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

STATEMENT BY

**H.E. Mr. Jayant Prasad
Ambassador & Permanent Representative of India
to the Conference on Disarmament**

GENEVA, 23rd June 2005

Mr. President,

Please accept my delegation's warm felicitations on your assumption of the Presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. We are most happy to see you in the chair and assure you of our fullest support. We are conscious of the burden you bear and the challenge on your hands while presiding over the sole multilateral negotiating forum in the field of disarmament that has not carried out any substantive work since 1999. This has happened not for want of exertion of your part or on the part of the past CD presidents over the past several years but because we, the members of the Conference on Disarmament, have been unable to arrive at a consensus on a Programme of Work. We would like to assure you, Mr. President, of the constructive cooperation of our delegation in seeking a way out of CD's current impasse.

2. Unfortunately, some of the current diagnosis of CD's present predicament locates the problem in process rather than politics. Some say CD's crisis of relevance results in part from its dysfunctional decision-making procedures that have said to paralyse the Conference on Disarmament. Others say that this body has outlived its utility and should be disbanded and that, instead of having a single multilateral negotiating body, the UN Security Council should set up ad-hoc bodies to take on discrete tasks. Such prognosis and advice could be counter-productive. In 1933, some countries withdrew from the Conference for the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments of the League of Nations. This presaged their withdrawal for the League of Nations itself, as also the demise of the World Disarmament Conference, if not also the outbreak of the Second World War.

3. The lack of agreement on CD's Programme of Work is symptomatic of the decline of the multilateral ethic. More specifically, it is reflective of the lack of political will. This is not, however, a reflection of a simplistic absence of resolve on the part of some of the key constituents of Conference on Disarmament. It is the consequence of their assessment that the time is perhaps not right or that it is perhaps not in their national security interest to engage in negotiations or deliberations over the issues on the agenda of the CD. The

fact is that specific national positions could be both protected and reconciled for the larger common good through the course of negotiations conducted on the basis of consensus. A case in point is the success in New York less than a week ago of the Open Ended Working Group of the General Assembly in concluding negotiations on an international instrument to enable States to identify illicit small arms and light weapons. We now have an instrument that provides universal standards for the marking of all small arms and light weapons and for international cooperation for the tracing of the illicit ones. The consensus principle helped rather than hindered the process of reaching agreement on the instrument. There is no reason why it should come in the way of negotiations within the Conference on Disarmament.

4. In view of the growing impatience with this body's lack of productive work, our task remains, besides appealing to good sense and wisdom, to generate ideas that could persuade member States to establish a Programme of Work for the Conference on Disarmament that reflects the concerns and priorities of all its member States and is responsive to the expectations of the international community. It is in this specific context, Mr. President, that India is supportive of the A-5 proposal. We continue to believe that it could form the basis for reaching consensus on CD's Programme of Work.

5. Our delegation has taken the floor, in response to your invitation to delegations to speak on the core issues of our agenda, in the hope that interventions could spur ideas on how we could proceed further in commencing negotiations within this body on these core issues. Otherwise, our debate will be meaningless, since our national positions are well known and adequately articulated. Speaking about the same issues and delivering general statements on them is in no way a substitute for the adoption of a programme of work, which remains our critical objective.

6. While articulating his vision of free India's foreign policy, India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru once said in the Constituent Assembly, and I quote: "It is well for us to say that we stand for peace and freedom, and yet

that does not convey much to anybody, except a pious hope." By itself, he explained, such an assertion had no particular meaning, because every country is prepared to say the same thing, whether it means it or not. All members of the Conference on Disarmament, indeed the entire membership of the United Nations, had agreed, by consensus, on a set of goals to secure peace, security and disarmament, reflected in the Final Document of the General Assembly's first Special Session on Disarmament in 1978. These constitute, essentially, the core agenda of the Conference on Disarmament. The test of our commitment to peace, security and disarmament is the willingness to undertake negotiations to accomplish the given objectives. Without a movement in that direction, all expression of pious hopes is but empty talk.

7. The Final Document of SSOD-I recognized that nuclear weapons pose the greatest danger to mankind and to the survival of civilization and that effective measures of nuclear disarmament and prevention of nuclear war have the highest priority. Twenty-seven years later, when the Cold War has ended, we will not profit by quibbling on this postulate - it would suffice for us to remember and reiterate it. Many colleagues here have acknowledged that the concept of mutually assured destruction (MAD) is anachronistic today. The dictum that a nuclear war can never be won and must never be fought, enunciated by President Reagan at the UN General Assembly in 1983, is accepted now as conventional wisdom.

8. In the informal discussions on nuclear disarmament last year, we had heard upbeat assessments by the representatives of the United States and the Russian Federation about the receding threat of bilateral arms race between them. Theirs was an impressive listing of achievements, especially in reducing their strategic arsenals and improving inventory management and rationalisation. We welcome the prospect of more radical reductions. This bilateral process, well begun, must be taken to its logical conclusion, by completely ridding the world of nuclear weapons - through a time-bound programme of nuclear disarmament.

9. India fully subscribes to the statement made by the G-21 Coordinator and the Group's position on the Programme of Work, clearly enunciated in the statement made by Ambassador Naela Gabr of Egypt in the plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament on 15th March 2005. She had expressed also G-21's reaffirmation of its proposal on nuclear disarmament as contained in document CD/1570.

10. The idea of implementing a phased programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons within a time-bound framework was the core idea of the Action Plan unveiled by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1988 at the third Special Session of the General Assembly devoted to Disarmament. The Action Plan provided for the elimination of nuclear weapons of all categories, tactical, medium-range and strategic. It brought within the fold of nuclear disarmament all the nuclear weapon States as well as the nuclear capable States. It also provided for relevant collateral measures, including the dismantling of doctrines that have underpinned the nuclear arms race and their replacement by new doctrines based on non-violence and cooperation. It also spelt out the parameters and principles that could govern a nuclear weapon-free world order. The core principle of the Plan has continuing relevance today.

11. As a nuclear weapon State, India is conscious of its special responsibility towards nuclear disarmament. Our defensive security posture is marked by responsibility, restraint, and predictability and is predicated on a minimum credible deterrence that precludes the doctrines of first use or pre-emptive use of nuclear weapons, or the use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon States. We have continued to advocate legally binding international instruments to enshrine these commitments, as also to negotiate a legally-binding instrument on assurance to non-nuclear weapon States. Until we reach agreement on a phased and time-bound programme for the elimination of nuclear weapons, which is the best way to eliminate the dangers both of nuclear war and nuclear proliferation, we support, as an interim measure, a convention on the prohibition of use of nuclear weapons. We remain committed to our unilateral moratorium on nuclear weapons testing and to participate in negotiations on a multilateral, non-discriminatory and effectively and internationally

verifiable Fissile Materials Cut-off Treaty. In sum, India's commitment to the goal of nuclear disarmament remains undiminished.

12. We also share the concerns of the international community concerning the possible connection between terrorism and weapons of mass destruction. There is a danger of such weapons falling into the hands of terrorists, euphemistically covered by the term, non-state entities. We emphasize in this regard, state responsibility and accountability for combating terrorism, eliminating its support infrastructure and preventing proliferation. Our own record in preventing proliferation of sensitive goods and technologies has remained impeccable.

13. As members of this multilateral negotiating body, we remain strong votaries of multilateralism in global disarmament efforts. Rule-based, multilaterally negotiated and legally binding, verifiable and non-discriminatory instruments provide the best mechanism to deal with disarmament and arms control. The total elimination of nuclear weapons is a global issue and needs to be addressed in a multilateral framework.

14. The A-5 proposal for CD's Programme of Work provides for a less-than-negotiating mandate for the Ad-hoc Committee on nuclear disarmament. Our acceptance of the A-5 proposal, in no way, diminishes our commitment to the immediate commencement of negotiations on nuclear disarmament. We have accepted the A-5 proposal in a spirit of flexibility and constructive approach in order to have the Conference on Disarmament adopt a Programme of Work, enabling commencement of negotiations. Success or otherwise of these plenary meetings will be judged against the yardstick of whether this happens or not. Any proposal to do less than that would not further our objectives.

Thank you, Mr. President.