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STATEMENT

BY

CARICOM



AT THE GENERAL DEBATE

OF THE FIRST COMMITTEE

62nd SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

NEW YORK, 11 OCTOBER, 2007

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Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) which are members of the United Nations, namely Antigua & Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Kitts & Nevis, Saint Vincent & the Grenadines, Saint Lucia, Suriname and Trinidad & Tobago.

We congratulate you on your assumption of the Chair of the sixty-second First Committee session. It is our belief that under your able leadership our discussions will have a successful outcome. We would also wish to congratulate the other members of the Bureau on their election and assure you of the active and constructive participation of CARICOM in the deliberations of the First Committee as we collectively deal with issues in the area of disarmament and international security.

CARICOM Member States would like to thank the newly appointed High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Ambassador Sergio Duarte, for his informative statement at the start of our deliberations presenting us with an overview of the status of several nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation issues. We congratulate Mr. Duarte on his appointment and pledge our full support and cooperation for the work of the new Office of Disarmament Affairs.

We expect that the restructured Office of Disarmament Affairs will contribute to strengthening the capacity of the Organization to advance the disarmament agenda. As members of the Non-Aligned Movement we would like to fully associate ourselves with the statement delivered by the distinguished representative of Indonesia on behalf of the NAM.

Mr. Chairman,

CARICOM concurs with the High Representative in his assertion that humanity as a whole continues to live in insecurity. The preamble of the United Nations charter clearly reflects the idea that we as the international community should unite our strength to maintain peace and security.

We continue to believe that only a strong commitment to multilateralism will provide an avenue to remove the insecurities worldwide and work towards the achievement of sustainable economic and social development of all countries, and in particular many small developing countries.

For the countries of the Caribbean Community, multilateralism remains the only viable option for maintaining international peace and security. A critical and urgent challenge is that of ensuring that the efficacy of the multilateral machinery is enhanced in addressing the vexed questions of disarmament and non-proliferation. Disarmament and non proliferation also need to be addressed hand in hand to ensure balanced progress and the building of mutual confidence.

We live in a world with constant reminders of the dangers of a nuclear catastrophe. The threats posed by nuclear weapons are so grave that they risk jeopardizing our collective cultural, political and economic heritage and our natural environment.

From a holistic approach the solution for such a catastrophe would be a complete prohibition of the proliferation of such weapons and the elimination of existing arsenals.

Our delegations therefore call on nuclear weapon states to promote greater respect for legal obligations which result from adherence to the Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Further, CARICOM would like to underline the necessity of assurances against the threat or use of nuclear weapons against non nuclear weapons states.

The commitment of CARICOM to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation is embodied in the participation of all its members in the Treaty of Tlatelolco, the world's first nuclear weapon free zone in a densely populated area. This effort to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons succeeded in establishing a framework to free the region from the threat of nuclear proliferation and has earned us the distinction of being the first nuclear weapon free zone in the world. In this fortieth anniversary of the Treaty of Tlatelolco, CARICOM would wish to reaffirm its commitment to contributing to regional peace and security.

Mr. Chairman,

This brings us to an issue that is of critical importance to the region- the transshipment of nuclear waste through the waters of our region. The risk of an accident or worse yet a terrorist attack on one of these shipments poses a grave threat not only to the environmental and economic sustainability of the region but to our very existence in the Caribbean. Heads of Government of CARICOM and the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) have consistently called for a total cessation of these shipments in our waters and we reiterate our strenuous and forceful rejection of the continued use of the Caribbean Sea for the shipment and transshipment of nuclear material and toxic waste. We call upon the countries that produce nuclear and toxic waste to implement urgently relevant measures to establish reprocessing facilities which would put an end to the need for transshipment of this nuclear and toxic waste.

CARICOM also urges those countries currently involved in production or shipment of nuclear waste to adopt measures aimed at strengthening international cooperation in order to comply with security measures on transportation of radioactive material, especially those adopted at the 47th General Conference of the IAEA (Austria 2003).

Mr. Chairman,

The international community remains concerned by the threat posed by non-state actors acquiring weapons of mass destruction. With the extension of the mandate of Security Council resolution 1540 with two more years, CARICOM together with other member states will endeavour to intensify efforts to promote the full implementation of resolution 1540.

Pursuant to our obligations under this resolution, CARICOM notes that many of its members have submitted reports to the specially established Security Council Committee to monitor implementation.

We express the hope that the extension of the mandate will provide member states ample opportunity for sharing experiences and lessons learned in the areas covered by resolution 1540 as well the availability of programs that might facilitate the implementation of the resolution.

In this regard we are proud to note that a successful sub-regional seminar was held earlier this year in Jamaica, where regional seminar experts exchanged views and shared experiences on the implementation of resolution 1540. We express our gratitude to the United Nations System and our bilateral partners who have facilitated this regional debate.

Mr. Chairman,

The proliferation of conventional weapons continues to pose a threat to international peace and security and continue to be a cause of conflict and organized crime, in particular narco-trafficking.

Small arms and light weapons, which are now regarded as the contemporary caucus of mass destruction, remain a high priority issue for our region. The increasing spread of these weapons has already caused much suffering, whereby hundreds of thousands of people are killed every year by such weapons. The majority of these are civilians, often victims of crime or conflict. We have previously stated CARICOM's position to explore further the scope, feasibility and parameters for an Arms Trade Treaty in order to ensure that those who buy such weapons comply in their use with relevant international humanitarian law and international human rights law thereby contributing to political stability and to peace and security in countries throughout the world.

CARICOM for its part will continue the regional efforts to combat this phenomenon and we welcome all forms of cooperation and assistance at the regional and international level.

Mr. Chairman,

It is high time for the international community to demonstrate the necessary political will in halting the proliferation of nuclear weapons, in putting an end to the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons and more generally by strictly adhering to international obligations relating to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

CARICOM Member States will proceed to constructively participate in the deliberations as we collectively strive to work towards advancing the disarmament agenda.

I thank you Mr. Chairman.