

PLEASE CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY



**PERMANENT MISSION OF INDIA
TO THE CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT
GENEVA**

STATEMENT BY

**Jayant Prasad
Ambassador & Permanent Representative of India
to the Conference on Disarmament**

GENEVA, 2nd February 2006

Mr. President,

My delegation would like to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and commend your many initiatives in seeking consensus on its programme of work. I wish you success in this mission and assure you of the fullest cooperation of my delegation.

We appreciate also your initiative to extend the established convention of the presidency troika to include all the incoming presidents for the 2006 CD session. Your idea to involve them in decision-making and to invite them to the presidential consultations will ensure continuity and consistency in presidential initiatives all through the year. The five incoming presidents also deserve credit for working closely with you in creatively exploring options for commencing substantive work in the Conference.

We are satisfied that the Conference adopted its traditional agenda, by consensus, at its very first meeting. This only reflects the belief of member States that the existing agenda of the Conference is relevant, inclusive and flexible enough for dealing with issues that they regard as important for their national security, as also international peace and security.

Having adopted the agenda, now the primary task before the Conference is to reach agreement on a programme of work. India is willing to consider any initiative that could facilitate consensus on it. 42 successive presidencies, since 1999, have grappled with this challenge. We support your initiative to invite Member States to engage in a debate on the issues on the agenda of the Conference in the hope that our deliberations today, and in the coming days, will enable us to find the common ground to reach agreement.

The goal of nuclear disarmament has been on the international agenda ever since the first nuclear weapons were built and used. The international community has accorded the highest priority to this objective, as embodied in the 1978 Final Document of the First Special Session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. The goal of a nuclear-weapon free world remains as important today as it was then. Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh, addressing the Indian Parliament in July last year, stressed that nuclear disarmament remains a core concern of India's foreign policy. India is committed to a nuclear-weapon free world, to be realised in a systemic and progressive manner, through global, verifiable and non-discriminatory nuclear disarmament.

As an interim measure, until the achievement of the objective of universal nuclear disarmament, India continues to support the demand of non-nuclear

weapon States for multilateral and legally binding security assurances. They have regarded the existing security assurances as conditional and not legally binding. There has been, however, little progress in realizing this demand.

India has always expressed its readiness to participate in the negotiations in the CD on a multilateral, non-discriminatory and internationally and effectively verifiable fissile material cut-off treaty. This is the essence of the Shannon mandate, which embodied the spirit of 1993 General Assembly Resolution on FMCT, co-sponsored by India and many other member States. While conscious of the developments in this regard over the past year and a half, we continue to believe that this essence should remain the basis for any future work.

The peaceful applications of space technology have very much contributed to India's socio-economic development. India has created a growing infrastructure, including deployment of several satellites in Space for communications and remote-sensing, for utilisation of space technology and assets in space for such diverse sectors as agriculture, health, education, natural resource management and disaster management. India is, therefore, committed to the peaceful pursuit of space technology and to preserve outer space, a common heritage of the mankind, exclusively for peaceful uses. We share the concerns about the dangers of deployment of weapons in the outer space and believe that this will not be in our collective interest. We regard the Conference as the appropriate forum to deal with this issue.

The agenda of the Conference is comprehensive and enjoys the support of all the member States. Likewise, for any programme of work of the Conference to enjoy the support of all member States, it will have to take into account their concerns and priorities. India has also, for instance, sought to accommodate the growing convergence on the A-5 proposal, even though its mandate had departed from CD/1570, which proposed a negotiating mandate on nuclear disarmament. Though not fully satisfied with the A-5 proposal, India decided to support it in the hope that it could become a basis for CD's programme of work. India continues to support the proposal as it reflects, to a large extent, the priorities of most constituents of the Conference. In this context, India continues to fully subscribe to the statement made by G-21 last year.

The UN Secretary General has acknowledged, in his message to the Conference, that it is the lack of political will which has not allowed the Conference to reach consensus on a programme of work. As we have seen, procedural fixes and cosmetic changes in the existing proposals have failed to end the impasse. The underlying reasons behind the Conference's deadlock have also impacted on other multilateral processes and forums, such as in the outcome document of the 2005 World Summit. This symptomises not just a procedural

failure; it reflects the deep divergences in the security concerns, priorities and goals of Member States. It is, therefore, not surprising that we have not been successful in reaching consensus on CD's programme of work.

We do not share the view that the current impasse signifies the failure of the Conference. As the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating body, the Conference has continuing relevance in today's world. There is no alternative forum that brings together militarily significant States and that can engage in negotiations on issues that directly impact on international security. If there is a divergence of views on security concerns, the same absence of convergence among key States will also impede progress in any alternative process or mechanism.

Mr. President,

India believes that we need to remain engaged in deliberations, since these are an essential prerequisite for success of any negotiating process. Your pragmatic proposal to undertake an exploration of agenda issues may be an instrument of distillation, leading to the enlargement of the common ground. As Mahatma Gandhi said, and I quote: "no principle exists without its application." We must persevere in our efforts, but these should expressly be made for the purpose of establishing a programme of work. We are supporting the presidential initiative in the hope that discussions in the plenary meetings may lead to the commencement of substantive work in the Conference.