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**GENERAL ASSEMBLY
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STATEMENT

**by Ambassador Jürg Streuli
Permanent Representative of Switzerland
to the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva**

General Debate

New York, 7 October 2008

Mr Chairman,

I would like to congratulate you on your election to the chair of our committee and to assure you of the full support of my delegation. My delegation is looking forward to constructive debates on all aspects of disarmament, non-proliferation and international security in the coming weeks.

Mr Chairman,

Switzerland regrets that many of the multilateral disarmament forums remain blocked. In our view, this is not the result of inherent deficiencies of the system. Rather, it mirrors the international security context and reflects the lack of political will to engage in negotiations. We need to overcome this obstacle and finally make progress.

The **Conference on Disarmament** remains the most pertinent example of the current impasse. Another year has passed in which member states could not agree on a programme of work and therefore not on negotiations on an FMCT. Such a treaty should be negotiated without any preconditions regarding scope and verification. It remains Switzerland's conviction that an FMCT will, alongside the NPT and the CTBT, become another important pillar of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation architecture. The draft programme of work by this year's six presidents – CD 1840 – is a solid basis to continue our efforts next year.

During the 2nd session of the **NPT** PrepCom last May we witnessed a constructive exchange of views on what we want to achieve by the 2010 Review Conference. We need to continue in a similar spirit of dialogue and cooperation. The NPT is one of the cornerstones of the global disarmament and non-proliferation regime. It needs to be further universalized and strengthened.

A priority for my country is the **decrease of the alert-levels of nuclear weapons systems**. Maintaining nuclear weapons on high alert was a feature of the Cold War. In the post-Cold War era, removing all nuclear weapons from high-alert status would lead to increased security for all. We are convinced that we can reach this goal if we approach the issue in an inclusive and pragmatic manner.

Mr Chairman,

The international community is currently facing a number of challenges regarding nuclear issues. For instance, the decision by the **Nuclear Suppliers Group** no longer to demand the application of full-scope safeguards as a condition for nuclear cooperation with India raises fundamental questions about the future of the nuclear non-proliferation system.

The lack of full cooperation with the IAEA by Iran, as well as the DPRK's recent move to resume its enrichment activities are of serious concern, too. Switzerland is convinced that all these issues have to be solved through **dialogue** and **diplomacy**.

Mr Chairman,

There have been a number of signs recently of possible greater political will to achieve nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. In this context Switzerland welcomes the recent efforts by some nuclear-weapons States to increase transparency regarding their nuclear arsenals. Yet, we should not forget that a number of disarmament and non-proliferation regimes remain that lack legally binding verification, transparency and confidence-building measures. Strengthening **the verification, transparency and confidence-building mechanisms for all types of WMD** is undoubtedly one of the international community's most important tasks in the coming years.

In the field of chemical weapons, we trust that all States possessing such weapons will continue their efforts to destroy their stockpiles within the deadlines set by the **Chemical Weapons Convention**. Switzerland welcomes the outcome of the Second Review Conference but strongly advocates that the negotiation process should remain inclusive.

Mr Chairman,

In the area of **conventional weapons**, the international community has taken a number of remarkable steps forward. In the first place, this year has seen the adoption of the **Convention on Cluster Munitions** in Dublin last May. Switzerland welcomes this historic development and considers the Convention as solid and ambitious. In our view, it is a reasonable compromise between military requirements and humanitarian considerations. The Swiss government has decided to sign the Convention on Cluster Munitions on 3 December 2008 in Oslo. However, it is aware that the problems posed by cluster munitions have not been resolved yet. For this reason my country appeals to all States involved in the negotiations concerning the new protocol on cluster munitions within the framework of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons to contribute everything within their power to ensure the success of these negotiations.

As incoming president of the **Mine Ban Treaty**, Switzerland will focus on the obligations regarding Stockpile Destruction and Mine Clearance. In addition, my country continues to work towards the universalisation of the **Ottawa Convention**, as well as of **Protocol V** annexed to the CCW. Switzerland also attaches great importance to further strengthening the protection of civilians against the humanitarian consequences of mines and explosive remnants of war. The demining of affected territories around the globe has to continue. Victim assistance should focus not only on the immediate consequences generated by landmines. Instead, we also need to improve the quality of and access to care, ensure the socio-economic re-integration of victims of mines, and guarantee their fundamental rights. Lastly, Switzerland aims to integrate mine-action in the larger framework of development cooperation. We believe that we will only achieve lasting and comprehensive results if we approach mine-action from such a perspective.

Concerning the issue of **small arms and light weapons**, Switzerland welcomes the substantive document resulting from the Third Biennial Conference (BMS III). After the failure of the 2006 Review Conference, this meeting has relaunched the issue of small arms and light weapons as well as the implementation of the programme of action. This result will enable recommendations for the future to take concrete form, regional and bilateral meetings to be organised, and projects to be implemented.

Switzerland is also pursuing, in close collaboration with a number of other States, its commitment to achieve greater recognition of the adverse impact of **armed violence on development**. Within the framework of the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development, Switzerland organised, in collaboration with the United Nations Development

Programme, a summit meeting in Geneva on 12 September 2008. Switzerland is especially pleased to report that the summit received the support of the 85 States present for the summit's final declaration. It hopes to be able to count on the support of the 95 signatory States of the Geneva Declaration for the promotion of this initiative in the relevant forums within the United Nations.

Lastly, Switzerland welcomes the report submitted to the General Assembly by the Group of Governmental Experts entrusted with examining the feasibility, the scope and the parameters of an **arms trade treaty**. As a member of the GGE we would have favoured more substantive recommendations. We remain strongly in favour of a comprehensive and legally binding arms trade treaty. We also consider it indispensable for the success of such a treaty to involve all stakeholders in the process. Switzerland remains committed to this issue and welcomes further discussion within the UN.

Mr Chairman, I thank you for your attention.