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PERMANENT MISSION
OF THE REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS
NEW YORK

UNITED NATIONS
62nd Session of the General Assembly
First Committee

GENERAL DEBATE

Statement by

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New York, October 15th 2007

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Mr. Chairman,

The delegation of Albania joins other delegations in congratulating you and the other members of the Bureau on your election. We are confident you will lead this committee's deliberations to a successful outcome. We look forward to working with you and assure you of our support and cooperation.

Albania aligns itself with the statement of the European Union delivered in this committee by Portugal at the commencement of the general debate. In this intervention my delegation would like to make a few further remarks.

First of all, let me express once again our appreciation for the Secretary General's initiative with regard to strengthening the capacity of the UN and advancing the disarmament agenda through the reconfiguration of the Disarmament Department into ODA. This newly-created arrangement, we hope, will provide the needed leadership in pushing this important agenda at the UN.

The serious discussions and negotiations which take place during the deliberations of this committee reflect the significance of its agenda items as well as the necessity of broader international consensus on disarmament issues. Terrorism, proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) and their direct means of delivery, proliferation of SALW and other conventional arms etc., continue to represent dangerous threats to international peace, security and stability.

Today, more than ever before, we all live in an interconnected world with challenges affecting us all and, as such, requiring global response. We live in a world where we all benefit or suffer from the collective security or its absence. That is why it is our collective duty to strengthen that security, to make regimes and treaties and their verification mechanisms even more effective, to put more emphasis on preventing threats and conflicts before they develop.

Meeting the challenge of proliferation risk is crucial. The Albanian Government joins the commitment reflected by member states to upholding, implementing and further strengthening the various disarmament and non-proliferation treaties. We respect and fully implement our obligation toward any multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation treaties and instruments to which we are a party, such as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC); the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) etc.

Combating terrorism remains a priority. It continues to remain a major threat to international peace and security. This global threat can be only met by forceful response and collective action. The adoption by consensus of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy sent a clear positive signal in this direction. The adoption of the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism will strengthen that signal and help with counter-terrorist activity.

The Albanian Government reiterates its condemnation of any form or manifestation of terrorism. It remains committed in fulfilling its obligations, nationally and internationally. Albania has signed, ratified and is continuously implementing the 12 UN conventions and protocols against terrorism. The counter terrorist agenda remains for us with a continued sense of purpose, direction and momentum.

Effective fight against terrorism is closely related with intensive and extensive measures in the field of non-proliferation and disarmament. An effective strategy designed to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), their means of delivery and their falling into the hands of terrorists or non-state actors is a "must".

Albania has supported and applauded, in particular, the UN Security Council Resolution 1540 as an entirely appropriate measure to counter that threat with substantial benefits. As an essential tool to combat proliferation, as a guide for an essential mechanism to prevent WMD, this legally binding Resolution remains an important document in implementing and developing any appropriate effective measures, as well as adopting and enforcing further appropriate effective laws in this respect.

NPT is a crucial multilateral instrument of the non-proliferation regime. It continues to remain vital, as the cornerstone of global nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. It is crucial that this regime be strengthened and improved, especially today when confronting tremendous challenges, such as non-compliance with its core of non-proliferation. As a non-nuclear weapons state the Republic of Albania remains loyal to the spirit of NPT and reiterates its full political will to strengthen its commitment to non proliferation. We express, as well, our support for the IAEA and for the strengthening of the role of the Security Council in reaction to any challenges or threats posed to international peace and security by nuclear weapons proliferation.

We are conscious that parallel efforts should be made in various aspects to strengthen the disarmament and non-proliferation regimes. Threats from biological and chemical weapons remain a concern. Further strengthening and effective implementation of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) and the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) is essential in countering these threats.

Albania supports the strict application of the CWC (Convention of Chemical Weapons). This convention has an essential role in countering the threat of chemical weapons. In this year of the 10th anniversary of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) we join the other delegations in welcoming the commemoration of this anniversary and in commending its achievements as an example for effective multilateralism.

Albania has attached particular importance to the objectives and purpose of the CWC. We have undertaken national efforts and concrete implementation measures with regard to fulfilling our obligations, related to the Convention. It is with a sense of pride that I reiterate here today the fact that Albania has

completed its destruction programme; that it is the first country to have achieved total, complete and verifiable destruction of all its chemical weapons stockpiles, in accordance with the requirement of the Convention. For my country, facing the enormous problems of transition to a pluralistic democracy, this undertaking represented a challenge. But at the same time it was an excellent opportunity to prove our commitment and responsibility; an excellent exercise for fostering international cooperation. I take this opportunity to express my Government's gratitude to OPCW and all member states that supported and assisted us in this very important project. This is a clear example of our significant progress and commitment to disarmament.

Mr. Chairman,

We all agree that conventional arms, including small arms and light weapons, their proliferation, illicit trafficking and easy availability, continues to pose an even more immediate and serious threat to peace, security, stability. These weapons may be small, but they exacerbate conflicts, facilitate violent crime and cause massive destruction.

In this context Albania perceives the issue of the control of SALW as an issue directly related to national, regional and international security. Albania remains committed and attaches utmost importance to the UN Program of Action, as the framework for both legal and practical measures against the illegal trade in these weapons. The Albanian Government has supported the Arms Trade Treaty, as a comprehensive legally binding instrument to establish common international standards and bring the conventional arms trade (import, export and transfer) under a stronger control.

On practical terms, Albania remains determined to further increase the national capacities in the field of control over SALW through various simultaneous and integrated measures on transfers, stockpile management and destruction. Just recently Albania completed successfully a NATO Trust Fund Project aimed at destroying and demilitarizing SALW ammunition. Within the last five years since this project started, millions or tons of SALW ammunition have been destroyed or demilitarized. In addition, huge quantity of anti-personnel mines was destroyed, as well, meeting in this way the obligations coming from Ottawa Convention. We express our gratitude to all the countries that participated in this project and contributed to its cost.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.