Message of Congratulations by the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs to Ambassador Jayantha Dhanapala on his receipt of the 2014 Inter Press Service International Achievement Awards for Nuclear Disarmament

delivered by

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Ladies and Gentlemen, Colleagues and Friends,

I am honoured to deliver this message today on behalf of the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Angela Kane, who is presently away from headquarters on mission.

At the outset, I wish to express my appreciation to the Inter Press Service, as well as the sponsor of the event, Soka Gakkai International, for the invitation to deliver some remarks on this happy occasion. It is certainly a great pleasure and honour to congratulate our colleague and friend, Ambassador Jayantha Dhanapala, on receiving the 2014 IPS International Achievement Award for Nuclear Disarmament. I would also like to pay tribute to the work of IPS which should be commended as well for their important work on raising awareness of the challenges in disarmament and non-proliferation – a role unfortunately not often provided by other media.

Today’s ceremony has even more meaning due to the fact that Ambassador Dhanapala is a former Under-Secretary-General, having led the Department for Disarmament Affairs from 1998 to 2003 during a very challenging period for disarmament diplomacy. Many major events during this period have continued to shape the future of disarmament. This included the extraordinary disarmament and verification efforts in Iraq, overseen by various United Nations bodies. During his tenure, he also had to contend with the emergence of new nuclear powers and growing concerns over the spectre of nuclear terrorism.

Despite these challenges, as the top official responsible for disarmament at the United Nations, his tenure was marked by a high level of dedication, enthusiasm, and productivity. His efforts laid the ground work for many of the significant activities and developments in disarmament and non-proliferation that his successors have inherited—including, I am pleased to mention, his enlightened work in establishing a department-wide Gender Action Plan. Through his strong personal commitment to implementing all of his Office’s disarmament mandates, Ambassador Dhanapala won the deep respect of all his colleagues.

Ambassador Dhanapala’s important work in the field of multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation merits nothing but praise. Throughout his long and distinguished career both as a national and international diplomat, Ambassador Dhanapala has always shown his dedication and strong commitment to the cause of multilateral disarmament, particularly
nuclear disarmament. You may recall among his many diplomatic successes, his successful leadership as President of the 1995 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review and Extension Conference. Even after his retirement from active service, Ambassador Dhanapala has continued to remain actively involved in various disarmament issues through his membership in many prestigious academic or civil society institutions.

The awarding of the International Achievement Award for Nuclear Disarmament to Ambassador Dhanapala gives fitting and well-deserved recognition to his important contributions in championing the cause of a world free of nuclear weapons. In receiving this award, he joins an illustrious group of previous recipients which includes political leaders and diplomats, as well as two former United Nations Secretaries-General. This award recognizes the importance of his continuing work and our hope to see more of his energetic leadership and guidance in the field of disarmament for many more years to come.

I thank you all for your attention.