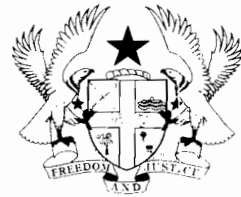


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63<sup>rd</sup> Session of the United Nations  
General Debate of the First Committee

## ***Statement***

*By*

***H.E. MR. LESLIE K. CHRISTIAN***

*Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Ghana  
to the United Nations*

*On*

***Disarmament and International Security***

*New York,  
Thursday, October 9, 2008*

Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, permit me to join other speakers before me in congratulating you on your assumption of the chair, and to wish you every success in your important mission. To this end, I wish to assure you of my delegation's full support and co-operation.

As a member of the Non-Aligned Movement and the African Union, my delegation associates itself with the statements delivered by the distinguished representatives of Indonesia and Nigeria respectively on behalf of these organizations.

Mr. Chairman,

A year ago, we met in this room with a shared goal of taking appropriate realistic measures towards abating the despair and disquiet over the challenges impinging global peace and security in accordance with one of the cardinal obligations of our organization as envisioned by the founding fathers. As we begin our session, it behooves each one of us, separately and collectively, to undertake a critical introspection to ascertain whether the goals that we set for ourselves under this mandate have been attained, either partially or wholly. After all, the world outside will not assess our stewardship by eloquent rhetoric, but by concrete and progressive results.

Mr. Chairman,

Developments over the past year, especially recent events, have raised concern about their ramifications on the already fragile international security environment. We are, indeed, living in a period of uncertainties precipitated and perpetuated by a far more unpredictable array of challenges, including, worsening geopolitical tension, soaring military expenditures, growing threats of terrorism and fears over the fate of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. As this grim reality unfolds, it behooves the community of nations to strive to reverse the decades of missed opportunities and broken promises by collectively pursuing bold and realistic measures to salvage the global disarmament and non-proliferation regime from plunging into an irredeemable abyss. This goal, Mr. Chairman, can only be realized if member states eschew unilateralism and embrace the noble values of cooperation and multilateralism underpinned by flexibility and compromise,

which has been widely recognized as the only viable option for the pursuit of constructive results in the disarmament and non-proliferation realm.

Mr. Chairman,

Given the fear of horizontal and vertical nuclear proliferation exacerbated by the threat of nuclear terrorism, we cannot deny the fact that the world is on the verge of a new phase in the nuclear dilemma. Admittedly, some progress has been made over the years, including the reduction in stockpiles, closure of test sites, maintenance of nuclear test moratorium and the retirement of various overheads and their delivery system, as well as an inconsequential increase in the number of nuclear weapon states. While welcoming these developments, we are equally disturbed that the existence of about 27,000 nuclear warheads, some on high alert, and threats of proliferation, could accentuate the general fear that the world remains insecure and vulnerable to mass destruction. Unless all nuclear weapons are verifiably and irreversibly eliminated, we, including the possessors, would continue to be haunted by the nightmarish scenario.

Mr. Chairman,

Despite the near convergence of views on the interconnectivity between nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, it is disheartening that some few countries continue to place emphasis on the latter with less focus on disarmament. This lopsided approach, which is at variance with the position of majority of member states, is doomed to failure. In this connection, we wish to stress that the most feasible, practical and sustainable path for the pursuance of nuclear non-proliferation is through tangible progress in disarmament. To this end, we strongly urge nuclear weapons states to exhibit exemplary leadership by faithfully and scrupulously abiding by their treaty obligations. Otherwise, the prediction about 50 years ago that the world would witness 20 or more states with nuclear weapons would come to fruition in the not too distant future.

Indeed, the increasing clarion call across the globe spearheaded by distinguished statesmen for the elimination of those weapons is an eloquent testimony of the disappointment of majority of humanity over our failure to advance this cause. The momentum is building and we should take the requisite measure to assume our leadership position if we are to play a

meaningful role in the advancement of the disarmament and non-proliferation process.

Mr. Chairman,

Undoubtedly, a major factor for the abysmal development in international peace and security is the apparent resolve of some state parties, albeit, a few, to disavow their obligations under the NPT and other related agreements, notably the 1995 and 2000 review conference outcome documents. Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation as well as peaceful uses of nuclear energy are the very foundation of the Treaty and every effort should be made to refrain from placing premium on any of the tripod. Irrespective of its relevant deficiency, we cannot and should not allow the erosion of the credibility of the NPT, which we all reckon as the fulcrum for the attainment of the non-proliferation regime, and the essential foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament, to persist. It is for this reason that we consider the 2010 Review Conference as an opportune moment for containing and reversing the accreting pessimism over the fate of the Treaty. We cannot afford to fail at this critical period since the consequences would be more grave.

Mr. Chairman,

Although my delegation has strong reservations about the focus on non-proliferation, we are surprised by the lukewarm reaction of some countries promoting the non-proliferation cause to the establishment of Nuclear-Weapon-Free-Zones and negative security assurances, laudable measures which have been recognized as imperative to the global non-proliferation goal. We exhort the nuclear weapon states to positively revise their positions with the view to supporting, without any reservation, the ideals of the NWFZs and also favourably considering the request of NNWSs for the codification of negative security assurances. Given the reality of the conditions in the Middle East, my delegation repeats its call for all stockholders to pursue, in good faith, the implementation of the resolution on a nuclear weapon free zone for the regime as stipulated in the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference.

Mr. Chairman,

While the predominance of WMDs is understandable, it should not diminish our focus with respect to the regulation and reduction of conventional arms. Despite the enormous achievements over the years in addressing the menace, proliferation of these weapons, especially illicit small arms and light weapons, continues to pose a serious threat to peace and security in many regions. We welcome the conclusion of the recent Review meeting and stress that the momentum should be maintained since without our collective effort the common goal of eradicating these lethal instruments would be a mirage.

Mr. Chairman,

It is a truism that the dividends of a progressive development in the disarmament realm extend beyond the confines of international peace and security to include economic development and the promotion of human rights. Is it not, therefore, a sad commentary that while 1.3 trillion dollars was expended on global defense in 2007, millions of people continue to live below the poverty line? It is these unfortunate persons, living at the edge of life, who become easy prey for recruitment by callous persons determined to cause havoc and mayhem in societies through terrorist activities.

Mr. Chairman,

Although we all concede that the threats confronting the global disarmament and non-proliferation regime are daunting, with a steadfast resolve underpinned by an unwavering commitment to our obligations, we should surmount these challenges.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.