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**Statement by Mr. Ram Chandra Jha, Member of the Nepalese Delegation,
at the General Debate of the First Committee of the 59th General Assembly
(New York: October 12, 2004)**

Mr. Chairman,

Let me begin by congratulating you on your unanimous election as Chairman of this committee. I also take this opportunity to extend our warm felicitations to other members of the Bureau.

My delegation commends the work the outgoing Chairman accomplished during the last session of the Committee.

I also wish to place on record our sincere appreciation to Mr. Nobuyasu Abe, Under Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, for his thoughtful remarks early in this session, dwelling on the persisting problems in the field of disarmament and international security.

Mr. Chairman,

Our common objective to find a durable peace will predicate on eliminating the weapons of mass destruction and their delivery vehicles as well as putting credible and sufficient curbs on small arms and light weapons. It calls for a complete eradication of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery vehicles, an effective control of small arms and light weapons, and a culture of peace.

But the international community's efforts to advance the cause of disarmament have never been without hitches. While some progress has been registered with respect to disarmament in chemical and biological weapons, nuclear weapons remain a persistent and devastating threat to human civilization. Controls over small arms and light weapons remain inadequate.

Mr. Chairman,

Nuclear weapons pose a serious threat to human civilization and even the existence of humanity on this planet. Therefore, a complete removal of nuclear weapons from the face of earth in a time-bound manner must be the foremost priority in the disarmament agenda. In this context, Nepal stresses the implementation of the 13 practical steps of the Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference, which have become so urgent and pronounced. Particularly, sincere compliance to Article VI of the NPT by nuclear weapon states is a sine qua non for durable peace.

There is no doubt that disarmament and non-proliferation will need to go hand in hand. No non-nuclear weapon state should engage in proliferation of deadly nuclear arms. At the same time, nuclear weapon states must also prove to the world that they are committed to nuclear disarmament, which will persuade non-nuclear states to abandon their nuclear ambition.

It is disheartening that progress in CTBT and FMCT is not encouraging. We fervently hope that substantive work on the FMCT will start without further delay.

Nepal believes countries should be able to engage in peaceful use of nuclear technology, under non-discriminatory safeguards. It is equally pertinent that such countries should comply with the applicable IAEA verification measures.

As an ardent believer in peace, Nepal supports nuclear-weapons-free zones. We also stress the necessity to keep outer space free of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction.

Mr. Chairman,

Although much progress has happened to control biological and chemical weapons, we are yet far from achieving complete disarmament in those arsenals. We must work relentlessly to strengthen the implementation of the Biological Weapons Convention with comprehensive, reliable and robust verification measures. Efforts should be constantly exerted to ensure that no country derogates from the execution of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

In these times of terrorism worldwide, it is absolutely vital that the world community joins forces to prevent weapons of mass destruction from falling into the wrong hands. The threat of terrorists having access to such deadly weapons and using them is not hypothetical anymore.

Missiles proliferation has become a major cause of concern for the international community and needs to be controlled in an effective manner. Nepal encourages the Panel of Governmental Experts to make extra efforts in order to reach consensus on the final report when they meet next time.

The prevailing situation underscores the urgency of preventing weaponization of and arms race in outer space. It is equally important that the seabed and Antarctica remain free from all weapons.

Mr. Chairman,

It is disconcerting that, over the last few years, multilateral disarmament mechanisms have been passing through a crisis. There is stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament, the Disarmament Commission, and the Third Preparatory Committee for the 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Serious erosion has appeared in the commitments of nuclear weapons states to eliminate their deadly arsenals.

To our dismay, even the much-hyped bilateral tracks appear to have gone into hibernation. Strategic treaties have been ditched. New doctrines have been introduced to stage a nuclear-come-back — a phenomenon which is certain to trigger an arms race

anew. Little progress has happened in reducing the huge stockpiles of nuclear weapons or the capacity for destruction, within the framework of the agreed arrangements.

Mr. Chairman.

Undoubtedly, the overall picture of the disarmament efforts is bleak. Yet we see a glimmer of hope in the domain of small arms and light weapons due to the almost unanimous commitment of the global community to implement the Programme of Action with a view to curbing such arsenals. The ongoing negotiation for an international instrument on identifying and tracing of illicit small arms and light weapons is a welcome initiative. However, there is a need to engage in extensive consultations with the wider membership regarding the nature of the instrument.

Nepal has been suffering from the destabilizing effects of small arms and light weapons. The so-called Maoists have been using such arms to brutalize and kill innocent people as well as to destroy private property and public infrastructure. We are taking a number of concrete actions in the implementation of the Programme, including by amending and sternly enforcing its domestic laws and regulations. Our national report on implementation is under active preparation.

Nepal is of the view that transparency in armaments is crucial to confidence building among States. In that respect, the UN Register of Conventional Arms measure should be further expanded, while ensuring equal degree of rights and obligations for all states. Similarly, we encourage the Panel of Government Experts to maintain full transparency in order to attain its objectives.

On the issue of anti-personnel landmines, we feel concerned at their growing proliferation and indiscriminate use in conflict zones, causing serious human casualties. As this problem relates to humanitarian concerns and legitimate security concerns of sovereign states, a proper balance between the two will be in order.

Mr. Chairman.

I wish to reiterate Nepal's full commitment to host the regional center for peace and disarmament for Asia and the Pacific to Kathmandu. We also urge that the stalled Kathmandu Process be revived as a logical step towards the early relocation of the Centre to Kathmandu.

In concluding, we fully agree that there is a need for initiating reforms in various UN organs, including the First Committee. Such a reform, however, should be integral to the comprehensive revitalization of the General Assembly and lead to the overall strengthening of the system, not to tilting or weakening it. We look forward to a constructive engagement in this exercise.

I thank you Mr. Chairman.