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**STATEMENT
BY**

SOUTH AFRICA

**AT
UNITED NATIONS DISARMAMENT
COMMISSION – 2006**

**DELIVERED BY
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Mr. Chairperson,

Please accept my delegation's congratulations on your assumption of the chair of the 2006 Disarmament Commission. I wish to assure you of delegation's full support and cooperation. I also wish to congratulate the chairpersons and vice-chairpersons of the two working Groups as well as members of the Bureau.

Mr. Chairperson,

South Africa is gravely concerned with the general lack of meaningful progress on nuclear disarmament and the apparent paralysis in one of the major parts of the United Nations disarmament machinery, the Conference on Disarmament. The failure of the 7th NPT Review Conference and the deadlock in the CD are an indictment that we have not risen to the challenge posed by nuclear weapons. These impediments to nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation are manifestations of a serious lack of political will to implement previously agreed nuclear disarmament commitments and undertakings. They equally depict our lack of courage to negotiate on certain core issues that would advance nuclear disarmament. South Africa believes that this state of affairs leaves us in a precarious situation of questionable prospects for nuclear disarmament. Rather than dispel this view, the inability of the recent General Assembly High Level Summit to reach agreement on matters relating to nuclear non-proliferation has entrenched it.

Despite this disappointing situation South Africa continue to believe that progress on both nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation is required in order to attain the goal of a world free from nuclear weapons. Although this is not a new concept, South Africa strongly cautions against the tendency to place primary emphasis on one of the other of these aspects. If this tendency continued unabated the pivotal role of the NPT as the essential foundation for nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation would be undermined.

Mr. Chairperson,

Faced with these difficult times, and compounded by its failure for the last two years to agree on agenda, it is imperative that this session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC) should strive to continue as a deliberative body on disarmament and non-proliferation issues. All efforts should, however, be made to retain its relevancy through focused debates on the agenda items. South African is hopeful that our deliberations will identify recommendations to achieve nuclear disarmament and to find achievable means to build confidence among States in the field of conventional weapons.

Mr. Chairperson,

Nuclear disarmament is considered by all States to be one of the most important among the disarmament issues facing the international community. Moreover, nuclear disarmament is a concern of the entire international community. A source of concern for

a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons. As emphasized during the course of the negotiations on this instrument, South Africa believes that the United Nations should play an important role in the smooth operation of the instrument, including by facilitating co-operation and assistance in the field of marking and record keeping. The basic premise behind the successful operation of the instrument is the concept of co-operation between and amongst States to trace and shut down illicit arms trading individuals and networks. As such, the sovereign right of States to trade in small arms and light weapons amongst each other should not be viewed as being under threat, but the instrument should be seen as contributing to our collective resolve to eradicate the illicit small arms and light weapons trade. Its value as a truly multilateral instrument will be measured against our willingness to share amongst ourselves the information that is required for its effectiveness.

Mr Chairperson,

Another practical measure to promote confidence among States in the field on conventional arms that South Africa has actively pursued and implemented is the destruction of surplus and obsolete weapons no longer in use by government forces. The destruction of surplus, confiscated or collected weapons together with an appropriate reporting system on this process will most certainly promote confidence among States in support of regional stability. It would significantly limit the illicit trade in these weapons, as their condition may render them being targeted for theft and diversion into the illicit trade.

With regard to the consideration of the item on "Improving the working methods of the Commission", my delegation supports idea that the discussion may continue based on the chairman's working paper as contained in the 2003 UNDC report. South Africa also believes that any efforts to improve the working methods of the Commission should also take into account the larger UN reform processes.

Mr Chairperson,

In conclusion, it is time that we find innovative ways of dealing with lack of progress on nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation, as well as the prevalent paralysis in the United Nations disarmament machinery in order to complement achievements made on small arms and light weapons and anti-personnel mines. South Africa remains committed to working in this Commission and in all other disarmament and non-proliferation fora so as to achieve the total elimination of all nuclear weapons and to limiting the numbers of conventional weapons to the minimum required for self-defence. My delegation will express specific views and positions on the two agenda items under consideration at this session during the deliberations of the two Working Groups.

Mr Chairperson, I thank you.