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STATEMENT

BY

**AMBASSADOR HAMID ALI RAO,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF INDIA
TO THE CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT, GENEVA**

AT THE

**2011 SUBSTANTIVE SESSION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS DISARMAMENT COMMISSION**

NEW YORK

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Statement by Ambassador Hamid Ali Rao at the 2011 Session of the UNDC

Mr. Chairman,

At the outset let me congratulate you on the assumption of the chairmanship of UN Disarmament Commission. I assure you of my delegation's full support in the discharge of your responsibilities. Let me also appreciate the important contributions of the UN Secretary General and High Representative of the Secretary General for Disarmament Affairs to our debate.

India associates itself with the statement made by Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

India attaches high importance to the UN disarmament machinery put in place by consensus by the 10th Special Session of the UN General Assembly devoted to disarmament. The UNDC forms a vital part of that machinery as the specialized deliberative organ. It offers Member States a unique opportunity to bridge differences and arrive at principles and recommendations capable of universal acceptance. India believes that the UNDC can play a central role in developing consensus on disarmament issues facing the international community.

Mr. Chairman,

With regard to Working Group I on "Recommendations for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons" we have had extensive exchange of views both in the last cycle as well as in the last two years of this cycle. However, it has not been possible to arrive at a consensus on these recommendations, though we came close to doing so in 2008. India remains willing to engage constructively with a view to developing such consensus in this year's meetings.

Nuclear disarmament remains the highest priority for India and the Non-Aligned Movement. India has been consistent in its support for global, complete and verifiable nuclear disarmament. In 1988, Prime Minister Shri Rajiv Gandhi presented an Action Plan for a Nuclear-Weapon-Free and Non-Violent World Order to the Third Special Session of the UN on Disarmament. The Action Plan postulated a nuclear weapon free world in stages by 2010. The end of the Cold War kept alive the hope that we will be able to reach that goal but it was not to be. We are nowhere near to attaining that goal today than we were in 1988. The imperative need to move towards the goal of complete elimination of nuclear weapons remains as valid today as it was two decades back. We welcome the high level reaffirmations of this need in the recent past.

In June 2008, on the twentieth anniversary of the Rajiv Gandhi Action Plan, Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh asked others to join India in taking the critical first step - a commitment, preferably a binding legal commitment through an international instrument, to eliminate nuclear weapons within a time bound framework. Other leaders have also expressed their commitment to seek the goal of global zero.

India believes that nuclear disarmament can be achieved by a step-by-step process underwritten by a universal commitment and an agreed multilateral framework for achieving global and non-discriminatory nuclear disarmament. We also believe that progressive steps for the de-legitimization of nuclear weapons are essential to achieving the goal of their complete elimination. Measures to reduce nuclear dangers arising from accidental or unauthorized use of nuclear weapons, increasing restraints on the use of nuclear weapons, de-alerting of nuclear weapons are pertinent in this regard.

India's resolutions in the First Committee on a "Convention on the Prohibition of the Use of Nuclear Weapons", "Reducing Nuclear Dangers" give expression to some of these steps and have justifiably found support from a large number of countries. These steps were also part of a Working Paper presented by India at the 2007 session of the Disarmament Commission. The intent of the Working Paper, which reflects the spirit and substance of the Rajiv Gandhi Action Plan, was to stimulate debate and discussion on nuclear disarmament.

Mr. Chairman, the countries with the largest nuclear arsenals bear a special responsibility for progress on nuclear disarmament. In this regard we welcome the ratification of the new START agreement between the US and Russia. The two still hold more than 90% of the nuclear weapons in the world and the new START is a step in the right direction. We believe that there is need for a meaningful dialogue among all states possessing nuclear weapons to build trust and confidence and for reducing the salience of nuclear weapons in international affairs and security doctrines.

Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation are mutually reinforcing processes. We believe that the expansion of nuclear energy and reduction of proliferation risks must go hand in hand. The possibility of nuclear material falling into the hands of terrorists is real and could have catastrophic consequences. We are happy that our resolution on this issue entitled "Measures to prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction" is adopted by consensus in the UNGA every year.

Mr. Chairman,

Working Group II on "Elements of a draft Declaration of the 2010s as the Fourth Disarmament Decade" saw substantive discussions on the revised draft last year though consensus again eluded us. We hope that the discussions this year will see greater convergence of views and we will be able to achieve consensus on this important item.

The draft declaration should reflect the aspirations of the international community in the field of disarmament. We should aim at finding consensus on elements that will be of enduring validity, that uphold the priority for nuclear disarmament and complete elimination of all weapons of mass destruction, that address other dimensions of global security including space security, and that strengthen the international framework for addressing issues related to conventional arms, including small arms and light weapons and preventing their use by terrorists. As is its tradition, the UNDC should focus on these issues of security taking into account global interdependence of peoples and nations.

Mr. Chairman,

The third item on our agenda is "Practical confidence building measures in the field of conventional weapons". This issue was also deliberated upon in two previous cycles of UNDC's work, in 2001-03 and 2006-08. Although we are skeptical of how much progress can be achieved in the short time available this year given that we have not deliberated the issue in this cycle, we are ready for substantive deliberations on the issue.

Mr. Chairman,

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate that UNDC is an important part of the multilateral disarmament machinery. My delegation is committed to working constructively in the coming weeks for the success of this session of UNDC.

Thank you.