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STATEMENT  
BY

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AT THE

GENERAL DEBATE  
OF THE UNITED NATIONS  
DISARMAMENT COMMISSION

UNITED NATIONS  
NEW YORK  
15 APRIL 2009

*Check against delivery*

Chairperson,

At the outset, my delegation wishes to congratulate you again on your assumption of the Chair of the Disarmament Commission and assure you of South Africa's full support and co-operation. South Africa also wishes to associate itself with the statements delivered by the distinguished colleagues from Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and Nigeria on behalf of the Africa Group.

Multilateralism, with the United Nations and its Charter at the centre, remains central to any effort to find sustainable solutions to the challenges to international peace and security. South Africa therefore continues to attach great value to the work of the Disarmament Commission with its mandate as deliberative arm of the multilateral disarmament machinery.

We welcome the adoption of a balanced agenda for this three-year cycle and believe that this agenda provides a suitable framework from which to achieve consensus recommendations at the end of our deliberations.

Chairperson,

Regarding the first agenda item, South Africa remains guided by the vision of a world free of nuclear weapons, informed by the principle that the only credible guarantee against the use or threat of use of such weapons is their total elimination.

This new cycle of the Commission's work commences in an international environment that is marked by both important new developments and enduring challenges in the area of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Added to this, we are also witnessing an increasing number of countries that are considering the nuclear energy option as part of their national energy mix.

Chairperson,

We are however not starting the important work on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation with empty hands.

- The elements contained in the Secretary-General 5-point proposal on "*attaining a world free of nuclear weapons*" provides the Commission with a comprehensive and balanced platform from which to launch our deliberations.
- In addition, the Working Group on Nuclear Disarmament and Non-proliferation made meaningful progress in its deliberations under the very able guidance of the Working Group's Chair during the previous cycle.
- For South Africa, the NPT with its three pillars of nuclear disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, remains

the most important international nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation instrument. The provisions of the Treaty as well as the decisions forming part of its review process presents a blueprint for a step-by-step process to reduce the threat of nuclear weapons, de-emphasize their importance and lead to their elimination.

Chairperson,

Security remains one of the most fundamental aspirations of humankind. The UN Charter is in fact premised on the notion of collective security with the right to self-defence explicitly enshrined. History has however shown that the traditional approach of seeking security through the acquisition of the most advanced weapons and building up huge armies has led to numerous arms races and wars, including two devastating World Wars.

The excessive accumulation of conventional weapons, in particular small arms and light weapons, beyond legitimate self-defence purposes, has the potential to create or perpetuate the vicious cycle consisting of instability and conflict on the one hand and poverty and under-development on the other. Confidence building measures, which include transparency and other elements, could play an important role in preventing or addressing this downward spiral.

South Africa therefore welcomes the inclusion of this item in the Commission's substantive agenda and look forward to building on the work done by the Commission during the previous cycle under the capable stewardship of the Chair of that Working Group.

Chairperson,

South Africa finally welcomes the inclusion of the elements for a draft declaration on a fourth Disarmament Decade in the Commission's substantive agenda. This item will allow us to collectively develop that broader vision on a common purpose that has been lacking in recent, and which would allow us to benefit from the positive developments while addressing the substantial challenges in the area of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control.

Thank you.