The XVII Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Non-Aligned Movement

remarks by

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Your Excellency President Nicolás Maduro, President of Venezuela, Chair of the Non-Aligned Movement

Your Excellencies, Heads of State and Government of the Non-Aligned Movement,
Honourable Ministers

Ladies and gentlemen

As this is the first time I speak, let me add my congratulations to those of the Secretary-General of the United Nations. First, to President Maduro and the Government of Venezuela on assuming the Chair of the Non-Aligned Movement and for hosting this summit. Second, to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran for its leadership of this body throughout the last year.

In his message, Secretary-General Ban alluded to some of the historic initiatives that have taken place over the past twelve months. The Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the universal adoption of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda are proof of the vitality of multilateral diplomacy.

Neither of these ground breaking developments could have taken place without the active participation of the Non-Aligned Movement. Your partnership with the United Nations is deeply appreciated.

So too is your long-standing and principled support for the cause of disarmament. The Movement’s initiatives to hold the first ever high-level General Assembly meeting on nuclear disarmament and to designate 26 September as the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, have helped to keep the global spotlight on this vital issue.

Like climate change, nuclear weapons pose an existential threat to humanity. The fact that there are some fifteen thousand of these weapons, when even one is too many, should be unacceptable.

I am disappointed that despite universal commitment to a world free of nuclear weapons, multilateral disarmament is at a standstill.

As Secretary-General Ban recognised in his 2008 Five Point Proposal on Nuclear Disarmament, there is more than one path to a nuclear-weapon-free world. But all States, especially those States possessing nuclear weapons, have a responsibility to act now and take the steps that will bring us closer to our shared goal.

The 2020 review cycle of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty will begin in May of next year. The Preparatory Committee meeting is an opportunity for all States Parties to demonstrate the spirit of compromise, with full respect for agreed objectives, common values, and core principles.
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

The theme of this summit, development, comes on the one year anniversary of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

The Agenda recognises the symbiosis between development and peace. As Secretary-General Ban said at the International Day of Peace commemoration held two days ago in New York, “peace, sustainable development and human rights – the three pillars of the United Nations – are mutually reinforcing. They are three sides of the same triangle.”

Sustainable peace cannot be achieved without disarmament. The world is flooded with weapons, many of them in the illicit arms trade. The threat posed by weapons of mass destruction – WMD – is growing. The use of toxic chemicals in the Middle East is evidence of this. Vicious non-state actors are also seeking all kinds of WMD.

If we are to achieve a peaceful and prosperous society, we need to bring about the total elimination of all WMD and the strict control of conventional weapons, in accordance with the principals of the UN Charter.

The revolution in information technology has the potential to benefit the world’s most needy. But our growing dependence on IT also leaves us vulnerable to malicious use. We must enhance our preparedness.

I count on all States of the Non-Aligned Movement to aid in these causes. First, by ensuring full implementation of your disarmament commitments. Second, by encouraging all States to sign, ratify and accede to existing instruments. Third, by helping to build common ground for new norms to tackle emerging security issues. Fourth, by investing in the young generation to build a safer and more secure planet for our children and our children’s children.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Building a world safer, more secure and better for all, requires inclusive efforts by all stakeholders. Challenges are many and complex.

But as Secretary-General Ban said, “nothing is impossible when we work together. Together we can build the future we want.”

I thank you so much.