



BANGLADESH

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Statement

by

H.E. Mr. Reaz Rahman
Hon'ble Adviser for Foreign Affairs
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

at

the general debate of the First Committee
Sixty First Session of the United Nations General Assembly

New York, 2 October 2006

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Statement by H.E. Mr. Reaz Rahman, Hon'ble Adviser for Foreign Affairs at the general debate of the First Committee of the 61st UNGA, 2 October 2006

Mr. Chairman,

Could I begin by congratulating you, and your bureau, upon your well-deserved elections. I am confident that under your able leadership, the work of this Committee will see fruition. Our appreciation also goes to H.E. Mr. Choi Young-jin of the Republic of Korea for his prudent stewardship of the Committee during the 60th Session.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement made by Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. However, we would like to add the following points:

The First Committee assumes its session at the backdrop of a heightened international concern over the expansion of the weapons of mass destruction -- particularly nuclear weapons. We are disheartened that the 2006 review conference of the Programme of Action to control the illicit trade in small arms failed to deliver an outcome. The 2005 NPT Review Conference was another great debacle. The recent record of the Disarmament Commission has been far from satisfactory. The largely hyped 2005 World Summit could not agree on a common agenda for disarmament, non-proliferation and peaceful use of nuclear energy.

Despite recurring failure of the diplomatic efforts, there is broad agreement that the security of the international community is being challenged by the proliferation of mass destruction weapons and their delivery means and the risk that non-state actors could gain access to those weapons.

We wish to remind that the greatest threat to the humanity comes from the continued existence of nuclear weapons and their possible use or threat of use. It is with grave concern that the nuclear weapon states, instead of disarmament, are acquiring more precision capability to the existing stockpiles as well as developing new types of weaponry. Such developments will only make these weapons more attractive to the terrorists for acquisition and use, bringing havoc for all of us. Bangladesh continues to believe that total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. Until that we demand reaffirmation of the negative security assurances provided by the nuclear weapon States.

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) remain the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime. We must ensure full universality of the NPT, CTBT and other international instruments without any single exception.

The process of NPT began in 1968 with a huge leap of faith. Signed by almost all countries of the world, it provided a guarantee that the non-nuclear nations would forgo building nuclear weapons, while the nuclear nations would divest themselves of their own nuclear weapons. However, the lack of political will by some has cast shadow over the prospect of making the world a safer place. It is now imperative to consider what practical steps might be taken to ensure the Treaty's continuing relevance and strength.

We strongly support the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). Bangladesh continues to believe that a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT) is ripe for

negotiation. Bangladesh reiterates its call for convening an international conference with the objective of arriving at an agreement on a phased programme that would provide for elimination of all nuclear weapons; prohibition of their development, production, acquisition, testing, stockpiling, transfer, use or threat of use; and their destruction. We urge also for concluding a Nuclear Weapons Convention.

Mr. Chairman,

Bangladesh's disarmament and non-proliferation records are impeccable. We have consciously and unconditionally opted to remain non-nuclear. Bangladesh is the first Annex 2 nation in South Asia to have signed and ratified the CTBT. We are party to almost all disarmament related treaties including the NPT, the CTBT, the CWC, the CCW, the APMT and the BWC. We have also concluded safeguards agreement with the IAEA including the Additional Protocols. These are tangible testimonies to our unswerving commitment towards the goal of disarmament.

Article IV of the NPT guarantees the inalienable rights of all States Parties to the NPT to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. These must apply without discrimination. We are disappointed that extraneous reasons are being used by some nuclear weapon States to deny the rights of non-nuclear-weapon States to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and technology. The NPT thus obliges States Parties to cooperate among themselves in the matter of exchange of equipments, materials, and scientific and technological knowledge and information on peaceful uses of nuclear technology.

We are concerned at the continued development and deployment of anti-ballistic missile defence systems and the pursuit of advanced military technologies capable of being deployed in outer space. This has further eroded the international climate. Bangladesh reiterates its call for resumption of work on the prevention of arms race in the outer space in the framework of the Conference on Disarmament.

Mr. Chairman,

Bangladesh greatly values regional approaches to nuclear disarmament. Confidence-building measures through the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free-zones (NWFZ) can contribute significantly to disarmament. We welcome all existing NWFZs and call for the establishment of similar zones in South Asia, in the Middle East and in other parts of the world. Kathmandu Process needs to be followed to contributing to regional peace and security in Asia and the Pacific. In South Asia, India and Pakistan must relinquish their nuclear option and join the NPT. Israel must do the same in the Middle East. Comprehensive Safeguards Agreements, together with Additional Protocols, had a deterrent effect on nuclear proliferation. We, therefore, call for universal access to the Comprehensive Safeguards Agreements and Additional Protocols.

Mr. Chairman,

The preponderant focus on the weapons of mass destruction threat should not lessen the attention to the regulation and reduction of conventional arms. The rapid and uncontrolled proliferation of those weapons continued to pose serious threat and destabilizing effects on countries and regions. Symptomatic treatment and ad hoc solutions could not yield durable results. There is a need for increased openness and transparency concerning legitimate arms transfers for defensive purposes. Such openness would promote confidence.

We are concerned that a huge number of civilians, particularly women and children, still fall victims to anti-personnel landmines in conflict and post-conflict situations around the world. We call upon those States, which have not yet done so, to become parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Land Mines and on Their Destruction. We wish to inform that Bangladesh has destroyed all its stockpiles of landmines in fulfilment of its commitment to the international instruments on landmines. We urge the international community for providing assistance to landmine clearance operations as well as in rehabilitating the victims.

Mr. Chairman,

It is appalling that the estimated global military expenditures exceeded US\$ 1 trillion in 2005 and projected to keep rising. Most of these expenditures are the result of a frantic arms race that is increasingly having negative impact on our development agenda. We urge all countries, particularly the major military powers, to divert part of these resources to poverty alleviation in developing countries. Such a move would greatly advance the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals including the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

Mr. Chairman,

Last year was a great disappointment for the disarmament and non-proliferation machinery. We need to move on from that. The trend of unilateralism and wilful interpretation of multilateral instruments and international law by some must be reversed. The major players in this field need to demonstrate their political will to move forward. Now it is time that we work for a safer world, a world free of weapons of mass destruction, a world that we hope to be able to bequeath to our generation and the next a gift of prosperity.