



UNITED NATIONS DISARMAMENT COMMISSION
2008 Substantive Session

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Mr. President,

It is a pleasure for my Delegation to see you, Mr Piet de Klerk, as Chairman of the 2008 substantive session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC). Please accept our warm congratulations on your election, as well as the assurance of the full cooperation of the Brazilian Delegation in your endeavours.

My delegation associates itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Mexico on behalf of the Rio Group.

Mr. President,

We are at the end of a three-year cycle in the UNDC. The two Working Groups – entrusted with the issues “ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament” and “confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms” - had extensive deliberations and are working on documents that we consider to be a good basis for agreement. A meaningful and generally agreed outcome is possible and long overdue.

Achieving substantive results in the UNDC is even more important in view of the recent lack of progress in the disarmament and non-proliferation negotiations. Negative developments such as the deadlock at the NPT review process, the paralysis at the Conference on Disarmament, the continued delay in the coming into force of the CTBT and the lack of agreement regarding the Programme of Action on the Illicit Trade of Small Arms - disturbing as they may be - must not detract us from persevering in the pursuit of disarmament and non-proliferation within the UN framework. The UNDC is the agreed forum for this essential exercise and has, in our view, a key role to play.

Mr. President,

Working Group I will once again carry on its deliberations in an international scenario in which nuclear disarmament is far from a reality. Over the past few years, we have noticed a worrisome development through which a renewed emphasis has been put on non-proliferation and less and less attention is paid to nuclear disarmament. The modest achievements made in this field have only a very precarious basis, as they are not the result of multilaterally negotiated, irreversible and verifiable agreements, and thus can easily be rolled back.

The growing 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, regrettably, we see that new rationales are sought to justify the maintenance of current stockpiles or the development of new and more sophisticated nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapon States furthermore leave little doubt as to their intention not only to keep their nuclear arsenals indefinitely, but also to modernize and improve them, in direct conflict with their obligation under the NPT.

So long as the States that possess nuclear weapons continue to believe that these weapons constitute a critical element of their security strategy, the goal of the complete elimination of nuclear weapons will remain elusive and distant. Reducing the

role of these weapons in strategic and security doctrines and policies is therefore essential for realizing the goal of nuclear disarmament.

We expect these concerns to be fully reflected in the paper to be produced by Working Group I so that recommendations on these issues that are of great importance to the overwhelming majority of UN Member States can be forwarded to the General Assembly.

Mr. President,

Let me underline that Brazil deeply appreciates the confidence that you and the Commission expressed in endorsing a Brazilian official to continue to chair Working Group II. I wish to highlight that the work done over the last two years in the Group has produced a text that we believe can form the basis for an agreement.

Confidence-building measures aim to alter inaccurate perceptions and to avoid misunderstandings about military actions and policies that might otherwise provoke violent conflict. Over time they can pave the way for more stable political and diplomatic relations, transform the parties' ideas about their need for security, and even encourage moves to identify shared security interests and highlight the importance of effective disarmament initiatives.

Confidence-building measures – in particular at the conventional weapon field – have become important steps in building the trust, stability and security needed to overcome conflict and enhance efforts at development. A range of CBMs are available and being actively used to pave the way for disarmament, reduce tensions and avert possible military conflict. They have been proven effective. And innovative ways to use them are being applied. Often CBMs have also addressed the proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons – a problem which poses one of the biggest arms-related challenges to peace and security for many countries – especially in Africa.

Mr. President,

The issues we address in the two Working Groups are distinct in nature and scope. Advances in one cannot be made contingent upon parallel progress in the other. Delegations should engage in good faith in deliberations and exercise enough flexibility with a view to reaching our common objective.

The UNDC is a deliberative body 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 forum that negotiates legally binding agreements. Therefore it does not operate under the constraints that characterize such negotiations. In view of the need to achieve concrete results at the end of this cycle, it is especially important that Delegations engage in the discussions with a constructive spirit as they seek to overcome the remaining differences.

Mr. President,

The Disarmament Commission was created at the I Special Session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament to serve as a forum for all UN Member States to "deliberate" on major disarmament issues. The Commission has since produced several useful recommendations that prepared the ground for multilateral disarmament negotiations.

The enormous challenges confronting the UNDC call for a deeper sense of responsibility and commitment to uphold the integrity of the international disarmament and non-proliferation regime. Brazil believes the Commission remains relevant as a means to explore new avenues towards disarmament. It is up to us to take advantage of this opportunity to restore this sense of purpose to our deliberations.

Thank you.