



The
Bahamas

**59th SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**FIRST COMMITTEE
DISARMAMENT AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY**

GENERAL DEBATE

**STATEMENT BY H.E. PAULETTE BETHEL
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE
COMMONWEALTH OF THE BAHAMAS
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

**ON BEHALF
OF
THE CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY [CARICOM]**

7 OCTOBER, 2004

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Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the following thirteen members of the Caribbean Community [CARICOM], that are members of the United Nations, namely Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, and my own country, The Bahamas. CARICOM delegations congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, and the other members of your Bureau, on your election to guide the work of this most challenging and important committee, and we are confident that you will guide our work to a successful conclusion. We pledge our full support and cooperation in this regard.

CARICOM delegations thank Mr. Nobuyase Abe, Undersecretary General for Disarmament Affairs, for his introductory remarks highlighting some of the more pressing disarmament and international security issues facing the First Committee at this session. CARICOM delegations also wish to once again pay tribute to the staff of the Department for Disarmament Affairs, for their sterling work throughout the year.

Mr. Chairman

It is a source of concern to CARICOM delegations that once again we must acknowledge that the current climate prevailing in the international disarmament and arms control arena does not inspire much confidence that we, as the Member States of the United Nations, are living up to our obligations contained in the Charter of this Organisation to preserve international peace and security. Little progress has been made in recent times in restoring confidence in critical multilateral treaties, agreement on enhanced verification measures remains elusive, stalemate still prevails in the Conference on Disarmament and global military expenditures continue to rise.

It is against this backdrop that this Committee, and the General Assembly as a whole, has engaged in an exercise of critical self-examination and reflection, in an effort to identify ways and means to make this body more effective. CARICOM delegations pay tribute to the process initiated by your predecessor, and continued by you, Mr. Chairman, to revitalise and rationalise the work of this Committee, in concert with the ongoing process of the revitalisation of the General Assembly as a whole. The adoption of resolution 58/316 earlier this year has provided both the impetus and context for our deliberations on both procedural and substantive means to improve our methods of work.

CARICOM states welcome the transparency and frank dialogue that have characterised our reform discussions thus far, and look forward to continuing discussions on practical and realistic ways in which to make the work of this Committee, and thus the General Assembly as a whole, have a greater impact on the global disarmament agenda, and the current threats facing the international community. We must ensure however, that we do not engage in reform as an end in itself, but rather as a means to make real progress on those issues on our agenda that remain unresolved. It is our hope that we can marry the reform impulse with the necessary political will to ensure that we all meet our Charter obligations.

Mr. Chairman

The issue of weapons of mass destruction continues to be in the forefront of our collective concerns. CARICOM states remain concerned that some of the critical legal instruments governing the multilateral disarmament agenda have recently come under threat or have stalled in implementation. In this context, we reaffirm our commitment to the implementation of the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons [NPT], and continue to call for its universality. We also call on all States Parties to the NPT to fully implement their obligations under Article VI of the Treaty, and the commitments made at the 2000 NPT Review Conference. CARICOM States look forward to next year's NPT Review Conference as an opportunity to assess the progress made in implementing the commitments undertaken at the 2000 Review Conference, and to chart the way forward to further achieve the purposes and goals of the Treaty.

In this context, CARICOM states also call for a renewed commitment to promoting the entry into force and the implementation of both the letter and the spirit of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty [CTBT], including through prompt treaty action by those States whose adherence is needed for its entry into force. We applaud the work of the Provisional Technical Secretariat of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty Organisation [CTBTO] in promoting the entry into force of the treaty.

We are strongly committed to the process of regional cooperation in promoting nuclear non-proliferation, and the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones. It is a source of immense satisfaction to CARICOM States that the Treaty of Tlatelolco commands universal adherence in Latin America and the Caribbean, the first nuclear-weapon-free zone in a densely populated region. We encourage other States engaged in discussions to create nuclear-weapon-free zones to continue to move those processes forward in pursuit of the important goal of non-proliferation.

Mr. Chairman,

We, as members of the international community, have committed ourselves to the control and elimination of certain types of weapons, having recognised the indiscriminate and devastating effects that these weapons have on military and civilian populations alike. In this context, CARICOM States are committed to the implementation of the Conventions governing the development, production and use of chemical and biological weapons. Accordingly, we welcome the initiative of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in organizing a regional workshop on the universality and implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention, to be held in St. Kitts and Nevis in November of this year. CARICOM States are also committed to a process of developing and enhancing verification arrangements governing the development, production and use of biological weapons, as a means to promote greater levels of confidence among States.

Mr. Chairman,

CARICOM Member States are fully aware of the devastating effects of landmines, especially on the more vulnerable members of our societies, including women and children. We therefore look forward to the First Review Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel mines and on Their Destruction, to be held in November in Nairobi this year. At the

'Nairobi Summit on a Mine Free World', world leaders will assess the progress made in ending the suffering caused by anti-personnel mines since the entry into force of this Convention. We expect that with the adoption of the Declaration and Plan of Action, States Parties will recommit themselves to overcome the remaining challenges. CARICOM remains committed to the universality of the Ottawa Convention, and expresses its appreciation for the support and assistance received from the international community in mine clearance and stockpile destruction in the few areas of some of our territories that are mined.

Mr. Chairman,

While the spectre of weapons of mass destruction hangs over us all, the international community has rightly recognised and decided to act on the growing threat posed by the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. CARICOM States are strongly committed to the implementation of the Programme of Action adopted by the 2001 United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. CARICOM States do not produce small arms and light weapons, nor are we large-scale importers of this category of weapons. Yet, despite our best efforts, we continue to face the uncontrolled spread of illicit weapons throughout our territories, most times through the illegal diversion of weapons from the licit trade. As a result, small arms and light weapons now pose one of the biggest threats to the national security, and economic and social development of many of our small countries. As we have repeatedly stated, small arms and light weapons have been used by those that would seek to destabilise our region through criminal networks involved in the trafficking of drugs, weapons and human beings. These activities pose a dangerous challenge to our security infrastructure and are helping to undermine the economic and social fabric of our nations, as they contribute to a rise in crime, particularly violent crime.

Faced with this multi-faceted threat, CARICOM States have welcomed the degrees of cooperation undertaken at the bilateral, sub-regional, regional and international levels, including through the work of the CARICOM Secretariat, the Organization of American States and the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, all of whom have provided assistance in the implementation of the Programme of Action and other agreements aimed at controlling the proliferation of these weapons.

In this context, CARICOM States welcome the establishment of the Open-Ended Working Group To Negotiate An International Instrument To Enable States To Identify And Trace, In A Timely And Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms And Light Weapons, whose first substantive session was held in June of this year. As CARICOM stated at that time, we consider that an effective, multilateral, legally binding international instrument on identifying and tracing illicit small arms and light weapons would be an important contribution to our existing national, bilateral and regional efforts to control a phenomenon that taxes our human and financial resources so heavily. CARICOM States will remain fully engaged in the deliberations of the Working Group, and look forward to the next stage in our work. We also continue to call for progress to be made in other areas, including commitments to establish transfer controls in producer countries, the exercise of greater levels of scrutiny of end-user certificates by producer States and a real commitment to regulate brokering. Utilising the tools currently at our disposal, and creating new ones, will ensure that combined national and collective action will enable the international community to eradicate this deadly trade.

Mr. Chairman,

Another issue of overriding concern to the Caribbean region remains the transshipment of nuclear waste through the Caribbean Sea. CARICOM countries maintain that these shipments, and the concurrent potential for accidents, represent a serious threat to the economic development and security of our region. In this context, CARICOM welcomed the 2000 NPT Review Conference's explicit recognition of the concerns of small island developing states and other coastal states with regard to the transportation of radioactive materials by sea, and viewed this as an acknowledgement of the responsibility of the international community to protect the marine space of *en route* coastal states from the risks inherent in the transport of these materials. We are particularly encouraged by the ongoing efforts of the IAEA in this regard, including the adoption of the Code of Practice on the International Transboundary Movement of Radioactive Waste, and the annual resolution adopted by the IAEA General Conference on Measures to Strengthen International Cooperation in Nuclear, Radiation and Transport Safety and Waste Management. We call on all States to fully implement these instruments, including the call for states shipping radioactive materials to provide assurances to potentially affected States that their national regulations take into account IAEA Transport Regulations, and to provide relevant information relating to shipments of such materials. CARICOM States recognize the need for safety and security relating to these shipments and the right of States under Article IV of the NPT to benefit from the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. However, we affirm that these considerations should not be inimical to the sustainable development of other states.

Mr. Chairman,

It is clear that the international community must place renewed emphasis on the global disarmament agenda as we grapple with unresolved issues and seek ways to address new threats, including the concern that weapons of mass destruction could come into the possession of non-State actors. Thus, CARICOM States also reaffirm that the time has come to take a firm decision to convene the Fourth Special Session of the General Assembly devoted to Disarmament. We have agreed that there are many new threats confronting us, as well as old threats that continue to haunt us, therefore it is time to reaffirm our commitment to existing principles, as well as agree on some new strategies to address these threats.

Mr. Chairman

While there is ample reason to be discouraged, it is unacceptable and indeed impossible for the international community to turn its back on certain disarmament issues. The previous decade was marked by increased commitments, by all Member States, for social and economic development. Yet, there can be no development without security and no security without development. We must therefore redouble our efforts in implementing both sides of this equation, or else we will have failed to live up to the obligations contained in the UN Charter.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman