



THE PERMANENT MISSION OF
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TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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**STATEMENT
BY
SOUTH AFRICA**

**ON THE
THEMATIC DEBATE: NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT
FIRST COMMITTEE**

**DELIVERED BY
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SOUTH AFRICAN REPRESENTATIVE
TO THE UNITED NATIONS IN VIENNA**

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2008 FIRST COMMITTEE THEMATIC DEBATE
STATEMENT BY SOUTH AFRICA ON NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

Chairperson,

South Africa is deeply concerned that the possibility that nuclear weapons could be used represents a real and continued danger. South Africa believes that the continued possession of these weapons, or the retention of the nuclear weapons option by some States, creates the real danger that they may be used, as well as the possibility that these weapons may fall into the hands of non-state actors. It therefore appears obvious that the only absolute guarantee against the use of such weapons remains their complete elimination. The complete elimination of nuclear weapons and the assurance that they will never be produced again therefore remain the only assurance against their use. It goes without saying, Chairperson, that this should remain our goal.

For South Africa, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) still remains the most important international nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation legal instrument and we will continue to promote its universality and compliance with all its provisions. We hope that the first and second PrepComs for the 2010 NPT Review Conference that were held in Vienna last year, and Geneva this year, will provide positive momentum that will be carried over to the 2010 RevCon itself.

The issue of security assurances also continues to remain of great importance to South Africa. In this regard, we continue to believe that genuine security cannot be achieved by the non-nuclear-weapon States abandoning the nuclear weapons option alone. It remains our belief that 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. It therefore follows that security assurances should also be provided under that Treaty. South Africa regards the provision of security assurances as a key element of the NPT and we will consequently continue to pursue negative security assurances within that framework.

Chairperson,

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) still has not entered into force as a consequence of the non-ratification of a number of States required to do so. South Africa continues to view this treaty as an important measure to accomplish our common goals of nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. It is for this reason that South Africa participated in the recent meeting in support of the entry into force of the CTBT that was held here in New York last month and subscribed to the Joint Ministerial Declaration that was issued on 24 September at the conclusion of that meeting. We will continue our efforts to encourage the earliest possible entry into force of the CTBT.

South Africa is also disappointed that the Conference on Disarmament has once again not managed to commence negotiations on banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. 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. We continue to believe that stocks should be included in a 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 CD to make it possible to finally achieve the successful negotiation of such a Treaty.

Mr. Chairperson,

In various fora, South Africa has continuously reiterated that the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is the only internationally recognised competent authority responsible for verifying and assuring compliance with safeguards agreements, with a view to preventing the diversion of nuclear energy from peaceful uses to nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. South Africa firmly believes that this authority should not be undermined in any manner or form.

South Africa also shares the IAEA Director General's concern that by the end of 2007, 30 non-nuclear-weapon States Parties to the NPT still had not yet brought Comprehensive Safeguards Agreements with the Agency into force as required by Article III of the NPT and that no safeguards conclusions could consequently be drawn for these States. My delegation also took note of the fact that by the end of last year only 82 States had both Comprehensive Safeguards Agreements and Additional Protocols in force.

Mr. Chairperson,

South Africa concurs with the view that the illicit network in nuclear material and technology continues to present a serious challenge to the nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation regime. South Africa's own experience with the network led to the conviction of Messrs. Visser and Geiges in November 2007 and March 2008 respectively. In this connection, our experience illustrates the central role of the Agency, not only in the area of verification and safeguards, but also in providing the necessary technical and other support that enabled us to bring these landmark cases to a close. However, success in the elimination of illicit networks is dependent on the successful prosecution of all the actors involved in such illegal activities, which requires a concerted effort by all affected countries.

In closing, Mr. Chairperson,

South Africa remains concerned over the massive number of nuclear weapons deployed and stockpiled around the world and does not believe that the possession of these weapons, or the pursuit of their possession, enhances international peace and security.

Furthermore, South Africa believes that universal adherence to, full implementation of, and compliance with, international agreements on weapons of mass destruction, and the total and early elimination of such weapons, will provide us with the only genuine guarantee that they will never be used. South Africa will continue to pursue this goal, and in so doing will also continue to promote the full implementation and universality of the NPT as the cornerstone of nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation.

I thank you, Chairperson.