

**Statement by the International Women's Day Seminar on "Terrorism, The Global Order, Arms and Missile Defence to the Conference on Disarmament on the Occasion of International Women's Day, Geneva, 7 March 2002**

Distinguished Members of the Conference on Disarmament:

Thank you for giving the annual International Women's Seminar the opportunity to address you on the occasion of International Women's Day. This Day, which actually falls tomorrow, the 8<sup>th</sup> of March, has its roots in the centuries-old struggle of women for the right to participate equally with men in making the decisions that determine the economic and social conditions of our societies and concern the question of war or peace. For decades now, women see ever more clearly, and particularly those living in regions of conflict, how necessary is peace and disarmament to improving their working and living conditions and the achievement of gender equality. They see disarmament as a necessary means to limit conflict and prevent war, and to free resources to enable the improvement of economic and social conditions for themselves, their families and their communities.

Both females and males need and have a right to a stable and secure environment; women and their children in particular need resources for the full develop of their potentials. In turn, the fulfilment of their potentials will strengthen security and stability for all, and they will contribute still more to the wealth of nations. In this spirit we wish to say here today the following:

When we addressed this Conference on 8 March last year, we believed that you would break the stalemate that had beset this negotiating forum for several years. We were confident that the conditions were such that would allow you to proceed with the work plan set out in CD document 1624 -- the 'Amorim' proposal. We are deeply disappointed and much concerned that today, one year later, the Conference remains deadlocked. From what we heard and read then and what we hear and read now there is agreement that document CD/1624 is a good basis for consultations with a view to advancing disarmament talks and negotiations. Why then does the deadlock in this forum persist when there is such an obvious need for talks and genuine negotiations of nuclear disarmament, for preventing an arms race in outer space, and for a treaty on the fissile material cut-off, as well as for a comprehensive programme for disarmament? Civil society has a right to an answer from this Conference. Disarmament issues are of concern to all people not only to governments and civil servants. People have a right to be informed. What kind of security is everyone's concern, and to be informed is the people's democratic right.

We have not yet recovered, if ever we will, from the terrible events of 11 September in the USA. The international community then rallied to the USA to join it in its response to the terrorist acts. Taking this collective stand kindled hopes for a return to genuine multilateral disarmament efforts. But the opposite is happening, The

response to terrorism is primarily in military terms, resulting in demands for increased military expenditures to develop and produce more and newer arms; the insistence on developing a missile defence system risks to set off a new arms race and to undermine a long-standing disarmament treaty. Sophisticated weaponry cannot protect us against these new kinds of terrorist acts. Perhaps a better use and sharing of resources to improve peoples' lives would be a more effective means to eliminate terrorism.

Addressing the UN Symposium on Terrorism and Disarmament in New York last October, Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala, UN Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, called for a common strategy in the disarmament area to deal with the global challenge of eradicating terrorism. He pointed out that "weapons-based security not only perpetuates the wrong value system internationally, it also increases weapon stocks and the danger of their diversion to non-state actors and individual warlords with calamitous consequences. The increasing number and sophistication of weaponry and expensive defence systems will not protect us from terrorism just as the derogation from fundamental human rights cannot be justified by the fight against terrorism. Disarmament and non-proliferation norms contribute to the battle against terrorism. Short-term expediency should not lead us to compromise on them because they will eventually feed terrorism as we have seen from the legacy of the Cold War."

Everything in the world demands that all states, but in particular the member states of the CD, work together to prevent the eruption of a new arms race. Our planet cannot bear it. Money-wise, we can hardly afford the safe destruction of the weaponry that has been agreed to destroy. Let us not build more.

We are concerned by the trend to pull out of or dismiss as outdated international treaties, such as the ABM treaty, or refuse to ratify treaties negotiated with patience over long periods of time, such as the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. We are deeply disappointed that the lengthy negotiations of a Protocol to strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention came to naught.

We fear that the failure of the CD to break the deadlock and begin genuine talks and negotiations in accordance with a generally acceptable work plan may have very negative repercussions on the review process of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. We fear that the CD may have become incapable of fulfilling its mandate. What then is the future of disarmament? What is the future of this negotiating forum? We know that there have been periods in the past when the CD (in its earlier form) was deadlocked. But this does not excuse the lack of movement today when conflicts multiply and arms kill thousands of innocent civilians and whole sectors of populations are massacred, individuals continue to be maimed by landmines still embedded in the soils, and the fear of the use of weapons of mass destruction by non-state actors grows. We understand fully that the CD is a negotiating forum, but we must not forget that it deals in essence with very human and humanitarian issues. Knowing how women live these many conflicts, we cannot

help but be impatient by what seems to us a lack of a sense of urgency in coming to grips with disarmament and non-proliferation in the interests of all humanity. Having stated this, we agree with, and join the delegates to the Conference who, while deploring the deadlock in this forum, have given recognition to positive developments in arms control and non-proliferation concerning small arms and light weapons, land mines and implementing the chemical weapons convention. We are also encouraged by the commitment of governments to continue to work on strengthening the biological (toxin) weapons convention, and strengthening the NPT.

We are gratified that the Conference has decided to again appoint Special Coordinators on the Review of the CD Agenda, on the Expansion of its Membership and on its Improved and Effective Functioning. An agenda set in 1978 may well need some up-dating. As for the improved and effective functioning of the CD, we express our hope that the issue of the relationship of NGOs to the Conference on Disarmament will be seriously taken up during this session. In a recent letter to the Conference on Disarmament, the President of the Geneva-based NGO Committee for Disarmament pointed out the mutually beneficial results a more open relationship between the CD and NGOs would have. We fully support his proposal that NGOs be invited to engage in some appropriate way in these discussions.

Distinguished Members of the Conference, it is early on in this 2002 session and we maintain our optimism that you will overcome the present stalemate. In this connection we wish to recall the final paragraph of the UN Secretary-General's statement to the opening meeting of this year's first session of the CD: "The UN General Assembly unanimously reaffirmed multilateralism as a core principle in negotiations on disarmament and non-proliferation. The Assembly also emphasized the need for progress in multilateral co-operation on disarmament and non-proliferation, to contribute to global efforts against terrorism. It is my sincere hope that this conference will respond to these challenges with dynamism and determination." We share his hope.

From this year's international women's seminar, at which we looked at Terrorism, the Global Order, Arms and Missile Defence, we call on you, we urge you, we beg you to act now, in the common interest of all citizens on this planet. It is time to come to grips with the proliferation of arms and take a decisive step toward disarmament. We wish you strength in your work.