

**Statement by Mr. François Rivasseau, Ambassador, French Representative to
the Conference on Disarmament**

Draft French resolution on the prevention radiological terrorism

Introduction

(New York, Oct. 18 2005)

Mr Chairman,

The issue of terrorism has taken an increased part on the agenda of the multilateral disarmament machinery. In this regard, I wish to draw member States attention's on the new draft resolution introduced this year by France regarding prevention of the risk of radiological terrorism.

What is radiological terrorism ? It is the threat that terrorists may divert radiological materials used in the civilian industry or in medicine in order to build what we usually call "dirty bombs". These are not properly speaking weapons of mass destruction, but they have been accurately described as "weapons of mass disruption".

Why are we stressing this issue ? Three ideas can explain it briefly :

- the threat of radiological terrorism is a real one : criminal organizations have already been able to acquire radio isotopes ; in 1998, a terrorist attempt to use a dirty bomb has been circumvented ;
- consequences would be huge : the number of casualties may not be very high but the people would panic. It would take a lot of time to reassure the people and to decontaminate the targeted area. If used in a large city, in the North as well as in the South, dirty bombs would allow terrorists to strongly disrupt economic activity ;
- the dirty bomb is an easy bomb : we are using radio isotopes in all kinds of machines : radiology machinery for medicine, oil search, agriculture, university research. Shall such machines stay improperly secured, it would be easy for terrorists to gain access to them.

France is active in the field of radiological sources. We are convinced that they have a useful role for both economic and social development. And because of that very conviction that the world needs these items for its development, we are convinced that we must protect them from the threat of terrorism, and use them in increased security conditions.

France has therefore been raising awareness on this topic in all the fora to which she is party. We did it in the G8, in the European Union, in the IAEA. We wish to do it in the general Assembly too. There has been a set of consensual steps in that field recently : we therefore believe that the first committee can play a useful role by

drawing the attention of States on this set of texts and on the measures they propose, and by encouraging all States to consider them.

We wish to contribute, with this resolution, to the exercise already undertaken through two other resolutions that are on the agenda of the First Committee : the resolution of Nigeria on the dumping of nuclear wastes, and the resolution of India on terrorism and weapons of mass destruction. We have therefore tried to draft a resolution that would complement these two texts without being redundant with them. Since the resolution of Nigeria covers abandoned nuclear materials, and their transfer to other States, we have focused on materials in use, and on actions by the States on which territory these materials are in use. In the same way, since the Indian resolution covers fissile materials that can be used in an atomic weapon, we focused on the other radioactive materials.

In the same mood, we have been careful to focus on texts that enjoy consensus : these elaborated within IAEA, and these elaborated in the universal framework of the United Nations, such as the convention against nuclear terrorism, which encompass non-fissile radio isotopes. We have been careful not to put forward ideas or texts that are not consensus ones.

This is therefore a clearly delineated proposal, but I believe it carries a message that is useful for all States. Our wish is to build a consensus on this proposal. We have already received suggestions by several States, and we are going to work to take them into account. We are also consulting with a specific attention the African States. We hope that we will receive other ideas from delegations in the coming days in order to improve the proposal and reach a consensus text.

I thank you for your attention.