

STATEMENT BY MRS. SUSHMA SWARAJ, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT AND MEMBER OF THE INDIAN DELEGATION AT THE 62ND SESSION OF THE FIRST COMMITTEE OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON OCTOBER 16, 2007

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation is most happy to see you, a distinguished representative of a friendly country, in the chair of the Committee on Disarmament and International Security, the First Committee of the General Assembly, which has been the incubator of several important global disarmament initiatives since its inception.

2. Indeed, the very first resolution adopted by the General Assembly, Resolution 1(1) of 1946, unanimously and unambiguously called for elimination from national armaments of atomic weapons and of all other major weapons adaptable to mass destruction, and the use of atomic energy only for peaceful purposes, a goal reaffirmed by the General Assembly repeatedly. The very existence of nuclear weapons, and consequently the ever present possibility of their use, poses a threat to mankind. This is the central message of the first UNGA resolution and the Final document of SSOD-I.

3. The ban on biological and chemical weapons raised the hope that a similar prohibition could be imposed on the remaining weapon of mass destruction, namely nuclear weapons. However, nuclear weapons stockpiles, both strategic and non-strategic, are still too large, and mostly on hair-trigger readiness. The threat of nuclear war remains real.

4. Our goal has to be the total elimination of nuclear weapons for a nuclear-weapon-free world. This was the core of the Action Plan presented by former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi at the Third Special Session of the General Assembly on Disarmament in 1988. It provided a holistic framework for disarmament with those with the biggest arsenals having greater responsibility for nuclear disarmament. Speaking before the General Assembly on October 1 the Minister for External Affairs of India said "India's longstanding commitment to universal, non-discriminatory and comprehensive nuclear disarmament is embodied in the vision of late Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi for a "nuclear-free and non-violent world". This vision was put forward nearly two decades ago. It remains undiminished today. Indeed it is all the more relevant today, given that fact that peaceful uses of nuclear energy can address the inexorably growing demand for new and non-polluting sources of energy to fuel economic development." The Minister for External Affairs also stated that we would be bringing proposals to Member States and this organisation in this regard.

5. Once the international community agrees on the goal of a nuclear weapon free world, all states could work together to elaborate incremental and progressive steps for realising that goal. Simultaneously, the international community could also craft a security system in which States do not feel the need to develop, produce, stockpile or use weapons of mass destruction. Both would require changes in attitudes, doctrines and national security postures to bring them more in line with today's globalised, interdependent world.

6. While maintaining a credible minimum nuclear deterrent, India remains committed to nuclear disarmament, which enjoys strong domestic consensus. India has remained steadfast to the goal of a nuclear weapon free world, to be achieved through global, verifiable and non-discriminatory nuclear disarmament. India's responsible nuclear doctrine is based on no first use and non-use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapons States. We are prepared to turn these commitments into multilateral, legally-binding obligations. The doctrine also reaffirms India's readiness to join multilateral negotiations for the 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 the 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, subject to its meeting India's national security interests. We also believe that the Conference on Disarmament must find practical ways of addressing the issue of nuclear disarmament in a comprehensive and nondiscriminatory manner.

7. Mr. Chairman, our commitment to nuclear disarmament is reflected also in the resolutions that have we been sponsoring in the First Committee and the General Assembly. We are convinced that a multilateral, universal and binding agreement prohibiting the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons under any circumstances would contribute to the elimination of the nuclear threat and create a climate for negotiations for an agreement on the prohibition of nuclear weapons. We, therefore, intend to once more table the resolution that requests the Conference on Disarmament to begin negotiations on such a convention.

8. While the international consensus to ban nuclear weapons develops, we should take measures to mitigate the dangers posed by these weapons. We propose to table again the resolution on reducing nuclear danger, which offers modest and practical proposals, calling for a review of nuclear doctrines, as also urgent steps to reduce the risks of unintentional and accidental use of nuclear weapons, including through de-alerting and detargeting of nuclear weapons.

9. Besides the threat to the safety and security of mankind from the likely use of nuclear weapons by States, there is now a new threat emanating from possible use of weapons of mass destruction by terrorists and non-State actors. We hope that the resolution on measures to prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction, which has been adopted by this Committee and the General Assembly by consensus since 2002, will receive similar endorsement this year, with an even greater number of sponsorships. In this context, we welcome the entry into force of the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism on 7 July 2007.

10. As a responsible nuclear power, we stand for strengthening global nonproliferation, as proliferation has already affected our security interests adversely. A constructive dialogue needs to be evolved for stemming proliferation without unduly constraining peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

11. India remains constructively engaged in collateral disarmament processes, including on small arms and light weapons, the Biological and Chemical Weapons Conventions and the

Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. India has completed destruction of 84 per cent of its chemical weapons stockpile and is committed to destroying its entire stockpile by April 2009. India was also among the first 23 States to ratify Protocol-V of CCW on Explosive Remnants of War that entered into force last year. With this, India has become one of 25 countries to have signed and ratified CCW and all its five Protocols.

12. The First Committee and the General Assembly have a special role in forging a better understanding on the entire range of issues on the global disarmament agenda. Through such an exercise, they can promote purposive actions internationally and provide useful direction to the disarmament negotiating body, the Conference on Disarmament. The challenges and opportunities in the areas of disarmament, non-proliferation and international security require multilateral solutions. They also need a renewed commitment by States and a global compact to undertake collective obligations. India, on its part, is ready for such an exercise.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman
