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STATEMENT
BY

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DURING THE
GENERAL DEBATE OF THE FIRST COMMITTEE

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Chairperson,

Allow me at the outset to congratulate you on your assumption of the Chair of the 2010 First Committee Session. I wish to assure you of South Africa's full support and co-operation as we work towards a successful session that will strengthen both the multilateral disarmament agenda and machinery. My delegation also associates itself with the statements delivered by the Non-Aligned Movement as well as the New Agenda Coalition.

As South Africa will be delivering more detailed statements during the Committee's thematic debates, this intervention will focus on South Africa's national views relating to the broad areas of weapons of mass destruction and conventional arms.

Chairperson,

Since we met here last year, there have been a number of encouraging developments in the disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control field that have given hope for progress in our collective endeavour to achieve a more just, peaceful and secure world.

South Africa shares the concerns regarding the threat posed by weapons of mass destruction. Due to their reach and indiscriminate nature, these weapons threaten not only individual countries, but the international community as a whole. South Africa believes that the continued possession of nuclear weapons, irrespective of where they are, continues to pose a danger to international peace and security. South Africa further believes that the NPT remains the cornerstone of the nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation regime. However, we remain concerned about the selective approach adopted by some States that focus exclusively on some of the Treaty's provisions that are preferred over others and suit own agendas. South Africa believes that the vitality of the Treaty is dependent on the balance that should be maintained between its three mutually reinforcing pillars.

The success of the 2010 NPT Review Conference has built upon recent international momentum in the field of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation and the vision of a world free of nuclear weapons. The 2010 NPT Final Document – albeit somewhat watered down from earlier drafting versions -- largely represents compromises on all issues, including nuclear disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation, peaceful uses, withdrawal, institutional reform, and the Middle East. It was carefully crafted to accommodate the main concerns of all States parties and as such, constitutes a small, but significant and practical step towards strengthening global security and laying the groundwork for a transformative, comprehensive approach to creating a world free of nuclear weapons.

The adoption of the 2010 Final Document has set the scene for the next review cycle of the NPT, culminating in the next Review Conference to be held in 2015. If vigorously pursued, its steps aimed at strengthening global security could play a meaningful role in outlining the future approach towards an eventual world free of nuclear weapons. It is South Africa's view that the outcomes of the 2010 NPT Review conference have the potential of strengthening global peace and security and could play a meaningful role in outlining the future approach towards an eventual world free of nuclear weapons. In this regard, I wish to underscore that Nuclear Weapon-Free Zones (NWFZs) are an integral part of the NPT in accordance with Article VII of the NPT and that they continue to be an important aspect of the nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation process. In this context, South Africa welcomes the entry into force of the Pelindaba Treaty and looks forward to more countries ratifying it in the near future. We also look forward to the first Conference of States Parties to the Treaty that will be held in Addis

Ababa at the end of this month and stand ready to honour the OAU's endorsement of the establishment of the African Commission on Nuclear Energy (AFCONE) in South Africa.

Chairperson,

Due to the anticipated expansion in the use of nuclear energy for electricity production the issue of having access to a reliable supply of nuclear fuel has been under discussion in various fora. My delegation has closely followed with keen interest all the evolving discussions on various proposals submitted to the IAEA on the matter of assurance of nuclear fuel supply. South Africa would like to underscore the need for reaching decisions on this matter by consensus.

South Africa recognizes that the availability of nuclear fuel in the market, or the existence of mechanisms that facilitate reliable supply, may well contribute to a decision by States not to pursue domestic fuel cycle capabilities. However, in South Africa's view such a decision remains a sovereign one. Although the prevailing proliferation concerns may prompt us to consider further modalities or alternative arrangements on supply mechanisms, these should not impose unwarranted restrictions and controls over the legitimate peaceful use of nuclear energy and the inalienable right of Member State to pursue any nuclear fuel cycle capabilities, consistent with their non-proliferation obligation under the NPT.

Chairperson,

South Africa congratulates Ambassador Ahmet Üzümcü of Turkey with the assumption of his duties on 25 July 2010 as the new Director-General of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). We wish him well with the task that lies ahead of guiding the Organisation through some major challenges as well as ensuring the Organisation adapts successfully to a changing operational environment.

The most important challenge facing the Chemical Weapons Convention is the fact that both the two major possessor States Parties have informally indicated that they would not be able to meet the final extended destruction deadline of 29 April 2012. While this would pose a serious challenge to the Chemical Weapons Convention, South Africa believes it does not necessarily have to be so. The most important consideration in this regard will be to ensure that the integrity of the Convention remains intact and that the destruction of all chemical weapons is completed without further delay.

South Africa also remains committed to the strengthening of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) to ensure that our common goal of preventing the threat posed by biological weapons is achieved. As the BTWC seeks ways to strengthen the regime, much emphasis has been placed on the developmental and co-operation features of the Convention. South Africa shares the view that Article X should promote the right of States Parties to participate in the exchange of equipment, materials and scientific information for peaceful purposes, and that States Parties in a position to do so, should contribute to the further development of scientific knowledge and discoveries in this field. The continued universalisation of the BTWC is likewise of critical importance to the effective eradication of biological weapons. We therefore call upon those countries not yet party to the Convention to join without further delay.

Chairperson,

The overall trend in developments in the field of conventional arms in recent years has been more positive. We are pleased to note that the Convention on Cluster Munitions entered into force on 1 August this year. As a signatory to the Convention, South Africa looks forward to participating in the First Meeting of States Parties in Lao PDR next month.

States Parties to the Convention banning anti-personnel mines also held their Second Review Conference in Colombia at the end of last year. That Conference gave States Parties the opportunity to review their overall implementation efforts in respect of the Treaty. As some States Parties have over the past ten years fallen behind in their clearance deadlines, South Africa renews its call on those in a position to do so, not to decrease their funding to States that have severe constraints in clearing anti-personnel mines and assisting the victims.

The Fourth Biennial Meeting on the implementation of the UN SALW Programme of Action in June 2010 also afforded States the opportunity to monitor their implementation of those undertakings that were made 2001. We are pleased that Colombia, on behalf of Japan and South Africa will introduce this year's omnibus draft resolution on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, thus setting a forward-looking agenda on the issue until 2012. My delegation trusts that with its non-controversial nature, the General Assembly will adopt the text by consensus.

Chairperson,

South Africa will continue to work hand in hand with other UN Member States in the process spelled out in resolution 64/48 entitled "The Arms Trade Treaty" mandating four Preparatory Committees to negotiate a legally binding instrument that will establish the highest possible common standards for the regulation of arms transfers. The First Preparatory Committee of the Arms Trade Treaty held in July this year, saw a robust debate develop that allowed for an encouraging exchange of ideas. South Africa wishes to express its satisfaction with the progress that was made towards establishing a common understanding around some of the key issues that the Treaty will address.

Chairperson,

Unfortunately, there have also been some worrying developments that have not served our shared security interests and that continue to undermine the multilateral disarmament agenda. This included the continued inability of the Conference on Disarmament and the UN Disarmament Commission to generate any substantive results, mainly as a result of conflicting priorities and a lack of the necessary flexibility and political will. In this connection, South Africa welcomes the High-level Meeting convened by the Secretary-General on 24 September 2010, which highlighted some of the divergences that exist on how the continuing impasse in these important multilateral bodies could be overcome.

The adoption of a Programme of Work during the 2009 Session of the Conference on Disarmament signalled to the international community the hope for progress after many years of stalemate and an era of resort to unilateral and other limited initiatives that have not always optimally served our collective security interests. We recall the positive atmosphere and spirit of compromise that allowed the adoption of that Programme of Work, which covered all the core

issues on the CD's agenda. It is indeed regrettable that the CD could not implement that decision and that no further progress could subsequently be achieved.

The CD has the responsibility to conduct multilateral disarmament negotiations. Due to its inability to fulfil this basic mandate during the last 14 years, some have understandably started questioning whether it remains the appropriate vehicle to pursue disarmament objectives. The past achievements of the CD speak for themselves. Core disarmament instruments have been negotiated in this forum and no one can therefore claim that the structure of the CD does not allow negotiations to take place.

Chairperson,

Current endeavours to address concerns regarding both conventional arms and weapons of mass destruction unfortunately continue to be characterised by actions that serve narrow interests, which paralyse the multilateral fora specifically established to address these concerns. The reality that initiatives to protect international peace and security are dependent on the collective participation of the international community therefore continues to escape us. In this regard, I would also like to recall South African President Jacob Zuma's statement at the Washington Nuclear Security Summit in April this year when he said that we should be concerned about (quote):

"the existence of networks dealing in the illicit transfer of nuclear related technology that could be used in the manufacture of weapons of mass destruction. The experience with this network, where South Africa was the first, among many affected countries, to successfully prosecute suspects, suggests that there is room for improvement regarding international cooperation and national legislation and enforcement machineries also in the most developed countries" (unquote).

Chairperson,

What is clear is that it can no longer be business as usual. South Africa has consistently argued that our collective security concerns require sustainable collective solutions that take into account not only the individual security needs of those that continue to hold the power in an unequal international system, but that would reflect our shared interests. While acknowledging its imperfections and the need for reform, we remain fully committed to the strengthening of the multilateral disarmament machinery.

In conclusion, Chairperson,

It is our hope that this year's First Committee session will contribute to our efforts to secure consensus on the important challenges facing the international community as a whole. My delegation stands ready to work with you, all Members of the UN and civil society with a view to supporting substantive progress on the multilateral disarmament agenda in order to strengthen the multilateral system of governance and contribute towards the maintenance of international peace and security.

I thank you.