



# HOLY SEE

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**Statement by H.E. Archbishop Celestino Migliore  
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**64<sup>th</sup> session of the UN General Assembly**

**First Committee:  
General debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items**

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Mr. Chairman,

At the outset allow me to congratulate you on your election to the Chairmanship of this Session of the First Committee. My Delegation assures you of its full support in your endeavours.

Civil society, the international humanitarian organizations, ordinary individuals and especially those suffering and struggling because of armed conflicts and violence, expect from us tangible and convincing results in the hope of seeing a world free of nuclear weapons, with strict controls over arms trade, which in our day is strongly embedded in illicit markets and causing serious damage to humanity. They want to see a world where education, food, healthcare and clean water are more accessible than illicit arms. Given that we are two-thirds of the way to the MDGs, many wonder whether the international community will ever achieve these goals, when, for example, military expenditures for 2008 increased by 4% and amounted to some US \$1.464 billion. And this in the year of the most acute economic crisis.

The world is watching while we are entering once again into discussions on disarmament issues. Can ordinary people expect more progressive, concrete and courageous changes from their leaders? The answer is in our hands, and will show the determination of the international community to pursue world peace and security based on the promotion of integral human development.

Article 26 of the United Nations Charter declares that excessive spending on arms is a diversion from human and economic resources. The main role of the disarmament machinery is to reduce military expenditures through arms control and disarmament so that the international community can progressively de-weaponise security. What are the alternatives to such excessive military spending that at the same time do not lower security? One is to strengthen multilateralism.

There are positive signs that disarmament is returning to the multilateral agenda, as was seen also in the 24 September Security Council Summit on nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. All things considered, a new political climate and momentum on the part of major players in disarmament is observed and recognized: the positive outcome of the last Preparatory Committee for next year's NPT Review Conference; the adoption of a new Convention on Cluster Munitions; the renewed commitments to achieve a mine-free world; many initiatives undertaken by Governments, international organizations, NGOs and civil society organizations in promoting disarmament in all its aspects; constructive and promising exchanges in the process towards an Arms Trade Treaty. All these are encouraging achievements.

In this perspective, my Delegation reiterates the Holy See's commitment to advancing the works on an *Arms Trade Treaty*, as a legally binding instrument on import, export and transfer of arms. Weapons cannot be considered as any other good exchanged on the global, regional or national market, and their excessive stock-piling or indiscriminate trading – especially to conflict-affected areas – cannot, by any means, be morally justified. In a globalized world, it is a given that we need to regulate trade, the financial system, and the interconnected economy. The same ought to be the case for arms trade.

Mr. Chairman, with the adoption of Security Council Resolution 1887, nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation are at the centre of the international debate on peace and security. My Delegation commends national policies and bilateral agreements to reducing nuclear arsenals and looks forward to seeing progress in seriously addressing issues related to nuclear strategic arms, tactical ones and the means of delivery of these weapons.

This, however, should not divert our sight and attention from many long-standing yet unresolved issues.

After 13 years, the *Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty* has not yet entered into force, lacking only nine ratifications while we continue to witness nuclear tests. Persistent obstacles hamper negotiations on a *Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty*. Although the Conference on Disarmament broke the gridlock on its programme of work for the first time in 12 years, it fails to advance because of procedural disagreements. The outcome of the last Disarmament Commission is not much better. Some major players choose to remain outside the international instruments to ban anti-personnel landmines and cluster munitions, which are significant humanitarian achievements. A few States have yet to join the *Chemical Weapons Convention*. An international *Programme of Action* to stem the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons still faces many challenges in achieving its goals. And the international community lacks multilateral legal norms concerning missiles.

Mr. Chairman, many disarmament issues await their definitive solutions. As a new disarmament cycle begins in these days, let us join efforts and good will so that international security is provided with well-functioning multilateral organisms.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.