



STATEMENT BY MR. BHARTRUHARI MAHTAB, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT AND MEMBER OF THE INDIAN DELEGATION, ON AGENDA ITEM 96: CRIME PREVENTION AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE, AGENDA ITEM 97: INTERNATIONAL DRUG CONTROL AT THIRD COMMITTEE OF THE 59TH SESSION OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON OCTOBER 11, 2004.

My delegation thanks the Secretary General for the reports under the Agenda Items 96 and 97 on "Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice" and "International Drug Control" respectively. We also wish to thank the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime for his statement to this Committee, highlighting some of the critical challenges before the international community, in particular, "the globalisation of crime."

We have studied with interest the reports before us. The Office of Drugs and Crime has devoted considerable attention and energy on the important aspect of technical assistance, imparted through both training and capacity-building. My delegation appreciates the work done by the Specialised Agencies as well as the Funds and Programmes of the United Nations in working together with national Governments in capacity-building. We, therefore, felicitate the Office of Drugs and Crime and extend to it our full support in this regard.

We do feel compelled, however, to point out that the reports presented to the Third Committee could have been of much greater value to the member States, had these provided us with more information and analysis on the important subjects within the mandate of the Office of Drugs and Crime, to make the debate in the Third Committee more meaningful.

Mr. Chairman,

In his address to the 59th session of the General Assembly, the Prime Minister of India highlighted the global and transnational character of the challenges that we confront. He underlined that terrorism was one such challenge for which many of us have paid an unacceptable price. He reiterated the fact that terrorism exploits the technologies spawned by globalisation.

The reach and spread of terrorist networks is no longer confined to a particular country or region. Terrorism not only disrupts global peace, security and stability, but also destroys civil society, democracy and human rights. One estimate indicates that in the last year (2003) more than 200 international terrorist attacks have taken place; in Asia itself, the total number of casualties has been put at more than 1400. Over 78,000 persons have been killed in various parts of India on account of terrorist attacks in the past several years. Our losses in terms of jobs, economic opportunities, developmental efforts negated and infrastructure damage are unimaginable.

India has resolutely pursued a multi-pronged strategy to combat terrorism. This strategy gives primacy to dialogue, democratic political processes and the rule of law. We believe that legitimate means are available to address socio-economic and political causes, particularly in democratic societies; and that there can be no justification for terrorism on any ground - religious, political, ideological or any other. There are no good or bad terrorists. A terrorist anywhere is a terrorist everywhere. It is self-defeating to introduce distinctions between different kinds of terrorists, particularly to do so on the basis of self-professed motivations. The fight against terrorism has to be global, comprehensive and sustained.

Mr. Chairman,

The twelve universal legal instruments on combating terrorism, to all of which India is a signatory, have served the international community as best as possible. The need to come together and complete work on the "Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism" which will strengthen the international legal framework against terrorism with provisions to detect, prevent, prosecute and convict terrorists cannot be over-stressed. The global nature of the scourge of terrorism makes it essential to have a comprehensive legal framework, without which it is a battle that is lost before it has begun.

While the international community must be able to distinguish between a criminal act and a terrorist act, often, the line is fine. These fine distinctions which often detract from our global and concerted efforts at fighting terrorism can and must be addressed. The Secretary General's report refers to the "enormous loss of life, destruction and damage" caused in 2003 by heinous acts of terrorism ...". Such characterisations in the reports by the United Nations and other organisations which address different facets of terrorism will continue till we collectively demonstrate the requisite political will, courage, determination and commitment to act.

My delegation has fully supported the work of the Office of Drugs and Crime, and especially the work of the Terrorism Prevention Branch. We are convinced that the Terrorism Prevention Branch can play a greater and more effective role. The need to enhance the resources of Terrorism Prevention Branch, in particular through increased budgetary resources, cannot be over-emphasised.

Mr. Chairman,

The efforts of the international community in addressing the world drug problem continue to be of immense significance. The World Drug Report 2004 presents heartening news in some sectors. Trends in global coca cultivation and cocaine manufacture have seen steady decline since 1999-2000. The trends are worrisome in other sectors, particularly with regard to global illicit opium production and ATS (amphetamine type stimulants) once again on the increase.

The 20th special session of the General Assembly held in 1998 had adopted the political declaration and plan of action, laying down goals and objectives to be achieved by member States by 2008. The high-level Ministerial segment of the 46th session of the Commission on Narcotics Drugs undertook a mid-term review of the implementation and the commitments undertaken at the 20th special session and adopted a Joint Ministerial Statement. The biennial report due next year assumes importance as it will assess the implementation of the commitments made by member States.

The 110 signatures to the Convention on Corruption, opened for signature in December 2003, promise to make it a successful one. In his report, the Secretary General points out that "Corruption is above all a key cause of economic under-performance and a major obstacle to poverty eradication." In our view, the blight of corruption needs to be addressed wherever it exists – it is not a bane that afflicts developing countries in isolation!

Mr. Chairman,

The funding situation of the Office on Drugs and Crime continues to cause concern. As funding from the regular budget remains inadequate, instead of focusing its energies on its programmes, the Office on Drugs and Crime is required to expend precious time and effort on mobilising additional extra-budgetary resources. It is important to enhance budgetary allocations to ensure that the priorities as laid down by the Commission can be implemented.

The challenges and threats posed by the links among drug trafficking, terrorism and transnational organised crime continue to pose a major threat to international security. My delegation had welcomed the adoption of the Joint Ministerial Statement reiterating measures and providing direction to the action needed to be taken, in particular in the areas of demand-reduction, judicial cooperation and money- laundering. The challenges posed by the insidiousness of transnational organised crime cannot be overcome without a concerted global effort. We look forward, in this context, participating in the Eleventh United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice being held in Bangkok in April, 2005.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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