

Statement by Ambassador (Dr.) Pankaj Sharma,
Permanent Representative of India to the Conference on Disarmament during the
High Level Segment of the Conference on Disarmament
on February 25, 2019

Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Distinguished colleagues

My country would like to congratulate you on chairing this High Level Segment which falls during your Presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. The United Kingdom and India enjoy excellent bilateral relations and closely cooperate on global issues including in the area of disarmament and international security. It is, therefore, an added pleasure to see you in the chair. We were honoured to listen to the address by the Secretary General and other high dignitaries earlier today.

2. The world is experiencing a considerable stress and is going through a process of churning. If we look at developments around us there are waves of change everywhere, not all of which are positive. However, this is not a new phenomenon. The world has witnessed major upheavals throughout history including two World Wars and the ensuing cold war. At the same time, important global institutions and arrangements have emerged in response to such events. The League of Nations, the centenary of which we commemorate this year, and the United Nations are some of the key examples in this regard.

3. From a disarmament perspective, one of the most significant milestones has been the First Special Session on Disarmament, SSOD I in 1978, which unequivocally affirmed the role of CD as the world's single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum.

Mr. President,

4. The CD and its predecessor institutions have a number of credits to their record, including the successful negotiations of the BWC and CWC. However, questions are being raised about its effectiveness and efficacy, and even its relevance as it has been more than two decades now that the CD has not been able to conduct negotiations in the discharge of its mandate. Attempts have been made to explore alternate forums. It is India's firm belief that the CD is the most relevant and appropriate forum as it brings together all militarily significant States, including all States possessing nuclear weapons. It enjoys the legitimacy through its mandate, membership and the rules for undertaking legally binding universal instruments for strengthening international peace and security. Instead of trying to doubt the relevance and effectiveness of a well-established forum like the CD, we must seriously

introspect and reflect, why we are, where we are? Is it the fault of the CD, or the lack of political will which has prevented the CD from working effectively? We could draw inspiration from the successful consensus outcomes achieved by the UNDC.

5. In our view, the need of the hour is to revitalize the CD, and bring it once again at the core of global disarmament efforts. In this context, India has welcomed and supported various efforts, including the establishment of the Way Ahead Working Group and the Subsidiary Bodies last year. India remains committed to the adoption of a Programme of Work for negotiating legally binding instruments on the core issues of the CD. It is our sincere hope that the Conference would be able to advance our substantive work in order to deliver on its core mandate through early commencement of such negotiations.

6. Secretary General referred to his Agenda for Disarmament. One of the important aspects in the Agenda is the importance of emerging developments in Science and Technology. India, on its part, has tried to put these developments on the global agenda through its resolution on the 'Role of Science and Technology in the Context of Disarmament and International Security'. When the world is divided on most issues, this is one area where the international community has come together to adopt the resolution by consensus for the last two years.

7. Terrorism poses the greatest threat to international peace and security. This threat becomes more grave when terrorists are able to acquire WMDs. Having recognized this threat, India has been drawing the attention of the world since 2002 through a consensus resolution in the UNGA on Measures to Prevent Terrorists from Acquiring Weapons of Mass Destruction.

Mr. President

8. No subject arouses as much interest as nuclear disarmament. The very first Resolution of the UNGA adopted, by consensus on 24 January 1946, called for ".....the elimination from national armaments of atomic weapons and all other major weapons adaptable to mass destruction....". India remains committed to universal, non-discriminatory and verifiable nuclear disarmament. India believes that this goal can be achieved through a step-by-step process underwritten by a universal commitment and an agreed global and non-discriminatory multilateral framework. India had presented, in 2007, a Working Paper on Nuclear Disarmament to the CD, as contained in CD/1816, which made a number of proposals, as part of a step-by-step process, which continue to remain relevant today. We support the proposal for the negotiation of a Comprehensive Nuclear Weapons Convention in the CD as also called for by the G-21. India has espoused the policy of "No First Use" against nuclear weapon states and non-use against non-nuclear weapon states. We are prepared to convert these undertakings into multilateral legal arrangements to be further negotiated in the CD.

9. To further these goals, India has been tabling two resolutions in the General Assembly, namely, the resolution on 'Convention on the Prohibition of the Use of Nuclear Weapons' since 1982, and the resolution on 'Reducing Nuclear Danger' since 1998, both adopted by a significant majority. Without prejudice to the priority attached to the nuclear disarmament, India remains committed to the immediate commencement of negotiation of a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty in the CD on the basis of CD/1299 and the mandate contained therein. With this aim in view, India also participated in the GGE in 2014-15, the High-Level Expert Preparatory Group on FMCT in 2017-18. India is also participating in the GGE on Nuclear Disarmament Verification.

10. Coming to the realm of space, India supports negotiation of a legally binding instrument on PAROS in the CD and is actively participating in the current GGE on PAROS.

11. With reference to conventional weapons, India shares the concerns about the challenges posed by their illicit transfers, including small arms and light weapons to terrorists and non-State actors, which pose a major threat to international peace and security. India remains committed to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) and its Annexed Protocols as well as the humanitarian principles embodied by them. A collective success in this framework was the adoption by consensus of the reports of the 2017 and 2018 Sessions of the GGE on Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems under India's chairmanship.

Mr. President

12. India today is a key partner in the efforts to strengthen global disarmament and non-proliferation order. In this context, I am pleased to share that starting this year, India has launched an Annual Disarmament and International Security Fellowship Programme. The first edition of the three-week Fellowship Programme was successfully held in New Delhi with the participation of 27 Member States of the CD. The Programme which was co-inaugurated by the Foreign Secretary of India and the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs in New Delhi on 14 January 2019, covered the entire gamut of key disarmament and international security issues. We have received an excellent feedback about the Programme and look forward to extending it to other fellow Member States.

13. In concluding, I would like to reiterate India's commitment to uphold multilateralism and the institutions it engenders. CD holds an important place in this framework and my delegation assures you of its full support and cooperation in your efforts as you lead this august body in its fortieth anniversary.

Thank you.
