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**Statement by Ambassador D.B. Venkatesh Varma,
Permanent Representative of India to the Conference of
Disarmament, Geneva**

**at the General Debate of the
First Committee of 68th United Nations General Assembly**

New York

9 October 2013

Mr. Chairman,

At the outset allow me to congratulate you on your election as the Chairman of the First Committee of the 68th UN General Assembly and assure you of our full cooperation. We associate ourselves with the statement made by Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Mr. Chairman,

This year we meet against the back drop of a complex international situation and the difficulties being faced in fashioning multilaterally agreed and effective responses to the multifarious challenges to international peace and security. The First Committee can play a substantive role in bringing purpose and direction to our efforts as we seek to build international consensus to meet these challenges.

Mr Chairman,

India has been unwavering in its support for universal and non-discriminatory nuclear disarmament and the complete elimination of nuclear weapons and other WMDs. Our policy is consistent with the highest priority to the goal of nuclear disarmament enshrined in the Final Document of the First Special Session of UN General Assembly on Disarmament and the Rajiv Gandhi Action Plan of 1988 for a Nuclear Weapon Free and Non-violent World Order. Speaking at the 68th session of the UNGA, on 28th September 2013, Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh voiced India's support for time bound, universal, non-discriminatory, phased and verifiable nuclear disarmament. India remains convinced that its security would be strengthened in a nuclear weapon free and non-violent world order. This conviction is based both on principle and pragmatism.

Mr Chairman,

India firmly believes that the goal of nuclear disarmament can be achieved by a step-by-step process underwritten by universal commitment and an agreed multilateral framework that is global and non-discriminatory. There is need for a meaningful dialogue among States possessing nuclear weapons to build trust and confidence and for reducing the salience of nuclear weapons in international affairs and security doctrines. India's resolutions in the First Committee give expression to some of these ideas and have found support from a large number of States as steps for the progressive de-legitimization of nuclear weapons. Our Working Paper submitted to the UN General Assembly in 2006 also outlined a number of specific steps in this regard. India welcomes the high level political commitment shown by UN Members to nuclear disarmament at the High Level Meeting held on September 26, which was addressed by Shri Salman Khurshid, India's Minister for External Affairs. India supports the proposed NAM resolution on follow up to the High Level Meeting on Nuclear Disarmament.

As a responsible nuclear power India has adopted the policy of credible minimum deterrence and a posture of no-first-use and non-use against non-nuclear weapon States and is prepared to convert these undertakings into multilateral legal arrangements. Our proposal for a Convention banning the use of nuclear weapons remains on the table. India remains committed to maintaining a unilateral and voluntary moratorium on nuclear explosive testing. Without prejudice to the priority attached to nuclear disarmament, India is ready to negotiate a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices on the basis of the Shannon mandate. As the single multilateral disarmament negotiating body of the international community the CD is the appropriate forum for undertaking FMCT negotiations. India is a nuclear weapon State and will approach these negotiations as such. India would be willing to join an FMCT that meets our national security interests.

India is committed to working with the international community to advance our common objectives of non-proliferation, including through strong export controls and membership of multilateral export control regimes and strengthening the implementation of UNSCR 1540. India does not see a contradiction between nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation as these are mutually reinforcing. India has contributed actively to the Nuclear Security Summit process. India also contributed to the success of the July 2013 IAEA Ministerial Conference on Nuclear Security. We fully share global concerns on nuclear terrorism and clandestine proliferation, which continue to pose serious threats to international security. It is important to maintain public confidence in the viability of nuclear power as a safe and secure energy source through enhanced international standards on nuclear safety and security.

India attaches high importance to the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention. These two treaties are examples of non-discriminatory treaties in the field of disarmament which could effectively lead to a total elimination of specific type of weapons of mass destruction. India completed the destruction of its chemical weapons stockpiles in 2009 as per its obligations and within the stipulated time frame under the CWC. The recent events in Syria show the importance of the complete destruction and elimination of all chemical weapons stockpiles in the world as soon as possible and that terrorists and non state actors must be prevented from gaining access to these weapons. The use of chemical weapons anywhere and by anyone must be condemned and the international norm against the use of chemical weapons must not be breached. India supports the ongoing efforts of the OPCW for the expedited destruction and elimination of chemical weapon stockpiles in Syria.

India continues to contribute effectively to the BWC discussions in the new inter-sessional period 2012-16. The vitality of this Convention is important for enabling State Parties to face the security challenges, including the threat of bio-terrorism, posed by the rapid pace of developments in biological sciences and technology in the 21st century.

We support continuing international efforts to strengthen the international legal framework to ensure the safety and security of space assets and to prevent the weaponization of outer space. While universal and non-discriminatory transparency and confidence building measures can play a useful complementary role, they cannot substitute legally binding instruments in this field. It is also important that all the major space-faring nations are involved in any multilateral endeavour related to prevention of arms race in outer space in order to enhance the possibility of universal acceptance of its outcome.

India participated actively in the negotiations for the Arms Trade Treaty in the expectation that such a treaty would make a real impact on illicit trafficking in conventional arms and their illicit use especially by terrorists and other unauthorized and unlawful non-state actors. During the ATT negotiations India consistently stressed that the treaty should ensure a balance of obligations between exporting and importing States. However, the finalized treaty text did not meet our requirements on these counts. We are undertaking a full and thorough assessment of the ATT from the perspective of our defence, security and foreign policy interests.

We made positive contribution to the work of the GGE which reviewed the operation of the UN Register of Conventional Arms this year. We look forward to the Biennial Meeting of States of the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons to be held next year. We remain strongly committed to the CCW process in strengthening the rules and principles of international humanitarian law.

India will make detailed statements on some of these issues during the thematic debate, including on the UN disarmament machinery.

Mr. Chairman,

Lastly, I would like to mention that as in the past years India would present three resolutions at this First Committee namely, Convention on the Prohibition of Use of Nuclear Weapons, Reducing Nuclear Danger and Measures to Prevent Terrorists from Acquiring Weapons of Mass Destruction. India seeks the support of all members for these resolutions.

Thank you.