Address by H.E. Yang Jiechi Minister of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China At the Conference on Disarmament

Geneva, 12 August 2009

2009/08/12

Madam President,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Dear Representatives,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to address the Conference on Disarmament. As the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, the Conference has produced many important legal instruments on arms control and contributed its share to world peace and security. Thanks to the concerted efforts of all parties, the Conference recently adopted its Program of Work and will soon proceed to substantive work on the core issues. I wish to offer my congratulations on the progress. I believe that with your diligence and wisdom, the Conference will press ahead with its work on various fronts and deliver new results, living up to the expectations of all parties.

Madam President,

The international security situation is undergoing the most profound changes since the end of the Cold War. Countries are more interdependent with their destinies closely linked than at any time in history. Peace and development remain the main theme of our time. Multilateralism and the vision of pursuing security through cooperation represent the shared aspirations of the people. Security dialogue and cooperation among countries have further deepened. All this has offered important opportunities for progress in the field of international arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation process.

On the other hand, however, the international community is confronted by an increasing number of security challenges. Terrorism is rampant, regional hotspot issues remain hard to resolve, the non-proliferation situation is still grim, and there are growing uncertainties as a result of the negative social impact of the international financial crisis and economic recession. To maintain international strategic stability and promote world peace and security remains a long-term and arduous task.

Madam President

China is committed to peace, development and cooperation in international affairs. As pointed out by President Hu Jintao, China unswervingly follows the path of peaceful development and a win-win strategy of opening up, and maintains that the people of all countries should join hands to build a harmonious world of enduring peace and common prosperity. The Chinese Government attaches great importance to arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation and has made due contribution to the international process in these areas.

Madam President

The Conference on Disarmament encapsulates the multilateral efforts on arms control and disarmament. It has made many proud achievements but also experienced a long period of stagnation. Today, at a time when the Conference is to open a new page in its history, we should seriously review past experience and lessons and explore ways to ensure all-round and sound progress of multilateral arms control and disarmament. In this connection, China
believes that:

First, we should embrace a new security concept featuring mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and coordination, and work for a harmonious and stable international and regional security environment.

Second, we should uphold multilateralism, bringing into full play the role of the United Nations and other multilateral mechanisms, and consolidate and reinforce the existing multilateral arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation regimes.

Third, we should maintain international strategic balance and stability, and achieve security for all based on mutual respect and equal treatment of the legitimate security interests of all parties.

Fourth, we should intensify dialogue and cooperation, and commit to peaceful settlement of international disputes.

Madam President,

Ever since nuclear weapons came into being, mankind has been living under the enormous shadow of the threat of a nuclear war. To achieve the complete prohibition and thorough destruction of nuclear weapons for a world free of nuclear weapons is the common aspiration of all peace-loving people. It is also a goal that China has all along been advocating and pursuing with unremitting efforts.

Back in the early 1960s, the Chinese Government issued a solemn statement, calling for the convening of a summit of world leaders to discuss the issue of complete prohibition and thorough destruction of nuclear weapons. As a nuclear-weapon state, China has never evaded its responsibilities in nuclear disarmament.

It is solely for the purpose of self-defense that China has developed limited nuclear capabilities. And we have faithfully abided by our commitment that we will not be the first to use nuclear weapons at any time and under any circumstances and that we will unconditionally not use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon states or nuclear-weapon-free zones. In fact, we are the only nuclear-weapon state that has undertaken such a commitment and this policy will not change in the future.

China has always exercised utmost restraint in the development of nuclear weapons. We have never deployed such weapons on foreign soil. We have never participated in any form of nuclear arms race and nor will we ever do so. This, in itself, is our unique contribution to the cause of nuclear disarmament.

China was among the first countries to sign the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). The Chinese Government is dedicated to promoting early ratification of the Treaty and will continue to make active efforts toward this end. We are ready to work with the international community for the early entry into force of the Treaty.

China supports the Conference in launching negotiations on the Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT) at an early date and will take an active part in the negotiations.

China opposes the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and their means of delivery. We have joined all related international treaties and mechanisms, put in place a comprehensive system of laws and regulations compatible with the relevant international legal regime, and strictly enforced UN Security Council Resolution 1540 and other non-proliferation resolutions. We have intensified efforts in export control and conducted multilateral and bilateral exchanges and cooperation on non-proliferation.

China calls for peacefully resolving the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula and Iranian nuclear issue through dialogue and negotiation, and has made unremitting efforts towards this goal. We are ready to work with other relevant parties to actively promote the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and proper settlement of the Iranian nuclear issue, with a view to safeguarding international non-proliferation regime and maintaining regional peace and stability.

Madam President,

Unprecedented opportunities now exist in international nuclear disarmament. The complete prohibition and thorough destruction of nuclear weapons and a nuclear-weapon-free world have become widely embraced goals, and various initiatives on nuclear disarmament have
been proposed. We welcome these developments.

We believe that in order to achieve the complete prohibition and thorough destruction of nuclear weapons for a nuclear-weapon-free world, the process of nuclear disarmament must be advanced in real earnest.

- As countries with the largest nuclear arsenals in the world, the United States and Russia bear special and primary responsibilities in nuclear disarmament. The two countries should continue to drastically reduce their nuclear arsenals so as to create necessary conditions for the eventual complete and thorough nuclear disarmament. We welcome the ongoing nuclear disarmament negotiations between the two countries and hope they will reach a substantive agreement as scheduled.

- Nuclear-weapon-states should reduce the role of nuclear weapons in their national security and commit themselves to no-first-use of nuclear weapons as early as possible. As early as in 1994, China officially put forward the draft of Treaty on the No-First-Use of Nuclear Weapons and we hope that under the new circumstances the parties concerned will take this proposal into serious consideration.

- Having given up their option to develop nuclear weapons, non-nuclear-weapon states are entitled to freedom from the threat of nuclear weapons. The international community should negotiate and conclude an international legal instrument on security assurances for non-nuclear-weapon states at an early date.

- The establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones is of positive significance to advancing nuclear disarmament and preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Nuclear-weapon states should support countries in the relevant regions in establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones or WMD-free zones and fulfill due obligations.

- The international community should work together for the early entry into force of the CTBT. The Conference on Disarmament should advance its substantive work in a balanced manner, and negotiate and conclude the FMCT as soon as possible.

- The practice of seeking absolute strategic advantage should be abandoned. Countries should neither develop missile defense systems that undermine global strategic stability nor deploy weapons in outer space.

- As a long-term goal, the international community should also conclude a convention on the complete prohibition of nuclear weapons so as to achieve the eventual complete and thorough nuclear disarmament under effective international supervision.

We believe that to achieve complete prohibition and thorough destruction of nuclear weapons for a nuclear-weapon-free world, the risk of nuclear weapon proliferation must be eliminated.

- It is important to enhance the universality, authority and effectiveness of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and ensure strict compliance with the Treaty.

- It is important to further strengthen the function of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in safeguards and promote effective implementation of and universal adherence to the Safeguards Agreement and its Additional Protocol.

- It is important to resolve proliferation issues through political and diplomatic means and eradicate the root causes of nuclear weapon proliferation.

- It is important to strengthen the safety and security of nuclear facilities and materials, combat nuclear terrorism, improve the nuclear export control regimes and carry out related international cooperation.

- And it is important to reject any practice of double standards.

We believe that to achieve the complete prohibition and thorough destruction of nuclear weapons for a nuclear-weapon-free world, peaceful use of nuclear energy and its international cooperation must be promoted.

- The right of NPT signatories to peaceful use of nuclear energy must be truly respected and upheld, and this right should not be compromised under the excuse of non-proliferation.

- The IAEA should play a bigger role in promoting peaceful use of nuclear energy.
- Countries should engage in multilateral consultations and actively discuss proper ways that can both reduce proliferation risks and promote peaceful use of nuclear energy, including the possibility of establishing a multilateral nuclear fuel supply mechanism.

The NPT Review Conference scheduled for next May is highly significant. All State Parties should seize this opportunity to advance the three major objectives of nuclear non-proliferation, nuclear disarmament and peaceful use of nuclear energy in a comprehensive and balanced manner, so that the Review Conference could produce substantive outcomes.

Madam President,

Outer space is the common asset of the entire mankind and to maintain security in outer space and ensure its peaceful use serves the common interests of all countries. Outer space is now facing the looming danger of weaponization. Credible and effective multilateral measures must be taken to forestall the weaponization and arms race in outer space. This is of high strategic significance and is also the common mission and responsibility of the international community. The Conference should play a key role in this regard.

In February last year, China and Russia jointly presented to the Conference the draft Treaty on the Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space, the Threat or Use of Force Against Outer Space Objects. We hope that the Conference on Disarmament will soon start substantive discussions on the draft so as to contribute to improving the legal system concerning outer space and maintaining its security.

Madam President,

An ancient Chinese philosopher Xun Zi said, "Unless you pile up little steps, you can never journey a thousand miles; unless you pile up tiny streams, you can never make a river or a sea." Likewise, to move forward the process of international arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation, we should also start from concrete steps and not waver in our conviction when faced with difficulties and setbacks. I am confident that with the concerted efforts of all peace-loving people in the world, we will make steady progress in the field of international arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation, making due contribution to the building of a harmonious world of enduring peace and common prosperity.

Thank you!