



SRI LANKA

Statement by
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to the United Nations

at the General Debate of the
First Committee
on Disarmament Affairs

of the Sixty-Second Session
of the
United Nations General Assembly

New York, 16 October 2007

(please check against delivery)

Let me first congratulate you on your assumption of the Chair of this Committee. My felicitations also goes to other members of the Bureau on their election. I take this opportunity to assure you of my delegation's full support and co-operation in all your endeavors.

I take this opportunity to congratulate Ambassador Sergio Duarte on his well deserved appointment as the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs and welcome him to the First Committee. Ambassador Duarte assumes this post with a wealth of experience and knowledge of the subject and I have no doubt that his guidance will add impetus to the work of this Committee and to the UN Disarmament agenda as a whole at this difficult juncture. In this regard I thank him for his introductory incisive remarks at the opening of the meeting and look forward to work with him in time to come.

My delegation fully associates itself with the statement delivered by Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

We still await a tangible peace dividend promised at the end of the Cold War and again at the onset of the twenty-first century. The Road Maps and action programmes created to achieve disarmament objectives at several major international Conferences like Special Sessions on Disarmament and the Millennium Summit still remain to be fully implemented. At this moment, it is apparent that national and international security perceptions and paradigms are in a state of flux. However, evolution of strategic perceptions that would advance new security paradigms as products of a unilateral approach to international peace and security issues, can, in our view, undermine the existing sense of stability and security. New strategic visions as well as threat perceptions, are best addressed in a multi-lateral, or plurilateral if not at least in a bilateral context. It has been proved beyond doubt that unilateralism cannot not yield results.

It is in this context that the international community has recognized the need to review and rejuvenate the system of international security. However, lack of international consensus on this issue has led to a gradual weakening of existing sense of collective security based on multilateral agreements. The apparent apathy in convening SSOD IV is a manifestation of this malaise. The more advanced weapons systems, which militarily powerful States seem to pursue with the expectation of bringing more security and peace to the world, can be a colossal waste of resources, if there is no clarity or an international understanding on a global system of security.

The Millennium Declaration adopted at the turn of this century by our Heads of States underlined the axiom of peace and security with less armament and more co-operation. The Declaration also reiterated the often repeated desire of humankind for common security based on collective reliance, at both national and international levels. The hope was held out that countries would pause in their desire for increased weaponization and would even roll back ongoing programmes. It was natural for us to expect that such lofty ideals would percolate down towards the various United Nations disarmament and security forums such as this Committee and the Conference on Disarmament, and bodies for treaty review. However, it is apparent that developments since the Millennium Summit have led us in the opposite direction.

International disarmament and arms control treaty regimes have been challenged in many ways. Several treaty review mechanisms are becoming theatres for polemics. Treaties and even action programmes currently in force are contested or out maneuvered for being outdated on the basis of unproven theories and assessments, and for political expediency. The spirit and the purpose of widely adhered treaties and action programmes are being violated because of a distinct lack of commitment for implementation measures by the parties and ill-motivated actions by those outside. The rule-based international conduct required to be observed under several treaty regimes is therefore being challenged. These developments do not bode well for our efforts in this Committee and elsewhere to achieve international peace and security.

The Conference on Disarmament touted as the single multilateral negotiating forum for Disarmament, although active, has not been able to achieve its goals in the recent past. We stress the importance of the Conference to agree on a practical, less ambitious programme of work, which could direct the Conference towards the goals for which it was established.

It is distressing to realize that little progress has been made on the issue of nuclear non-proliferation after forty years since the adoption of the Non-Proliferation Treaty by the General Assembly. And nuclear weapons remain the most dangerous weapon of mass destruction. Sri Lanka regrets to observe that the integrity and relevance of the international non-proliferation system centered on the NPT, is being undermined in many ways. The unwillingness of the nuclear weapons states to fulfill their obligations under Article VI of the Treaty is deepening the gap between the nuclear 'haves' and 'have nots.' Strengthening the existing nuclear non-proliferation regime by remedying its deficiencies is also an urgent need. Parallel efforts should be made to strengthen disarmament and non-proliferation regimes of other classes of WMDs, particularly Chemical Weapons and Biological Weapons. This is all the more important since the potential now exists for terrorist organizations to access components of weapons of mass destruction. This ability of non-state actors to lay their hand not only on small arms and light weapons but also on weapons of mass destruction is a matter of grave concern.

Acts of terrorism by non-state actors continue to cause unprecedented havoc in many parts of the world. Therefore, there is a need to generate a new global compact on collective security that could encompass the issue of terrorism as well, for the benefit of both States and the peoples of the world. It is apparent that the security of a State per-se does not necessarily translate into the security and well-being of a global citizen in our globalizing world. Only a legitimate, rule-based system that is robust and internationally respected, similar to those now operating in several other fields of human endeavour, could have the capacity to combat terrorism effectively. We need to evolve, formulate and agree upon such a broad based system of security and conduct that will be respected by States, civil society and the citizens of the world.

Therefore, we need to assess as to how this Committee could contribute to the efforts of the international community to evolve a regime or system that encompasses all spheres of human activity that would leave no room for anyone to perpetrate acts of terrorism targeting innocent civilians. For this purpose the High Representative, his office,

and this Committee could work with all branches of the United Nations system, and seek to contribute and make specific input either directly or indirectly, towards that objective.

Sri Lanka, together with Egypt, for many years have strived to bring the attention of the Committee to the issue of the Prevention Of an Arms Race in Outer Space. This is a manifestation of our often repeated belief that the last frontier of humankind, outer space, should remain peaceful as our common heritage, and that this is vital for stability and security on earth. However, our efforts to obtain consensus and to work towards concrete action on this issue have yet to produce results and the threat of a roll- back of the existing understandings on the issue also looms large. In this regard Sri Lanka also reiterates its call for resumption of work on the prevention of an arms race in outer space at the Conference on Disarmament.

Today more lives are lost on a daily basis due to illicit trade and easy availability as well as trafficking of small arms and light weapons primarily by non-state actors. In this respect, full implementation of the UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects, is of paramount importance. The failure of the Review Conference of the UN Programme of Action to agree on further measures to fully implement and to expand the scope of the Programmes of Action is a cause of concern for my delegation. Nevertheless, the forthcoming biennial meeting on implementation of the Programme of Action will provide an opportunity to renew our commitment to the POA and to seek ways to further strengthen its implementation. In this regard Sri Lanka welcomes the successful completion of the work of the Group of Governmental Experts on the Brokering of Small Arms and Light Weapons and the valuable recommendations they presented to the General Assembly.

We expect the United Nations to play a major role in the implementation of the agreed measures and follow-up action of the UNPOA on illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. At the same time, States, and regional and international organizations, including the United Nations system, should continue to develop and support action-oriented research on this complex issue with a view to bringing forth other relevant and interconnected issues pertaining to the illicit transfer, manufacture and proliferation of small arms and light weapons, especially those that involve non-State actors. Such efforts should focus on issues that have not been adequately addressed so far either at the Conference which adopted the UN Programme of Action in 2001, or at its review Conference in 2006.

The new leadership at the UN in New York, in particular on disarmament affairs, and this Committee, has a historic opportunity ahead. The time has come to assess innovatively as to how some of the moribund processes of disarmament can be revived and as to how new issues that confront the international community like illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and terrorism can be best addressed. This challenge is real. And unless we are ambitious, we will fail by those people of the world who demand nothing less.
