

Remarks by Ambassador Jayant Prasad at the Plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament

16/05/2007

Madam President,

At the start of the second part of the 2007 annual session of the Conference on Disarmament, I should like to first thank you, and the Ambassadors of South Africa and Spain, for your leadership of the Conference. My delegation shares the sense of forward movement prevailing in the Conference this year.

2. For India, at the current stage of CD's activities, establishing a programme of work remains the top priority and we are supportive of initiatives that would facilitate reaching consensus on it. We are happy to note that the presidential draft decision contained in document L.1 focuses on this issue. You, Madam President, have clarified in the plenary that the draft decision and CD's schedule of activities "will, for all practical purposes, constitute a programme work." For us, certainly, this does very much constitute a programme of work.

3. To ensure the smooth conduct of negotiations, there should be sufficient understanding on the fundamental parameters of the unfolding programme of work, especially on its substance. This is required so that we embark upon a successful venture and for a positive outcome of the substantive work that we hope to undertake in the Conference.

4. The true vocation of the Conference is to engage in negotiations to arrive at multilateral, non-discriminatory legal instruments on the disarmament issues listed on the Conference agenda. The Conference has also engaged in exploratory discussions that precede negotiations, such as identification of issues, which we have conducted during the course of last year and the first part of the current annual session, as also clarification of objectives, on which an understanding amongst the constituents of the Conference is a prerequisite for successful negotiations.

5. Since we are engaged in that process now, it would be appropriate for my delegation to reiterate that, on a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT), we attach importance to the negotiation of a universal, non-discriminatory and effectively and internationally verifiable treaty and that it would be desirable for this to be clarified by the presidency in line with documents CD/1299 and CD/1547. India was supportive of the mandate on FMCT contained in the UNGA resolution 48/75L, which, India had co-sponsored. This support was reiterated by India at important moments when CD considered the matter, in 1995, following the adoption of CD/1299, and in 1998, following the adoption of CD/1547. We sincerely hope that there is sufficient common understanding on this fundamental issue as we proceed towards FMCT negotiations in the Conference.

6. In order to protect the negotiating position of my delegation, it would have been ideal to engage in FMCT negotiations in an Ad-hoc Committee and not have negotiations presided over by a coordinator. You, Madam President, clarified that the functions of the coordinators would be "comparable to those of a subsidiary body." Since the coordinators could not be designated as such, it might help very much if the clarifications provided by you earlier could be incorporated, even in a summary form, in the complimentary presidential statement.

7. My delegation would encourage the presidency to continue consultations so that the Conference is able to arrive at a decision that takes into account the interests and concerns of all delegations. We have to go beyond appealing to the good sense and wisdom of delegations. It is only through a consultative process that the presidency can engender

ideas that would persuade all CD members to arrive at a consensus.

8. India will continue to participate constructively in the ongoing efforts to reach a consensus on CD's programme of work.