NEW ZEALAND MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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UNGA 60: FIRST COMMITTEE

GENERAL DEBATE STATEMENT

STATEMENT BY
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(Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, New Zealand)

5 October 2005

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Mr Chairman

We are very pleased to see you in the role of Chair for the First Committee. Let me assure you of New Zealand's support as you take the work of the Committee forward.

The past year has been a difficult one. At a time when progress on disarmament and non-proliferation objectives is more important than ever, we have lost three significant opportunities to work together as a global community to improve the international security situation: the NPT Review Conference, the UN High Level Summit, and the Conference on Disarmament.

New Zealand was extremely disappointed that the NPT Review Conference was unable to agree a substantive outcome, and that so much of the time available for discussion on concerted strengthening and implementation of the Treaty was consumed by wrangling over questions of procedure. The Treaty's status as the cornerstone for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation was reaffirmed by many States at the Review Conference, but clearly we need to find new ways of working together to achieve its implementation. Commitments agreed by consensus under previous Review Conferences of the Treaty, particularly the thirteen practical steps and the unequivocal undertaking to eliminate nuclear arsenals, are outstanding and must be actioned. Creating a world safe from the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons is in all our interests.

Nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation are mutually reinforcing processes. As noted in the statement made by South Africa on behalf of the New Agenda Coalition which includes New Zealand, we remain convinced that positive progress on nuclear disarmament would improve global security with respect to proliferation.

New Zealand was therefore deeply concerned at the failure of the High Level Summit to agree any language on disarmament and non-proliferation. This gives a misleading message about the ongoing importance of addressing these critical issues at the highest possible level within an international framework. We commend the seven nations who, led by Norway, made such efforts to gain agreement on a meaningful statement on disarmament and non-proliferation for our leaders.

The third lost opportunity is the continuing failure of the Conference on Disarmament to agree on a Programme of Work. It has now been eight years since the CD was able to undertake any substantive negotiations. The longer this impasse continues, the more irrelevant the CD will render itself in international mechanisms. The willingness by some states to use rules of procedure as a means to prevent progress going forward continues to be of concern. The difficulties that confront the Conference on Disarmament are not

the result of inadequacies in the scope or currency of its agenda. If there were a political willingness to agree on the elements of a Programme of Work, the agenda would almost certainly be treated as flexible enough to accommodate it. During New Zealand's Presidency of the CD, we conducted extensive bilateral consultations, which revealed that the overwhelming majority of member states were ready to get down to work. We urge those states withholding consent to the commencement of negotiations to approach discussions on the work programme with a renewed degree of flexibility.

Despite New Zealand's deep regret at the wasted potential for progress at the multilateral level, we have continued our work on disarmament and non-proliferation objectives where possible. We have committed a further $3 million over the next four years to the G8 Global Partnership Against the Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction to help safeguard and destroy unsecured WMD legacies in the former Soviet Union.

New Zealand has already contributed $1.2 million toward the destruction of chemical weapons. This is a tangible demonstration of our support for the Chemical Weapons Convention, a multilateral disarmament treaty that applies equally to all parties and is verifiably and irreversibly eliminating weapons of mass destruction.

The Biological Weapons Convention still lacks any verification mechanism. This remains a major hole in multilateral defences at a time when biological weapons have been identified as a growing threat. We hope that the BWC Review Conference next year will provide an opportunity to consider how to address this issue.

At last month's Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty entry into force Conference we emphasised New Zealand's continued strong commitment to this Treaty and its early entry into force. We will continue to work to achieve that objective.

We commend the International Atomic Energy Agency and Director General ElBaradei for their continuing work in verifying that nuclear energy programmes are for peaceful uses. We support the Director General's call for states to allow the agency more stringent verification measures.

We call on Iran to put in place full transparency and cooperation with the IAEA, to respect all its commitments and to continue negotiations on long-term arrangements.

We welcome the outcome of the recent Six-Party talks in Beijing and the DPRK's commitment to abandon all nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programmes and to return at an early date to the NPT and to IAEA safeguards.

Progress on conventional weapons has been more encouraging over the past year. The Ottawa Convention held a successful first Review Conference and agreed an action plan which will guide states parties through the next phase of implementation, particularly as the first set of deadlines for mine eradication and destruction approach in 2009.

The threat posed to peace and security by the excessive accumulation and uncontrolled spread of illicit small arms and light weapons remains a significant challenge. But at the same time we are encouraged by the international community's progress in strengthening controls, as evidenced by the entry in to force of the Firearms Protocol and the adoption of the marking and tracing instrument earlier this year. New Zealand will continue to work closely with the countries in our region. We look forward to a successful outcome for the 2006 Review of the Programme of Action.

In conclusion, Mr Chairman

New Zealand believes that it is now more important than ever for us to work toward strengthened multilateral legally binding instruments, with verification provisions that are as strong as necessary to give the confidence that will finally allow us to eliminate weapons of mass destruction from our world. In our view, the most important moves that we could make collectively – for both disarmament and non-proliferation – would be to ensure compliance with the NPT in all its aspects, to bring the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty into force, and to negotiate a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty.

Thank you, Mr Chairman.