



Permanent Mission of Eritrea
to the United Nations

STATEMENT

BY

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**IN THE GENERAL DEBATE
OF THE FIRST COMMITTEE**

New York, 13 October 2008

Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, allow me to join the distinguished delegates who spoke before me in congratulating you on your election as Chairperson of the First Committee during the 63rd session. I also wish to seize this opportunity to congratulate the other members of the Bureau. I am certain that, with your vast experience and proven skills, you will be able to guide us to a successful conclusion of our deliberations. My sincere appreciation goes to your predecessor, Ambassador Paul Badji of Senegal who led us to a successful conclusion in the 62nd session.

My delegation fully associates itself with the statements delivered by the delegation of Indonesia, on behalf of the Non- Aligned Movement (NAM), and by the delegation of Nigeria on behalf of the African Group.

Mr. Chairman,

Achieving peace and security in any region requires, among other things, the establishment of just and parallel international and regional mechanisms in the areas of disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation. Issues related to international security, disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, have been high on the international agenda. Although the First Special Session of the General Assembly Devoted to Disarmament (SSODI) has identified the goal of nuclear disarmament as the main priority for international efforts in the field of disarmament and arms control, the world still witnesses draw-backs in achieving nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which is the most critical for global disarmament and non-proliferation regime. It was believed that the end of the Cold War and its replacement by a new international world order would create a new security environment. Indeed, some progress was made in the right direction. However, nuclear weapons are still the most dangerous kinds of weapons of mass destruction. And this raises serious concern that the international community continues to witness a difficult historical era in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation.

Mr. Chairman,

Peace and security are not threatened by nuclear weapons only. Other weapons of mass destruction, including, Chemical as well as Biological and Toxin Weapons, are also posing a great threat to international security especially after the emergence of new and advanced technologies, which are available in an ever-increasing way and which readily facilitate the transport and proliferation of these weapons.

Mr. Chairman,

There is a growing consensus that the international community can meet the challenges of its time, including traditional and new threats to peace, security and stability through multilateralism. Multilateralism and multilaterally agreed solutions, in accordance with the UN Charter, provide the solid basis for addressing disarmament and international security issues. Embargo and pressure can hardly offer a fundamental solution to the proliferation concerns. It is, therefore, imperative that the International Community needs to come together, and work hard to promote a world free of fear from nuclear armaments.

Mr. Chairman,

The relation among nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and peaceful use of nuclear energy should be appropriately addressed; and nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation should be pushed forward in a balanced way. The inalienable right of all states to peaceful use of nuclear energy should be fully guaranteed and respected without compromising the goals and objectives of the NPT. The free, unimpeded and non-discriminatory transfer of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes must be fully ensured.

Mr. Chairman,

In the field of Conventional Weapons, my delegation underlines that Eritrea as a victim of aggressions and wars, fully supports the prohibition of all weapons, which indiscriminately maim and kill. The proliferation and easy access to Small Arms and Light Weapons exacerbates conflicts, facilitates violent crime and terrorism, impedes post-conflict reconstruction and undermines long-term sustainable development, in many regions of the developing world, particularly in Africa. It is for this reason that Eritrea attaches utmost importance and sees no better instrument to rely on than the United Nations Program of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eliminate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects since its adoption in 2001 as a politically binding instrument.

Mr. Chairman,

My country firmly believes that full observance of all principles and norms of international law, including full respect of sovereignty and territorial integrity of states, is indispensable for the prevalence of international peace, security, and stability.

Eritrea without being distracted by the ongoing deliberate campaign of smear and misinformation by some quarters, it shall continue to work in partnership with other countries and organizations for regional peace and security.

Mr. Chairman,

My country reaffirms its strong condemnation to terrorism in all its forms, and pledges its full cooperation in combating this phenomenon. It is, however, regrettable to witness that the war on terror is being derailed from its original objectives and intentions to serve as an excuse in our sub-region for military occupation, torture and extra-judicial killings.

Mr. Chairman,

Disarmament benefits mankind not only because it eliminates threats to peace, security but also because it may help to divert scarce material and financial resources to development efforts. The Millennium Development Goals could be achieved by only a small fraction of the amount spent on military expenditure by nations big and small.

Before I conclude, my delegation wishes to express its hope and confidence that this Committee will be able to work purposefully, under your able leadership. I assure you, Mr. Chairman, of my delegation's fullest cooperation and support.

Thank you.