

Statement by Ambassador Majed Bamy, Senior Political and Legal Adviser, Mission of the State of Palestine, at the general debate of the First Committee, 11 October 2021

Mr. Chair,

The fact there are still nuclear weapons in our world today – over 75 years after the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki - constitutes one of the greatest failures for humanity, and one of the gravest dangers for its survival.

One of the critical objectives of the UN, since its inception, has been to rid the world of these horrific, inhumane, and insane weapons. It is our duty to ensure that we advance, undeterred, towards this goal.

Mr. Chair,

The State of Palestine aligns itself with the statements of NAM and the Arab group.

There is no justification for the exceptional status enjoyed by nuclear weapons. Weapons of mass destruction are, by their very essence, indiscriminate and inhumane. Nuclear weapons are the most destructive of them all. They are thus, have always been, and will always be, illegal. There is no situation, no circumstances, in which their use can be justified. Their very existence is an insult to those who perished and those who survived. They are a threat to innocent people around the world, an existential threat for humankind and our planet that can only be addressed by their elimination.

Mr. Chair,

The deal we made in the context of the NPT is clear: those who have nuclear weapons shall disarm and those who do not have them shall not acquire them. Nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation moving hand in hand and as mutually reinforcing. What we did not agree to is to offer anyone a privileged status granting them a right to possess nuclear weapons. The indefinite extension of the NPT was never intended and can never be interpreted as granting any legality or validity to the existence or indefinite possession of nuclear weapons. The NPT has three pillars, and we look forward to advancing on all three fronts at the upcoming 10th NPT Review Conference.

If nuclear disarmament falters, the whole edifice will collapse. In this sense, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is the natural extension and the indispensable corollary of the NPT. The State of Palestine is proud to have been among the States that elaborated the treaty and among the first countries to ratify it, contributing to its early entry into force.

We can not stand by and wait till the environment is ripe, till the circumstances are right, as there will always be a reason or a pretext not to move ahead. If it is about security then we are all entitled to security, if it is about deterrence then we are all entitled to deterrence. and if we can achieve

those by any means necessary, then all weapons of mass destruction are fair game. But that is not the international law-based order we built. We have among the States that possess nuclear weapons friends and foes, but in all cases nuclear weapons are the enemy. 76 years after Hiroshima and Nagasaki, resolute action can no longer be delayed. This is why the same determination displayed in the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons was displayed in the convening of the conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction.

Mr. Chair,

The Middle East region is a prime example of what happens when a country claims for itself what it denies others, ignoring both international law and international will. Israel has illegally and secretly developed nuclear weapons, refused to join the NPT and other relevant instruments, and actively obstructed the prospect of a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction. In this context, we note that this case reveals unacceptable and damaging double standards and selective condemnation, outrage and mobilization against proliferation of nuclear weapons.

The establishment of this zone enshrined in the 1995 resolution and subsequent decisions is an integral part of the package that led to the extension of the NPT. We welcome the convening of the first session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction under the able presidency of Jordan. We trust that the second session held under the presidency of Kuwait will allow us to advance towards this Conference's noble objective and we call on all parties to engage effectively and in good faith to help rid the region of these weapons, once and for all.

Mr. Chair,

Those calling here for a world free of nuclear weapons are simply echoing the voice of survivors and peoples around the world and their appeal for humanity and sanity to prevail. We are not speaking of a theoretical threat, we have seen the effect of nuclear weapons, and how many times their use was seriously envisaged. We are not speaking of a past threat, we have witnessed threats of resorting to such weapons just a few years ago. The world has been on the verge of a nuclear war too many times to underestimate the risk. Let us not tempt fate any further.

Mr. Chair,

The State of Palestine calls for universal adherence to instruments that prohibit or impose limitations on the use weapons in line with fundamental rules of international law. It reminds countries, in this context, of their obligations, including as they pertain to ensuring that these weapons are not used in the commission of genocide, crimes against humanity or war crimes.

The State of Palestine also calls to ensure that the common spaces that are shared by humanity, cyberspace and outer space, are used exclusively for peaceful means.

Mr. Chair,

As billions and billions of dollars are spent on armament, we continue suffering from systematic underfunding for the achievement of the SDGS, notably in the context of the pandemic. This must change, not only in the name of humanity, but also to achieve shared security. We must abandon the narrow interpretation of security and understand that in an interdependent world we must adopt policies that foster hope rather than fuel despair, resentment, marginalization, and hatred. The progress we achieve in the field of disarmament reverberates across many other fields that directly affect the lives and realities of our peoples. We hope that we can together move forward towards a safer and more equitable world.

Thank you Mr. Chair.