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INTERVENTO DELLA SANTA SEDE AL PRIMO COMITATO DELL'ASSEMBLEA GENERALE DELLE NAZIONI UNITE SU GENERAL AND COMPLETE DISARMAMENT (ITEM 67)

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Nella giornata di ieri, 7 ottobre, nel corso della 59a Sessione dell'Assemblea Generale dell'O.N.U., l'Osservatore Permanente della Santa Sede presso l'Organizzazione delle Nazioni Unite, S.E. Mons. Celestino Migliore, ha preso la parola dinanzi al I Comitato sul tema "General and Complete Disarmament" (item 67).

Riportiamo di seguito il testo dell'intervento dell'Osservatore Permanente:

• INTERVENTO DI S.E. MONS. CELESTINO MIGLIORE

Mr Chairman,

I would like to join the other Delegations in congratulating you and the rest of the bureau upon your election.

We are now on the eve of the sixtieth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations. The ideals embodied in the Charter – seeking peace through international organization and cooperation – have been a source of hope through the years. These ideals ought to animate us as much now as in 1945. But lately, a sense of fear seems to cloud our vision: fear of terrorist attacks, fear of new wars, fear of a breakdown in the processes of international law.

A sign of this fear is the surge in global military spending which reached \$956 billion last year, an increase of 11 percent from 2002 and 18 percent from 2001. Military spending, which will exceed \$1 trillion this year, will soon surpass even the Cold War peaks. Many States are increasing their spending because they think that larger arsenals of firepower will provide security. Increased reliance on guns – large and small – is leading the world away from, not towards, security.

A clear result of such over-spending on the instruments of death is that governments are much less able to meet long-term commitments to education, health care and housing. The Millennium goals are left lagging while military priorities claim scarce funds. The United Nations pioneered studies which show the integral relationship

between disarmament, development and security. Security for all is enhanced when disarmament and development steps complement one another. We must point up the economic benefits of disarmament measures. Development alternatives to militarism must be the constant work of this Committee.

Moreover, it certainly cannot be said that poverty leads directly to terrorism, but it is true that terrorists exploit conditions of poverty in ways that produce heightened conflict and violence. The brutality of the terrorist attacks over the last year is a clear sign of a culture of fear and death. Responding to the ideological and supposedly religious nature of international terrorism, the Holy See has condemned these blasphemous attacks. My Delegation reiterates that the name of God must not be used to justify terrorism in any form and calls upon all religious leaders to speak and act against terrorism.

Terrorists use an array of weapons to kill, maim and slaughter. Their global reach means that these weapons are being produced and sold internationally, on black markets as well as by State-sponsors. In conjunction with the Counter-Terrorism Committee, States must look for ways to reduce the easy availability of these weapons through increased export controls and added vigilance over weapon stockpiles.

The world has also become increasingly aware of the grave threat posed by terrorists acquiring weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear weapons. The fragile state of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty at this moment is very worrying, as proliferation of these weapons greatly increases the likelihood of terrorist acquisition.

On the immediate horizon is the 2005 Review Conference of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. As the three preparatory meetings for the Conference have shown, the NPT is in crisis. The inability even to agree on an agenda or the continuing relevance of the Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference indicates the diverse perspectives among States Parties. The crisis, however, is far deeper than procedural disagreements. It has to do with the interplay of responsibilities between the Nuclear Weapons States and the non-Nuclear Weapons States. The non-nuclear members of the NPT have a duty not to engage in the proliferation of nuclear weapons, while the Nuclear Weapons States have a duty to engage in negotiations leading to the elimination of their nuclear weapons. This was the original bargain of the NPT: no proliferation in exchange for nuclear disarmament.

Since the Treaty was signed in 1968, there has been an ongoing struggle between the nuclear haves and have-nots. This struggle has divided our attention between "vertical" and "horizontal" proliferation, and the best intentions of this bargain have not resulted in the desired outcome of a world free of nuclear weapons. On the contrary, attempts are being made to modernize nuclear weapons and to give them a war-fighting capacity. This situation is becoming increasingly unsustainable and unacceptable. Progress will be made only when strategic choices towards nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and a reconsideration of nuclear policies are undertaken by all parties.

It is to be hoped that the gravity of the present crisis will lead States to act to ensure that the NPT emerges from the Review Conference next year in stronger condition than at present. There should be early agreement to start negotiations for a fissile cut-off treaty; placement of surplus fissile materials under IAEA control; verification measures for nuclear disarmament; de-alerting measures; establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament at the Conference on Disarmament; maintenance of the moratorium on nuclear testing and early Entry-into-Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty; and the universality of the NPT.

As frightening as the proliferation of WMD and their possible acquisition by terrorists are, they do not come close to exhausting our disarmament concerns. The spread of conventional weapons, especially in conflict and post-conflict situations in Africa, is extremely concerning. The UN and its Member States must support all disarmament, demobilization and re-integration efforts in Africa and everywhere there is the need of such activities. We should give particular attention to addressing the special needs of children affected by armed conflicts, in particular the reunification with their family, their reintegration into society and their appropriate rehabilitation, as stressed in the UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

Mr Chairman,

In two months, Nairobi will host the First Review Conference of the Anti-Personnel Landmine Convention, also known as the Nairobi Summit for a Mine-Free World. From the beginning, the Holy See supported the process of the Ottawa Convention which has yielded a number of positive results in the fight against anti-personnel mines. Nonetheless, much still needs to be done if humanity is to be set free from these terrible, treacherous devices.

The Summit will be an important occasion to renew our efforts to promote the universalization and the implementation of the Convention in order to realize, in the not too distant future, the dream of a world free of anti-personnel mines. The Holy See calls on the whole international community to accomplish these efforts and pledges its own full and active participation.

Mr. Chairman, over the years, the Holy See has supported UN initiatives for building a "culture of peace". The discussion of this agenda item has always taken place in the Plenary Assembly, rather than in this Committee, even though its importance to disarmament is evident. While the technical proficiency of arms control negotiators and experts is welcome and necessary, my Delegation would like to emphasize the larger aspects of education and formation, and reiterate its firm commitment to it.

Thank you, Mr Chairman.

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