

NEW ZEALAND MISSION to the UNITED NATIONS



Te Māngai o Aotearoa

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UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY FIFTY-NINTH SESSION

FIRST COMMITTEE

GENERAL DEBATE

**STATEMENT BY THE NEW ZEALAND REPRESENTATIVE
MS CAROLINE MCDONALD**

MONDAY 4 OCTOBER 2004

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr Chairman

We are delighted to see you leading the work of the First Committee. You bring considerable expertise and experience to this role and we are confident that you will lead the Committee to a productive outcome.

At this time when the United Nations Secretary-General himself has found it necessary to express his concerns for the rule of law, and when we are facing the possibility that weapons of mass destruction may fall into non-State hands, it is more important than ever for us to agree to work towards strengthened multilateral legally binding agreements, with verification provisions that are as strong as necessary to provide the confidence that will finally allow us to eliminate weapons of mass destruction from the world. Disarmament – complete, verifiable and irreversible - remains New Zealand's goal.

In that regard, New Zealand is proud to work towards nuclear disarmament with the other members of the New Agenda Coalition. We strongly support the statement that is to be made on behalf of the New Agenda Coalition.

The New Agenda played a role, with others, at the 2000 Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty Review Conference in negotiating practical steps in pursuit of nuclear disarmament, as required by Article VI of the NPT. Those steps, agreed by consensus, set out an achievable framework for nuclear disarmament and emphasised the fact that the NPT is a two-way street: the nuclear weapons states have obligations to disarm (and not to proliferate), as the non-nuclear weapons states have obligations not to proliferate.

Far from being overtaken by recent events the implementation of the 2000 NPT outcome is even more important in a security environment in which recourse to the ingredients of weapons of mass destruction by terrorists is no longer a remote risk. The challenge for next year's NPT Review Conference is for States Parties to demonstrate through their actions rather than their words that the NPT can stand the test of time in serving the security interests of all States Parties.

Currently, much international energy is being concentrated on various non-proliferation initiatives. These certainly have a contribution to make in curbing the spread of weapons of mass destruction, and New Zealand has over the last year demonstrated our support by:

- contributing NZ\$1 million to the G8 Global Partnership – an initiative that offers the opportunity to contribute to a practical programme addressing problems that pose a real risk to global security;
- endorsing the statement of interdiction principles as set out under the Proliferation Security Initiative;

- participating in initiatives to tighten export controls on items that could contribute to weapons of mass destruction, including through support of UN Security Council Resolution 1540. It is important, however, that such controls should not impede knowledge or technology flows to countries that can demonstrate full treaty compliance; and
- sponsoring last March, in partnership with the International Peace Academy, a conference titled “Weapons of Mass Destruction and the United Nations: Diverse Threats and Collective Responses”. A key conclusion from that was that “the full implementation of the treaty regimes would be an essential component for addressing the threat of non-state actors gaining access to nuclear, biological and chemical weapons and their materials.”

These practical yet essentially ad hoc measures and activities are however, in our view, in no way a substitute for the development of strong and effective multilateral instruments.

In New Zealand’s view, the most effective non-proliferation moves we could make collectively would be to ensure and enhance compliance with the NPT in all its aspects including nuclear disarmament, to bring the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty into force, and to negotiate a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty.

We believe that the foundation of any multilateral disarmament treaty if it is to be effective must be a robust and comprehensive verification mechanism. The purpose of such a mechanism is to focus the efforts of the international community on compliance and reassure all States that independent verification will be carried out. For New Zealand, as a small multilateral player and strong supporter of the rule of law, independent verification is an indispensable element of establishing disarmament and non-proliferation norms.

This year New Zealand began its first two-year term on the Executive Council of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. The comprehensive nature of the Chemical Weapons Convention – banning an entire class of weapons and providing for verification - together with the wide membership the Convention attracts, are evidence of its success. But there is scope to do better. New Zealand’s objective during its term on the OPCW Executive Council is to seek to ensure that the chemical weapons ban is enforced as effectively as possible. The credibility of the verification regime is central to the effectiveness of the Chemical Weapons Convention, and New Zealand will pay attention to issues such as the methodology for inspection selection; possibilities for increased inspection of “Other Chemical Production Facilities”; and the use of the challenge inspection mechanism.

The International Atomic Energy Agency is a key organisation in the context of verification and confidence-building, working with member states to safeguard and secure nuclear materials for exclusively peaceful purposes. One of the Agency’s primary objectives is to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons through the implementation of safeguards under the NPT, providing the independent verification

required to assure member states that nuclear material is not diverted towards illicit nuclear weapons programmes. In fulfilling this mandate, the past couple of years, during which New Zealand has served as a member of the Agency's Board of Governors, have been particularly challenging for the Agency. Of the difficult issues that the Board has dealt with recently, New Zealand remains concerned about Iran's nuclear programme and the questions relating to verification which remain outstanding. In this context, North Korea's nuclear programme is also of concern. These two examples illustrate the key importance of the Agency's work in contributing to the effective functioning of the non-proliferation regime. New Zealand congratulates the Director General and his staff for the professional manner in which they have undertaken their work.

The Agency, in partnership with member states, also continues to make a significant contribution to efforts guarding against nuclear terrorism, through such initiatives as the Nuclear Security Fund and the Code of Conduct on the Safety and Security of Radioactive Sources. New Zealand will continue to support the Agency in these vital activities.

While such measures will take us so far, long-lasting solutions to proliferation threats need to address the reasons why some States believe that nuclear weapons are the answer to their security problems. Firstly, all States in a position to do so need to engage actively in resolving regional tensions. We believe that transparent and verifiable disarmament processes both facilitate and expedite the permanent settlement of regional conflicts. It cannot be the case that disarmament must await the resolution of tensions, for if such a proposition was always followed then a peaceful settlement might never come about. Secondly, greater leadership is required of the nuclear-weapon States to match their rhetoric with actions, lead by example and to demonstrate that as well as taking a strong stand against proliferation of nuclear weapons they are determinedly reducing their own nuclear arsenals.

Finally, New Zealand would like to register our thanks and appreciation for the tireless and often unpaid work being done by Non-Government Organisations in keeping information and debate flowing about these issues, and for keeping up the pressure on governments to take practical steps towards disarmament. New Zealand has now set aside annual funding to assist NGOs in implementing the recommendations of the UN Study on Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Education which was presented to this Committee in 2002. It is vital that an informed civil society takes an active interest in what we are doing in these closed committee rooms. After all, we are talking about how to control and eliminate weapons that could destroy the world.