NEW ZEALAND MISSION to the UNITED NATIONS

Te Mängai o Aotearoa

ONE UNITED NATIONS PLAZA 25TH FLOOR NEW YORK, NY 10017-3515, USA
TELEPHONE (212) 826 1960 FACSIMILE (212) 758 0827 HOMEPAGE: www.nzmissionny.org

---

UNGA 61: FIRST COMMITTEE

GENERAL DEBATE

STATEMENT BY
DON MACKAY
AMBASSADOR FOR DISARMAMENT

2 October 2006

Madame Chair

We are very pleased to see you in the Role of Chair for First Committee. You can be assured of my delegation's full support as you lead us through the Committee's comprehensive work programme.

This year has brought a mixture of challenges and opportunities in the disarmament and international security realm.

We were among those who were disappointed there was no agreement on an outcome document recording this year's review of the 2001 Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. We do not underestimate the complexities of reconciling state sovereignty, commercial and trade freedoms as well as civil liberty considerations with steps that need to be taken at the global level to mitigate and prevent the harm done by illicit trade in light weapons. At the same time, we consider that further global level action is possible, and is warranted. We need to pursue opportunities to make this happen. In particular, New Zealand supports further work on an arms trade treaty, transfer principles, and brokering, over the course of the next year.

The Conference on Disarmament, during its 2006 sessions, seemed, at times, closer to breaking its decade-long stalemate than at any other point in recent years. Under the Six Presidents' schedule of activities, useful structured thematic debates were held on the core areas of the CD's mandate, in which the participation of experts was a welcome development. However, we must guard against convincing ourselves that such discussions constitute an adequate substitute for substantive work. We urge all delegations in the CD to capitalise on the momentum generated this year, and exercise maximum flexibility in their efforts to commence substantive negotiations.

In our view, an immediate task for any rejuvenated CD should be the negotiation of a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty. This issue deserves priority consideration on a number of fronts, with its potential as a preventative measure in terms of minimising stockpile build-up, and also as a significant contribution to nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. We are all aware of the sensitivities surrounding the issues of stocks and verification. However, to make even the commencement of such negotiations subject to agreement on these divisive points at the outset further compromises the security of us all. The key imperative at this stage should be the launching of negotiations, without prejudging their outcome. For New Zealand's part, we are prepared to approach negotiations without pre-conditions. Within the framework of that process we would argue the case for an FMCT that dealt adequately with existing stocks and had structured verification provisions. The potential for an FMCT to function as a supporting mechanism for nuclear disarmament is clear. Any instrument which contributes to a norm against the production of nuclear weapons helps to provide momentum to the nuclear disarmament debate.

Creating a world safe from nuclear weapons remains one of the international community's most pressing priorities. My delegation has already registered its views on the imperative for implementation of nuclear disarmament commitments through the statement of the New Agenda Coalition, delivered by Egypt at the outset of this General Debate. One of our most important responsibilities during this Committee's work will be to ensure a smooth start to the next Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty review process, so that measurable substantive progress within the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime can be achieved.

We commend the work of the International Atomic Energy Agency and Director General Mohamed El Baradei in verifying that nuclear energy programmes are for peaceful uses. It is clear that more stringent verification tools are required to fulfil this mandate. The Additional Protocol is the contemporary verification standard, and, as such, should logically be a condition of nuclear supply. We urge those states that have not yet concluded Additional Protocols with the Agency to do so without delay.

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. In the pursuit of these objectives, New Zealand supports IAEA and Security Council calls for Iran to suspend its enrichment and reprocessing programme, and to comply with all of the requirements of UNSC Resolution 1696.

The DPRK's decision to pursue nuclear weapons creates a serious challenge to the nuclear non-proliferation regime and the stability and security of the Asia-Pacific region, which was exacerbated by the missile tests in July. We believe that committed dialogue, rather than military brinksmanship, provides the best possibility for achieving a peaceful and comprehensive resolution, and we therefore urge the DPRK to return to the Six Party Talks process.

This year is the 10th anniversary of the opening for signature of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. It is imperative that this treaty enter into force. New Zealand remains fully committed to encouraging the universalisation of the CTBT. For us, it remains important that we back our political support for the Treaty by assisting the CTBT in its efforts to encourage states that have not yet done so to ratify the Treaty.

In December, we will be participating in the Eleventh Session of the Conference of States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention. We will be emphasising that all chemical weapons stockpiles be destroyed by 2012, the deadline in the Convention. Our focus at the Conference will be on the on-going implementation of the Convention, particularly in the Pacific, as well as on improving the current methodology for selecting sites for inspections. New Zealand is playing its part towards this goal by contributing, through the G8

Global Partnership, to the chemical weapons destruction project at Shchuch'ye in Russia.

Through the G8 Global Partnership, New Zealand is also contributing funds towards a project to shut down Russia's last plutonium producing nuclear reactor and replace it with a fossil fuel plant. Both of these contributions are practical examples of New Zealand's commitment to disarmament and nuclear safety.

Looking ahead to the remainder of 2006, we have two further important opportunities to make concrete progress on disarmament and non-proliferation objectives.

New Zealand is committed to playing an active role in the upcoming Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons Review Conference in November, and looks forward to seeing progress made on the effective implementation of international humanitarian law to mitigate the humanitarian impact of conflict. In particular, New Zealand supports the negotiation of a new legally binding instrument which addresses the humanitarian concerns posed by cluster munitions. We would also welcome the conclusion of an instrument on mines other than anti-personnel mines, if a legally binding text could be agreed that made a credible improvement on existing international humanitarian law provisions.

The Biological Weapons Convention Review Conference in November and December will also give States a chance to evaluate the effectiveness of international management of the biological weapons threat through a comprehensive review of the Treaty. Against the backdrop of rapid developments taking place in biotechnology industries, and the threat of terrorist acquisition and use of biological agents for malicious purposes, States Parties will need to find new ways to make the Treaty's implementation relevant and effective in the contemporary environment. New Zealand supports the discussion and development of practical steps which can achieve pragmatic results, particularly in areas relating to national implementation, confidence building measures, implementation support, and intersessional processes.

In conclusion, Madame Chair,

The Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission Report released in June reminded us all of the need for a cooperative approach to collective security and a rule-based international order. Our work within the framework of this Committee should be based on these principles. The international community must collaborate to build the necessary confidence and transparency required to achieve meaningful gains on disarmament and non-proliferation. New Zealand is committed to playing its part in this process.