



BANGLADESH

Please check against delivery

Statement

by

His Excellency Dr. Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury
Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Bangladesh
to the United Nations

at

**THE THEMATIC DISCUSSION SEGMENT OF THE
FIRST COMMITTEE OF THE 61ST SESSION OF
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

ON

THE ISSUE OF 'NUCLEAR WEAPONS'

New York, 10 October 2006

PERMANENT MISSION OF BANGLADESH TO THE UNITED NATIONS

227 East 45th Street, 14th Floor, New York, NY- 10017

E-mail: bangladesh@un.int, web site: www.un.int/bangladesh

TEL (212) 867-3434 • FAX (212) 972-4038

Madam Chairperson,

Today as we focus our thoughts on the theme of 'nuclear weapons', we do so against a grim backdrop of multiple setbacks in recent years.

The failure of the 2005 NPT Review Conference to produce a consensus outcome was a huge disappointment. Disagreement on a common disarmament and non-proliferation agenda at the 2005 World Summit was a missed opportunity. As if those were not enough, the CD the world's sole multilateral forum for disarmament negotiations has for years been unable to adopt a Programme of Work. Similarly, its deliberative counterpart, the Disarmament Commission has remained hobbled by the deep divide among its members. Clearly then, these are not the best of times. But can we afford to continue along this path for too long without bringing upon most unsavoury consequences? Logic would point to the contrary. Something obviously must be done, but such actions can only flow from the appropriate political will.

As we mark the 10th anniversary of the adoption of the CTBT, we recall how long and hard we had worked to put it in place. Yet regrettably to date we do not have sufficient ratifications for its entry into force. Without this treaty, let me unequivocally reiterate, the world will be a far less safe place. So we would appeal to the remaining 11 Annex 2 States whose ratification is essential for such entry, to do so, soonest. We would urge upon all others to observe a moratorium on nuclear testing in the meantime. In this context I wish to add that Bangladesh authorities have expressed deep concern over the recent testing by the DPRK. We believe such actions would be exacerbating the already tense global situation, and serving no positive purpose. We urge them to return to the talks instead.

It is not that our efforts have always been futile. There have been occasions when we have discerned glimmers of hope, or even brighter prospects. We have seen a modicum of achievements in 1995 and in 2000. These must not be weakened. The price we will pay for renegeing on our commitments and

obligations will be too high. We must build on those successes. We must implement what we have agreed upon. Particular mention must be made of the thirteen practical steps adopted by the 2000 Review Conference for the systematic and progressive implementation of Article VI of the NPT.

Also, we are heartened by the modest progress made in regard to the application of the IAEA safeguards, with seventeen States signing additional protocols and eight States signing comprehensive safeguard agreements. There is the ever so slight shift in focus on substantive work in the CD that occurred this year that we encourage. I speak of the work towards an agreed schedule, for the first time in a decade, with particular efforts to reflect the security concerns of all States. The momentum generated must be capitalized upon. The CD must resume its substantive work in line with the unanimous conclusions of the ICJ that there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith, and bring to a conclusion, negotiations trading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control.

The best methodology to achieve disarmament and non-proliferation goals is to strive for them in a multilateral framework. This can be free, or seen to be free, of suspicions that oftentimes shroud bilateral or even plurilateral approaches. Meaningful and effective multilateralism in the disarmament machinery would entail activating two fronts: the CD and the DC. In the CD this could be achieved through resumption of negotiations on a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material. We welcome the positive development to this end and the contribution of major nuclear weapon powers, including the US. On the DC front we need to agree on the agenda of the substantive session, at the same time prepare ourselves to give a boost to the upcoming 2007 PrepCom.

It is evident that Nuclear Weapon States have demonstrated little will, or progress, towards disarmament. True some old warheads have been destroyed. But it appears that this is owed to the aspirations for modernization rather than the desire to conform to any treaty obligations. Moreover, precision is being

added to stockpiles and newer types of weapons are being developed. Needless to say these enhance the propensity for use, and have serious and adverse destabilizing ramifications. There could be temptation to indulge in surgical strikers which are presumed to be without excessive collateral damage. Nuclear war-fighting with the aim of winning could become a theoretical possibility. Everything must be done to prevent acquisition by non-state actors.

If nuclear weapons acquisition is seen to be a means to satisfy security needs, and is perceived to add to political or even military clout, it will become attractive for those who have the capabilities to acquire the same. In other words if some have such weapons that add to their power, others will want them also. This is incontrovertible logic. For instance if there is presence of such weapons in any region, others will seek to deter them with similar capabilities. Nuclear neighbours do not inspire non-violent predilections such as voluntary weapon-renunciations. These are fundamental patterns of human and State behaviour that have remained constant throughout history. If there are States which genuinely feel that they need nuclear weapons for enhancement of its sense of security, we will have failed. If there be just one such, soon there will be another, and then, yet another. Like justice should not only be done but also seen to be done, our regimes must not only ensure that states are secure but they must also feel that they are secure. Above all the regimes must be fair, just, and equitable, and must be perceived to be so. Even in the nuclear age, military behaviour is no different from the tactical conventional wisdom as in the Sergeant's famous exhortation to his troops: have faith in God my boys but keep your powder dry !

In the face of these realities, it is with a sense of pride that Bangladesh can point her own impeccable disarmament and non-proliferation credentials. We have consciously, and unconditionally, opted to remain non-nuclear. We were the first Annex-2 nation in South Asia to have signed and ratified the CTBT. We are also party to NPT and have concluded safeguard agreements with the IAEA including the additional protocols. These are we believe, adequate testimonies to our

unflinching and constitutional commitment towards the twin goals of disarmament and non-proliferation.

We have done so because we have concluded that our safety and security lie in adopting such positions. But our fear is that in the current international climate, all may not see it that way. There may be those who may extrapolate that their security is buttressed by their acquisition of nuclear weapons because their perceived sources of threat have them. Our challenge is to persuade them, and persuade all others, that possession of such weapons of mass destruction can never enhance safety and security in the long run, and till such time we rid our world of these, humanity will remain hostage to their use, or the fear of their use. Despite the history of setbacks, we have no option but to continue our endeavors to achieve our aims even though at times they appear unattainable. As that mighty poet of the Renaissance Dante Alighieri had said, man's reach should exceed his grasp, for what else are heavens for.

I thank you Madam Chairperson.