

## STATEMENT TO THE FIRST COMMITTEE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen—I welcome this opportunity to address the members of this Committee and am pleased to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on your appointment to guide our work. I also wish to recognize the members of the Bureau and to assure all of the fullest cooperation of the Office for Disarmament Affairs in the work ahead.

This year is the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first Special Session on Disarmament (SSOD-I), which defined the mandate of this Committee. Though SSOD-I did not address terrorism, the following paragraph from the SSOD-I Declaration raised many of the security concerns we still face today:

Mankind today is confronted with an unprecedented threat of self-extinction arising from the massive and competitive accumulation of the most destructive weapons ever produced. Existing arsenals of nuclear weapons alone are more than sufficient to destroy all life on earth. Failure of efforts to halt and reverse the arms race, in particular the nuclear arms race, increases the danger of the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Yet the arms race continues. Military budgets are constantly growing, with enormous consumption of human and material resources. The increase in weapons, especially nuclear weapons, far from helping to strengthen international security, on the contrary weakens it. The vast stockpiles and tremendous build-up of arms and armed forces and the competition for qualitative refinement of weapons of all kinds, to which scientific resources and technological advances are diverted, pose incalculable threats to peace. This situation both reflects and aggravates international tensions, sharpens conflicts in various regions of the world, hinders the process of detente, exacerbates the differences between opposing military alliances, jeopardizes the security of all States, heightens the sense of insecurity among all States, including the non-nuclear-weapon States, and increases the threat of nuclear war.

The gravest challenges, then as now, come from weapons of mass destruction—especially nuclear weapons, which present threats from existing arsenals and from their proliferation. Tens of thousands of such weapons remain, and there are no operational plans for disarmament. The number of states with nuclear weapons has grown. Concerns persist over nuclear activities in Iran and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Then there is the risk of nuclear terrorism.

Yet there are still some grounds for cautious optimism. Though most statements made in the General Assembly's plenary regrettably failed to address disarmament squarely, other aspects of the quest for progress in related areas were identified by a large number of speakers, by civil society, and by former leaders—they are also being raised in the domestic politics of states.

Closing some nuclear test sites, maintaining the nuclear test moratorium, declaring reductions in deployed nuclear weapons, and studying the means to verify nuclear disarmament—these are all welcome steps. But much more are needed, including deep cuts in nuclear arsenals, better understanding of measures already taken, operational plans for disarmament, entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), and negotiation of a fissile material treaty.

Meanwhile, the Chemical and Biological Weapons Conventions (CWC and BWC) are approaching full universal membership, and are strengthening the global taboo on such weapons. Last year, the new “Implementation Support Unit” formed the substantive Secretariat for BWC meetings, which serviced the Meeting of States Parties in 2007 and the Meetings of Experts in 2007 and 2008.

With respect to Security Council resolution 1540, efforts are underway by governments around the world to improve national efforts to ensure that weapons of mass destruction are not acquired by non-state actors or additional states. At the request of—and with the support of—Member States, UNODA has organized several workshops to promote its full implementation.

While another year has passed without significant progress in developing multilateral legal norms for missiles, I was pleased that the Group of Governmental Experts addressing this issue was able to adopt a report this year, which I hope will lead to additional steps in this direction.

Just as the world community must pursue nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament together, so too is it vital to address both WMD and conventional arms issues in building the architecture of international peace and security for the future. The point is not to make one form of control a pre-condition for the other, but rather to pursue both.

We must never forget that conventional weapons take a heavy toll in human lives everywhere. Concerns over their devastating effects have inspired many international initiatives focused on regulating trade in such arms, improving transparency in arms transfers, curbing the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, outlawing certain types of weaponry, and many other such initiatives. Recent multilateral efforts in pursuit of a possible Arms Trade Treaty echo concerns that the Secretary-General has repeatedly voiced over the “recurring problem” of a lack of a clear normative framework in this area. There is a compelling need for progress in all these areas.

With respect to small arms, this summer’s Biennial Meeting of States (BMS) to implement the UN Programme of Action produced a substantive outcome, thanks to good preparations and rigorous process management. If states decide that one-week meetings suffice, the comprehensive preparation and management of such meetings will become even more important.

To assist in implementing the Programme of Action, UNODA launched the web-based Implementation Support System, which I commend to all delegations as a central information tool for multilateral small arms control. UNODA has also started to lay the foundations for regional implementation meetings to be held next year. I trust that extra-budgetary funding will be found for these events.

The “problem of small arms” is part of the larger problem of armed violence. It will thus require more than a narrow arms-control solution, as it relates to a wide range of issues, including trade, health, development, human rights, drugs, and terrorism issues. This approach is reflected in this year’s well-received report by the Secretary-General to the Security Council on small arms.

Greater attention is also needed to the problems arising from the accumulation of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus. We are seeing the tragic effects of unconstrained ammunition flows, which in part leak away from poorly guarded stocks. We are witnessing explosions of stockpiles, often in urban areas, causing thousands of casualties. Better stockpile management is

urgently needed and this year's Expert Group report has made good recommendations on this.

International efforts have also been underway to address the horrible effects of cluster munitions on civilian populations. In December, over a hundred countries will gather in Oslo to sign the Convention on Cluster Munitions, a landmark event in the development of global norms in this area. The United Nations will do all it can to support its noble goals—goals that I hope will serve as an inspiration to the states parties of the CCW in their efforts to deal with the dreadful effects on civilians of these weapons.

We must also not forget the reports of rising military expenditures and arms transfers. This is an area where the UN has much to offer—I am referring here to the Register of Conventional Arms and the Standardized Instrument for Reporting Military Expenditures, which will both be reviewed in the coming years. I would like to applaud those states that have contributed data to these two useful resources, and to encourage others to follow their example. In an era of growing arms transfers and military expenditures, these tools are becoming all the more indispensable.

While the drafters of the SSOD-I Final Document recognized the importance of political will of states, they also stressed that “appropriate international machinery” can play a “significant role” in disarmament. The First Committee plays a vital role in the establishment, growth, and maintenance of multilateral norms in this field. In a sense, it offers a kind of barometer of the political climate in our world today, and the challenges we will all face tomorrow.

Other barometers in the UN disarmament machinery are clearly indicating stormy weather. The Disarmament Commission concluded its three-year cycle without any agreement on the issues on its agenda. The Conference on Disarmament—the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum—was again unable to commence substantive work, despite an unprecedented high level of participation by Member States and a unified effort by its six Presidents.

I wish to commend the efforts of all who have worked in the UN disarmament machinery to find common ground—their inability to succeed relates more to the old question of political will than to any flaw in those institutions per se. We should not blame our barometers for the bad weather.

For its part, the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters has altered its methods of work to allow for more in-depth deliberations. One of its recommendations was that the Secretary-General should continue strengthening his personal role in generating political will in the field of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Later this month, the Secretary-General will be addressing these issues in major speeches at Harvard University and at the United Nations.

Much of the analytic work in disarmament is done at the UN Institute for Disarmament Research. Its distinguished Director, Dr. Patricia Lewis, stepped down from that post in August—so I wish to take this opportunity both to thank her for her many productive years of service, and to wish her well in her future work. Her successor will be announced shortly.

Another key part of our machinery is the UN Programme of Fellowships on Disarmament, which is now marking its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Including our current class of 25, the Programme has now trained no less than 759 officials from 159 states, including many who are in this room today. I warmly welcome these new additions to our growing disarmament community.

Though most of the work in disarmament is in the pursuit of multilateral goals, it remains true that the responsibility remains with individual states to adopt policies and laws that are focused on achieving such goals. This is not only a challenge for separate states, but also for regions.

Arms control and disarmament issues are taken quite seriously in the regions, and UNODA's three Regional Centres—in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Asia and the Pacific—have all been working hard to meet growing demands for assistance in these areas. They have been organizing workshops, seminars, and providing information and advice. They have promoted the universal membership in key treaties, including the CCW and the CTBT. They have assisted states on several issues relating to small arms and light weapons. And this work has been well recognized, including by the 11 ministers of the UN Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa.

I hope to see more progress at the regional level, including full regional membership in the treaties establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones, adherence by the nuclear-weapon-states to the relevant protocols, and progress in establishing new zones, particularly in the Middle East.

Delegations are aware that the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific has just opened its new office in Kathmandu. The Committee will later hear more about this event and the recent productive work of the other Regional Centres.

I must add that the support from non-governmental groups, and even individual, concerned citizens, is vital for progress in disarmament and non-proliferation. When the authors of the SSOD-I Final Document cited the need for “political will,” this inevitably implied an active role for civil society in shaping the views of their leaders. I am pleased to welcome the groups that are observing our deliberations today, and I applaud their many efforts to increase public awareness of the important work of this Committee and the issues it addresses.

One of our key activities in UNODA is to publish information on disarmament issues. This year, we are very pleased to present a new and improved edition of the *Disarmament Yearbook*, which contains more analysis than before. The yearbook is on your desks and is also available on-line to make it more accessible to a wider public. We will soon be launching the new UNODA website.

In closing, I would like to recall the words of the President of the General Assembly, Father Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann, who called in his address of 16 September for “a results-based approach both to disarmament and to the regulation of armaments, an approach that measures progress by deeds—and not words or numbers of resolutions alone.” This is sound advice indeed. And last April, our Secretary-General stressed the vital importance of disarmament and non-proliferation in shaping international peace and security. He said, “We must all work together—the Secretariat, Member States and civil society—to reinvigorate our collective efforts to reach our shared goals in these fields. Failure is not an option.”

In that spirit, I wish you all a very productive session.