

EGYPT



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The Permanent Mission of Egypt
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Statement delivered

by

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At the 63rd Session of the First Committee

New York, 8 October 2008

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Mr. Chairman,

I wish to begin my statement by conveying to you sincere congratulations for taking up the Chairmanship of the First Committee and to confirm our confidence that your leadership and that of the Bureau will lead the Committee at its current session towards fulfilling its anticipated objectives. My delegation also associates itself with the Statements of the Non-Aligned Movement, the African Group and the New Agenda Coalition.

Mr. Chairman,

The current session is convening at a time, during which key international fora are witnessing limitations in their outcomes and an absence of consensus in the majority of their results, be that in the context of the First Committee, whose largest number of resolutions still await implementation, or in the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, which has again suffered an operational paralysis for an additional year, or in the context of the United Nations Disarmament Commission which arrived at no consensus on the result of its work this year.

This has coincided with the international situation: experiencing an escalating implicit confrontation between East and West, based on enhancing the role and scope of military alliances in a regrettable escalation of a confrontational approach, while the world is most needy of an approach of dialogue and cooperation built on mutual confidence and the implementation of equitable and balanced responsibilities.

In this complex international situation, added to which are the special peculiarities of the Middle East region, Egypt continued to work on promoting the regional and international disarmament agenda through the Non Aligned Movement, the African Group and the Arab group, and with all States and groupings, aiming at the arrival at the currently absent regional security and stability in the Middle East, along with international stability aimed at achieving the security of all peoples, without exception.

In this context, the Second Preparatory Committee for the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) 2010 Review Conference witnessed thorough discussions which tackled the priorities of the international community and the requirements for enhancing the credibility of the Treaty. While NPT States were not able to adopt a consensus report, the five nuclear-weapon-States issued a joint statement which we hope will represent a change in their position towards taking the necessary practical measures to secure the success of the 2010

Review Conference and to consolidate the framework in which the Treaty was indefinitely extended in 1995.

At the time of commemorating 40 years since the conclusion of the NPT, the Treaty is undoubtedly exposed to ever increasing challenges, which go well beyond the lack of implementation of nuclear-weapon-States of their nuclear disarmament commitments in accordance with Treaty obligations, components of the indefinite extension package deal in 1995 and the measures agreed at the 2000 NPT Review Conference. Such challenges today go as far as to causing serious damage to the very chances of achieving the universality of the Treaty and even challenging its very feasibility in an unprecedented manner, especially as the Nuclear Suppliers' Group had fully altered its role through moving from safeguarding compliance with the stipulations of the Treaty and pushing for its universality, to ignoring such stipulations together with the need to arrive at universality, without taking into account that such an approach will most seriously endanger the Treaty, and will create a state of international nuclear chaos.

Concerning the Middle East, we reaffirm that the indefinite extension of the Treaty in 1995 was part and parcel of a package deal, of which a main component was the Resolution on the Middle East, which remains unimplemented to date, allowing Israel to remain outside the NPT and outside the comprehensive safeguards system of the International Atomic Energy Agency. In light of the logical consequences of this situation, and the fierce nuclear arms race the continuation of this situation can bring about, we need to work without any further delay on the establishment of the Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in the Middle East. Otherwise the indefinite extension would be based on imposing more commitments on the Arab States in return for exempting Israel from any commitments whatsoever. This is a situation which drives the Arab street to question the validity of the indefinite extension decision if the Treaty does not bring about for States of the region the security and stability to which those States have aspired.

Mr. Chairman,

Efforts to combat the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons are closely linked to those aiming at eradicating terrorism and organized crime. Egypt has thus worked, through national efforts and international cooperation, towards enhancing its capability in implementing the United Nations Program of Action to Combat the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons and the International Instrument on Marking and Tracing of Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons, adopted by the General Assembly in 2005. Egypt also actively participated in the

Third Biennial Meeting to consider the implementation of the UN Program of Action, held in New York last July, through facilitating the consideration of the implementation of the International Instrument on marking and Tracing of Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons. We hope the success of this meeting will practically reflect on the volume of international cooperation activities in this field.

Egypt has participated in the work of the Group of Governmental Experts appointed by the Secretary General to consider the feasibility, scope and draft parameters of the proposed Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), which has issued its report after three sessions of its deliberations only to reflect the lack of consensus on all aspects of the mandate of the Group, and to confirm the importance of following-up any further consideration of this issue in the context of the United Nations, on the basis of consensus. We hope those two conditions will be carefully observed by States promoting the proposal, in order to secure that the United Nations remains at the heart of any international move on this issue, on a gradual basis which avoids the hasty arrival at a new international regime that obstructs current international disarmament priorities or one which is based on subjective criteria affecting the right of States to self defense, or threatening the regional balance in the conventional armament field, which relates to other factors beyond the considerations of this proposal.

Also in the context of international cooperation, I wish to positively refer to the continued cooperation of Egypt with different partners to develop and enhance its national capacities in the field of the detection and demining of landmines and other explosive remnants of war (ERW), since Egypt still has on its territories some 17 million landmine and ERWs which obstruct developmental efforts and threaten the lives of civilians in infected areas every day. We hope the volume of this cooperation will expand to the level sufficient to address the massive landmine problem in Egypt and the consequent humanitarian and developmental losses it causes.

Mr. Chairman,

Egypt is submitting three traditional resolutions during the current session, entitled "Establishment of a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in the Middle East", "Risk of Nuclear Proliferation in the Middle East", and "Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space". We hope the current session will witness continued growing support for these resolutions, consistent with the priorities represented by the issues they address.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.