



# SRI LANKA

**STATEMENT**

**BY**

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TO THE UNITED NATIONS, GENEVA**

**AT**

**THE FIRST COMMITTEE**

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Mr. Chairman,

I wish to extend my delegation's sincere felicitations to you and the other members of the bureau on your election. You will have our full support in carrying out your plans to reinvigorate the work of the First Committee towards a productive conclusion.

We also take this opportunity to commend Mr. Nobuyasu Abe, Under Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs and the officials of his department both in New York and Geneva, for their invaluable dedication to the cause of disarmament even in a situation of limited resources and at a time when key multilateral institutions are under stress.

The First Committee is meeting once again at a time when the international security situation is in crisis. The tragic events of September in Russia have returned the spectre of international terrorism to haunt us. The horrific events of Beslan where hundreds of innocent children were deliberately targeted on a day intended for joy to the family, has resulted in universal condemnation against all forms and manifestations of terrorism and has evoked our greater solidarity, to take whatever action is required to eradicate this menace.

It had been assumed for a long time that the security of a nation state could best be assured on a weapon-based system relying on ever-greater technological advances. Yet we have in recent times seen that such impressive arsenals could not deter terrorists or non-state actors who appear to have the ability to lay their hands on even small arms and light weapons and construct of them the means of mass destruction. The recurrence of such tragedies, aimed at the most militarily powerful of nation states, underlines the need for us to reflect deeply on the issues of security and the urgent need to work together to consolidate the international legal regime using all the branches of the UN system, strengthening international legal norms and standards, enabling judicial, security and intelligence cooperation across borders while addressing also issues of root causes, wherever appropriate.

Our hopes for a more peaceful and secure world in the post cold war era have yet to be realized. The Millennium Declaration adopted at the turn of this century by our heads of states, underlined the common objectives of peace and security with reduction of armaments and increased cooperation on the basis of the desire of mankind for global common security, based on collective reliance both at national and international levels. We recognize that the cessation of the nuclear arms race between US and Russia has resulted in the reduction of nuclear weapons and military stockpiles : yet at the same time we see that the international disarmament and arms control treaty system is under challenge; treaties and negotiated agreements are being contested and the spirit of purpose

of obligations already agreed to, are being revoked. It seems that the very foundation of rules based international conduct is now being challenged.

These developments have contributed inevitably to the situation of paralysis in the Conference on Disarmament and the Disarmament Commission and does not bode well for the achieving of international peace and security. In the CD, my delegation has consistently drawn attention that the approach of some countries to de-link the measures for non-proliferation of nuclear weapons from that of nuclear disarmament, is a matter of serious concern. Such an approach is in our view fraught with danger, contributing to the crisis of confidence, particularly untenable in these months leading up to the 5<sup>th</sup> Review Conference of the NPT, with the failure of the Third session of the Preparatory Committee to agree on even the agenda and substantive recommendations. We express our confidence in the President designate of the 2005 Review Conference Ambassador Sergio Duarte as he commences the challenging task of getting agreement on these issues before the May Review Conference. The NPT remains the cornerstone of multilateral efforts to prevent both horizontal and vertical proliferation of nuclear weapons. Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation are two faces of the same coin and our efforts must go in the direction of achieving both objectives as complementary and mutually reinforcing, whilst also taking into consideration the right of developing countries to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

Mr. Chairman,

The Conference on Disarmament, which is the only multilateral negotiating forum for disarmament, still remains in impasse. We reiterate that agreement on a programme of work remains our highest priority. However, the series of informal plenaries shepherded by successive Presidents of the CD from the G-21 group this year has enabled the CD to take some steps in the direction of improving its functioning. Exchanges of views proved useful in exploring positions with regard to the traditional agenda as well as persistent threats and challenges seen in new forms of terrorism, while all delegations stressed the need to strengthen compliance with arms control and disarmament agreements.

We were pleased to note that the majority of delegations expressed support for the re-establishment of an Ad-hoc Committee on the issue of PAROS in the CD during this year's open-ended informal consultations and the informal plenaries. Over the last several years, my delegation together with the delegation of Egypt have introduced at the First Committee of the General Assembly a resolution on the "prevention of an arms race in outer space" calling for the recommencement of stalled negotiations on PAROS, at the earliest. The increased support for this resolution over the years is a significant development. It may be that the unprecedented, amazing, photographs beamed across television screens around the world from the Mars Rover, Opportunity and Spirit have once again rekindled in our hearts and minds the wonder of space exploration and strengthened popular resolve to keep this pristine world of space a peaceful arena for all time for all the peoples of the world. The annual presentation of the PAROS resolution

in the First Committee and the almost universal endorsement of its principles we believe has had the salutary effect of according to these objectives, the status of customary law.

Mr. Chairman our approach to disarmament is founded in our belief in multilateralism which most particularly serves the interest of small states. It is our belief that positive steps however small, can have an incremental effect. In this context we are pleased to inform that Sri Lanka has acceded to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to be, Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects (Convention of Certain Conventional Weapons). While acceding to this Convention, Sri Lanka has also become a Party to the Amended Protocol II on Mines, Booby traps and other devices, Protocol III on Incendiary Weapons and Protocol IV on Blinding Laser Weapons. The Hon. Lakshman Kadirgamar, Minister of Foreign Affairs deposited the formal instrument of accession on 24<sup>th</sup> September this year.

Furthermore, Sri Lanka will also be submitting at the Nairobi Review Conference a report on a voluntary basis, under Article VII of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction (Ottawa Convention), and in accordance with UNGA Resolution 58/53.

These measures are a reiteration of Sri Lanka's unwavering commitment towards the further promotion of humanitarian law and its continued constructive engagement with the international community on the issue of landmines. Since the signing of the ceasefire agreement between the Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE in February, 2002 the Government of Sri Lanka has embarked on a comprehensive humanitarian mine action programme with the broad objective of making Sri Lanka a mine free country by the year 2006. The Sri Lanka Army was the first to engage and the major force in the country's de-mining activities. As a result of ongoing mine action programmes the number of mine related incidents have dropped by half and hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons have been resettled in their homes. These measures extend protection to both the civilian population as well as the UN and other humanitarian missions operating in the conflict affected areas. We also welcome the efforts made by the international community to persuade non-state parties to sign the Deed of Commitment which would facilitate Sri Lanka's accession to the Ottawa Convention.

Mr. Chairman it must also be mentioned that while much attention is placed today on the dangers of weapons of mass destruction and their proliferation, it is small arms which threaten most people in the conflict and war zones today. We remain closely engaged in the international efforts to combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects, adopted at the UN Conference in 2001 and follow up meetings including the most recent work on

'tracing' and 'marking'. We agree that the supplies of small arms and light weapons should be limited only to governments or to duly authorized entities and arms transfers must be under national, regional and international control in order to prevent their illicit transfer into the hands of terrorists and non-state actors

The CD also heard this year from Ambassador Jaap Ramaker of the Netherlands the good news that the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) with 172 signatures is reaching universality, with the number of ratifications continuing to grow to 115, despite the challenges faced. Similarly we welcome the increasing number of ratifications of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and express our hope that the OPCW programmes for elimination of these weapons will grow from strength to strength in the years to come. We note that the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) is also continuing to grow in strength with 151 States Parties with a further 16 awaiting ratification, and a technical meeting in Geneva this year has produced a wealth of ideas and enabled useful discussions in preparation for the meeting of States Parties to be held in Geneva later this year.