

UNITED NATIONS DISARMAMENT COMMISSION
2006 Substantive Session

STATEMENT by AMBASSADOR RONALDO SARDENBERG,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF BRAZIL to the UNITED
NATIONS
April 10 2006

Mr. President,

On behalf of the delegation of Brazil I wish to extend warm congratulations on your election. We are pleased to see you, Ambassador Joon Oh, presiding over this Committee. You and the members of the Bureau may rest assured of our delegation's full cooperation in your efforts for a fruitful session. I would also like to congratulate Mr Nobuaki Tanaka for taking up his responsibilities as Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs.

Mr. President,

Brazil fully associates itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Guyana on behalf of the Rio Group.

We meet today under challenging circumstances that can result in longstanding adverse effects on the work of the United Nations. Although it may still be early to fully evaluate the impact of the international security environment that is taking shape, one feature stands out: there seems to be a growing perception that the multilateral system devoted to disarmament and non-proliferation is being faced with a credibility crisis.

In May of last year, the NPT Review Conference ended in frustration. Owing to the lack of political will from different quarters, it was not possible then appropriately to discuss substantive issues and even to attempt agreement on a final document. In September, the long expected High Level Summit meeting lost a valuable opportunity to reach agreement and to give new guidance on matters relating to disarmament and non-proliferation. This year, the Geneva-based Conference on Disarmament will complete 10 years of practical impasse, unable to agree on a programme of work.

Discouraging as they may seem, these developments must not lead us away from the pursuit of disarmament and non-proliferation within the framework of the United Nations. It is, however, of little use and comfort to merely reiterate that important processes have been

reversed and that the disarmament agenda has been paralyzed. Time has come for us to confront the causes of the current stalemate, to embark on a comprehensive exercise for identifying the relevant elements of the security context and to map the road ahead. The UNDC is the proper forum for this essential exercise.

Mr. President,

The UNDC is about to begin a new three-year cycle of deliberations. The fact that this is the first year of the cycle and that no final decisions are to be taken now should not lead us to avoid discussions – or to put them off. On the contrary, this Commission should seriously discuss the issues that are before it and seek as much progress as possible, keeping a permanent spirit of cooperation and striving for consensus.

It is worth stressing that this is a deliberative forum with universal participation dedicated to long-term discussion of disarmament issues, with a view to the submission of concrete recommendations to the General Assembly. It is not a body that negotiates legally binding agreements, and therefore does not operate under the constraints that characterize such negotiations. Its location within the purview of the General Assembly means it is the right place to hold a thematic discussion on issues related to the maintenance of international peace and security.

Indeed, this Commission has a unique role to play in discussing future options for disarmament. It should be in no one's interest for the UNDC to be seen as failing in this mandate. Achieving positive and substantial results in the UNDC is even more important in view of the lack of tangible progress in other disarmament fora.

Mr. President,

This year's substantive work will be entrusted to two Working Groups with different responsibilities. The issues we will have to address there are distinct in nature and scope. Progress should be made in all areas, yet we should not allow advances in one to be made contingent upon parallel progress in another. The success of the exercise as a whole depends on this.

Mr. President,

My Government deeply appreciates the confidence that you and the Commission have shown in endorsing Brazil to the Chair of Working Group II, charged with confidence-building measures in the field of

conventional arms. I wish to highlight the work previously done in this WG by Ms. Gabriela Martinic of Argentina, that was subsequently carried on by Brazil in 2003 and left us with a text that can form a basis for further discussion, with a view to reaching consensus for substantive recommendations on the issue.

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.

Unfortunately, the nuclear disarmament scene is still marked by distressing signs. Recent events could hardly be seen as "ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament" as stated in the mandate of the 2003 session of the UNDC. The growing international emphasis on strengthening non-proliferation mechanisms must be accompanied by similar efforts in terms of disarmament and enhancement of international cooperation for the development of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes. Instead, it is disquieting to perceive that new rationales are sought both for the maintenance or development of new, more sophisticated nuclear weapons and for the reinterpretation of the rights to development, research and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes recognized in Article IV of the NPT.

In this context, it is all the more relevant that Working Group I seriously debates its subject and advances in the formulation of a substantive document. The next three weeks are an opportunity for an updated exchange of views on these issues.

Mr. President,

The enormous challenges confronting the Disarmament Commission call for a deeper sense of responsibility and commitment to uphold the integrity of the international disarmament and non-proliferation regime. This session provides an opportunity to do so. Let us take it, by means of frank and substantive exchange of views in the two working groups, taking into account the dynamics of the world outside this building, as well as the realities within it and the need for concrete new ideas, initiatives and proposals to further the cause of disarmament.

Thank you.