



BANGLADESH

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Statement

By

H.E. Ms. Ismat Jahan
Ambassador & Permanent Representative
of Bangladesh to the United Nations

at the

General Debate of the
First Committee of the 63rd Session
of the United Nations General Assembly

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PERMANENT MISSION OF BANGLADESH TO THE UNITED NATIONS
227 East 45th Street, 14th Floor, New York, NY 10017
E-mail: bangladesh@un.int, web site: www.un.int/bangladesh
Tel (212) 867-3434 • Fax (212) 972-4038

Mr. Chairman,

Bangladesh delegation warmly congratulates you, and the bureau, upon your well-deserved election. We look forward to a successful session under your able stewardship.

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation associates itself with the statement made by Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. However, I would like to underscore the following points:

Bangladesh believes that the continued existence of weapons of mass destruction constitutes the greatest threat to humanity. We emphasize that given the necessary political will, disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation are achievable goals. The NPT remains the most important instrument for non-proliferation. Universalization of the treaty is, therefore, a *sine qua non* in order to make this world a safer place. While pessimism clouds the progress of NPT, we are nonetheless, hopeful that the Third PrepCom and the 2010 NPT Review Conference will succeed in reaching the expected outcomes.

Similarly for the CTBT there has been little development in the last few years. As we mark the 12th anniversary of the opening for signature of the CTBT, we call upon the nine remaining Annex II states to ratify it. Universalization of the treaty must be pursued at bilateral, regional and international levels.

Mr. Chairman,

Disarmament is a cornerstone of our foreign policy. We are bound by our Constitution to general and complete disarmament. Bangladesh is party to all major international instruments pertaining to disarmament including the NPT, the CTBT, the CWC, the CCW, the APMT and the BWC.

Bangladesh is the first Annex 2 nation in South Asia to have signed and ratified the CTBT. We have also concluded safeguards agreement with the IAEA including the Additional Protocols. These are tangible testimonies of our unwavering commitment towards the twin goals of disarmament and nuclear nonproliferation. We are also actively supporting the development of the International Monitoring System of the CTBT verification regime.

As one of the early signatories and ratifying States of CWC, Bangladesh is committed not to pursue production, procurement, or use of chemical and biological weapons. Indeed, we always condemned the use of such weapons of mass destruction against mankind and environment. Bangladesh always supported the OPCW's efforts in making the convention comprehensive, non-discriminatory, verifiable and ultimately a universal instrument for the elimination of chemical weapons from the world.

Mr. Chairman,

Bangladesh deplores the use of anti-personnel mines that maim, kill and terrorise unarmed and innocent civilians. We have destroyed all our stockpiles of landmines in fulfillment of the Treaty obligation. We are concerned that a large number of civilians, including women and children, still fall victim to anti-personnel landmines in conflict and post-conflict situations around the world. We urge the international community for providing financial, technical and humanitarian assistance to landmine clearance operations as well as in rehabilitating the victims. We call upon those States, which have not yet done so, to become parties to the Anti Personnel Mine Treaty. And the same time the non-state actors must be pursued to stop the use of such weapons.

Mr. Chairman,

Bangladesh Government remains fully engaged in the goal of eliminating illicit small arms and light weapons, and fulfilling its obligations under the Plan of Action of 2001. A number of stringent statutory legislations and executive orders are put in place to regulate lawful possession, manufacture, conversion, sale, export, import and transport of Small Arms and Light Weapons. These national laws and mechanisms also regulate the civilian ownership, record-keeping, collection, destruction and disposal of SALWs under strict supervision of authorized national law enforcement authorities. Strict procedures are followed in the management of stockpiles including storage, physical security, control of access, inventory management and accounting control. Confiscated illegal small arms and light weapons are routinely and publicly destroyed as provided for in our National Stockpile Management Programme. We call for enhanced international cooperation particularly in the field of capacity building.

Mr. Chairman,

Article IV of the NPT guarantees the inalienable rights of all States to develop, research, produce and use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. These guarantees must apply without discrimination, and the rights of non-nuclear-weapon States to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and technology must be upheld and promoted.

Bangladesh strongly reaffirms the importance of multilateralism in the negotiations relevant to disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. The international community must enhance their collective efforts to remove the long drawn *impasse* in the Conference on Disarmament, which remains the sole multilateral negotiating body on disarmament.

Mr. Chair,

We believe that a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT) is ripe for negotiation. It is our expectation that in the future sessions, the Conference on Disarmament will negotiate and conclude an agreement on complete elimination of such materials.

Mr. Chairman,

Bangladesh strongly believes in regional approaches to nuclear disarmament. Confidence-building measures through the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free-zones (NWFZ) can contribute significantly to this goal. We appreciate all the existing NWFZs. We call for the establishment of similar zones in South Asia, in the Middle East and in other parts of the world. Nuclearization of South Asia is a particular concern for my country. We would urge India and Pakistan to relinquish their nuclear option and join the NPT regime. Israel must also do the same in the Middle East. Bilateral agreements on civilian use of nuclear energy should not, in any way, hinder the cause of regional disarmament. We also call for universal access to the Comprehensive Safeguards Agreements and Additional Protocols, as these have had so far a deterrent effect on nuclear proliferation.

We are also concerned at the continued development and deployment of anti-ballistic missile defence systems and the pursuit of advanced military technologies capable of being deployed in outer space. Bangladesh reiterates its call for resumption of work on the prevention of arms race in the outer space within the framework of the Conference on Disarmament.

Mr. Chairman,

We believe that trade in arms, as much in all other goods and services, should be brought under an agreed international regulatory framework. This would aim at conclusion of a conventional

arms trade treaty under the UN auspices. An effective Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) will ensure a responsible transfer of conventional weapons. This mechanism will prevent the spread of such weaponry. As a country committed to disarmament and non-proliferation, Bangladesh would welcome conclusion of such a treaty.

Mr. Chairman,

We are dismayed to learn that global military expenditures exceeded 1.3 Trillion US \$ in 2007 which is a real-terms increase of 6% in 2006 and 45% since 1998. The money that has been spent for military purposes corresponds to 2.5% of the world Gross Domestic Products (GDP). The frantic arms race is increasingly having negative impact on our development agenda. We urge all countries, particularly the major military powers, to divert part of these resources to poverty alleviation in developing countries. Such a move would greatly advance the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015. In this regard, we must also refocus on the link between disarmament and development. Similarly, it is time that we look into the impact of disarmament on ecology and global climate regime as the world grapple with the new and emerging challenges of climate change.

I thank you.