



THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

STATEMENT

BY MR. SLAVKO KRULJEVIC, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE,
IN THE GENERAL DEBATE IN THE FIRST COMMITTEE
NEW YORK, 15 OCTOBER 2007

Mr. Chairman,

On behalf of the Serbian delegation, I would like to congratulate you on your election as Chairman of the First Committee and wish you and the members of the Bureau every success in your important work.

My delegation would also like to congratulate Ambassador Sergio Duarte upon his appointment as High Representative of the Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs. We are looking forward to cooperating closely with Ambassador Duarte and his office.

The delegation of the Republic of Serbia subscribes to the Statement made by the delegation of Portugal on behalf of the European Union. Now, let me concentrate on the areas of priorities and the dynamic activities Serbia has pursued in connection with various topics on our agenda.

Non-Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD). Serbia attaches great importance to international activities, aimed at strengthening joint efforts and preventing proliferation of all types of weapons of mass destruction, particularly those related to the strengthening of the universality of the prevention measures and activities. My country's practical contribution has been manifold: we have sent nuclear fuels for long-term storage in the Russian Federation, strengthened the system of physical protection of nuclear and other radio-active materials in order to combat illegal trade in those materials more effectively and ratified the relevant United Nations Conventions. In addition, my country has fulfilled its primary obligations under SC resolution 1540 (2004) by submitting required reports. It continues to implement the resolution and preparations are under way to work out an implementation Action Plan.

I would like to inform that my country has adopted the *Law on the Implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention* and that work is about to be completed on the adoption of the *Law on the Implementation of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention*. Also, the amendments of the Criminal Code make it possible to sanction violations of the *Conventions*.

Serbia cooperates actively with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in The Hague and with its member States. We are ready to strengthen the cooperation and to present our experiences in the field and render assistance to other interested countries through courses and seminars on assistance and protection against chemical weapons.

We have worked very actively, too, on the promotion of measures and activities related to the implementation of the *Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention* along the lines recommended by the Fourth Review Conference on the implementation of this Convention, held in Geneva in December 2006.

Serbia submits timely reports on CBM implementation. A law on the BTCW implementation is expected to be adopted soon and a procedure for waiving the reservation on the 1925 Geneva Protocol is under way. Serbian experts take active part in the work of other international organizations against bio-terrorism. Efforts on the national level to adopt new measures to promote bio-safety and bio-security will soon be initiated.

This year, Serbia submitted for the first time the annual Declaration for 2006 on the implementation of The Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation. In November 2006, my country joined the Proliferation Security Initiative and the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism. In this way, Serbia joined the activities of the international fora as well, with the aim of making a contribution to the overall improvement and modernization of measures for effective prevention and prohibition of all forms of proliferation. To that end, we have strengthened our efforts to improve the export control of dual-purpose goods and to complete it and make it ever more effective.

Arms control. Serbia attaches great importance to arms control which it considers an essential segment of the security of every United Nations member State. Along with the other parties to the Agreement on Sub-regional Arms Control, concluded under Article IV of Annex 1-B of the Dayton Peace Accords, Serbia made an important contribution to greatly increased security and stability in the region by reducing the overall number of armaments.

Special mention should be made in this regard of the fulfilment of the international obligation in the field of arms control that arose for Serbia, as well as for Montenegro, upon the dissolution of the former State union of Serbia and Montenegro. The obligation concerned the regulation of the question of numerical limits for five armament categories provided for by the Agreement on Sub-regional Arms Control. It is with pleasure and satisfaction that I am able to point out that those questions have been resolved by Serbia and Montenegro in cooperation with the Office of the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office for Article IV in accordance with the highest standards in this area. The Foreign Ministers of the two countries signed the Agreement on the Principles and Procedure for the Implementation of the Agreement on Sub-regional Arms Control in Podgorica on 11 June 2007.

Ottawa Convention. Serbia is resolved to implement the Ottawa Convention in good faith and carries out its obligations under the Convention in a timely fashion. It is guided by the principles of the 2004 Nairobi Action Plan and has made an active contribution to the realization of the initiative *The Region of SEE without Mines until 2009*. The last anti-personnel mine from the stockpiles of the Army of Serbia was destroyed in May 2007 and it is expected that the last mine field in Serbia will be de-mined by the end of 2008.

The national legislation increasingly provides for the prohibition and sanctioning of all illegal activities related to arms and military equipment, including anti-personnel mines. Also, an important novelty is the establishment of the School of Prosthesis and Orthopedics in Belgrade to help mine victims. The School has regional importance and additional resources from international donations will be needed for its future work.

In complying with its obligations, Serbia also submitted the 2006 annual report on the implementation of the relevant articles of the Ottawa Convention.

Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW). Serbia subscribed to the *Statement* issued by a group of countries at the Third CCW Review Conference, held in Geneva from 7 to 17 November 2006, calling for the adoption of an Agreement banning the use of cluster munitions in highly civilian populated areas, as well as for the destruction of cluster munitions as a grave humanitarian threat.

My country has taken necessary measures to ratify early CCW Protocol V on Explosive Remnants of War and to accede to CCW Amended Protocol II.

However, it is with regret that I have to note that projects related to the stockpiling and destruction of ammunition, de-mining and victim assistance, are often hampered by the lack of domestic resources and continued provision of material and expert assistance to institutions in Serbia by international donors remain therefore very important.

Serbia has participated very actively in the "Oslo Process", initiated by Norway in Geneva 2006 with the aim of adopting a binding international legal document to ban cluster munitions. It also took part in subsequent Conferences of the Process, held in Oslo in February 2007 and in Lima, Peru, in May 2007. As a staunch supporter of the Process and as a country affected by cluster munitions in NATO raids of 1999, Serbia hosted at the initiative of Norway and a number of other countries and non-governmental organizations the Conference on States Affected by Cluster Munitions in Belgrade from 2 to 4 October 2007.

Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). Proceeding from UNGA resolution 61/89, Serbia has submitted a timely report (in April 2007) to the Secretary-General on its assessment of the feasibility, scope and parameters of a future ATT as a binding international legal instrument. In the report, we emphasized the importance and feasibility of the initiative and continue to follow attentively its implementation. I wish to re-iterate our readiness to take active part in all phases of the preparation of this important document. At the request of the Secretary-General, we also submitted a summary report at the end of July 2007.

Export Control of Arms and Military Equipment and Small Arms and Light Weapons. By its *Law on Foreign Trade in Arms, Military Equipment and Dual-Purpose Goods* of 2005, Serbia has regulated the arms export control according to EU standards, taking into account the experiences of other countries as well. In order to provide for stricter control in this sensitive area, the government submitted a proposal to amend the existing *Law on Trade in Arms and Military Equipment*. Even though the *Law*, entered into force on 31 March 2005, had been a major improvement on the previous legislation (transfer of relevant competences from the Ministry of Defence to the Ministry of the Economy and Regional Development, for instance), the proposal was based on the assessment that certain modifications and adaptations were necessary, in particular the inclusion of the so-called "catch-all" clause and the introduction of stiffer sanctions for its violation.

Serbian officials in the field of the export control of arms and military equipment, particularly of the export control of small arms and light weapons, continue to be trained and attend international seminars, workshops and courses. Serbia fulfils regularly its obligations under the Firearms Protocol, United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, United Nations Programme of Action on SALW, OSCE on SALW and observes relevant arms export practices and procedures.

Stockpiling of Arms and Ammunition. The unfortunate accident – the explosion in an arms and ammunition depot in the Serbian town of Paraćin in 2006 - exposed a major problem of stockpiling arms and ammunition properly in open-air depots in Serbia. The problem was compounded by the destruction of 70 per cent of the stockpiling capacities in the NATO raids of 1999. In cooperation with UNDP, the Ministry of Defence of Serbia has been working on clearing the explosion site, but, like in the case of the destruction of surplus ammunition, de-mining and victim assistance, these efforts are often hampered by the lack of resources. Therefore I would like to call for continued international donors' assistance and support.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.