

Mr. President,

It gives me great pleasure to extend our warm congratulations to you on your assumption of the Presidency. I would also like to extend our thanks to your predecessor, Ambassador Labidi of Tunisia for the able manner in which he conducted the business of the Conference. We also associate ourselves with the statements made on behalf of the G-21.

Mr. President,

It is an honour and privilege for me to make my first statement in the Conference representing my country. The magnificent frescoes of *Jose Maria Sert* have a time-less quality and evoke in me, the same sense of awe, as when I first entered this Chamber, as a member of my delegation more than a decade ago. These frescoes underline the message that to move the wheel of disarmament on and forward, we require to exert no less than the men and women that adorn these walls.

This Chamber has also been compared to a hall of trick mirrors, in which, nothing is what it seems to be. It is my fervent hope that in the weeks and months ahead we are able to replace these, with mirrors that truly reflect each others interests and concerns, so that the reality of our collective interests becomes the basis of our work here. Our success will be measured by our ability to negotiate forward-looking agreements that are global and non-discriminatory, thus enhancing global security.

It is in this spirit that India attaches high importance to the CD as the single multilateral negotiating forum, whose mandate is drawn from the consensus of SSOD I. Since its decisions impact on national security of member-states, it is logical that the CD should conduct its work and adopt its decisions by consensus. In doing so, we should abide by the well-established rules of procedure, which have served the Conference well.

Mr. President,

We are deeply conscious of the fact that the Conference has been unable to commence substantive work for nearly a decade. During this period, India has joined other delegations to explore various proposals to advance the CD's work. Despite commendable efforts, the momentum that was created last year to move the CD out of its longstanding stalemate did not advance far enough so as to command consensus.

We remain committed to participating constructively in ongoing

discussions so that the Conference can commence substantive work by reaching consensus on a programme of work that takes into account the interests of all its stake-holders. We believe that any decision on a programme of work must be consistent with the rules of procedures, preferably on the basis of a clear and integrated text. We also believe in the significance of common understandings on fundamentals and clarity on mandates to ensure the smooth and successful conduct of negotiations.

Mr. President,

India has consistently maintained its principled position- it attaches the highest priority to the goal of nuclear disarmament, both as a national position which has enjoyed strong and consistent domestic support as well as a member of the Non-Aligned Movement, and here in the CD as member of the G-21. A holistic framework seeking negotiations for a time bound commitment for the complete elimination of the nuclear weapons to usher in a world free of nuclear weapons and rooted in non-violence was presented by India's Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi to the United Nations in 1988.

India has made several proposals in the CD on nuclear disarmament and has joined G-21 positions on the subject including in CD/1570 and 1571. The General Assembly approved, as in previous years, a resolution sponsored by India on a Convention on the Prohibition of Use or threat of Use of nuclear weapons, which calls upon the CD to commence negotiations on an international convention prohibiting to use or threat of use of nuclear weapons under any circumstances.

India has also sponsored a resolution on 'Reducing Nuclear Danger' to highlight the risks posed by hair-trigger posture of nuclear weapons and the related unintentional, unauthorized or accidental use of nuclear weapons leading to a nuclear war with catastrophic consequences. Last year, India submitted a working paper on Nuclear Disarmament in CD/1816.

Over the years, several international groups and NGOs have lent their voice in favor of nuclear disarmament. The goal of a world free of nuclear weapons has now received the support of eminent personalities like Henry Kissinger, George Shultz, William Perry and Sam Nunn- all knowledgeable and experienced in this field. This Conference cannot be oblivious to the shifting currents of informed opinion, which are now moving ever stronger in favor of nuclear disarmament.

As the sole multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament, there is a heavy responsibility on the Conference on Disarmament to make progress on nuclear disarmament. The first priority is binding

commitments, accompanied by negotiation of specific steps that would reduce and finally eliminate the nuclear threat globally, in a verifiable and irreversible manner, where no state would claim exclusive security based on its possession of nuclear weapons.

India would suggest enunciation of concrete steps towards achieving the goal of nuclear disarmament based on the following elements:

- Reaffirmation of the **unequivocal commitment** of all nuclear weapon States to the goal of complete elimination of nuclear weapons;
- **Reduction of the salience** of nuclear weapons in the security doctrines;
- Taking into account the global reach and menace of nuclear weapons, adoption of **measures by nuclear-weapon States** to reduce nuclear danger, including the risks of accidental nuclear war, de-alerting of nuclear-weapons to prevent unintentional and accidental use of nuclear weapons.
- Negotiation of a global agreement among nuclear weapon States on '**no-First-use**' of nuclear-weapons;
- Negotiation of a universal and legally-binding agreement on **non-use of nuclear weapons** against non-nuclear weapon States.
- Negotiation of a **Convention** on the complete prohibition of the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons;
- Negotiation of a **Nuclear Weapons Convention** prohibiting the development, production, stockpiling and use of nuclear weapons and on their destruction, leading to the global, non-discriminatory and verifiable elimination of nuclear weapons with a specified timeframe.

We recognize that these are complex issues on which divergences of approach persist amongst member states. We propose that the Conference consider the appointment of a Special Coordinator to assist in carrying out consultations on specific measures or a set of measures that have the potential of commanding consensus which can form the basis of a mandate for a possible Ad Hoc Committee on Nuclear Disarmament. We further recognize that consensus will not be easy, but that should not deter us from taking the first steps towards meaningfully addressing the priority of nuclear disarmament.

India supports the establishment of an Ad Hoc Committee on FMCT as part of the CD's Programme of Work. In 1993, India joined as one of the original co-sponsors of UNGA resolution 48/75L, which envisaged FMCT as a significant contribution to nuclear non-proliferation in all its aspects. That remains India's position. The international consensus on FMCT in 1993 reflected with clarity the

common understanding of the basic objective of the Treaty and enabled India to join that consensus and on that basis, support the negotiation in the Conference on Disarmament of a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable Treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. It is obvious that the Treaty would have to meet India's national security interests.

India supports the establishment of an Ad hoc Committee on NSAs to negotiate with a view to reaching an agreement on effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear weapon states against the use, or threat of use, of nuclear weapons. We believe, that the negotiation of such an instrument will compliment other measures to reduce the saliency of nuclear weapons in security doctrines and improve the international climate for promoting nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation in all its aspects. As part of its credible minimum nuclear deterrent, India has espoused a policy of no-first use and non-use against non-nuclear weapon states and is prepared to convert these undertakings into multilateral legal arrangements.

Over the last four decades, India has consistently underlined the developmental dimensions of the use of outer space for the benefit of its people. Today, India is ranked among the advanced space-faring nations in the world. Space-based connectivity and navigation are now critical to our economic development and a factor of national security importance. We are deeply conscious of the need to strengthen the present international legal framework to ensure the safety and security of space assets and to prevent the placement of weapons in outer space.

In this regard, we welcome the tabling of the draft Treaty by the Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation on Prevention of Placement of Weapons in Outer Space, along with China, as a further contribution of filling the existing gaps in the international legal regime. We agree with Russia that the CD is the appropriate forum to take forward discussions on this issue.

There is no legal regime governing the possession and use of Missiles. The complexity of this issue arises mainly due to the untenable claims made by some states for the exclusive rights for the possession of advanced weapon systems and their continued modernization. Any initiative, to address these concerns in a sustainable and comprehensive manner, should be through an inclusive process based on the principle of equal and legitimate security. Discussions are underway at the UNGA on the issue of missiles in all their aspects. We hope that they lead to the adoption of a multilateral, universal and non-discriminatory approach to missiles as a contribution to international peace and security.

Mr. President,

While we share the disappointment of delegations with regard to delay in getting down to substantive work, we should not be overly pessimistic about the future of the Conference. Here I would like to quote from the farewell statement of Ambassador Arundhati Ghose who said the following in September 1997.

"Many apprehensions have been voiced of late about the future of this forum; there has been much doom and gloom about CD's apparent imminent collapse. I do not agree with this assessment. The CD is not an organization with programmes and projects. It is a forum ready to be used when there is need for it and when we, the members, wish to do so. It was set up by us to negotiate multilateral treaties which, while responding to the needs of international security, safeguarded vital national security interests as well. Agreement to negotiate such treaties is reached, I believe, when views coincide on the bases and the objectives of a treaty."

In conclusion, let me reiterate the commitment of my delegation to contribute to all efforts for making this Conference productive and worthy of the immense trust and hope that the international community has placed on it.