



**BANGLADESH**

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**Statement by  
Mr. M. Zulfiqur Rahman  
Director General (United Nations), Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
at the General Debate of the First Committee of the 64<sup>th</sup> Regular Session of the UNGA**

New York, 06 October 2009

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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 fruition.

Bangladesh aligns itself with the statement made by Indonesia 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. The necessary political will is apparent to make a difference. I agree with the UN Secretary General that now it is our time to be united in purpose and in action for a nuclear-weapon-free world, and that nuclear disarmament was the only sane path to a safer world.

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.

The historic Security Council Summit of last week that unanimously adopted resolution 1887 (2009) can be a step in the right direction, if all parties fulfil their obligations under the UN disarmament and non-proliferation regimes. We hope this would put an end to the existing situation where the nuclear-weapon States continued to acquire more precision capabilities to the existing stockpiles as well as developing new types of weapons. Such a situation only makes these weapons more attractive to terrorists for acquisition and use, bringing unimaginable disaster for all of us. We, therefore, must remind ourselves that the greatest threat to humanity comes from the continued existence of nuclear weapons and their possible use 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 threat of use of nuclear weapons. All our endeavours, therefore, should aim at achieving this noble goal for the sake of humanity's existence.

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. The Security Council has just re-confirmed it. 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 to the NPT Review Conference of 2010 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, have 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 have 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 this year, 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 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 Programme 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 Programme 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), by the developing countries, 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 the world spends some US\$ 3.5 billion every 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 of ensuring development of all our peoples. This would be the best guarantee for peace, security, human rights and development, ensuring a shared prosperous future for the entire humanity.

Mr. Chairman,

We have good reasons to be hopeful, more than ever, about making progress in the disarmament and non-proliferation agenda. Also about the NPT review conference next year. This can indeed be a time for looking beyond what has been perceived to be achievable all these years and work for an ambitious disarmament agenda to make this planet a safer place for all of us, and our future generations.

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 64<sup>th</sup> 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.

I thank you all.