



**STATEMENT BY  
H.E. MR. BERENADO VUNIBOBO,  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF FIJI TO THE UNITED NATIONS,  
DURING THE GENERAL DEBATE OF THE FIRST COMMITTEE  
UNHQ, 8 OCTOBER 2008**

Mr Chairman,

Good morning.

I congratulate you and members of the Bureau on your appointments to this important committee and thank your predecessor, the Distinguished Permanent Representative of Senegal, for his efforts during the last session.

Fiji stands ready to support you and the Bureau in leading this Committee's work during this session. We look forward to your leadership and guidance as we debate issues of importance to all of us.

I also thank you for your opening comments on Monday and those of the High Representative of Disarmament Affairs.

Mr. Chairman,

Fiji is a small country; mostly at peace with itself and seeking peace in our own region. With the international community - we have contributed by our participation in international peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts. Small as we are, Mr Chairman, we are concerned about disarmament and international security issues. It is due to this concern, and our belief that **security is our collective responsibility** that we make this intervention today.

For sometime, the Pacific has been used as a testing ground for nuclear weapons. The people who lived in these islands have never been asked whether they have any views on what is being done in their neighborhood.

Our intervention is being made also because our citizens and indeed citizens of other Pacific Island Countries; suffered and continue to suffer from the effects of nuclear explosions that were conducted in the Pacific and which only ceased in 1995 after five decades of atmospheric and underground testing—we know of no other region that has had such an experience.

The time is long overdue when the international community should ask those who undertook these tests for an accounting on the health of those who lived in these islands, the effects of these tests on the environment, land and marine life.

The establishment of the Pacific Islands Forum in 1971, to which Fiji is a founding member, was, to a certain extent, in response to concerns by our Leaders, about nuclear testing in the Pacific. The colonial powers who were conducting these tests resisted all attempts to discuss nuclear testing with the South Pacific Commission's annual meetings. They viewed the discussions of nuclear testing as a political subject which has no place in the Terms of Reference of the Commission.

My delegation therefore wishes to support the recent pledge by Secretary-General Mr. Ban Ki-moon to give **increased priority to disarmament and international security issues** and wish to reaffirm our belief in **multilateralism as the core principle** when negotiating disarmament and non-proliferation issues. We also support the important role of the United Nations in the field of verification.

Mr. Chairman,

Fiji remains committed to working for the cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament in a way that promotes international stability. There exists, an obligation to pursue, in good faith and bring to a conclusion, negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control.

We recognize that the maintenance of nuclear weapons systems at a high level of readiness increases the risk of their use, including unintentional or accidental use, which would have catastrophic consequences. We are therefore committed to ensuring that further progress is made in preventing an accidental nuclear war.

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation wishes to stress the vital importance and urgency of signature and ratification by member states, without delay and without conditions, to achieve the earliest entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. We again urge States not to carry out nuclear-weapon test explosions, to maintain their moratoriums and to refrain from acts that would defeat the object and purpose of the Treaty.

We also note with concern the increased threat that terrorism poses and the ever-increasing risk that terrorist organizations can now acquire radioactive materials and we urge all members to support international efforts to prevent the acquisition and use of such materials by terrorists and their organizations.

Mr. Chairman,

Nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation are substantively interrelated and mutually reinforcing, the two processes must go hand in hand and there is a genuine need for a systematic

and progressive process to both nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. We must also spare no effort in our quest for **achieving universality of the Non-Proliferation Treaty**, and urge states, which are not yet parties to the Treaty, to accede to it, as non-nuclear-weapon States, promptly and without conditions.

We urge nuclear-weapon States to pursue practical steps for systematic and progressive efforts to implement article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, and we call on nuclear-weapon States to make further efforts to unilaterally reduce their nuclear arsenals, increase transparency, and support further progress in nuclear disarmament.

Mr. Chairman,

Fiji supports a nuclear-weapon-free southern hemisphere. We believe that these nuclear-weapon-free zones have an important role in strengthening the nuclear non-proliferation regime and in extending the areas of the world that are nuclear-weapon-free. We welcome additional steps being taken to conclude further nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties in other regions of the world and again call on all member states to support the process of nuclear disarmament and to work for the total elimination of all nuclear weapons.

The shipment of nuclear materials through our waters is of particular concern to Fiji. Our economies which rely heavily on fisheries and tourism are subject to potential economic loss in the event of an incident involving these shipments and we therefore call on "shipping states", to cease these shipments through the Pacific.

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation wishes to reiterate the call of the international community to all States, in particular those with major space capabilities, to actively contribute to the peaceful use of outer space and to prevent an arms race in outer space and to refrain from actions contrary to that objective.

Mr. Chairman,

Fiji supports efforts in conventional arms control at the regional and sub-regional levels and will work closely with the Conference on Disarmament to consider creating a framework for regional agreements on conventional arms control. Fiji reaffirms its strong support for the operationalization and further strengthening of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific, and the Kathmandu process as a vehicle to facilitate region-wide security and disarmament dialogue.

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation recognizes that the illicit sale in small arms and light weapons is a serious problem to the international community; this is especially so for countries such as Fiji with porous borders. These illegal transnational activities are difficult to monitor and detect given the vast expanse of the Pacific Ocean which surround our island homes. They have humanitarian and

socio-economic consequences and pose a serious threat to peace, reconciliation, safety, security, stability and sustainable development in our region.

For many countries, including my own, these small arms and light weapons are the real weapons of mass destruction simply because they kill more people than the proverbial WMDs and we call upon the international community to provide technical and financial support to strengthen the capacity of member states to help combat the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

Mr. Chairman,

The Diplomatic Conference on Cluster Munitions which was held in Dublin, Ireland in May this year, concluded negotiations on a treaty instrument prohibiting the manufacture, use, stockpile and transfer of cluster munitions that cause unacceptable harm to civilians.

Fiji participated actively in this conference and wishes to reiterate our support for achieving the noble humanitarian goal of prohibiting cluster munitions which cause unacceptable harm to civilians. We therefore call on all like-minded states to sign and ratify the Treaty in Oslo, Norway on 03 December 2008.

Mr. Chairman,

There is some obvious connection between disarmament and development. We must convert our swords to plough shares and dedicate the resources available from the benefits of disarmament to assist the economic and social development of developing countries.

Mr Chairman,

The United Nations thrives on resolutions. As we approach the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the First Special Session on Disarmament (SSOD-1) and the Sixtieth Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights looms large on the horizon, let us at least resolve that we eliminate most if not all the elements that threaten the peace and tranquility of our world.

I thank you.