

## **Statement by the Chairman, Amb. Nabil Fahmy**

Mr. Secretary-General, your Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters will conclude its 36th session later today, following three days of intensive deliberations. We received useful briefings from the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, the Director of UNIDIR, two non-governmental groups specializing on the small arms problem, and three experts on the "Revolution in Military Affairs" -- a popular label for the dynamic changes now underway in the conduct of modern warfare in an information-driven age. Though we have not arrived at any instant solutions to the difficult problems on our agenda, we have been able to agree on many issues. We intend to develop more specific recommendations at our second session in Geneva next July.

### **(1) DISARMAMENT**

The Board is fully united on the most fundamental issue of all -- the continuing relevance and importance of disarmament as a means of promoting international peace and security. Many alarming international developments call for a renaissance of disarmament, not its abandonment in a climate of despair, mutual suspicion, and competitive rearmament. Despite the enormous potential of globalization to contribute to the satisfaction of genuine human needs, rising military expenditures and the persistence of large numbers of nuclear weapons are only two of the alarming trends that should well be of concern to all.

### **(2) CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT**

The second point of agreement is that the elimination of weapons of mass destruction will require a truly multilateral effort, an effort necessarily involving the maintenance and elaboration of binding legal norms, and respect for the rule of law. Yet the Conference on Disarmament has for many years remained in deadlock. We strongly support the Secretary-General's numerous statements of concern over this development and encourage him to give this issue the high-profile attention that it deserves and to register such concerns in every appropriate forum, including at the CD and when the General Assembly meets at the foreign ministerial level.

The situation is grim, but not without hope. Many of our members voiced deep concern over the future of the CD as an institution of disarmament -- including its effectiveness and its ability to respond and adapt to rapidly changing circumstances. Some members addressed similar concerns over the United Nations Disarmament Commission. The seriousness of these concerns cannot be understated. We all sense that many of the traditional processes and institutions for the conduct of multilateral disarmament diplomacy are in danger of becoming irrelevant.

### **(3) REDUCING NUCLEAR DANGERS**

The weapons provisions of the Millennium Declaration represented the third area of agreement in the Board. There was specific agreement on the common commitment to

"strive for the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons" and on the need to keep open the option of convening an international conference to identify ways of eliminating nuclear dangers.

All members regarded the theme of "reducing nuclear dangers" as an issue of vital importance and an urgent priority. The Board reaffirmed many of the initiatives it identified in its report to the Secretary-General at the end of its 35th session. There was, for example, general support for de-alerting, deep reductions through the resumption of the START process, new efforts to bring the CTBT into force, national reviews of nuclear doctrines, and confidence-building measures, although opinions differed on some of the modalities for implementing these goals. Among these, members discussed the possibility of establishing intergovernmental "technical working groups" under the auspices of the UNGA to investigate this issue. We also discussed a proposal to encourage expert discussions within the UN Disarmament Commission on reducing nuclear dangers and the possible engagement of UNIDIR in the evolving debate on the issue. The members also discussed the theme of accountability as a key reason for convening an international conference on reducing nuclear dangers and there was wide-ranging support for this concept. Members also noted some advantages of convening a fourth Special Session of the General Assembly on Disarmament (SSOD-IV), and suggestions were made towards the possibility of convening a ministerial-level session of the UN Security Council specifically to address disarmament issues.

In short, while it was felt that the Secretary-General's proposal for an international conference on eliminating nuclear dangers should be kept alive, the Board agreed that the matter required further study to determine its optimal scope and timing. Many members felt that this goal is best pursued through gradual, incremental, but persistent steps.

#### **(4) NON-PROLIFERATION REGIMES**

The fourth issue we addressed in detail concerned international regimes set to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. While we agreed on the fundamental need for measures to prevent proliferation, many of us expressed the view that some of these controls were discriminatory in nature, especially to the extent that non-proliferation was being practiced by some states as a policy totally divorced from the issue of disarmament. All of us agreed that these regimes should be dynamic in function and that they must respond to changing international environments, including specifically the deeper roots of the underlying conflicts that can lead to proliferation. Concern was raised about possible ramifications of some regimes on civilian development. All of us see such regimes and global disarmament obligations as twin -- and inseparable -- means of serving the interests of international peace and security. They should not be viewed as ends in themselves. We agreed on the need for these regimes to increase their transparency and to promote greater consultation between regime members and with non-members. Last November, in an address on nuclear disarmament at John Jay College, the Secretary-General stressed the danger of complacency -- we fully share this concern and continue to emphasize the need for disarmament education and the greater dissemination of information on disarmament matters to address this chronic problem.

## **(5) MISSILE DEFENCE**

The fifth point of agreement concerned missile defence. Though there was no consensus on specific issues relating to the content and future of the ABM Treaty, there was widespread concern that unilateral actions to deploy national missile defences could jeopardize several disarmament, arms control, and non-proliferation goals -- all to the likely detriment of international peace and security. The Board acknowledges that while the ABM Treaty is a bilateral undertaking, its ultimate fate will have profound implications for global efforts in the fields of disarmament, arms control, and non-proliferation. Accordingly, the Board wishes to underscore the vital importance of consultations and mutual agreement on this matter, as a positive alternative to strictly unilateral action. We support the Secretary-General's numerous warnings of these dangers and urge him to continue to voice such concerns both with individual governments and to the public at large.

## **(6) REVOLUTION IN MILITARY AFFAIRS**

All members agreed that the rapid development the "Revolution in Military Affairs" is having profound implications for international peace and security and requires closer attention at the United Nations in particular -- we agreed to treat it as an open item. Though some technological developments associated with RMA may have some positive benefits for disarmament -- in promoting transparency, for example -- we believe that in general RMA is posing a number of serious and alarming new challenges to both regional and international peace and security, particularly with respect to military uses of outer space, the development and use of conventional weapons, global and regional disarmament efforts, and the future of the non-proliferation regimes.

As the gap in conventional weapons capabilities continues to widen among nations, risks will grow of the proliferation weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, and other so-called "asymmetric" responses. The dangers of pre-emptive wars and military interventions will also grow if military leaders are convinced that RMA offers them the means to achieve cheap, quick, and decisive victories with minimal civilian casualties. The discussions on RMA underscored the need to actively pursue comprehensive disarmament measures in order to ensure international peace and security. Members agreed that technological developments in private industry are fuelling the RMA and that many of these trends are difficult if not impossible to control. Nevertheless, it was felt that RMA was a subject that must be taken out of a narrow military context and addressed as an important political/military issue. We intend to continue to examine in our next session some more specific implications of RMA for disarmament.

## **(7) SMALL ARMS**

The seventh and last general point on which we agreed was the importance of a positive outcome from the 2001 United Nations Conference on Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. We agreed both on the vital need for action to address this issue, taking into account global trends and the particular challenges of different regions. All members

agreed that NGOs -- working both with governments and international organizations -- can play an important role in future efforts to curb the illicit trade in small arms.

We also agreed that while the illicit trade in small arms remained a major international security concern. It was also felt that efforts must also be taken in the world community - - consistent with national sovereignty -- to ensure that the legal production and trade in such weapons does not create new sources of illicit supply of such arms. Many argued that the Secretary-General should give special emphasis to this point in his discussions with other governments. The Board also discussed the value and potential obstacles to the establishment of an international code of conduct for small arms in general or particular aspects relating to the issue at hand. All agreed that efforts to curb this illicit trade will have to address several causal factors generating this trade, specifically the forces of poverty and greed.

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, the Board finds itself facing an enormous variety of challenges to international peace and security. We are more convinced than ever that the primary engine driving the worst of these threats -- specifically those coming from weapons of mass destruction -- stems from security concerns that arise out of, or are aggravated by, the fundamental existence of these types of weapons. We hold little faith in simply managing more safely the perpetual existence of such weapons.

Achieving disarmament will not be easy. It will require strong political will to be sure, but this political will must be backed by tangible resources -- people, funding, information, and institutional support. To our great alarm, we have learned recently that modest proposed increases in the budget of the Department of Disarmament Affairs -- along with the increase of the UNIDIR subvention -- are now reportedly slated for substantial cuts. We can only note that the DDA remains the smallest department in the United Nations, yet it is responsible for fulfilling one of the eight top priority areas facing the organization.

We conclude therefore with the hope that the Secretary-General will consider these concerns and would welcome any support he could provide in ensuring that DDA and UNIDIR receive the resources they need to do their important jobs.