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BANGLADESH

STATEMENT

BY

H. E. DR. IFTEKHAR AHMED CHOWDHURY
AMBASSADOR AND PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF BANGLADESH
TO THE UNITED NATIONS

AT

THE GENERAL DEBATE

IN

THE UNITED NATIONS DISARMAMENT COMMISSION

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PERMANENT MISSION OF BANGLADESH TO THE UNITED NATIONS
227 East 45th Street, 14th Floor, New York, NY 10017; Tel: 212 – 867 – 3434; Fax: 212 – 972 – 4038
E-mail: bangladesh@un.int; Website: www.un.int/bangladesh

Mr. Chairman,

Could I begin by congratulating you on your election as Chair of the Disarmament Commission, and through you the bureau, as well as the chairs of the working groups, upon their elections. I am confident that the deliberations of the Commission, under your able and skilled stewardship, will find fruition in effective results.

May I also take this opportunity to welcome Ambassador Nobuaki Tanaka, the new Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, and wish him all the best in his new and challenging assignment.

My delegation associates itself with the statement made by Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Mr. Chairman,

We are meeting here at a time when the multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation machinery is in limbo. Not only we have not made any progress during the last several years, we have in fact regressed on many fronts. This is evidenced in some recent developments outside the existing disarmament and non-proliferation machinery. Those have further weakened the multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation regime particularly the NPT and the CTBT.

The Conference on Disarmament, the sole multilateral forum for disarmament negotiation, has been remarkably unproductive for over a decade. The debacle of the 2005 NPT Review Conference, to say the least, was shocking. And our failure to make any reference to disarmament and non-proliferation issues in the 2005 World Summit Outcome document was, surely, acute underperformance.

These successive failures have certainly left deep dents in our confidence in the international community's disarmament and non-proliferation endeavours.

It is in this perspective that we attach high importance to this substantive session of the Commission. Our agreement on the agenda of the Commission may be a small step, but surely a firm step in the right direction.

Mr. Chairman,

The NPT and the CTBT are the two key instruments for achieving nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Bangladesh believes that any erosion of the NPT regime is a danger to world peace. We also reject double standards, and call for universalization of the NPT and the CTBT. If possession of nuclear weapons appears to strengthen the sense of security, their acquisition will become attractive. If some have them, and appear to benefit from their possession, others will want them also. This is a simple, but incontrovertible logic.

Bangladesh, I am happy to be able to say, has an impeccable disarmament and non-proliferation record. We have consciously and unconditionally opted to remain non-nuclear.

Bangladesh is the first Annex-2 nation in South Asia to have ratified the CTBT. We are also party to the NPT, as well as to other disarmament treaties. We have concluded safeguards agreements with the IAEA including on Additional Protocols.

Mr. Chairman,

We believe that the greatest threat to humanity continues to derive from the continued existence of nuclear weapons and their possible use or threat of use. We have witnessed the devastations caused by the atomic bombs dropped over Hiroshima and Nagasaki. But those bombs contained energy equivalent to some 12,500 tons of TNT. The power of a nuclear bomb, according to experts, currently ranges from equivalence of 1 megaton to 20 megatons of TNT, and we have several thousands of them deployed around the world. We are, furthermore, continuing with efforts to enhance precision. We must bear in mind that increase in precision or supposed reduction of collateral damage, also enhances the propensity for use, lowering the nuclear threshold. It is a genie once unleashed can never be contained. No war resulting from its use can be fightable or winnable.

We are also convinced that nuclear weapons have served no purpose for humanity. With the demise of Cold War decades ago, the erstwhile foes have become partners, and even allies. The nuclear deterrence theory, which we used to call MAD (mutual assured destruction), was developed and put in practice in a different historical era. Such a theory should no longer be relevant in this era. We further believe that the nuclear weapons are inherently dangerous, hugely expensive and militarily inefficient.

We also reject doctrines that view nuclear weapons as legitimate means of war fighting. The International Court of Justice have rightly concluded that "the threat or use of nuclear weapons would generally be contrary to the rules of international law applicable in armed conflict, and in particular the principles and rules of humanitarian law."

The viewpoint that nuclear arms can ensure security of a country is not only baneful, but also fallacious. We must acknowledge that in the event of a nuclear war there would be no victors, only victims. We must, therefore, strive for systematic and concerted nuclear disarmament with a view to achieving total elimination of nuclear weapons.

Mr. Chairman,

We are deeply disappointed at the failure of the 2005 NPT Review Conference. However, we do not believe that that has in any way weakened our achievements of the 1995 and 2000 review conferences. We also believe that implementation of the 13 practical steps, agreed by consensus in 2000, continues to be the cornerstone of our disarmament and non-proliferation efforts.

We are concerned at the slow pace of progress on the part of the Nuclear-Weapon-States (NWS) to accomplish the elimination of their nuclear arsenals. Also at the improvement of existing nuclear weapons and development of new types of nuclear weapons, which run contrary to the assurances provided at the time of conclusion of the CTBT. We call upon the

NWS to take immediate steps towards an irreversible and accelerated reduction, and eventual elimination of global stockpile of nuclear arsenal, in accordance with Article VI of the NPT.

We urge the Conference on Disarmament to go back to its substantive work immediately. Also to start negotiations on a programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons with a specified framework of time. We refer in this regard to the unanimous conclusion of the International Court of Justice that “there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control.” The Conference on Disarmament must also resume its negotiations on a verifiable fissile material cut-off treaty without any further delay.

Bangladesh reiterates that the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons against non-NWS is in contravention of the negative security assurances. We continue to believe that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against such use or threat of use. Pending their total elimination, we reiterate our call for the conclusion of a universal, unconditional and legally binding instrument on security assurances to non-NWS.

Bangladesh deeply values the role of the Nuclear-Weapon-Free-Zones (NWFZ) in advancing disarmament and non-proliferation agenda. We appreciate the works of the existing NWFZs and call for establishment of more such zones in all the regions of the world.

Mr. Chairman,

Article IV of the NPT guarantees the inalienable rights of all States Parties to the NPT to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. These are to be without discrimination. Also in conformity with Articles I and II of the Treaty. The NPT thus obliges States Parties to cooperate among themselves in the matter of exchange of equipments, materials and scientific and technological knowledge and information on peaceful uses of nuclear technology.

It is disconcerting to note that undue restrictions on exports to developing non-nuclear-weapon countries of material, equipment and technology for peaceful purposes continue to persist through measures incompatible with the provisions of the Treaty. Those barriers must be removed.

We also underscore the need for the IAEA, under its statutory obligations, to continue to pursue the goals of technical cooperation in peaceful applications of nuclear energy. The IAEA must put in place necessary safeguards and verification regimes, and monitor their compliance in conformity with the obligations of the State Parties to the NPT.

Bangladesh remains convinced that total elimination of nuclear weapons is the greatest guarantee against their proliferation. Bangladesh is concerned at the alleged attempts by the terrorists to acquire weapons of mass destruction including nuclear weapons. This is a grave phenomenon that we need to address collectively and with prudence. But we believe that the

most effective way of preventing terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction is through the total elimination of such weapons.

Mr. Chairman,

Bangladesh underlines the importance of reduction of the alarmingly increasing military expenditures in accordance with the principle of undiminished security at the lowest level of armaments. Increased openness and transparency in legitimate conventional arms transfer, coupled with enhanced reliance on peaceful settlement of dispute would build the necessary environment of confidence. Such steps would reduce risks of armed conflicts; also of arms race relieving the much-necessary resources for socio-economic development of the poor and the vulnerable sections of our populations.

Mr. Chairman,

The challenge before us today is the total elimination of nuclear weapons before they eliminate us. This would be a litmus test for humanity. Also it would determine our capacity to be led by sound logic and respect for international law to security for all, or to oblivion through fear and quest for power.

We must also remember that the current deadlock in the disarmament machinery is the result of deliberate policy decisions. It is generally believed, with a modicum of truth, that success in nuclear disarmament does not hinge on technical issues. It is a matter of political will. We, therefore, need stronger political will, and more innovative thinking, to move forward on this score. If we fail to act now, this will be at great peril to ourselves and to posterity.

I thank you Mr. Chairman.