

Statement by Ambassador Jayant Prasad, Permanent Representative of India to the Conference on Disarmament at the Thematic Debate on Nuclear Disarmament at the 62nd Session of the First Committee of the UN General Assembly , New York, October 18, 2007

Mr. Chairman,

I am happy to recognize in the chair Vice-Chairman Roman Hunger, a former co-worker from the Geneva disarmament family. Allow me also to commend Ambassador Badgi for conducting our proceedings in an exemplary way. Do please convey our compliments to him. We would also like to thank in particular the High Representative of the UN Secretary General and the other high-level officials who briefed us on the current state of global arms control and disarmament activities, as also the panellists on nuclear disarmament.

The startling transformation of the global security landscape since the end of the Cold War has spurred significant reductions in the nuclear arsenals of the Russian Federation and the United States. We welcome the steps taken by the two countries to reduce their weapons stockpiles and their affirmation to meet their nuclear disarmament obligations. We would like to see further and deeper reductions in their stockpiles of nuclear weapons with a view to achieving the goal of global nuclear disarmament, as also to see all UN Member States, including the other Nuclear Weapon States, contributing to the process of nuclear disarmament.

From what we are hearing from the experts who have spoken here and from the pundits of security policy outside the United Nations, it appears that while the objective factors for the increasing militarization of international relations no longer exist, and we have had 62 years of non-use of nuclear weapons, the global outlook for disarmament, in particular nuclear disarmament, appears to be outweighed with our perception of new threats and uncertainties. These contingent factors have clouded our vision of the future, so much that there has been a regression of disarmament in the contemporary political lexicon, as also global disarmament forums.

At the same time, however, the discussions over the past ten days, both during the general debate and the thematic discussions on nuclear disarmament, have reflected the resolve of almost all UN

Member States to accord the highest priority to the goal of the complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

While maintaining a credible minimum nuclear deterrent, there is no dilution in India's commitment to nuclear disarmament. Indeed, this remains a core concern of India's foreign policy. India is not seeking a nuclear arms race with any other nuclear power and believes that the security of India and that of the entire world will be considerably enhanced in a world free of nuclear weapons, to be achieved through global, verifiable and non-discriminatory nuclear disarmament. India's nuclear doctrine, enunciated during the course of the general debate, is marked by restraint, responsibility, transparency, predictability and a defensive orientation.

The ability of the international community to move towards the goal of nuclear disarmament presupposes a reaffirmation of the unequivocal commitment of all States, including the Nuclear Weapon States, to the goal of complete elimination of nuclear weapons. And until such time as nuclear weapons cease to exist, there are several measures that can be taken meanwhile to prevent the threat of nuclear war.

An important collateral measure for this, as a precursor to a convention prohibiting the development, production, stockpiling and transfer of nuclear weapons and on their destruction, could be a global compact on the prohibition of use of nuclear weapons. By delegitimising the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, such an instrument can contribute to reducing the danger of nuclear war. As Patricia Lewis reminded us yesterday, the international community took a similar step in 1925 in respect of chemical and biological weapons. That example applies to the remaining weapon of mass destruction, nuclear weapons, which we are addressing today. India has a long-standing proposal for the Conference to commence negotiations, in order to reach agreement on an international convention prohibiting the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons under any circumstances.

Another valuable suggestion, articulated from several quarters in this Committee, has been to pursue specific measures that would significantly reduce the risks of nuclear war, while awaiting a global compact to eliminate nuclear weapons. These range from promoting an international dialogue on cooperative security to the de-alerting of nuclear weapons. These are pragmatic and feasible, especially in the improved international atmosphere after the end of the Cold War, when the Nuclear Weapon States are no longer in adversarial relations with each other.

When we address the question of nuclear disarmament, we subsume within it nuclear non-proliferation. These are not dichotomous, polar opposites but two ends of the same continuum. In this context, the distinguished representative of South Africa mentioned that the illicit network in nuclear technology to manufacture nuclear weapons constitutes a particular challenge. We commend States for taking purposive action to check these clandestine networks, some of which involve individuals from within State or government structures.

As for FMCT, very briefly at this stage, India is happy to count itself as one of its original proponents. The General Assembly, in its resolution 48/75L of 1993, co-sponsored by India, had expressed its unanimous conviction that a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices would be a significant contribution to nuclear non-proliferation in all its aspects and had recommended the negotiation of such a treaty in the most appropriate international forum, which is the Conference on Disarmament. We believe an FMCT must be a treaty for banning the future production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

India continues to believe that any such treaty should be non-discriminatory: it must stipulate the same obligations and responsibilities for all States. While the nature, extent and mechanisms for verification shall no doubt be determined during negotiations, we believe that an FMCT should incorporate a verification mechanism in order to provide the assurance that all States party to it are complying with their obligations under the Treaty. Full compliance by all States with their obligations under international instruments to which they are party is critical to achieving the goals envisaged in these instruments. When a State consents to adhere to an instrument, it wants to be assured that other State Parties to that instrument are also complying with its obligations. Verification, which serves the dual purpose of detection and deterrence, provides that assurance. Absence of a verification mechanism may engender lack of confidence in compliance with the Treaty, encourage wilful non-compliance, and lead to allegations and counter-allegations of non-compliance.

We hope to address the issues I have mentioned in my statement in the Conference on Disarmament by nurturing the ongoing dialogue on its programme of work in a manner that takes care of the concerns of all its constituents, big or small, developed or developing, Nuclear Weapon States or Non-Nuclear Weapon States, within or outside military alliances and privileged security relationships. We shall then be able to bridge the rupture between contemporary reality and the political action required for achieving nuclear disarmament.