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Statement

By

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to the United Nations*

On

Disarmament and International Security

*New York,
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Mr. Chairman,

Permit me to join other speakers in conveying my delegation's congratulations to you on your assumption of our chair, and to assure you of my delegation's full cooperation to ensure the success of your stewardship of the work of this session.

My delegation associates itself with the statement made by the distinguished representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. In this connection, let me extend my delegation's heartfelt condolences to the Government and People of Indonesia following last weekend's terrorist attack in Bali.

Mr. Chairman,

We meet again this year amid the reality of daunting challenges that continue to confront the international disarmament regime. As in previous meetings, issues relating to international security, disarmament, non-proliferation and fear of acquisition of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs) by terrorist groups, continue to be the dominant themes of our deliberations. This is an eloquent manifestation that sixty years after the birth of our organization from the tragedies of war, the cardinal goal of creating a world devoid of fear of war remains an illusion.

In this connection, Ghana shares the concern of the majority of states over the dismal developments in international disarmament over the past twelve months. My country's initial optimism that the Seventh Review Conference of the NPT would build on and strengthen previous agreements reached in 1995 and 2000 was shattered by the failure of the conference to produce substantive results. If the conclusion of the Review Conference was regrettable, then the absence of reference to disarmament and non-proliferation issues in the outcome document is equally disturbing, since it portrays either a creeping lethargy within the international community over disarmament issues or lack of appreciation of the gravity of the situation confronting us.

In the opinion of my delegation, the recent setback, rather than creating an atmosphere of despondency among member states, should spur us to intensify our collective effort to achieve the ultimate, that is, a world free from the scourge of war, especially an atomic Armageddon. After all, it

is only in a secure global environment that the pursuit and promotion of other important issues such as development, human rights and the rule of law can be effectively sustained. The responsibilities of member states are unambiguous and we should resolve to unequivocally abide by our commitments.

Mr. Chairman,

The 2005 World Summit reaffirmed the imperative need for multilateralism, which admittedly has been under grave pressure in recent years. Considering the dire strains on the international disarmament machinery, it is not only proper, but expedient, that the revival of multilateralism should be embraced in the domain of international peace and security. Now, more than ever, we need to work together as a community of nations to address the challenges confronting us. In an environment of collective security, unilateral measures are an aberration, if not anachronistic and dysfunctional.

Mr. Chairman,

Given that the attainment of a verifiable missile cut-off treaty would impact positively on non-proliferation and disarmament, efforts must be made to surmount the impasse on the programme of work of the Conference on Disarmament, to facilitate the resumption of negotiations on the issue and other related matters. Equally, the Disarmament Commission should be freed from strangulation by the parochial interests of member states to enable it body effectively execute its mandate.

Mr. Chairman,

Nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation continue to be primary challenges confronting the international community. We concur with the Secretary-General's observation that the two are "interlinked and mutually reinforcing", and therefore stress that a progressive process of nuclear disarmament is the sine qua non for the effective enforcement of nuclear non-proliferation. Focusing on one to the neglect of the other is a recipe for further exacerbation of the current fragile international security environment. Indeed, the unsuccessful conclusion of the 2005 NPT Review Conference and the absence of disarmament and non-proliferation issues from the Outcome Document, would seem to buttress this view.

Despite its shortcomings, the NPT has been widely acclaimed as the fulcrum for the attainment of the global non-proliferation regime, and the essential foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament. Undoubtedly, the lack of compliance with the provisions of the Treaty and attempts to de-link the tripod that underpins its spirit and letter, namely, disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful use of nuclear technology, have placed considerable stress on the NPT and contributed to the current erosion of its credibility and effectiveness. While the majority of non-nuclear states have remained faithful to their commitments, the same, regrettably, cannot be said of the nuclear-weapon states. This asymmetrical environment cannot prevail in perpetuity and must be rectified. Ghana, therefore, joins other countries in calling on the nuclear-weapon states to abide by their commitments under Article VI of the Treaty, which was reaffirmed in Step 6 of the 13 practical steps adopted at the 2000 Review Conference.

The continued possession of nuclear weapons by the 5 plus 3 states impedes efforts to make the acquisition and use of nuclear weapons an anathema, and also the pursuance of tough enforcement of non-proliferation rules. If nuclear weapons are legitimate and of profound value for these countries, it is evident that those on the threshold would feel entitled to join the club. The irreversible and sufficiently verifiable elimination of nuclear weapons would therefore be a positive development in our quest to save succeeding generations from the scourge of a nuclear holocaust.

The quest for universal adherence to the NPT is of utmost importance to Ghana. In this connection, we consider the recent undertaking by North Korea to rejoin the Treaty as a laudable gesture worthy of emulation by non-state parties, as it would inject new blood in the NPT.

Mr. Chairman,

A grave concern to my delegation is the perennial issue of negative security assurance. The fear among the majority of states regarding the proliferation of nuclear weapons could be assuaged, if Security Council Resolution 984 is affirmed by a legally binding document, as rightly stipulated in paragraph 8 of the decision of the 1995 Review and Extension Conference. Legally binding security assurance by nuclear-weapon states to non-nuclear-weapon states would impact positively on the NPT, with its attendant effect on disarmament and non-proliferation.

We remain convinced, Mr. Chairman, that nuclear-free-zones are critical components in our common aspiration for a weapons-free world. We have witnessed laudable progress towards this end as evidenced by the Treaties of Tlateloco, Rarontonga, Bangkok and Pelindaba. We, therefore, enjoin nuclear weapons states to support efforts of non-nuclear-weapon-states to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones and implement their corresponding obligations. In this connection, we applaud Mexico for hosting the April 2005 conference of state parties and signatories of treaties that establish nuclear-weapon-free zones, and hope that the exchange of ideas and decisions taken would consolidate the existing nuclear-weapon-free zones to serve as stimulus for the creation of similar free zones in other regions and ultimately enhance our common goal of nuclear disarmament.

Mr. Chairman,

The quest to promote human security would be a mirage unless the community of nations comprehensively addresses the menace of illicit trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW). The illicit trade, which generates over 1 billion dollars annually, poses grave danger to peace and security, due to their easy availability to criminals, drug traffickers and terrorists. In this regard, despite my government's preference for a legally-binding instrument, we join other like-minded states in welcoming the consensus instrument to identify and trace illicit small arms and light weapons in a timely manner, as a positive development. It is the hope of my delegation that this instrument would eventually be transformed from its current political and voluntary nature to a legally binding instrument. Such a transformation would affirm our commitment to end the infamous activities of those who have turned wanton deaths into a lucrative business.

Mr. Chairman,

Human development reports have invariably underscored the inextricable nexus between disarmament and development. It is crystal clear that humankind stands to derive enormous benefit from disarmament, not only in the realm of peace and security, but also in the area of socio-economic development. It is morally wrong and an indictment on the community of nations that while over 1 trillion dollars is spent annually on weapons of death, half the world continues to suffer from acute poverty and deprivation, the fundamental factors that promote and foster terrorism, the

bane of the 21st Century. The development goals enshrined in the Outcome Document could be attained with only a minimum fraction of global military expenditure.

Mr. Chairman,

The gloomy developments in the disarmament regime over the past year places an enormous responsibility on this Committee, as it seeks measures to meet the aspirations of humankind for a peaceful and secure world. Though the challenges are daunting, with determination, political will and unanimity of purpose, we should be able to rise to the occasion. Otherwise, we risk being accused by the very people we represent here of being insensitive to their concerns.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.