



The Permanent Mission of Iceland to the United Nations

**Statement by
H.E. Ambassador Gunnar Pálsson
Permanent Representative**

**General debate on all disarmament and
international security agenda items
1st Committee**

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Mr. Chairman

Allow me first to congratulate you on your election and assure you of my delegation's full cooperation and support in the coming weeks.

Mr. Chairman

The impasse that has largely characterized multilateral discussions and negotiations on arms-control and disarmament over the past years has been broken. These important issues are now at the forefront of the international agenda, and, as was observed by speakers during the Security Council's meeting two weeks ago, the next twelve months will be instrumental in setting the tone for our future efforts.

For the first time, a world free of nuclear weapons, a distant vision at the time of the Reagan-Gorbachev Summit in Reykjavik in 1986, has become a realistic working goal. The unanimous adoption of Security Council resolution 1887, pledging the Council's support for progress on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation has brought that goal a step closer.

The recent commitments made by US President Obama and President Medvedev of Russia to pursue a legally binding successor treaty to the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START), have also provided an important impetus to further disarmament efforts.

While being witness to these positive developments, the world community remains confronted with grave risks of nuclear proliferation. We call upon all states to honor their international obligations and cooperate fully with the IAEA.

Mr. Chairman,

The Non-Proliferation Treaty remains the cornerstone of our global security. While the treaty has stood the test of time, it has confronted numerous challenges in recent years. These include the risks of further proliferation, the acquisition of nuclear weapons by non-state actors and nuclear terrorism. Such challenges should harden our resolve to strengthen the NPT's universality, effectiveness and authority and to combine our efforts in ensuring a successful 2010 NPT Review Conference that genuinely restores confidence in the non-proliferation regime.

The early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is a critical building block in the global nuclear non-proliferation architecture. Therefore, it is disappointing that out of the forty four states whose ratifications are required for the treaty to enter into force, nine have yet to either sign or ratify it. We welcome the positive signals coming from the individual countries in that regard, which hopefully will encourage others who have yet to ratify the treaty to come forward. Thanks to these recent developments the CTBT's entry into force could be within reach.

A verifiable Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty (FMCT) is another essential step toward nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. We sincerely welcome the adoption of a program of work by the Conference on Disarmament and hope that negotiations on a FMCT will begin early next year.

Two other key areas of the WMD arms-control and disarmament agenda are biological and chemical weapons. Iceland fully supports the universalisation and complete implementation of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTCW) and the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), and calls upon those countries that have not acceded to these instruments to do so without delay.

Mr. Chairman,

Small and light weapons have often been referred to as the real weapons of mass destruction. A major challenge confronting global peace and security is their misuse and illicit spread. Working to prevent the proliferation of such weapons also serves the cause of development and human rights. Therefore, Iceland strongly supports the UN Program of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the illicit Trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects, and calls for reinforced efforts to further strengthen its implementation.

Likewise, landmines and cluster munitions have been shown time and again to cause unacceptable harm to civilians, both during and in the aftermath of conflict. We therefore fully support the Ottawa Convention on Anti-Personnel mines and hope that the Summit in Cartagena, Colombia, later this year will bring us even closer to its universalisation. Iceland also wishes to acknowledge the adoption of the Convention on Cluster Munitions last year as a major milestone in addressing the humanitarian damage inflicted by these munitions.

Furthermore, we believe that a legally binding Arms Trade Treaty to regulate import, export and transfer of conventional arms is much needed in our efforts to reduce the human cost associated with the proliferation of conventional arms. Iceland will support measures to that end during this General Assembly and we hope that the negotiations on the treaty will begin as soon as possible.

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation shares the view, expressed by some previous speakers, that in order to take full advantage of the conducive atmosphere that seems to be emerging, a fundamental review of the intergovernmental machinery in the area of arms-control and disarmament, set up by the United Nations more than 30 years ago, may now be called for.

Mr. Chairman,

My country is among the 20 plus member states that either have never had or have abolished their own military. Therefore, it was particularly revealing for my delegation to hear Mr. Duarte, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, at the opening of this session inform the committee that the estimated global military expenditures last year exceeded \$1, 4 trillion, a 4% real increase compared to the previous year, and an alarming 45% increase from 1999. Let us hope that the current optimism and high expectations in the field of arms-control and disarmament can be converted into a reversal of this disturbing trend over the coming years.

I thank you Mr. Chairman.