

UNITED NATIONS DISARMAMENT COMMISSION
2003 SUBSTANTIVE SESSION
GENERAL DEBATE

**INTERVENTION BY H.E. AMBASSADOR RONALDO MOTA SARDENBERG,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF BRAZIL TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

New York, 31 March 2003

Mr. President,

Allow me to congratulate you on your election, and through you all the members of the Bureau. Rest assured of our cooperation for a fruitful session. We would also like to pay tribute to Mrs. Diana Quarles, of Jamaica, for her competent work as Chairperson last year.

I wish to commend Under-Secretary-General Dhanapala, under whose leadership the Department of Disarmament Affairs is playing an invigorated role. I thank him for his presentation before this Commission.

Mr. President,

We meet today under challenging circumstances, which could have adverse and longstanding effects on the work of the United Nations, not to mention the great suffering and desolation to innocent people, and the unavoidable toll on human life.

Although it is early to evaluate the impact of recent events in our work, and to extract lessons from them in order to better understand the international security environment that is taking shape, at least one element stands out: disarmament has become once again a clear priority.

These events only highlight that accumulation of weapons, wherever it occurs, engenders mistrust and has destabilizing effect among neighbors and on the international community as a whole, and contributes to generate an unstable, less predictable and less secure environment.

This is a pressing reason for the strengthening of our collective effort within the indispensable framework of the United Nations to maintain peace and security. And, as I stressed, disarmament is key to the achievement of this goal.

In this context, it is of little comfort to reiterate in our statements that progress achieved has been modest, that important processes have been reversed and that the disarmament agenda has been paralyzed. Time has come for us to debate and discuss thoroughly the causes of this stalemate and to embark in a comprehensive exercise to identify the relevant elements of the security context and to map the road ahead. The UNDC is the agreed forum for this inescapable exercise.

This is not a body that negotiates legally binding agreements. Rather, it is the only universal forum dedicated to the long-term discussion of disarmament issues. Therefore, the delegation of Brazil expects that the prerogative of discussing future options of disarmament will be exerted without any constraints here at the UNDC.

Our delegation understands that it is in no one's interest that the UNDC be seen as a failed forum for such deliberations. The need for results here is even more evident if we take into account that the prospects for immediate progress and agreement in other disarmament fora are far from reassuring.

Mr. President,

Confidence-building measures are a powerful instrument to generate trust. Their implementation has a positive impact in the consolidation of a more cooperative environment, essential to the full development of national and regional potentials. Brazilian bilateral, regional and multilateral experience in this field confirms this reality. We encourage delegations to approach the upcoming discussions in an open spirit, so that this Commission can better understand the implications and results of CBMs.

We appreciate the work done by the Chairperson of Working Group II and the presentation of the working paper, which is a genuine effort of compilation of the views expressed by all delegations and provides an excellent basis for further discussion. We are sure that this Commission will be able to work constructively on this issue, whose importance has been highlighted by recent international developments.

My delegation is of the view that Member States should make better use of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms as a confidence-building tool. We support this instrument and hope to see an increase in the number of participating countries. In this regard, we welcome the initiation of the process of reviewing the Register and we hope the Group of National Experts may come up with suggestions and recommendations to further strengthen and to promote it. We would also wish to see broader participation in the UN Standardized System of Reporting on Military Expenditures.

Regionally, the Americas are implementing with good results an outstanding number of confidence-building measures. Regional CBMs have both influenced and being influenced by the development of sub-regional and bilateral measures with Brazil's neighbors. We look forward to a successful debate on this issue in Working Group II.

Mr. President,

Unfortunately, the field of nuclear disarmament is still marked by distressing signs. Lack of progress in the Conference on Disarmament is alarming. Recent developments could hardly be construed as meaningful to the achievement of nuclear disarmament.

At this moment we are in the midst of a new revision cycle of the NPT. The NPT is an important component in the international security architecture, in particular in regard to nuclear disarmament. Universalization and full compliance are of the essence as we are committed to the strengthening of this Treaty. Universalization is our goal, and compliance by all member states and with all provision of the Treaty, including through the 13 practical steps adopted by consensus in 2000, our responsibility.

In this particular juncture, the Working Group I should seriously advance the debate on the question of nuclear disarmament. The next three weeks are an opportunity for a meaningful exchange of views on these issues. It is our expectation that we will be able to advance in the formulation of a substantive document for adoption at the end of this session.

In conclusion, Mr. President, I wish to underscore the conviction of my delegation that this should be a very positive session. At the UN we must make every effort to respond to the growing fears as regards the maintenance of international security and disarmament. A frank and substantive exchange of views in the two working groups, taking into account the dynamics of the real world outside this Building and the need for concrete new ideas to further the cause of disarmament, would be a step in the right direction to reassure public opinion of the importance of the UNDC and to lay the foundations for the successful conclusion of this exercise.

Thank you.