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**STATEMENT**

**BY**

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PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE TO THE  
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GENEVA**

**DURING THE FIRST COMMITTEE  
GENERAL DEBATE**

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**Check against delivery**

**STATEMENT BY SOUTH AFRICA DURING THE GENERAL DEBATE OF THE FIRST COMMITTEE DURING THE 62<sup>ND</sup> SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

Thank you Chairperson,

First of all, I wish to congratulate you on your assumption of the Chair of the 2007 First Committee Session and assure you of South Africa's full support and co-operation. My delegation fully associates itself with the statements delivered by Mexico on behalf of the New Agenda Coalition and Cuba on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Chairperson,

We are meeting here today against the backdrop of a number of important challenges in the area of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. In the area of weapons of mass destruction, we have witnessed several failed attempts to reach a global consensus on issues that have a direct bearing on international peace and security. Instead of arriving at multilateral solutions, we are witnessing the emergence of a multitude of unilateral and plurilateral initiatives or what can be called initiatives by "coalitions of the willing" aimed at curbing what they believe to be the greatest threats to international peace and security. These initiatives not only reflect the lack of agreement and divergent views on the challenges that we face, but are also indicative of a disregard for the value of the multilateral system.

South Africa has always argued in favour of inclusive as opposed to exclusive solutions to address challenges. International peace and security requires the full participation of the entire international community and multilateral engagement and partnership is essential if we are to address these global challenges in a sustainable manner. It is our hope that this year's First Committee session will contribute to our efforts to secure consensus on the important challenges facing our collective security.

Chairperson,

South Africa remains deeply concerned over the massive number of nuclear weapons that continue to be deployed and stockpiled around the world, as well as current and new security doctrines that envisage the actual use of such weapons. We are also disappointed that nuclear-weapon States have not used the opportunity presented by the renewal of weapons systems to give effect to their disarmament commitments. We do not believe that the possession of nuclear weapons, or the pursuit of their possession, enhances international peace and security. For South Africa, the NPT remains the most important international nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation legal instrument and we will continue to promote its universality and full compliance with all its provisions. We hope that the encouraging progress made at the first Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) for the 2010 NPT Review Conference (RevCon) that was held in Vienna earlier this year will provide positive momentum that will be carried over to the RevCon itself.

With regard to the issue of security assurances, South Africa believes that genuine security cannot be achieved by the non-nuclear-weapon States abandoning the nuclear weapons option alone. Security assurances rightfully belong to those States that have foresworn the nuclear-weapons option, as opposed to those who still prefer to keep their options open. The NPT is the primary international legal instrument in terms of which the non-nuclear-weapon States have foregone the nuclear weapons option. South Africa therefore regards the provision of internationally legally binding security assurances as a key element of the NPT and we will consequently continue to pursue negative security assurances within that framework.

Whilst we remain dissatisfied with the lack of progress by the nuclear weapon States that would demonstrate progress on their commitment to the unequivocal undertaking to nuclear

disarmament, we are particularly encouraged by the recent statement of a nuclear-weapon State, reaffirming its unequivocal undertaking to the disarmament measures contained in the 1995 and 2000 Review Conference decisions and final document. We call upon the other nuclear-weapon States to also reaffirm the same commitment.

My delegation has with interest taken note of the proposal regarding civilian nuclear co-operation with India. This proposal has raised a number of important questions related to its possible impact on the nuclear non-proliferation regime in general and the NPT in particular and it is imperative that we ensure that any decision in this regard should not erode but strengthen the disarmament and non-proliferation regime.

Chairperson,

The peaceful application of nuclear energy is of particular importance to developing countries given the urgent need for sustainable and accelerated economic growth. The International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) Technical Co-operation (TC) projects are therefore more than just political commitments - they constitute important building blocks to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). We very much appreciate the contribution of the Agency's projects in support of the MDG's especially in the areas of water security, environmental sustainability, the combating of disease, hunger and poverty, as well as maternal and child health.

In Africa, the Agency's efforts in developing synergies and seeking co-operation with the African Union in the context of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) could assist with the transfer of technology to African countries for the benefit of the poorest and least developed of this world. Furthermore, my delegation wishes to renew its fullest confidence in the Secretariat and the Director General in respect of their implementation of technical assistance programmes in conformity with the decisions of the Board of Governors, as well as international law.

Over the years, developing countries have repeatedly stressed the need for the funding of the Technical Co-operation (TC) projects to be sufficient, predictable and assured. They have also stressed the need for the TC budget to be increased as it is clearly not sufficient. South Africa believes that the time has arrived to conclusively correct the mistake of the past fifty years by incorporating into the regular budget of the IAEA the funding of TC projects.

Chairperson,

Our meeting takes place at a time when an increasing number of countries are considering the nuclear power option in their national energy mix to meet rising electricity needs. We are indeed in an era where nuclear power is suddenly regaining prominence due to its potential to enhance the security of energy supply and to mitigate the effects of carbon emissions. This rise in the demand for nuclear power comes with challenges and responsibilities that require the international community to be more vigilant in ensuring that nuclear energy is utilised for peaceful purposes only. In this connection, South Africa strongly believes that the Agency should be provided with the necessary means to carry out not only its verification mandate, but also to enhance its technical cooperation activities and assistance in a non-discriminatory, efficient and professional manner.

With the anticipated expansion of atomic power globally there is also a need to strengthen the regulatory approaches in respect of nuclear, radiation, radioactive waste and transport safety and to ensure the safe utilisation of this energy source. South Africa therefore strongly supports the IAEA Safety Fundamentals, which can facilitate the establishment of an effective legal and governmental framework for safety in all nuclear activities, and also serve as reference in international efforts to harmonize legislation and regulations in individual countries.

Chairperson,

Turning now to developments in the Conference on Disarmament, South Africa was honoured to have presided over the Conference at the beginning of its 2007 session and to have had the opportunity to work together with the other five 2007 CD Presidents with a view to adopting a Programme of Work and resuming negotiations in the CD. Although this objective was unfortunately not achieved, the momentum that has been created to move the CD out of its longstanding stalemate has been recognised, as has the desire to continue efforts to start substantive work in the Conference in 2008. In this regard, South Africa believes that negotiations in the CD on banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices are long overdue. Differences on a range of issues, including the scope of the Treaty and whether or not to include past production and stockpiles, as well as doubts about its verifiability, have all combined to make the progress on negotiations a difficult process.

South Africa believes that a verifiable Fissile Material Treaty that fulfils both nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation objectives should be negotiated without any further delay. Although cognizant of the difficulties associated with the past production of fissile material, South Africa believes that stocks should be included in a verifiable future Treaty in order for it to be truly credible and to have a true nuclear disarmament character. My delegation will remain actively engaged in the Fissile Material issue with a view to seeking solutions and compromises that would allow the political will to materialize in the Conference on Disarmament to make it possible to finally achieve the successful negotiation of a verifiable Fissile Material Treaty.

Chairperson,

South Africa looks forward to the Second Review Conference of the Chemical Weapons Convention, due to take place during April 2008. The Review Conference will provide the States Parties to this important Convention with the opportunity to consider the progress made in the implementation of the Convention over the past 10 years and to prepare the Convention and its structures to continue to function optimally, and maintain their relevance, after the 2012 deadline for the destruction of all chemical weapons. In this regard, South Africa calls on all States Parties to the CWC who possess chemical weapons to actively continue with their destruction programmes and to ensure that all chemical weapons stockpiles are destroyed by the agreed deadlines.

South Africa welcomes the outcome of the Sixth Review Conference of the Biological Weapons Convention that took place in Geneva during November/December 2006. We especially welcome the fact that a thorough article-by-article review of the Convention was done for the first time in a decade and that States Parties were able to agree on the creation of an Implementation Support Unit and a new intersessional programme for the period leading up to the Seventh Review Conference. South Africa continues to see the BWC as a core element of the international security architecture and its strengthening as an important imperative.

Chairperson,

Just last month the 155 States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty marked its tenth anniversary. While some of the major States that still stockpile anti-personnel mines (APMs) remain outside the Treaty, it has irreversibly established itself as the international norm in banning anti-personnel mines. The fact that the Treaty has tarnished as morally reprehensible the transfer or use of APMs in modern warfare across the globe speaks of its success as a highly effective instrument of international humanitarian law. My delegation appeals to those States and relevant organisations in a position to do so, to work more closely with highly affected States to assist them in the development and also in the concrete implementation of their national survivor assistance plans.

Furthermore, my delegation has followed international developments regarding cluster munitions closely and remain flexible as to whether negotiations on an international instrument should take place within the framework of the Certain Conventional Weapons Convention (CCW), or as part

of a separate process. What we believe has been interesting, is that the issue has invigorated the cluster munitions debate in the CCW, as was evident from the dynamic deliberations that States Parties held in Geneva in June of this year.

Chairperson,

The annual omnibus small arms and light weapons draft resolution that is co-ordinated by Colombia, Japan and South Africa will be introduced by the delegation of Colombia during this session. The resolution is not only intended to act as the implementation mechanism for the UNPoA, but will this year set the dates of our next biennial meeting of States (BMS) in 2008. South Africa views this as an important occasion during which to reflect on the implementation of our 2001 undertakings, following the disappointing outcome of our Review Conference of last year. While the BMS should also reflect on the two substantive elements of the follow-up, namely tracing and illicit brokering, my delegation would support the continued practice of past Presidents-elect to consult widely in order to explore and identify both an innovative approach, as well as related themes that will make for a successful BMS.

In addition to the above, South Africa will be co-operating with other UN Member States in the process spelled out in resolution 61/89 entitled "Towards an Arms Trade Treaty: Establishing common international standards for the import, export and transfer of conventional arms". to explore the possibilities of such an international agreement.

In conclusion, Chairperson,

This Committee has the responsibility to collectively address concerns related to the threat posed by weapons of mass destruction, as well as conventional arms. In fulfilling this responsibility it is incumbent upon us to agree collectively to actions that will strengthen the multilateral system of governance, thereby contributing to the maintenance of international peace and security.

Thank you.