

Conference on Disarmament
Plenary Meeting, 28 June 2019

Statement by Pakistan (Usman Jadoon, Counsellor)

Mr. President,

I would like to begin by congratulating you on assuming the Presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. You can rest assured of my delegation's full support and cooperation, and of our active participation in the CD's work. We are pleased to note that you have planned substantive activities during your Presidency in the form of thematic discussions on the CD's agenda items. We also note that you intend to draft a Programme of Work, in accordance with your responsibility as the CD President. We have already shared our detailed views with you on a draft PoW, both bilaterally and through the G-21 platform.

Mr. President,

Coming over to the topic of today's discussions, i.e. Negative Security Assurances or NSAs. We thank the distinguished panellists for their introductory remarks. The issue of NSAs has been on the international agenda for over sixty years now. Already in 1966, the UN General Assembly Resolution 21/53A called upon the Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarmament "to consider urgently the proposal that nuclear weapons powers should give an assurance that they will not use, or threaten to use, nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapons States without nuclear weapons on their territories."

In 1978, the consensus Final Document of SSOD-I called upon the nuclear-weapon States to "pursue efforts to conclude appropriate, effective arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons." The CD began considering the issue of negative security assurances as an integral part of its agenda right from its very first session in 1979 – forty years ago. Besides the broad support enjoyed by this issue, it is ripe for the commencement of negotiations in the CD just by virtue of the mere length of time that it has been under consideration.

Mr. President,

Pakistan has a long history of support for NSAs. From the late 1960s onwards, then as a non-nuclear weapon State, Pakistan sought legally binding assurances to safeguard its security from the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. These efforts assumed greater urgency after nuclear weapons were introduced in our region in 1974.

In 1979, Pakistan tabled a draft "International Convention to Assure Non-Nuclear-Weapon States against the Use or Threat of Use of Nuclear Weapons" at the CD, contained in Document CD/10.

The ineffective and insufficient response from the international community was part of the reasons that compelled Pakistan to develop its own nuclear deterrent. Pakistan still did not abandon the cause of NSAs and has continued to support it. We feel that the option of using nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon States is not only strategically untenable but also morally unacceptable. As a responsible State possessing nuclear weapons, Pakistan has unilaterally pledged not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against any State not possessing nuclear weapons. We are ready to transform this pledge into a multilateral, legally binding international commitment.

Since 1990, Pakistan has annually introduced a resolution on NSAs at the UN General Assembly. The most recent version was adopted last year without a single negative vote. The resolution recommends that the CD should “actively continue intensive negotiations with a view to reaching early agreement and concluding effective international agreements to assure the non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, taking into account the widespread support for the conclusion of an international convention”.

Mr. President,

Pakistan agrees with its fellow G-21 members that the only guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons is their complete elimination. Pending the achievement of that goal, the long-standing and genuine aspiration of non-nuclear weapon States to receive negative security guarantees should be fulfilled. Failure to make progress on this count will further erode the so-called grand bargain of the non-proliferation regime.

The responses of some of the nuclear weapon States to this long-standing demand, as contained in UNSC resolution 255 of 1968 and UNSC resolution 984 of 1995, are insufficient and partial. Apart from China, which has given unconditional negative security assurances, the other unilateral declarations contain qualifiers and caveats, the interpretation of which lies with the States making those declarations. They thus cannot substitute the need for a credible, multilateral legally binding instrument on NSAs.

In our view, the principle of non-use of force or threat to use force, as enshrined in the UN Charter, extends to the use of nuclear weapons, without prejudice to Article-51, the right to self defence. Concluding a legally binding agreement on NSAs is therefore, in our view, an obligation and not an option.

As long as the goal of nuclear disarmament eludes us, NSAs can bridge the security gap between nuclear and non-nuclear weapon States. Concluding and implementing NSAs would cause no financial burden and is, therefore, a cost-free exercise with immense benefits for global peace and security. Once concluded, NSAs could also obviate the concerns amongst non-nuclear weapon States on account of new doctrines and technologies related to the use of nuclear weapons.

NSAs can also make a significant contribution to strengthening the international non-proliferation regime. NSAs would constitute a major Confidence Building Measure between the nuclear and non-nuclear weapon States thus leading to a genuinely conducive international environment facilitating negotiations on other matters related to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Commencing negotiations on this agenda item would meet the demands of all Member States that advocate for the CD to undertake treaty negotiations, thereby ending the CD's deadlock.

Mr. President,

My delegation would urge the States that oppose the commencement of negotiations on NSAs to enlighten us with the reasons for their opposition, including any security interests of theirs that might be at stake through the conclusion of such a treaty. We would also like to understand why their concerns, if any, cannot be addressed during the negotiations on an NSA treaty in the CD. In any event, they should at least acknowledge their responsibility for perpetuating the CD's ongoing stalemate by refusing to negotiate a legally binding treaty on NSAs.

Mr. President,

My delegation has been actively participating in the substantive and interactive discussions on NSAs that have been held in the CD over the years, including in Subsidiary Body no. 4 last year. While we regret that the report of SB-4 could not be adopted due to lack of consensus; we do acknowledge the value added by those discussions to the further advancement of this issue, including by identifying the major points of convergence and divergence. These mutual understandings and commonalities should be further narrowed down to build upon the already strong foundation. We hope that the discussions today will also contribute towards that objective, heeding the legitimate demand of the vast majority of States to receive legally binding assurances against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.

I thank you, Mr. President.