in the pursuit of global security. However, this objective can only be realized if the Treaty attains universality and all state parties, without any exception, avoid selectivity and faithfully comply with and implement its provisions. The discriminatory nature that some countries can be entrusted with nuclear weapons, while others cannot, is difficult to defend. We would be undermining both the spirit and letter of the NPT, if non-nuclear states continue to abide by the Non-Proliferation Treaty, while some states remain free to acquire them and others further improve on the destructive capability of their weapons and continue to display these as enviable source of power and respectability in international politics. The disparate positions on fundamental issues at the third NPT PrepCom is regrettable and we encourage member states to relentlessly strive towards overcoming the issues of contention, since the outcome of the Review Conference will have an enormous impact on the global nuclear weapons regime.

Mr. Chairman,

Ghana regards the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) as crucial to efforts towards nuclear non-proliferation and in extension nuclear disarmament. Thus, we are disheartened by the abeyance of the treaty and entreat states, particularly the eleven, whose ratification is paramount for the Treaty to enter into force, to do so sooner rather than later. While awaiting the realization of the ultimate, Ghana urges nuclear weapons states to maintain the current moratorium on nuclear testing.

My delegation shares the concerns of most member states regarding the threat of acquisition by terrorist groups of weapons of mass destruction. It is on this premise that we view with great concern, reports of opposition to the inclusion of provisions on inspection and verification in the Treaty on Fissile Material Cutoff. In our view, any treaty devoid of credible verification and inspection provisions, will not attain the goal of denying terrorist groups acquisition of plutonium and enriched uranium.

Mr. Chairman,

It is the considered view of Ghana that nuclear weapons free zones are critical components for the cause of non-proliferation and global nuclear disarmament. Our efforts will, however, be to no avail without the support of the nuclear weapons states, which are required to respect the underlying objectives of these agreements and abide by their provisions.

Mr. Chairman,

It is deserving, and rightly so, that weapons of mass destruction remain the main focus of attention. However, we should not be oblivious to the havoc being wrecked in diverse areas of conflict, worldwide, through the use of conventional weapons. The eradication of anti-personnel mines in Africa, has been unequivocally demonstrated by the recent adoption of a common position by our Foreign Ministers for the forthcoming Nairobi Summit. We hope that the necessary resources will be made available for this collective aspiration to attain fruition.

Mr. Chairman,

With the general malaise in the disarmament process, it is imperative that this Committee is revitalized to enable it efficiently execute its responsibility. We support the reform process, but we are of the view that it should focus primarily on the creating of the requisite environment to enable the Committee pursue its cardinal responsibility in the field of disarmament. Undoubtedly, the challenges are daunting but surmountable.

Mr. Chairman,

It is my fervent hope that the monumental achievements in science and technology would be utilized for the common benefit of humankind and not to aggravate fears of an Armageddon. It behoves our organization, and indeed this Committee, to achieve this laudable aspiration. We cannot and should not betray the trust reposed in us.

I thank you.