

7 September 2006

The Arab League, Ambassador Abdulla Abdullatif Abdulla (*statement delivered by Bahrain*)

Mr. President, on behalf of the Arab Group participating as members or observers at this Conference, I should like to express our region's full appreciation of your efforts to address the issue of disarmament in general and nuclear disarmament in particular. I should like to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency and to confirm our willingness to cooperate with you fully in making this Conference a success and obtaining the best results for all sides. I should like to sincerely thank the Secretary-General of the Conference, as well as his deputy and the secretariat, and also to express my gratitude to your predecessors.

The Arab Group affirms its strong commitment to the General Assembly's resolutions, most recently resolution 60/59 of 8 December 2005, which states that multilateralism is the core principle in negotiations in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation. This is confirmation of the universality of these questions, which require the equal participation of all countries.

It was on this kind of basis that the Arab States undertook to abandon the nuclear option by acceding to the NPT. For this reason, and because of their commitment to non-proliferation, they attach the utmost importance to disarmament. Accordingly, they call on the nuclear-weapon States which are parties to the Treaty to bear their responsibilities and provide the required security assurances to implement the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly and the review conferences on the subject of nuclear disarmament. The Arab Group hopes that the nuclear-weapon States will respect the commitments that they have made, particularly the undertakings that they gave at the Sixth NPT Review Conference held in 2000 with regard to the "13 steps".

In this connection we are very disappointed at this Conference's failure to respond to the appeals of the 2005 Review Conference, to establish a subsidiary body to deal with nuclear disarmament and commence negotiations on an FMCT, including stockpiles, taking account of the related objectives of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

The Arab Group further hopes that the parties to the Treaty will take advantage of the preparatory meetings for the forthcoming review conference to conduct a genuine, impartial and balanced review of the three pillars of the Treaty, namely, nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and peaceful uses.

In 1995, the Arab Group's States parties to the Treaty agreed to an indefinite extension of the Treaty, because they were convinced that the resolution on the Middle East could strengthen regional security by ridding the region of nuclear weapons. The Arab States reiterate that this resolution is part and parcel of the Treaty. The final document of the Sixth Review Conference clearly reaffirmed "the importance of Israel's accession to the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the placement of all its nuclear installations under comprehensive IAEA safeguards, realizing the goal of universal adherence to the Treaty in the Middle East" (art. 7, para. 16, subpara. 3).

Arab States insist on the need to implement the vital resolution of 1995 on making the Middle East a nuclear-weapon-free zone and the related resolutions which the General Assembly adopts every year, at the initiative of the Arab Group, the most recent resolutions being General Assembly resolutions 60/52 and 60/92 on this issue.

Our request is more urgent than ever, given the very grave developments in our region, particularly Israel's deplorable aggression against Lebanon and Palestine. According to Amnesty International, the widespread destruction of civil infrastructure, energy networks, civilian homes and factories was premeditated and part of an Israeli military strategy which led to the deaths of more than 1,100 persons - one third of them children - the wounding of 4,000 others and the displacement of 978,000 persons, or one quarter of the population, who had to flee to the north of Lebanon. The Amnesty report describes these violations as war crimes for which individuals should be prosecuted.

The director of the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) has further stated that Israel deliberately used cluster bombs against populated areas, targeting at least 170 villages and locations in violation of international law. These bombs were scattered across wide areas and are deadly traps for civilians from villages near and far. Indeed, many people, including children, have been killed or injured by them since the ceasefire.

If a number of multilateral forums deal with the subject of disarmament, this remains the only international, multilateral forum that can prepare draft conventions and treaties on these subjects. To do this, we all have to work to protect this advantage and contribute to the creation of a new international legal order that guarantees lasting security and peace in the world. We hope that the members will demonstrate the right kind of political will, flexibility and realism to find compromise solutions with a view to adopting a programme of work that takes account of the security requirements of all the different groups of States.