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**INTERVENTION BY AMBASSADOR CLAUDE HELLER, PERMANENT
REPRESENTATIVE OF MEXICO, ON BEHALF OF THE RIO GROUP**

**SUBSTANTIVE SESSION 2008, UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON
DISSARMAMENT**

GENERAL DEBATE

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Mr. Chairman,

It is an honor for my delegation to intervene in this General Debate on behalf of the countries which are members of the Rio Group: Argentina, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela, and my country, Mexico.

First of all, the Rio Group congratulates you, Ambassador De Klerk, for your election to preside over the substantive session of 2008 of the Disarmament Commission, with which we conclude a cycle that began three years ago. Likewise, we would like to thank the Chairmen of Working Groups I and II, Mr. Jean-Francis Zinsou, of Benin, and Mr. Carlos Perez, replacing Mr. Carlos Duarte, of Brazil, for their continuous efforts to bring to a good term their mandate, and we look forward to the successful conclusion of their work.

The Group takes this opportunity to express its recognition to the team that, under the presidency of Ambassador Elbio Roselli of Uruguay, guided the previous Substantive Session of 2007.

The Rio Group also thanks Ambassador Sergio Duarte, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, for his presence today and his commitment to the disarmament agenda.

Mr. Chairman,

The Rio Group observes with concern the lack of substantive agreements in the areas of nuclear disarmament and non proliferation.

The Rio Group members form part of the first inhabited Nuclear Weapons Free Zone in the planet, established more than forty years ago, which signifies the commitment and responsibility of our region in matters of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. In this context, we call again on nuclear weapon States to offer clear signs of commitment to advance in the reduction of their arsenals, stressing the responsibility that these States have in the application of disarmament and non proliferation measures.

The Rio Group reiterates its solidarity with the other Nuclear Weapons Free Zones and urges the establishment or expansion of zones of this nature in other regions of the world.

We echo the call of the States Party to the Treaty of Tlatelolco for the Nuclear Weapon States to withdraw the interpretative statements made at the moment of adhering to the Protocols of the aforementioned Treaty of hemispheric scope.

On the other hand, we take note of the official announcements of some of the Nuclear Weapon States related to the revision of their nuclear policies. We hope that such revision will be conducive to the objective of nuclear disarmament.

Mr. Chairman,

The Rio Group reaffirms its commitment to the Treaty on the Non Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), cornerstone of the disarmament and non proliferation regime, favors its universality, and calls on States, that have not yet done so, to adhere to it as Non Nuclear Weapon States.

We also reaffirm our commitment to the Legal Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on the Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons. Likewise, we consider that States Party should comply with the integrity of the NPT, without interpreting or implementing it in a selective manner.

We reiterate that the right of States to the investigation, production, and peaceful use of nuclear energy, and to receive exchanges of material, equipment, and scientific information and technology for such purposes, in the context of international law, and in conformity with the obligations contracted with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), should be respected.

The Rio Group insists once again on the fulfillment of the 13 practical steps agreed upon in the 2000 NPT Review Conference, as well as the strengthening of negative security assurances against the possible use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, as we emphatically call for the conclusion, as a priority, of a universal and legally binding

instrument on negative security assurances for non nuclear States. This type of instrument, which would provide a legal framework, more than any other measure, would guarantee the decline of horizontal proliferation, making it unjustifiable and illegitimate.

The Rio Group also favors the prompt initiation of negotiations, without preconditions, on a multilateral and non-discriminatory International Treaty, that includes an international verification regime, on the prohibition of the production of fissile material for the production of nuclear weapons and other explosive devices which will constitute the next logical step for the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. In particular, it will be a concrete measure to renovate the commitment of Nuclear Weapon States, parties to the NPT, to fulfill their obligations according to Article VI.

Within that spirit, the Rio Group can not fail to express its concern regarding signs of an arms race in outer space; in this regard, we invite all States to conclude the necessary international agreements to prevent it.

The Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty plays an important role in the disarmament and non proliferation regime. The Rio Group supports its prompt entry into force, which would significantly contribute to a systematic and progressive reduction of nuclear weapons, as well as the prevention of the perfection of new types of weapons of this nature. The Rio Group salutes the efforts undertaken by the Provisional Technical Secretariat with the view to a prompt ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. In that sense, we express our recognition to Barbados, Colombia and the Dominican Republic, within our region, for their decision to ratify such an important instrument. Likewise, we congratulate Malaysia. Once again we call upon all States that have not yet done so, to sign or ratify the Treaty as soon as possible.

Mr. Chairman,

The Rio Group reaffirms that the unrestricted respect to international law and the adoption of measures to promote confidence building measures, contribute to the strengthening of peace and security considering that they are intended to promote understanding, transparency, and cooperation among States. For this reason, it is necessary to strengthen, enhance, and broaden confidence-building measures at all levels, as in the cases of the *United Nations Program of Action to Prevent, Combat, and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in all its Aspects*, the *United Nations Register of Conventional Arms*, and the *United Nations System for the Standardized Reporting of Military Expenditures*, examples of important measures developed within the United Nations. At the regional level, we highlight the *Inter-American Convention on Transparency in the Acquisition of Conventional Weapons*.

The Rio Group confers particular importance to the issue of ammunition. It is convenient to deal with this particular issue at the heart of the United Nations, while acknowledging that the problematic issues related to small arms and light weapons are intrinsically linked to ammunition. That is why, in the issue of small arms and light weapons, the Rio Group

considers important the strengthening of the application of the *Program of Action to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit traffic of small arms and light weapons in all its aspects*. We hope that the Third Biennial Meeting of States, that will take place here, will give us the opportunity to generate concrete results that will allow for a better implementation of the Program of Action.

The Rio Group expresses its concern over the lack of political commitment of some States to prevent the proliferation of conventional weapons, including those that have excessively cruel and indiscriminate effects. In this regard, we recognize the different processes advanced by the international community in order to tackle the issue of cluster munitions, considering its humanitarian impact.

Regarding the topic of common international criteria on the import, export, and transfer of conventional arms, the Rio Group, expresses its aspiration that the work of the *Group of Governmental Experts established to study the viability, scope and parameters of a draft, legally binding instrument on conventional arms*, under the chairmanship of Argentina, could reflect adequately the diversity of opinions collected from Member States, regarding this issue.

Mr. Chairman,

To conclude, the Rio Group stands ready to cooperate with you, with the view to achieve concrete results during this session, considering that this is the last year of the cycle 2006-2008 of the substantive sessions of this Commission. It would be desirable to make progress in all the areas; yet, we should not allow that the advances in one area are conditioned by equivalent advances in another. Taking into account the complexity of the topics, the insistence in a parallel development in negotiations would mean, in practice, preventing the Commission from reaching, at least, partial results in its work. We call upon all delegations to show the political will and necessary flexibility in their positions, to enable us to reach a successful outcome.

I thank you.