



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE
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HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIÈGE PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLS
OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE SALA DE IMPRENSA DA SANTA SÉ
BIURO PRASOWE STOLICY APOSTOLSKIEJ دار الصحافة التابعة للكرسي الرسولي

N. 0499

Martedì 04.10.2005

INTERVENTO DELLA SANTA SEDE AL PRIMO COMITATO DELL'ASSEMBLEA GENERALE DELLE NAZIONI UNITE SU GENERAL AND COMPLETE DISARMAMENT (ITEM 98)

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Nella giornata di ieri, 3 ottobre, nel corso della 60a 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 98).

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

● **INTERVENTO DI S.E. MONS. CELESTINO MIGLIORE**

Mr. Chairman,

I would like to congratulate you on your election as Chairman of this important Committee.

Over the past few months, the international community had some hope that the issues of disarmament and non-proliferation would be addressed by the world leaders who came to the Summit for the 60th Anniversary of the United Nations. Indeed, the draft document prepared for the Summit called on States "to pursue and intensify negotiations with a view to advancing general and complete disarmament and strengthening the international non-proliferation regime." It encouraged them to strengthen the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and the biological and chemical weapons conventions. Some specific steps were suggested. Yet this language did not appear in the adopted Outcome document.

The Secretary-General labeled this exclusion a "disgrace." It happened not because most leaders and governments do not care. Many of them care a great deal about the suffering and increased dangers posed by the proliferation of weaponry of all kinds. But the pressure is such that the legitimate and grave concerns of many, especially the most vulnerable and marginalized, are often set aside.

Although the opening of the Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism was an important step

forward in reducing the risk of nuclear terrorism, it remains deplorable that the Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference in May ended without a single substantive decision. Nuclear weapons are becoming a permanent feature of some military doctrines, and there has been a dramatic 20 percent increase in world military spending in the past two years. The combined arms sales of the top 100 arms-producing companies increased 25 percent in a one-year period. Small arms kill at least 500,000 people per year, and the U.N. conferences on this subject have still not produced a legally-binding instrument on small arms transfers. The legal arms trade is once more on the rise, and the illegal flow of arms to the world's conflict zones is responsible for countless deaths. Terrorist attacks using assault rifles, automatic weapons, hand grenades, land mines, shoulder-launched missiles, and small explosives are mounting.

It is disappointing that the principles and progress of disarmament are being weakened both by the reluctance of some to disarm and by the unwillingness of others publicly to take to task such an attitude. The Holy See re-asserts the importance of arms control and disarmament, which are fundamental pillars of the architecture for peace.

All members of the United Nations have a duty to keep working on the technical, legal and political elements of the disarmament agenda. This duty becomes more relevant since we all know that security for all is enhanced when disarmament and development steps complement one another. The United Nations pioneered studies which show the integral relationship between disarmament, development and security. We must point up the economic benefits of disarmament measures. Development alternatives to militarism must be the constant work of this Committee.

This Committee bears a special responsibility this year to repair, to the extent possible, the omission of disarmament from the Summit's Outcome document. This ought not to be hard to do because the great majority of States want to move the disarmament agenda forward surely and speedily. Efforts will be made to revitalize the First Committee this year and to set up special working committees to deal with nuclear weapons issues, and this work should be supported. Other efforts will be made to bring like-minded States together to lay the technical, legal and political ground work for a Nuclear Weapons Convention. These are signs that States are serious about overcoming the obstacles that stand in the way of a nuclear weapons-free world.

Similarly, there is an urgent need to work locally, nationally, regionally and globally to eradicate small arms and light weapons. Multifaceted action incorporating arms control, crime reduction and peacebuilding components will advance human security. The important contributions made by civil society should be acknowledged by governments. Expanding partnerships between governments and civil society would greatly strengthen disarmament efforts.

Mr. Chairman, the past year has not been a good one for arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. Glossing over failures does not serve the cause of peace. But we have a responsibility to move from analysis to action. The "we the peoples" of the United Nations, as the Charter so eloquently refers to humanity, deserve to be free from the scourge of self destruction.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[01198-02.02] [Original text: English]
