



BANGLADESH

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Statement by

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Of the People's Republic of Bangladesh to the United Nations
at the General Debate of the First Committee of the 65th Regular Session of the UNGA

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Mr. Chairman,

Let me begin by congratulating you, and also the bureau, on your well-deserved elections. Your able leadership and wisdom, Mr. Chairman, I am confident, would guide our work in this committee to meaningful outcome.

Bangladesh aligns itself with the statement made on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement countries.

Mr. Chairman,

Given the recent encouraging developments in the field of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, this session's work of the First Committee would be critical for turning a corner in our disarmament agenda, after many frustrating years. *First*, the signing of a new "Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START)" by two countries with the largest arsenals of nuclear weapons is a positive development. *Secondly*, successful holding of "High-Level meeting on 'Revitalizing the work of the Conference on Disarmament and taking forward multilateral disarmament negotiations'", convened by the Secretary-General shortly before the commencement of this session, demonstrates renewed determination of the international community to establish a Nuclear Weapons Free World.

Holding of "NPT Review Conference of 2010" following the resumption of the substantive work of the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva after many years of stalemate is surely a welcome development. We are "also encouraged at the pronouncements emanating from different capitals on their promises to advance nuclear disarmament agenda in a substantial manner.

We must remind ourselves that the greatest threat, fear and uncertainty to humanity come from the continued existence of nuclear weapons and their possible use or misuse or threat of use. We should not have any doubt that total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against the use or misuse of nuclear weapons. All our endeavours, therefore, should aim at achieving this noble goal for the sake of humanity.

Mr. Chairman,

Bangladesh believes that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against their use or misuse. Pending this ultimate goal of a nuclear weapon free world, non-nuclear weapon states have the legitimate right to receive security assurances from nuclear weapon states. Bangladesh stresses on the early commencement of negotiations for a comprehensive, non-discriminatory, multilateral, and internationally and effectively verifiable Treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other explosive devices. Bangladesh believes that outer space is the common heritage of mankind and supports all international efforts to prevent an arms race in outer space.

Mr. Chairman,

Bangladesh had never any illusion that the NPT remained the cornerstone of the nuclear non-proliferation regime and the essential foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament and for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Bangladesh reiterates its call, as reflected also

in the Security Council resolution 1887, that States that are not Parties to the NPT should accede to the Treaty as non-nuclear-weapon States so as to achieve its universality at an early date, and pending their accession to the Treaty, to adhere to its terms.

Bangladesh calls for adopting a balanced approach in addressing the three pillars of NPT— nuclear disarmament of countries currently possessing nuclear weapons, non-proliferation to countries not yet in possession, and the peaceful use of nuclear energy for all. Bangladesh also reiterates its call for all States, particularly the remaining Annex—2 nations, to refrain from conducting nuclear test explosion and to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). Bangladesh has been the first Annex—2 South Asian nation to join CTBT. We are convinced that universalisation and entry into force of CTBT at an early date is a critical building block for a nuclear-free world.

Bangladesh also calls upon the Parties to the NPT, pursuant to Article VI of the Treaty, to undertake to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to nuclear arms reduction and disarmament, and on a Treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control, and calls on all other States to join in this endeavour. We are looking forward for a balanced outcome in all the Treaty's three pillars: non-proliferation, disarmament, and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

Mr. Chairman,

Bangladesh, a country constitutionally committed to general and complete disarmament, enjoys an impeccable record in disarmament and non-proliferation, in nuclear as well as in conventional weapons. We are party to almost all UN disarmament and non-proliferation instruments, and make endeavours, within our limited resources, towards their full implementation at the national, regional and international levels.

Bangladesh, a country having no nuclear weapon ambition, reiterates its demand for security assurance through establishment of a universally binding legal instrument prohibiting use or threat of use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States. We support the Security Council resolution 1887 which recalled the statements of 1995 by each of the five nuclear-weapon States guaranteeing security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon State Parties to the NPT against the use of nuclear weapons. Strict adherence to this assurance is essential for strengthening the nuclear non-proliferation regime.

We would like to emphasise here that while we support all non-discriminatory efforts towards nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, Bangladesh recognises, as stipulated Article IV of NPT, the inalienable right of the Parties to NPT to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without discrimination and in conformity with Articles I and II of this Treaty. Bangladesh, for example, has consciously and unconditionally opted to remain non-nuclear. We are currently working on making good use of the NPT provision on peaceful uses of nuclear energy for improving the living standard of our people, under the guidance of IAEA. Bangladesh has also concluded safeguard agreements with the IAEA including the Additional Protocols as part of her commitment to non-proliferation.

Bangladesh have long been advocating for the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones around the world. We value establishment of such zones as confidence building measures against the threat of nuclear weapons. While we welcome the entry into force of the Central

Asian Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty and the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty, we continue to support establishment of such regimes in South Asia, in the Middle-East, and in other parts of the world.

Mr. Chairman,

While we must continue to work on eliminating weapons of mass destruction from the face of the earth, we must not lose sight of the perennial threats posed by proliferation of conventional weapons, including small arms and light weapons. Bangladesh lends its support to the global effort for concluding an arms trade treaty to ensure transparent production, shipment, and transfer of conventional weapons.

Proliferation of small arms and light weapons, the real weapon of mass destruction in use on a daily basis, are destabilising regions and societies with devastating impacts on the vulnerable groups of people, including women and children. The unanimous adoption of the Program of Action in 2001 on small arms and light weapons was a watershed moment in the history of disarmament and non-proliferation. This carefully crafted document has been the cornerstone of our efforts in building norms and setting standards in regulating the affairs related to small arms and light weapons. Progress in its implementation, however, has been uneven. Full implementation of the Program of Action, therefore, is of paramount importance for all societies.

Bangladesh also calls for putting an end to the use of anti-personnel landmines. Many civilians, including children and women, have fallen victims to landmines in conflict and post-conflict situations. Bangladesh has fulfilled its obligations under the landmine convention by destroying its stockpile. We call upon all States, which have not yet done so, to accede to the Ottawa Convention. Assistance should also be extended in mine clearing operations as well as in rehabilitation of victims in the affected countries.

The disarmament agenda, both of nuclear and conventional weapons, is absolutely critical for achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) particularly the Least Developed Countries. Appalling military expenditure in excess of one trillion dollar every year is morally unacceptable at a time when financial and economic crisis have pushed millions around the world below poverty line and made over one billion people, one-sixth of the humanity, go to sleep hungry every night. It is estimated that the world spends some US\$ 3.5 billion each day on weapons and soldiers, and over US\$ 42 billion worth of conventional weapons are sold to developing nations every year. We reiterate our demand that the major military powers stop this mindless arms race and divert the resources to much worthy causes such as eradication of poverty, spread of education, supply of medicines, reducing infant, child, and maternal mortality rates, providing resources for climate change victims for adaptation, mitigation, technology transfer and rehabilitation of climate migrants--- basically for ensuring development of people across nations. Such would be the best guarantee for peace and security, growth and stability, democracy and human rights, counter terrorism, tolerance and development, ensuring a shared prosperous future for the entire humanity.

Mr. Chairman,

As I mentioned earlier, there are some good reasons to be optimistic considering some recent developments. I am hopeful about making progress in the disarmament and non-

proliferation agenda. It is from this perspective that the work of the First Committee, the UN forum responsible for setting norms and standards in matters related to disarmament and international security, assumes high significance in the 65th session of the UNGA. It would be up to us to rise to the task to prevent a nuclear nightmare. Mere talks and resolutions are not enough. All these statements and resolutions must be implemented in letter and spirit, and with due urgency. We cannot afford anything less than that.

Mr. Chairman,

Let me conclude with a quote from former US President, DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER. He mentioned in 1953 that "Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who are hungry and are not fed, those who are cold and not clothed". It is regrettable that we are arming ourselves to the teeth, when our people go hungry, homeless and are vulnerable to disease, climate change and natural disasters.

We cannot let it happen any longer. I am confident that we can reach our long sought goal of disarmament if we all make a concerted effort with true political commitment.

Thank you.