



UNITED STATES MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

799 UNITED NATIONS PLAZA
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10017-3505

Check against delivery

Statement

by

Mr. J. Sherwood McGinnis

Representative

U.S. Delegation to the UN Disarmament Commission

At the Plenary meeting of the United Nations Disarmament Commission

New York, April 1, 2003

Mr. Chairman

Permit me at the outset of my remarks to formally congratulate both you and Italy on your assumption of the Chairmanship of the UN Disarmament Commission. Your effective stewardship of this body is already moving us in the right direction as we address the important issues of this body, and you can count on the full support of the United States delegation.

Allow me also to thank Ghana and Argentina for their significant efforts to advance the work of the UNDC, and to express our appreciation to our Egyptian and Brazilian colleagues for their willingness to assume the Working Group chairmanships on short notice.

And, as he prepares to take his leave, we would like to wish every future success to Under Secretary General for Disarmament Affairs Jayantha Dhanapala and to convey our abiding respect for his many contributions to the international community.

Mr. Chairman

Since the UNDC last met in 2001, it is clear to all that the international security environment has changed dramatically. And in point of fact, the international political situation of today is substantially changed from that of twenty-five or fifty years ago.

This is why we believe that it will be imperative for the UNDC to focus its efforts on the realities of today – of 2003 – and those of the future. It serves no one's interests to advocate approaches that no longer track with the current international situation and the new directions in which it may be heading.

We need to acknowledge that we live in a changed world, one faced with new threats to international security. In the days ahead, we will be urging that the UNDC emphasize forward-looking thinking that takes into account the past without dwelling in it.

It is essential that we build confidence – confidence that the security of the states represented here will be preserved and enhanced. An important question to be

addressed is how the international community should acknowledge and deal with the current security situation.

For example, we believe that there has been significant recent progress towards the goal of nuclear disarmament since the last meeting of the Commission. Most notable are the substantial efforts undertaken by the Russian Federation and the United States to reduce their nuclear arsenals. The Moscow Treaty strengthens international security and stability not just for today but for the next ten years of its implementation.

At the same time, we must acknowledge that weapons of mass destruction programs in a number of states, and the risks that terrorists may one day soon acquire weapons of mass destruction on their own pose serious challenges to international peace and security.

The UNDC's work also should take into account that moving forward on disarmament requires that parties to existing treaties fulfill their obligations and that existing treaty regimes be kept viable through vigorous enforcement of compliance.

We should also encourage confidence building measures (CBMs) that contribute to regional and international peace and security. My delegation will work within Working Group II to help achieve this goal.

Mr. Chairman,

In conclusion I wish to emphasize that effective multilateralism, including at the UNDC, will be critical if together we are to deal with the growing challenges to international peace, security and stability.

The United States looks forward to contributing to this effort.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.