



STATEMENT BY MR. JAYANT PRASAD, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF INDIA TO THE CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT, GENEVA AT THE UNITED NATIONS DISARMAMENT COMMISSION ON APRIL 11, 2006

Mr. Chairman,

On behalf of my delegation, I congratulate you on your election as the Chairman of the Disarmament Commission and assure you of our full cooperation in your efforts to guide the Commission's work. We should like to express our appreciation for Ambassador Sylvester Rowe of Sierra Leone, the outgoing Chairman, for his contribution to forging a consensus on the agenda of the Commission. I would also like to congratulate the new Under Secretary General for Disarmament Affairs, Ambassador Nobuaki Tanaka, and compliment him on his thoughtful statement to the Commission yesterday.

There is a deep connection between the deficient functioning of the United Nation's disarmament machinery and the decline in the multilateral ethic in international relations. The reconvening of the substantive UNDC session after a gap of two years to consider two important issues on the disarmament agenda is, in a sense, a reaffirmation of multilateralism. It symptomises that the multilateral approach, even if contested, continues to be regarded by the international community as critical for the development of norms and standards governing international relations.

The Disarmament Commission plays a unique role in the multilateral disarmament mechanism created by the First Special Session of the General Assembly devoted to Disarmament. As a subsidiary organ of the General Assembly, with the same universal membership, it has the mandate to consider and make recommendations on issues relevant to disarmament to the General Assembly, and through it, to the negotiating body, the Conference on Disarmament. The Commission provides a platform where all States can engage in an interactive and thoroughgoing dialogue over these issues.

The task of the Commission, thus, is to prepare the ground for disarmament negotiations, by elaborating a general approach to such negotiations. The Commission has previously been able to formulate principles, guidelines and recommendations on several disarmament issues, including those on verification and confidence building measures. Since the Commission reaches its conclusions by consensus, its recommendations provide a useful and universally acceptable framework for all States in their endeavour to achieve their final objective: general and complete disarmament under effective international control.

The Commission's first agenda item enjoins it to make recommendations for achieving the objectives of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. India remains fully committed to the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world, to be realized by the complete elimination of nuclear weapons through global, verifiable and non-discriminatory nuclear disarmament. The Final Document of SSOD-I had accorded the highest priority to the goal of nuclear disarmament. It affirmed that its ultimate objective was the complete elimination of nuclear weapons and outlined concrete steps to achieve that objective. The Millennium Declaration in 2000 reiterated the commitment of the member States of the United Nations to strive for the elimination of the weapons of mass destruction, in particular, nuclear weapons.

For India, nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation are not mutually exclusive. Instead, they intersect and reinforce each other. The very first resolution of the UN General Assembly, Resolution 1 (I) of 1946, adopted unanimously, sought the elimination of atomic weapons from national armaments and, as indeed, all other major weapons amenable to mass destruction. The present discussion is how to go about this task and also, in the process, deal with contemporary proliferation threats, emanating both from States and non-State actors. Disarmament and non-proliferation, therefore, are not polar opposites but two ends of a single continuum.

Under the Presidency of the Republic of Korea during the first part of its 2006 session, the Conference on Disarmament engaged in a focused debate on the issue of nuclear disarmament. It became evident that all States, both those who possess nuclear weapons as also the non-nuclear-weapon States, remain firmly committed to the goal of nuclear disarmament. A number of issues were identified by member States of CD during the debate for achieving this goal. It is, therefore, opportune that the Commission is going to consider in some detail the

ways and means for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation, in order to arrive at a set of recommendations on the subject. The Commission can carry forward discussions on nuclear disarmament and chart a possible path that provides direction for the future work of the Conference. The task of the CD, as the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, is to produce legally binding agreements and conventions. Although it is currently engaged in structured discussions on the issues on its agenda, it cannot substitute the functions of UNDC, the deliberative organ of the UN disarmament mechanism, which must consider issues relevant to disarmament and make recommendations to the Conference. My delegation shall present India's perspectives on the steps for achieving the twin objectives of nuclear disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons in the course of discussions in the Working Group devoted to this issue.

A basic problem afflicting the disarmament institutions and processes is the lack of trust among States. This erosion of trust further begets the lack of willingness for mutual accommodation, making further progress on nuclear disarmament even more difficult. The absence of consensus on disarmament and non-proliferation paragraphs of the 2005 World Summit Outcome underscored the fact that, currently, there are sharp differences among States over the goals, priorities and approaches in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation. These differences cannot be set aside or ignored.

For any breakthrough, all States need to sincerely engage in a dialogue on their approaches to nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation and understand and accommodate each other's security concerns and threat perceptions. One way to restore this trust would be to secure a reaffirmation of the unequivocal commitment of all nuclear weapon States to the goal of complete elimination of nuclear weapons. The Commission provides all States an opportunity to reaffirm their commitment to nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation and to outline their positions and priorities, as well as understand the positions and priorities of others.

We are hopeful that renewed consideration of the agenda item "practical confidence building measures in the field of conventional weapons," will be productive this time. In revisiting this issue, addressed during the last three substantive sessions of the Commission, we should strive for a consensus that had eluded the Commission earlier. My delegation considers it useful to build on the deliberations held already in the Commission during its last cycle of work. India fully

supports the adoption of confidence building measures, whether bilateral, regional or global, on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among States of a region. India has initiated, both unilaterally and bilaterally, a number of confidence-building measures in its neighbourhood to built trust and confidence and to ensure greater transparency. We are committed to adopting further measures to prevent misunderstanding and promote a stable environment of peace and security with the countries in our neighbourhood. In considering this matter in Working Group II, we shall outline our approach on the issue of confidence- building measures in fuller detail.

The United Nations has contributed to the development of an impressive corpus of norms and standards governing international relations, including in the field of arms control and disarmament. The Commission has also played a unique role in this and has many achievements to its credit. However, no system or institution is perfect and there is always room for improvement. Our experience in the First Committee demonstrates that there is scope for better utilization of the resources available. My delegation, therefore, welcomes that besides considering the two agenda items, the Commission will also discuss measures for improving the effectiveness of the methods of its work.

We look forward to working with other delegations for a purposive and productive session.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman

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