

**Statement by Ms. Rachita Bhandari, Counsellor,
Permanent Mission of India to the Conference on Disarmament at the
CD Plenary on January 31, 2019 on the draft Programme of Work
presented by the Ukrainian Presidency.**

Mr. President,

The delegation of India thanks you for sharing with us your draft Programme of Work for the 2019 Session as contained in document CD/WP.618. In accordance with Rule 29 of the CD's Rules of Procedure, it is incumbent upon the President to present a Programme of Work to the CD for consideration and adoption. Further, in accordance with Rule 28, such a Programme of Work should be established at the beginning of the annual session. Consequently, the obligation of presenting a Programme of Work remains paramount for the first Presidency in particular and therefore, we acknowledge and appreciate your efforts in the discharge of this cardinal responsibility.

We also thank you for taking time out to meet with the G-21 yesterday, upon the Group's request, to discuss your draft Programme of Work. We are appreciative of your willingness to take suggestions and ideas from all member States to improve the initial draft.

Mr. President, India remains committed to the adoption of a Programme of Work in the CD. We shall therefore extend our full support and cooperation towards this collective endeavour. It is in this spirit that we put forward a few suggestions for your consideration.

1. As a general comment, while we welcome the negotiating mandates for the core agenda items of the CD, we believe it would be appropriate if these negotiations were conducted with the objective of concluding legally-binding instruments. Else, these would essentially remain more of discussion mandates rather than negotiating mandates.
2. India attaches high priority to universal, non-discriminatory and verifiable nuclear disarmament. Nuclear disarmament remains the top priority for the G-21 as well. We would therefore support nuclear disarmament to be addressed as a priority under agenda item-1 and as paragraph-6(a) of your draft. This would also be in line with the decisions of last year as well as work conducted under Subsidiary Body 1. We would also welcome a strengthened mandate towards the negotiation of a comprehensive Nuclear Weapons Convention.

3. Without prejudice to the priority we attach to nuclear disarmament, we support the negotiation of an FMCT in the CD. We welcome your proposal and would suggest that this be addressed under agenda item-2, as was done last year, and as paragraph 6(b) of your draft. We would also suggest a drafting change so that the negotiating mandate would read clearly as follows – quote ‘to negotiate a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices on the basis of CD/1299 and the mandate contained therein’ unquote.
4. We would be willing to go along with your proposals under agenda items 3 and 4 on PAROS and NSAs respectively and would suggest strengthening the negotiating mandates in both cases by referring to the conclusion of international legally-binding instruments.
5. Under agenda item-5, while we remain aware of the magnitude and gravity of biosecurity threats, both existing and potential, we are not wholly convinced about the merit of establishing a working group in the CD to address this challenge and would like to seek clarity about the proposal. We would also request further clarification regarding the proposed globalised governance mechanism that is referred to in your draft.

To conclude, Mr. President, as mentioned earlier, we remain committed to working with you and other delegations towards the adoption of the Programme of work proposed by you. However, in the event that a Programme of Work with negotiating mandates is unable to command consensus in this room, we would suggest advancing substantive and technical work in the CD on all core issues of its agenda through the reinstatement of the Subsidiary bodies of last year.

Thank you, Mr President.
