

New Zealand Permanent Mission to the United Nations



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UNGA 64: FIRST COMMITTEE

GENERAL DEBATE

**Statement by Dell Higgle
Ambassador for Disarmament**

7 October 2009

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Mr Chairman,

It is a pleasure to see you leading the work of the First Committee at this critical moment for disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation. I note that you have urged all delegations to recognise the opportunities that currently present themselves and you can be assured of New Zealand's full support as you guide us towards achieving this aim.

2009 has seen an increased focus on nuclear weapons issues. As a country with a proud record of promoting nuclear disarmament, we have been heartened by the renewed commitment to a nuclear weapon-free world espoused by international leaders the world over.

As New Zealand's Prime Minister, the Honourable John Key, emphasised in his statement to this year's General Assembly, "we must take full advantage of this historic moment to advance the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation agenda.....we owe it to our generation and to those who will follow us to progress our vision for a world free of nuclear weapons".

Some steps are already underway. We are pleased by the commitment of the US and Russia to conclude a new bilateral nuclear arms reduction agreement by the end of the year and we urge both sides to be ambitious in their approach.

We welcome President Obama's commitment to seek US ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. We urge other Annex 2 States to do likewise. As noted by New Zealand's Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Honourable Murray McCully, during the Treaty's recent entry into force conference, the CTBT remains a fundamental step in the process of moving towards a world without nuclear weapons.

The leadership shown by the UN Security Council summit on nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament and its Resolution 1887 is also very welcome and lends important momentum to our efforts.

New Zealand lauded the historic achievement earlier this year when the Conference on Disarmament agreed on a programme of work for the first time in more than a decade. Our enthusiasm has been tempered, however, by the disappointing inability of the Conference since then to agree on the implementation of this programme. This is not the time for rigid rules of procedure to be allowed to frustrate the international community's expectations of progress. It is imperative that all CD members work co-operatively to ensure substantive work commences in January 2010 on all elements of the CD's agenda, particularly the long over-due negotiations on a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty.

Mr Chairman,

We are on the eve of the 2010 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference, a critical juncture not only for the NPT itself but also for the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. My delegation has already registered its views on the imperative for implementation of nuclear disarmament commitments through the statement of the New Agenda Coalition, delivered by the Ambassador of Brazil.

It is clear that a collective effort will be required to ensure a meaningful outcome at the Review Conference – one that positions the NPT to meet contemporary nuclear non-proliferation challenges and advances the nuclear disarmament agenda. New Zealand stands ready to do its part to secure agreement on concrete measures for the Treaty's implementation across all its pillars.

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is an integral part of the nuclear non-proliferation regime and New Zealand was pleased to be able to contribute to its work, and to broader nuclear non-proliferation efforts, by chairing this year's General Conference.

IAEA safeguards are an essential element of its verification work. We note the Director General's ongoing view that an Additional Protocol is essential for the Agency to be able to provide the necessary assurances of the peaceful nature of nuclear programmes. We urge all countries yet to do so to conclude Additional Protocols without delay.

New Zealand shares the concerns of the international community at the questions that remain regarding Iran's nuclear programme. We urge Iran to comply with resolutions of the UN Security Council and to co-operate fully with the efforts of the IAEA. We note the agreement between Iran and the IAEA regarding access to the recently disclosed nuclear facility at Qom and we urge Iran to give the Agency full and transparent access.

New Zealand, like others, condemned the nuclear test carried out earlier this year by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The DPRK's decision to pursue nuclear weapons represents a critical challenge to the nuclear non-proliferation regime and the stability and security of the Asia-Pacific region. We believe that committed dialogue provides the best possibility for a peaceful and comprehensive resolution. We therefore urge the DPRK to return to the Six Party Talks process without delay.

Mr Chairman,

New Zealand is fully committed to addressing the humanitarian impact of conventional weapons. The impact of these weapons is felt deeply, on a daily basis, in many areas of the world and is of concern as well to the peoples of my

region, the Pacific. The international community must accord priority to meeting the challenges posed by conventional weapons.

We recognise the impact that the illicit arms trade continues to have on global security. It is a contributing factor to conflict, terrorism and transnational crime and a considerable impediment to sustainable development. We are convinced of the strong humanitarian dividends that would flow globally from a comprehensive and legally-binding Arms Trade Treaty which would establish universal standards for the import, export and transfer of conventional arms. We must intensify work towards an ATT to address these challenges and we join others in supporting calls for negotiations to commence next year.

New Zealand was proud to have a leading role in the negotiation of the Convention on Cluster Munitions. Given the humanitarian gains that will flow from this Convention, we are pleased at the strong progress made towards its entry into force. For our part, the New Zealand Government has attached priority to passing the legislation to enable us to ratify this significant treaty. We look forward to being part of the first Meeting of States Parties and welcome the offer of the Lao PDR to host this historic event.

The good outcome achieved on cluster munitions is due in no small part to the trail blazed by the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. Significant gains have been made under this Convention in terms of clearing mined areas, destroying stockpiles, and assisting victims. Our work is not done, however and we are particularly pleased that victim assistance will be a significant focus at the second Review Conference in Colombia later this year. We commend Colombia, as host country, and Norway, as President-designate for their sterling preparation for it. New Zealand's Minister for Disarmament and Arms Control, the Honourable Georgina te Heuheu, is looking to attend the Cartagena Summit.

Mr Chairman,

2009 has been a year of some promise. The 'Prague' vision and other strong statements of support for a nuclear weapon-free world herald a new era for global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. The onus is on all of us to live up to this historic opportunity.