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

STATEMENT BY

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to the Conference on Disarmament

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Mr. President,

My delegation is most happy to see you in the Chair. We would like to congratulate you, the four incoming Presidents, as also Ambassador Rapacki, for organising discussions on key issues on the agenda of the Conference. You shall have our full and earnest cooperation.

In my statement today I shall attempt to provide India's assessment of the present situation in the field of nuclear disarmament and the way ahead to accomplish the goal of a nuclear-weapon free world. This is the most critical and difficult issue on the global disarmament agenda.

Efforts to address nuclear disarmament began as soon as nuclear weapons were first tested and used. Ever since, the international community has accorded the highest priority to the goal of the total elimination of nuclear weapons. The very first resolution of the UN General Assembly, Resolution 1(I) of 1946, adopted unanimously, sought the elimination of atomic weapons and all other major weapons adaptable to mass destruction from national armaments, and the use of atomic energy only for peaceful purposes.

The Final Document of the First Special Session of the General Assembly devoted to Disarmament in 1978 constitutes the basic terms of reference of the Conference on Disarmament. The agenda of the Conference, which we are in the process of addressing, derives from it. The Special Session accorded the highest priority to the goal of nuclear disarmament. It outlined concrete steps to achieve that objective. It affirmed that the ultimate goal was the complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

Some five years ago, the unanimously adopted UN Millennium Declaration reiterated the commitment of the Member States of the United Nations to strive for the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons, and to keep all options open for achieving this aim.

The objective factors for the increasing militarisation of international relations, a feature of the Cold War years, no longer exist. Yet, we are very far from realising the goal of total elimination of nuclear weapons. India welcomes steps taken so far by the Russian Federation and the United States to reduce their nuclear

weapons stockpiles, as also their means of delivery. India also welcomes the Russian Federation's willingness to consider further reducing its stockpiles of nuclear weapons to levels lower than those specified in the Moscow Treaty. We hope the process of bilateral reductions will be further continued.

India shares the belief that the very existence of nuclear weapons, and of their possible use or threat of their use, poses a threat to humanity. India has remained committed to the goal of a nuclear-weapon free world, to be achieved through global, verifiable and non-discriminatory nuclear disarmament. My delegation believes that there is no reason why nuclear weapons too, like biological weapons and chemical weapons, cannot be eliminated. The Conference and its predecessor body successfully negotiated conventions to prohibit biological and chemical weapons and it has now to find practical ways of addressing the issue of nuclear disarmament in a comprehensive and non-discriminatory manner.

While India will continue to maintain a credible minimum nuclear deterrent, there is no dilution of India's commitment to nuclear disarmament, which remains a core concern of India's foreign policy. India continues to believe that security of India and that of the entire world would be enhanced in a world free of nuclear weapons. Our position is based on the fact that India is not seeking a nuclear arms race with any other nuclear power. India's nuclear doctrine is well defined and based on a posture of no-first use and non-use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States. Our doctrine also reaffirms India's readiness to join multilateral negotiations for reduction and elimination of nuclear weapons. India has continued to observe a moratorium on nuclear explosive tests. We are ready to participate in negotiations, in this Conference, on a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

India attaches the highest priority to establishment of an Ad-Hoc Committee on Nuclear Disarmament. The Group of 21 proposed this almost a decade ago. It sought to commence negotiations on a phased programme of nuclear disarmament, for the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons within a specified framework of time. India, together with 27 other members of the Group, also put forward a proposal, in August 1996, for a programme of

action for the elimination of nuclear weapons, as contained in document CD 1419.

India's preferred position has, thus, always been for negotiations on nuclear disarmament, as contained in documents CD 1570 and CD 1571. Nevertheless, India decided to support the Amorim proposal and the proposal of the Five Ambassadors, hoping that they could become a basis for consensus on a programme of work for the Conference. We recognize that given the current impasse, it may be unrealistic to expect consensus on a negotiating mandate for the Ad Hoc Committee on nuclear disarmament, but anything less than what is contained in the proposal of Five Ambassadors would be unacceptable to us.

India's resolution in the General Assembly on a "Convention on the Prohibition of the use of Nuclear Weapons", first presented in 1982, requests the Conference on Disarmament to commence negotiations for an international convention prohibiting the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons under any circumstances. The resolution reflects India's belief that a multilateral, universal and binding agreement prohibiting the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons would contribute to the mitigation of the nuclear threat as an important interim measure. It would also help create the climate for negotiations leading to the elimination of nuclear weapons, thereby strengthening international peace and security.

Pending the total elimination of nuclear weapons, India accords high priority to the need for steps to be taken to reduce the risk of unintentional or accidental use of nuclear weapons. The Final Document of SSOD-I had recommended that, to ensure that mankind's survival was not endangered, all States, in particular nuclear weapons States, should consider various proposals designed to secure the avoidance of the use of nuclear weapons and the prevention of nuclear war. The residual threats of accidental and unauthorized use of nuclear weapons can be addressed by moving towards a progressive de-alert of nuclear forces.

India's resolution on "Reducing Nuclear Danger", first presented in 1998, manifests our conviction that the hair-trigger posture of nuclear forces carries the unacceptable risk of unintentional or accidental use of nuclear weapons, which would have catastrophic consequences. The danger posed by the increased risk of nuclear weapons or its components falling into the hands

of non-State actors or, in some cases, rogue actors within State structures, has further aggravated existing dangers. While unilateral, bilateral or plurilateral nuclear confidence building measures are useful, our aim should be to reach international understanding or agreements for reducing nuclear danger, as also the risk of accidental nuclear war.

Any solution to end the impasse in the Conference on its programme of work must be responsive to the concerns of Member States of the Conference, big or small, developed or developing, nuclear-weapon States or non-nuclear-weapon States, within or outside alliances and privileged security relationships. It must address the security of all, for no State can imperil its security or allow other States to impose their will on it. The way out of the current impasse is for States to agree to deal with all core issues on the agenda of the Conference, as in the Five Ambassador's proposal, which we have supported.

The lack of consensus on disarmament and non-proliferation paragraphs of 2005 World Summit Outcome underscores the fact that, currently, there are sharp differences among States over the goals, priorities and approaches in the field of disarmament. These differences cannot be set aside or ignored. Such differences can only be overcome by rising above the practice followed in the past century that sought to perpetuate the asymmetric advantage of a handful of countries at the expense of collective global security. Otherwise, our inability to deal with these fundamental questions would continue to frustrate us in various disarmament forums, whether it is the First Committee, the Conference on Disarmament or the Disarmament Commission.

A basic problem afflicting the disarmament institutions and processes is the lack of trust among the States. This erosion of trust further begets the lack of willingness for mutual accommodation, making progress on nuclear disarmament even more difficult. We believe that this lack of trust also belied hopes for any consensus on disarmament and non-proliferation issues at the 2005 World Summit. The international security environment will be a key determinant in enabling realisation of progressive and systemic elimination of nuclear weapons. For any breakthrough, all States will need to sincerely engage in exchanges on their approaches to nuclear disarmament and understand and accommodate each other's security concerns and threat perceptions. Trust can only be restored through a reaffirmation of the unequivocal

commitment of all nuclear weapon States to the goal of complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

A revalidation of this commitment, with further steps towards its progressive concretion, may be the right way to proceed. The goal of complete elimination of nuclear weapons, in a systemic and progressive manner, will also be facilitated by reducing the salience of nuclear weapons in the security doctrines of nuclear-weapon States. Alignment of nuclear doctrines to a posture of no-first-use and non-use against non-nuclear-weapon States by all nuclear-weapon States will be an important step in achieving this objective. India is ready to enshrine its commitment to no-first-use and non-use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States in a legally binding agreement. We are also ready to multilateralise our no-first-use commitment so as to reduce the salience of nuclear weapons in the strategic realm. These measures should be within our grasp given the non-adversarial relations among major powers.

Mere tinkering with modalities or revisiting the divisive debates, especially those of the past year, is not going to help. What might be a renewed effort to create a system of global security based on the fundamental changes in the international political, economic and security environment, which could contribute to achieving the goal of total elimination of nuclear weapons. As mentioned before, for any measure of nuclear disarmament to be successful, it must be global and non-discriminatory and should enhance the security of all States. The continuing impasse in the Conference is out of tune with the aspirations of the international community, the growing democratic temper of the world, and the absolute imperative of development in the age of globalisation. That is why, Mr. President, we must persevere in our efforts in the Conference.