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Statement

by

Mrs. Santosh Chowdhary
Hon'ble Member of Parliament
and Member of the Indian Delegation

on

The Thematic Debate on Other Weapons
of Mass Destruction
66th Session of the UN General Assembly

New York

October 17, 2011

Statement by India
First Committee Thematic Debate on Other Weapons of Mass Destruction
New York, 17 October 2011

Mr. Chairman,

India has been a consistent proponent of general and complete disarmament and remains committed to the goal of total elimination of all Weapons of Mass Destruction. We attach the highest importance to the two non-discriminatory and multilaterally negotiated treaties, the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC) and the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), which ban two entire categories of weapons of mass destruction globally in a non-discriminatory fashion.

Mr. Chairman,

The Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention is the first disarmament instrument that bans the development, production, stockpiling and use of an entire category of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). India ratified the Convention in 1974. We believe that the prohibitions against biological weapons enshrined in the Convention must be upheld. We fully support initiatives to strengthen the Convention, ensure its full implementation by all States Parties and to make it universal. We believe that only a multilaterally agreed mechanism for verification of compliance can provide the assurance that all States Parties to the Convention are in compliance with their obligations under the BWC.

India has been participating constructively in the inter-sessional meetings of the BWC following the sixth Review Conference in 2006. This is an important year for the Convention and we thank Ambassador Paul van den Ijssel for his briefing on preparations for the 7th Review Conference. We assure him of our full cooperation for a successful Seventh Review Conference in December. We hope to reach positive results by consensus at the Review Conference taking into account scientific and technological developments in the field of biological sciences.

The Chemical Weapons Convention is a unique disarmament treaty providing for the elimination of an entire category of WMDs through a multilaterally negotiated, non-discriminatory and internationally verifiable instrument. We believe that the primary objective of the Convention is the elimination of chemical weapons. We completed destruction of our chemical weapons stockpile in March 2009 within the deadline prescribed for India. It is

important that all state parties uphold and fulfill their commitments under the treaty.

While recognizing the disarmament and non-proliferation aspects of both the BWC and the CWC, we must not lose sight of the promotional aspects of both these Conventions. The economic and technological development of developing countries through international cooperation is fundamental to the achievement of the object and purpose of these Conventions. It is important that developed countries ensure full, effective and balanced implementation of all provisions of these Conventions regarding international cooperation in transfer of technology, material and equipment for peaceful purposes.

Mr. Chairman,

The risk of WMDs falling into the hands of terrorists presents a grave security challenge to the international community. India is committed to supporting international efforts to prevent non-State actors and terrorists from acquiring WMDs and their means of delivery. We have a well-established and effective export control system which has worked well for over six decades. Our commitment to prevent terrorists and non-state actors from acquiring WMDs and related materials and technologies is enshrined in domestic law inter alia through the enactment of the Weapons of Mass Destruction Act of 2005.

Our First Committee resolution entitled "Measures to prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction", first adopted in 2002 has continued to command consensus and growing support both in the First Committee and the General Assembly. The resolution gives expression to the concerns of the international community and is a clear reaffirmation of the Member States to take measures aimed at preventing terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction. It underlines that the international response to the threat needs to be national as well as multilateral and global. As in previous years we are introducing our draft resolution this year and we hope that it will continue to elicit strong support of all countries.

Thank you.