

NEW ZEALAND MISSION to the UNITED NATIONS



Te Māngai o Aotearoa

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UNGA 63: FIRST COMMITTEE

GENERAL DEBATE

**STATEMENT BY
DON MACKAY
AMBASSADOR FOR DISARMAMENT**

8 October 2008

Mr Chairman

We are very pleased to see you in the Chair of the First Committee. You can be assured of my delegation's full support as you lead us through the Committee's comprehensive work programme.

The standout achievement for disarmament in 2008 was the will of the international community to deal with the humanitarian impact of cluster munitions, even if it meant stepping outside the comfort of traditional consensus arms control frameworks. The new Convention on Cluster Munitions, endorsed by over 100 States in May, demonstrates the value of committed partnership between disarmament, humanitarian, and civil society experts, in order to achieve substantive results for civilians on the ground. New Zealand is proud to be a member of the Core Group driving the Oslo Process, and will sign the Treaty on 3 December in Oslo. We need to ensure that any outcome under the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons complements this significant humanitarian achievement.

The Biennial Meeting of States to consider the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons also illustrated this year that consensus should not be a goal in itself. Fortunately the BMS was able to achieve substantive progress on a number of detailed measures for furthering the international community's work on small arms, and has put the implementation of the Programme of Action back on a firmer footing after an uncertain few years. Ongoing progress in the expert group examining prospects for an Arms Trade Treaty has also been encouraging, and New Zealand remains a strong supporter of a new legally binding international instrument governing the trade in small arms and light weapons as the outcome of this work.

While progress was possible on some disarmament issues in 2008, the constraints of consensus continued to block efforts to enable the Conference on Disarmament to recommence negotiations. The Six Presidents are to be congratulated for their tireless efforts, which unfortunately have not yet proved sufficient to break the procedural deadlock. We continue to believe that using procedural objections to prevent the commencement of negotiations is an unfortunate and unnecessary use of the consensus principle to say the least, particularly given that there are several layers of safeguards required during the negotiation and adoption phases of the CD's work so as to ensure that the security interests of all States are accommodated. We support recent suggestions that the Conference should review its procedural mechanisms in 2009, and we urge all delegations in the CD to exercise maximum flexibility to enable the Conference to recommence substantive negotiations.

Creating a world safe from nuclear weapons remains one of the international community's most urgent priorities. My delegation has already registered its views on the imperative for implementation of nuclear disarmament

commitments through the statement of the New Agenda Coalition, delivered by Ambassador Mitshali of South Africa at the beginning of this General Debate. It is clear that the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty requires a sense of renewed ownership and energy from all of its States Parties in support of its full implementation. We need to work collectively towards agreement on concrete measures for the Treaty's implementation across the full remit of nuclear issues to ensure that the relevance and credibility of the Treaty is reaffirmed at the 2010 Review Conference. Priority areas for New Zealand are nuclear disarmament, revision of nuclear doctrine, transparency and confidence-building measures, and the de-alerting of nuclear weapons. I will expand further on these issues during the nuclear disarmament segment of our work.

Twelve years have passed since the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty was opened for adoption in 1996. It is imperative for the realisation of a nuclear weapon free world that this treaty enters into force without any further delay. New Zealand urges all those Annex 2 States that have yet to do so to ratify the Treaty as a matter of priority. We welcome that earlier this year Colombia, an Annex 2 State, brought us one step closer to having the ban on nuclear explosions fully in force under international law by ratifying the treaty.

We commend the work of the International Atomic Energy Agency, and its Director General Mohamed ElBaradei, in verifying that nuclear technologies are used solely for peaceful uses. The IAEA Additional Protocol is a key tool in this regard and is the contemporary verification standard in New Zealand's view. We urge those states that have not yet concluded Additional Protocols with the Agency to do so without delay.

New Zealand shares the concerns of the international community about the questions that remain regarding Iran's nuclear programme. Iran's failure to comply with the provisions of the UN Security Council and IAEA resolutions continues to be a serious matter. We call on Iran to comply with these resolutions as a matter of priority and to offer its full co-operation to the IAEA in its efforts to ascertain the nature of Iran's past and present nuclear activities.

New Zealand welcomes the ongoing attempts to achieve the denuclearisation of the DPRK and we continue to support international efforts to encourage the DPRK to fully meet its Six Party Talks commitments within a reasonable timeframe. Steps now being taken by the DPRK to restore its nuclear capacity will, however, seriously undermine the good faith and confidence it has been building with the international community. We urge the DPRK to fully comply with its international obligations, including an early return to IAEA safeguards and the NPT.

Our work on other weapons of mass destruction is progressing well. This year's Second Review Conference of the Chemical Weapons Convention demonstrated that the Convention remains unique and relevant in the

contemporary environment through the standards it sets in both disarmament and non-proliferation. The intersessional meetings of the Biological Weapons Convention demonstrated the practical benefits of facilitating interactive exchange between scientific experts to assist with the Treaty's implementation in the rapidly-developing world of biotechnology. The newly-established Implementation Support Unit has already made a welcome and concrete contribution to the work of the Convention.

New Zealand continues to support the G8 Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction. Through the G8 Global Partnership, we contributed this year to a Japanese-led project to dismantle a decommissioned nuclear submarine in the Russian Far East. This is another tangible example of New Zealand's commitment to improving international security.

New Zealand is a strong supporter of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, and has been proud to serve as co-chair for victim assistance issues during 2008. With the first set of mine clearance deadlines expiring next year, States Parties will need to collaborate closely at the November meeting of States Parties to ensure that those States experiencing challenges in meeting their mine clearance deadlines are supported through the extension request process to enable the full implementation of their Article V obligations as soon as possible. Over the last decade, the gains made under this Convention in terms of clearing mined areas, destroying stockpiles, and assisting victims have been enormous and have qualitatively improved the lives of many civilians living in environments affected by conflict.

In conclusion, Mr Chairman,

We have made some substantial progress in 2008. The conclusion of a new international instrument prohibiting cluster munitions will result in significant humanitarian benefits in terms of protecting civilians in conflict situations. The re-energised Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons will enable States to more effectively combat those weapons which have the most widespread impact on civilian populations on a day to day basis. However, there is still much to achieve. The Conference on Disarmament is one arena where the mechanisms relating to procedural consensus should be further explored, with a view to commencing negotiations in 2009 in accordance with the wishes of the overwhelming majority of the C/D membership. We need to pursue concrete progress on NPT implementation goals by 2010. This will require renewed ownership and engagement on the part of all States Parties. New Zealand is committed to playing a constructive and effective role in these and all other international security processes.