



PERMANENT MISSION OF SWITZERLAND
TO THE UNITED NATIONS

Check against delivery

**Disarmament Commission
Annual Session 2003**

STATEMENT

by

Ambassador Christian Faessler,
Permanent Representative of Switzerland
to the Conference on Disarmament

(General debate)

New York, 31 March 2003

Mr. Chairman,

Allow me to begin by expressing, on behalf of my delegation, its pleasure to have you chairing the Disarmament Commission. Your personal experience in the field of disarmament and arms control and your country's constructive commitment in these contexts are assets essential to the success of our work, rendered more important than ever, at this present juncture which is marked by significant crises. In this context, marked, on several continents, by conflicts and serious tensions related to disarmament questions, our present session assumes a particular character. You may, in any case, count on the full support and cooperation of my delegation in the exercise of your tasks.

Mr. Chairman,

Under the circumstances, and as my country participates for the first time as Member State of the United Nations in the work of the Disarmament Commission, Switzerland should like to recall here the fundamental principles of our disarmament and arms control policy.

Switzerland supports all multilateral efforts in the contexts of disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation aimed at concrete and verifiable results. It has ratified all multilateral treaties before it in this context, and it attaches the greatest importance to their faithful and integral implementation. For example, the implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, of which the first Review Conference will take place at the Hague in a few weeks, is of paramount importance for my country. Furthermore, Switzerland supports all measures aimed at improving transparency in armaments as concerns the import and export of war materials, including small arms and light weapons; it particularly supports confidence-building measures at the global and regional levels which aim at reducing the risk of surprise attacks and accidental triggering of war. Finally, remaining true to its traditions, Switzerland strongly supports the application of international humanitarian law criteria in regard to the development, production and use of conventional weapons; in fact, on the humanitarian plan, the uncontrolled and indiscriminate dissemination and use of these weapons have devastating effects and threaten the security and development of the most underprivileged countries. In this regard, my country attaches a great importance to the Convention on the prohibition of antipersonnel land-mines and to the negotiations on explosive remnants of war in the context of the Conventional Weapons Convention.

Mr. Chairman,

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their vectors, as well as the possibility of non-State actors having access to these weapons, constitute a serious challenge to international peace and security. The fears aroused by the frightening prospects in this domain call for a re-examination of the very bases of collective security. In order to meet this challenge, my country, as previously indicated, actively participates in multilateral disarmament and arms-control efforts, and firmly commits itself to the flawless respect of existing obligations. In this regard, my country is both alarmed and disappointed by the violations of contractual obligations in the context of the Nuclear weapons Non-Proliferation Treaty: these acts not only endanger the integrity and implementation of one of the important pillars of international security, but equally

the efforts aimed at achieving the treaty's universality. It is our responsibility to preserve the NPT's integrity and respect for its obligations. However, we agree that these efforts must equally be accompanied by concrete and sustained commitments on the part of the nuclear States. The upcoming second session of the Preparatory Committee for the NPT Review Conference will provide an occasion, we hope, to put these words into action. My country equally attaches a paramount importance to the immediate resumption of negotiations, at the Conference on Disarmament, regarding the prohibition of the production of fissile materials for military purposes.

Mr. Chairman,

Switzerland supports an active and constructive role on the part of the United Nations in the context of disarmament, weapons control and non-proliferation. It is favourable to the development of a dialogue and cooperation among the United Nations' main organs in the context of disarmament, namely the First Committee, the Disarmament Commission and the Conference on Disarmament.

The Disarmament Commission, in its capacity of specialised, deliberating organ of the General Assembly, plays an important role within the United Nations system in the context of disarmament. It is the organ "*par excellence*" for in-depth consideration on precise disarmament questions. In this regard, my country should like to call upon all its partners in the Disarmament Commission to commit themselves, in an open and positive spirit, as the final deliberations of this triennial cycle draw to a close, in order to reach a consensus on the most burning questions, namely the means of achieving nuclear disarmament and confidence-building measures in the context of conventional weapons.

Mr. Chairman,

Switzerland expresses its appreciation to the Chairmen of both working groups, Yaw Odei Osei (Ghana) and Gabriela Martinic (Argentina), for the revised versions of their reports. These two reports on nuclear disarmament and on confidence-building measures constitute a good basis upon which to finalise the present cycle of the Disarmament Commission and to arrive at concrete results.

As concerns nuclear disarmament, it must regrettably be pointed out that humanity continues to be exposed to the dangers represented by the threat of the use of nuclear weapons, be it by accident, on purpose or by terrorist groups. The total elimination of nuclear weapons and the creation of a world without such weapons remains essential. In order to achieve such an objective, the international community as a whole must enact measures which will rapidly give way to concrete results. This has been reaffirmed before numerous fora, notably before the General Assembly's special and regular, annual sessions. Switzerland stands ready to actively commit itself to this path.

Mr. Chairman,

The Conference on Disarmament has charged a Working Group with examining practical confidence measures in the context of conventional weapons, measures which establish confidence yet are neither restrictive nor normative. Their ultimate objective is to strengthen international peace and security and to contribute to preventing war. At the regional level, there is already one extremely positive experience in confidence-building measures, notably in the context of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) ; in this regard, I should like to draw your attention to a working paper on confidence-building measures which was submitted by Switzerland to the Disarmament Commission in 2000. We have requested that the Secretariat distribute this document.

Confidence-building measures which have been achieved in different regions complement and contribute to strengthening peace, security, and stability at all levels. At the global level, one such important measure is good governance in the military and security sectors. Such a measure should reduce the uncertainty and unpredictability of international relations, internationally highlight the peaceful intentions of States, and, on the internal plan, improve the security climate. Over the last few years several countries, including Switzerland, have committed themselves to having this measure taken into consideration by the Disarmament Commission. In order to discuss, in-depth, the potential of such a confidence-building measure, I should like to draw your attention to a seminar organised by the Netherlands, Sweden and Switzerland. Entitled, "Sector Governance and Confidence-Building measures: Regional Experiences -- Global Standards?", the seminar is to take place on April 3rd from 1:15 to 2:45 p.m. in Conference Room n°4. A roundtable will be held the following day in Conference Room n°5.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.