



MALDIVES

Statement by:

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First Committee General Debate Statement

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Mr Chairman

Let me begin by congratulating you and the other members of the Bureau on your election to the Chairmanship of the First Committee. I would like to assure you of my delegation's full support in the work ahead. Let me also take this opportunity to thank the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Angela Kane and the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs in their efforts to support the work of the Committee.

Mr Chairperson,

You may wonder, why a country, as tiny as the Maldives, that does not produce any weaponry, let alone nuclear weapons, is speaking at this plenary. You may wonder what such a country can say about international security through addressing non-proliferation, stockpiling, arms in outer space, or even general disarmament.

A country such as ours cannot do much to contribute to making the world a safe place for future generations. But we can most certainly highlight the dangers weapons of mass destruction pose. We can talk about the futility of wasting what precious little resources we have on research and development of these weapons which could otherwise be used for development. We can give moral support to those states standing up for non-proliferation and disarmament.

We followed the first ever High Level meeting on Nuclear Disarmament convened during this General Assembly, with great interest and hope. Our hope was that the momentum manifested in the high level of participation and the strong support voiced during the event will help us to move forward in this critical matter.

We cannot state often enough, that small states like the Maldives are not contributors to the world's ills. Just as we are not the cause of global climate change; we do not deal in arms; we do

not produce or stockpile nuclear weapons, nor do we take part in arms races. Yet, should a nuclear strike occur, its effects would ripple across our community of nations. Ripples the high and breath of tsunamis. We know, that today no nation on earth has the ability to deal with the humanitarian consequences of a nuclear strike. In this light, we welcome the increased attention on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons reflected by the conference in Oslo this year and Mexico next year. We believe, we have a moral obligation and a responsibility to raise our voice on this issue.

As the Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said a couple years ago "A world free of nuclear weapons would be global public good of the highest order". We therefore call on all nations to work together towards this ultimate goal through the United Nations Disarmament machinery, especially the Conference on Nuclear Disarmament. We believe the negotiation of a fissile material cut-off treaty, the long-due entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the commencement of negotiations towards a comprehensive convention on nuclear weapons to prohibit their possession, development, production, acquisition, testing, stockpiling, transfer, use or threat of use and to provide for their destruction, would be vital steps in the right direction.

The Maldives would in this regard also like to emphasize the importance of the Treaty for Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and its three pillars, which also works towards reaching the goal of complete disarmament as agreed in Article VI of the NPT. Non-proliferation and disarmament are mutually reinforcing and pursuing non-proliferation alone is both counter-productive and unsustainable. Also the NPT enshrines the right of each state for peaceful uses of nuclear energy, which needs to be upheld. The Maldives calls for the implementation of the action plan of the 2010 NPT Review conference.

Mr Chairperson,

The Maldives supports international arms control initiatives and counter-proliferation including nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament activities. The Maldives is party to a number of international conventions on disarmament and arms control, including the Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Chemical Weapons Convention, Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, and the Biological Weapons Convention. We have submitted regular reports under these conventions. Our participation and compliance are not because we are involved in any of the activities banned by these conventions. In this regard, we join other states in welcoming the Syrian Government's recent signing of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling, and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction. Also we congratulate the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons for being awarded the Nobel Peace Price and commend it for its extensive efforts to eliminate chemical weapons.

Mr Chairperson,

Global peace and security can only be achieved through the eradication of all nuclear weapons. The only way to effectively eliminate these weapons would be for the nuclear states to destroy their weapons and the threshold states to give up their ambitions to develop them. I know there are dissenting voices to this argument. I know there are those that believe that having nuclear weapons is an indispensable insurance policy as well as a status symbol of great power. But I urge those nations to compare these views against the recent events that raised concerns over the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. It was only recently we saw the significant real dangers and the unbelievable human cost of chemical weapons in Syria. It was only a few weeks back that we at this United Nations condemned the use of chemical weapons. It is our hope that these events will help to shape the global consensus about nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction.

Mr Chairperson,

While the threat presented by nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction is clear, we are also often reminded of the damage that can be caused by small arms and weapons in the wrong hands. The building up of small arms and weapons stockpiles is a cause for alarm, increasing the risk of escalating civil wars into large scale regional or international conflicts. It is a sign of hope and a sign of the growing solidarity behind the principles that we gather here today to defend, that the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Arms Trade Treaty earlier this year. We believe that this treaty is an important step in the right direction: prohibiting states from transferring conventional weapons to countries when they know those weapons would be used to commit or facilitate crimes against humanity. The Maldives' stringent domestic laws and means on control have ensured that the illicit trade in arms does not occur at all, either within the local population or with other countries. The Maldives annually submits its report to the United Nations Register for Conventional Arms. However, there have been indications that Maldivian territorial waters have been used in the past as a transshipment point for illicit arms destined for third party entities. Thus, the Maldives hopes to join 113 that have signed the Treaty, in the near future.

Mr Chairperson,

The Maldives also supports the creation of nuclear free zones around the globe, particularly in regions, which are more volatile. Nuclear free zones are important as they open the possibilities of regional dialogue on issues of security, for each region is unique and so are their security concerns. These regional initiatives then can be translated to the wider international community.

The Maldives has continuously supported the establishment of Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace. Since the adoption of the declaration, the cold war power dynamics and context of issues prevalent in the region has changed significantly. There have been many new challenges and

new dynamics of threat to security that needs due regard. I therefore think it is of utmost importance to have focused discussions on this topic at the 68th General Assembly on those new challenges to reinvigorate the idea and fashion it in a way which would be more acceptable to all. It is our hope that through the co-operation between the countries of the Indian Ocean and the other concerned powers; we will be able to find practical ways of fulfilling the aspiration of our peoples on the Zone of Peace proposal.

Mr Chairperson,

As responsible citizens of the global community of nations, we have an obligation to our future generation: to protect and to preserve. We have obligations to our present generation, to ensure that the limited resources in our world today, get used in the best way possible, that resources get allocated where they are needed the most. It is therefore a shame when one in eight people worldwide still suffer from chronic hunger, more than \$100 billion is spent on global nuclear weapons. It is a shame that nuclear weapons spending is equal to roughly 80% of the total official development assistance, especially at a time when this General Assembly is calling for countries to fulfil their commitments in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. It is a shame that the annual operating budget of the Office for Disarmament Affairs is approximately \$10 million, which is less than the amount the nuclear-armed nations spend on their nuclear weapons every hour! In the words of the United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, “the world is over-armed and peace is under-funded”.

Dear colleagues,

Every dollar we spend on nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction is a dollar that can be spent on overcoming poverty in our countries. It is a dollar that can be spent on educating a child, on eradicating non-communicable diseases, on hospitals, food, clean water, climate change adaptation, building resilience. Every dollar we spend on these weapons is a dollar that can be invested in our shared future.

Thank you