

**CHAIR'S OPENING STATEMENT**  
**(First Committee, 2 October 2006)**

Distinguished colleagues,

It is a great honour and privilege to have been elected chairperson of the First Committee of the General Assembly. I thank you for your support and I will spare no efforts to bring our deliberations to a successful conclusion.

Distinguished colleagues,

This year's session of the First Committee takes place against a background of some urgency. Not much has been achieved in the field of multilateral arms control diplomacy in recent years. But the global and regional security challenges persist.

Again we have a window of opportunity to address important disarmament and non-proliferation issues. I appeal to all of you to look actively for common ground and to identify areas of agreement rather than disagreement. Consensus is not a goal in itself, but it is certainly preferable to sustained and chronic gaps between different security perceptions.

We will not be able to agree on everything. But let us try to agree on more than we have been used to over the last couple of years. Let us listen carefully to each other's statements with the aim of understanding the security concerns of all stakeholders. This is of crucial importance because the issues at hand are indeed serious. They include nuclear disarmament, production of fissile material for weapons purposes, nuclear weapons free zones, security assurances, a possible militarization of outer space, compliance and verification, proliferation threats, biological weapons, chemical weapons and illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. This list is not exhaustive.

It is up to you, the Member States, to achieve substantive progress. I, as chairperson, can only facilitate your work.

Distinguished colleagues,

To facilitate your work in the best possible manner it is my intention to continue the process of improving the working methods of this committee. I went through the organizational aspects of this year's session last Thursday. Let me on this occasion just reiterate the following:

1. Delegations are encouraged to avoid unnecessary overlap and duplication as regards resolutions and decisions.
2. I invite you to respect the system of a rolling speakers list.
3. Interventions should be limited to 10 minutes for national statements and 15 minutes for regional groups. Even shorter interventions are most welcome.
4. I intend to start the meetings on time. Regional groups are kindly requested to convene their meetings at times that do not conflict with the committee's proceedings.

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Distinguished colleagues,

We are to embark upon an intergovernmental enterprise. But our ultimate goal is obviously to achieve something that positively will affect civil society. So we will listen to civil society, as custom requires. I am working with the bureau and the secretariat to organize the civil society input as effectively as possible and I trust that all of you will participate in this dialogue later in the month.

Finally dear colleagues,

I am now in your hands. Please feel free to advise me, to make proposals and to involve members of the bureau in your undertakings should the need arise. I trust that you will have extensive consultations among yourselves in order to reach agreement on as many resolutions and decisions as possible. Wherever feasible: let our voice be collective. The late Mahatma Gandhi was born on this very day. With his vision of peace and non-violence in mind I wish you all the best of luck in your endeavours.

Thank you.