



PERMANENT MISSION OF
JAMAICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

STATEMENT BY

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TO THE UNITED NATIONS

AT THE

GENERAL DEBATE OF THE FIRST COMMITTEE

64th SESSION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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Mr. Chairman,

Please accept our warmest congratulations on your assumption to the Chair of this First Committee. Our felicitations are also extended to the other members of the bureau. I assure you of my delegation's full support as we all strive for a successful outcome of the work of the Committee, in this 64th session.

Jamaica aligns itself with the statement made at the start of this debate by Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and the statement to be delivered later by Haiti, on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

Mr. Chairman,

The year 2009 will certainly be recalled as the year during which an ailing disarmament agenda was resuscitated, re-invigorated and placed back at the top of the list of the global priority of issues which demand immediate attention. I speak of several recent events which have ushered in renewed feelings of hope, and a sense of anticipation that the long awaited breakthrough on stalled nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation discussions has now been realized. Our clear desire is for the First Committee to take advantage of these developments to enable concrete actions for a nuclear weapons free world.

Firstly, the announcement in April 2009 in Prague of the intention to work towards a world free of nuclear arms followed by the agreement, also in April 2009, by the two foremost nuclear powers to reduce their nuclear arsenals beginning with a new treaty by year's end, indeed sets the stage for a continuation of the momentum.

After a decade of stalemate and inaction, Jamaica was therefore pleased to join the rest of the international community in welcoming the adoption of a programme of work, by the Conference on Disarmament (CD), the first step in the commencement of substantive work which we hope will begin in 2010.

On 24th September we witnessed the historic Security Council Summit at the level of Heads of State and Government, dedicated to addressing the issue of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation and the adoption of a landmark resolution 1887 which commits to a world without nuclear weapons. Also coming out of that Security Council meeting was a commitment by at least one Annex II State to pursue ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear- Test-Ban Treaty.

Mr. Chairman,

These welcome developments have undoubtedly ignited high levels of expectations which must be translated into concrete actions, beginning at the very least with the resolutions and decisions to be adopted by this Committee, if

those at the centre of the current wave of positive developments are to be taken at their word and if the opportunity presented to us by their pronouncements are not to be squandered. The signals sent in these deliberations will serve to bolster the present scenario that we are indeed engaged in a new beginning; a renaissance of commitments and ideas.

Certainly Mr. Chairman, there can be no denying that the matter goes much further to include the need for compliance by all States, in particular the nuclear weapons States, to fulfill their disarmament and non-proliferation obligations in good faith. Next year 2010 will present ample opportunity for the advancement of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation agenda where we hope that the 2010 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference will use the opportunity to build on the successes of previous review conferences. Similarly, the positive momentum must extend towards the achievement of the much needed breakthrough in securing the entry into force of the CTBT, and the substantive advancement of work in the CD.

The UN Disarmament Commission (UNDC)), the centerpiece of the UN disarmament machinery remains very relevant despite its inability to reach agreement on its agenda items during its last substantive sessions ending in April 2008. Jamaica supports the work of the Commission and calls for constructive, consensus-building dialogue to create a platform to move the work of the Commission forward in the next cycle. Similarly, we endorse the efforts of the Open-ended Working Group to consider the objectives, modalities and agenda, including the possible establishment of the Preparatory Committee for the Fourth Special Session of the General Assembly Devoted to Disarmament (SSOD-IV) and look forward to its reconvening at an appropriate time.

Mr. Chairman,

While we remain resolute in our calls for a nuclear free world, Jamaica supports the right of all States to the peaceful use of nuclear energy as stipulated in Article IV of the NPT and calls on all States engaged in the development and use of nuclear energy to fully comply with the IAEA verification, monitoring and safeguard provisions to provide the guarantees necessary to build confidence and uphold the integrity of the NPT.

At the same time Mr. Chairman, we are concerned about recent events on the Korean Peninsula which threaten to undermine the NPT regime and the stability of the region and beyond. We continue to express our support for a diplomatic resolution to the situation and urge the States involved in the six party talks to return to the negotiating table and work towards a long-term solution that addresses the concerns of all parties.

Mr. Chairman,

Among the inventory of positive developments on the disarmament agenda for 2009 is the coming into effect of 2 Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones. Jamaica welcomes the entry into force of the Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia, signed at Semipalatinsk and the entry into force of the Treaty of Pelindaba, establishing a Nuclear- Weapon - Free Zone in Africa. Given the serious threat posed to the preservation of regional and international peace and security, Jamaica continues to call for urgent inter-governmental dialogue for the creation of such Zones where none currently exists in other parts of the world.

Mr. Chairman,

The Cluster Munitions Convention which was opened for signature last December represents the tangible results of the international community's sustained efforts to eliminate the harm and suffering caused by Cluster Munitions and their indiscriminate effects on civilian populations in clear violation of International Humanitarian Law. Jamaica signed the Convention last June and work is underway to have it ratified as soon as possible. We remain optimistic that the Convention will inspire further confidence in the disarmament agenda and serve as a catalyst in the work towards the elimination of weapons which have an indiscriminate and lethal impact on the lives of civilian populations.

Mr. Chairman,

The revival of the global disarmament agenda is undoubtedly of tremendous importance which must be supported from all fronts. At the same time however, there is the urgent need for decisive international action to curb the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons which facilitate violence and hampers every aspects of our development efforts. It is estimated that small arms kill at least 300,000 people a year in both conflict and non-conflict situations and injure or disable many thousands more. We cannot ignore this ignoble fact, especially when an increasingly high percentage of its impact is the result of the illicit trade in such weapons.

The successful outcome last year of The Third Biennial Meeting of States (BMS-3) to Consider the Implementation of the UN Programme of Action (POA) to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects will amount to nothing if developing countries like Jamaica are not equipped with the apparatus necessary to satisfactorily implement their commitments. Requests for technical and financial assistance must not go unheeded; we must commit to take effective action now.

We strengthen our calls for the establishment of a legally binding instrument for the marking and tracing of small arms and light weapons and that ammunition should be incorporated into the POA as a matter for serious consideration.

In the same breath Mr. Chairman, Jamaica fully supports the establishment of an arms trade treaty to impose strict controls on the trade in small arms and light weapons and to that end will work vigorously with our partners in pursuit and realization of such a treaty.

Mr. Chairman,

We commend the work of the UN Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Latin America and the Caribbean particularly in the area of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and hope that the renewed efforts by the Office for Disarmament Affairs through this office will continue to develop and expand its operations for the benefit of the entire region. We wish to acknowledge the tremendous support provided by the Regional Centre to the Member States of CARICOM.

Mr. Chairman,

In the context of huge global military expenditures, which continue to increase annually, the nexus between disarmament and development merits greater attention. We are of the view that now more than ever, particularly against the backdrop of the current global financial and economic crisis, represents an opportune time to redirect significant portions of these funds to aid global development initiatives and poverty eradication strategies.

As I have alluded earlier, the positive developments which have occurred over the past few months in the sphere of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation provide a solid platform from which delegations must renew their commitments to advance the work of this Committee. Jamaica pledges its full support. The onus is on us to seize the moment and capitalize on these positive developments.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.