

Statement by Ambassador Rakesh Sood, Permanent Representative of India to the Conference on Disarmament, Geneva at the General Debate in the First Committee of UNGA, New York, October 16, 2001

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation congratulates you on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. The diplomatic skills and experience that you bring will help to fulfill the responsibility entrusted on you, while also facilitating the work of all the delegations present here. The Indian delegation would like to assure you of its full cooperation in your efforts.

As we assemble again in New York for a meeting of the First Committee this year, we are acutely aware that we are only a short distance away from the site of the devastating terrorist attack of September 11. It cost thousands of innocent lives, and reinforced the need for the international community to take concerted action to ensure the security of all humanity. The diversity of the nationalities of the victims of that event is symbolic of the global nature of the scourge of terrorism and defines the kind of collective response it deserves. We share in the grief of those bereaved. We know what it means. Tens of thousands of Indians have become victims of terrorist acts in the past two decades. This carnage, has been aided, abetted and promoted across borders as part of the phenomenon now described as "terrorism with a global reach"; a phenomenon that is widely accepted as the primary threat to plural societies. While continuing our own battle against this threat, we remain ready to join collective efforts to deal with groups and regimes which engage in, or aid and abet, such crimes against humanity.

Mr. Chairman, recent developments underline the need for us not to procrastinate on a number of issues that threaten international peace and security. We should seize this moment to redouble our resolve to address the issues before this Committee squarely, and take certain measures that we have not been able to take in the past. Consider the threats posed by nuclear weapons, which remains central to the work of this Committee. The security that all of us are entitled to can be achieved only by the total elimination of all nuclear weapons. The spectre of nuclear terrorism by nations or groups cannot be erased as long as such weapons are not eradicated completely from our arsenals. Hence the need to give heed to the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice of 1996 which unanimously concluded that "there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control". As a nuclear weapon state, India remains committed to the goal of global nuclear disarmament. It is in this context that my delegation is bringing before this Committee, once again as it has done since 1982, the resolution calling for a convention to be negotiated for prohibiting the use or the threat of use of nuclear weapons under any circumstances.

India's exercise of its nuclear option by conducting a limited series of tests in 1998 and subsequent weaponisation, was a decision that we were forced to take due to the nuclearisation of our region and the failure of existing non-proliferation regimes to deal with it. It was a decision characterized by moderation and voluntary restraint. The concepts of 'minimum nuclear deterrent' and 'no-first-use' define our deployment posture, combined with a civilian command and control structure. We realize the urgent need, pending a total ban on nuclear weapons, for all nuclear weapon States to take steps to reassure the world that they will reduce the risk of accidental or unauthorized use of nuclear weapons. There can be no justification, in this post-post-cold war period for thousands of

nuclear weapons to be maintained in a state of hair-trigger alert with possible disastrous consequences. A number of specific proposals and measures have been put forward by nations, and NGOs in this regard that are worth considering. The call in the United Nations Millennium Declaration to seek to eliminate the dangers posed by weapons of mass destruction, including by convening an international conference to identify ways of eliminating nuclear dangers, needs a positive response. Given the audacity and the scale of terrorist operations that we have witnessed in recent times, the urgency for action in this regard is even greater today than ever before. India's resolution entitled "Reducing Nuclear Danger" will be brought before this Committee for the fourth consecutive year, in the hope that it will receive wider support and that speedy action will follow.

India's declaration of a voluntary moratorium on further underground nuclear test explosions meets the basic obligation of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). India is also committed to building a consensus nationally for creating a possible environment to sign the Treaty. Developments in other countries have demonstrated that it is not a simple issue and that consensus building in democracies needs considerable patience and time. Meanwhile we have made it clear that India will not stand in the way of the entry-into-force of the CTBT. India also expects that other countries will adhere to this Treaty without conditions.

India is committed to participate constructively, and in good faith, in the Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty (FMCT) negotiations in order to develop a Treaty to prohibit the future production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons or other nuclear devices which is non-discriminatory and verifiable. This commitment had prompted India to support the compromise Amorim Proposal in the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, which would have paved the way for the commencement of the long awaited negotiations on FMCT while also establishing Ad-hoc Committees on Nuclear Disarmament and Prevention of Arms Race in outer Space. It is time that the necessary political will is displayed by those countries whose ambiguous positions have led the Conference on Disarmament to its current comatose state, so that the Conference can be activated to fulfill its intended role as the single multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament. Five years have passed without any negotiations and prolonged discussions limited to procedural issues that are bound to remain inconclusive will weaken genuine multilateralism, painstakingly developed over a period of time.

Since this Committee processes several resolutions dealing with nuclear weapons-free zones, let me reiterate that India respects the sovereign choice exercised by non-nuclear weapon States in establishing such zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the states of the region concerned, as recognized in the guidelines formulated by the UN Disarmament Commission in 1999. India is prepared to extend all necessary commitments to such nuclear weapons-free zones. We do so, while recognizing that regional approaches underlying nuclear weapons-free zones cannot do justice to the concerns emanating from the global nature of the threat posed by nuclear weapons.

Mr. Chairman, it is evident that existing legal instruments are inadequate to deter imminent attempts for the further militarisation and weaponisation of outer space. Hence the need for the Conference on Disarmament to engage itself on this subject at the earliest. India was one of the cosponsors of Resolution 55/32 which reiterated that the CD has the primary role in the negotiation of a multilateral agreement or agreements, as appropriate on the prevention of an arms race in outer space in all its aspects. Our endeavors should aim to preserve space for the full range of cooperative, peaceful and developmental activities.

Meanwhile arms limitations and disarmament treaties need to be implemented fully and in good faith in order to contribute to stability.

This Committee had a year ago, recognized the need for a comprehensive approach towards missiles, in a balanced and non-discriminatory manner, as a contribution to international peace and security. India is participating in the panel of governmental experts established on the basis of resolution 55/33A to prepare a report for the consideration of the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session. There is widespread recognition that club-based, discriminatory export control measures have failed to address the issue of missiles. India wishes to see the norms against the proliferation of missiles strengthened through transparent, multilateral agreements on the basis of equal and undiminished security, that also ensure that civilian space related applications are not adversely affected.

The issue of export controls is one that goes beyond missiles to a whole range of dual use technologies. What is needed today is an effective and transparent system of export controls of technologies that would be in line with the objectives of non-proliferation in all its aspects without affecting peaceful applications of these technologies. Persistence of discriminatory mechanisms, some of which run contrary to existing treaty provisions, deprive developing countries of the benefits of scientific and technologic developments. There is an urgent need to address this critical issue, that can affect the quality of life of people all over the world, in a fair and transparent manner. It is for this purpose that India has since 1989 brought before this Committee, along with our co-sponsors, a resolution entitled "Role of Science and Technology in the Context of International Security and Disarmament."

In seeking to apply the principle of non-discrimination to disarmament instruments, we have the successful example of the Chemical Weapons Convention. It is now the responsibility of all States Parties to the CWC to ensure that all the provisions of the Convention are fully and effectively implemented. India, as an original State Party, remains fully committed to this task.

Mr. Chairman, India, like many other countries, who had participated actively for about six years in the negotiations for a Protocol to strengthen the implementation of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, was disappointed that the Ad-Hoc Group was unable to conclude its work in time for the Fifth Review Conference planned for the end of this year. It is particularly sad that an endeavor that had come so close to a successful outcome was abandoned so abruptly, when threats of bio-terrorism are becoming more likely. It is our sincere hope that the forthcoming Review Conference will succeed in maintaining the mandate for strengthening the implementation of the BTWC within the framework of the Convention.

There is yet another Review Conference in the disarmament calendar this year, which offers a little more hope. The Second Review Conference of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) promises not only to review the existing provisions on excessively injurious weapons, but also presents the possibility of expanding the scope of the Convention to cover non-international armed conflicts. India has been active in the CCW process, having ratified all its Protocols, including the Amended Protocol II on landmines. India believes that a phased approach for a non-discriminatory, universal and global ban on anti-personnel mines, that addresses the legitimate defence requirement of States will help ameliorate the critical humanitarian crises that have resulted from irresponsible transfer and indiscriminate use of landmines. The process of complete elimination of APLs will be facilitated by addressing the legitimate defence role of anti-personnel landmines for operational requirements under the

defence doctrines of the countries concerned, through the availability of appropriate militarily effective, non-lethal, and cost effective alternative technologies.

India had actively participated in the UN Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects held here in New York last year. The outcome of the Conference fell far short of our expectations of dealing with the priority of breaking the nexus between small arms proliferation, international terrorism, drug smuggling, organized crime, money laundering, and the 'grey markets' that feed this link. Nevertheless, the modest Programme of Action adopted by the Conference needs to be implemented expeditiously and fully as a first step in a multilateral process.

Mr Chairman, this year has brought us new hopes and fears like an interplay of light and shadows. Some of those shadows appear longer and darker while some of the sources of light seem to recede into distance. Prospects of a new security framework for a post-Cold War world remain distant even as new threats highlight the need for multilateralism. A century and even a new millennium that we hoped will begin on a note of peace in contrast to the past, has already been scarred by violence. To make progress in this Committee, we need to acknowledge certain fundamentals. Peace and security are indivisible. Every nation has a claim to equal and legitimate security. Unilateralism or exclusive alliances of a select few will prove to be counter-productive. We need to work together, using non-discriminatory and transparent approaches in a truly multilateral and inclusive manner in order to seek that peace and security we all deserve. This is necessary if we have to emerge from the shadows of vulnerability and fear into the light of confidence and hope.

Mr. Chairman, before concluding, allow me to congratulate Secretary General Kofi Annan, and the United Nations for the richly deserved Nobel Prize for Peace. We are sure this will encourage both the Secretary General and the UN to redouble their efforts to achieve the goal of complete elimination of nuclear Weapons, a goal so cherished, yet so elusive. There could be no better gift to the succeeding generations and dare I say guarantee the Nuclear Peace Prize to this very organization.
