

Conference on Disarmament
Plenary Meeting, 29 January 2019

Statement by Pakistan

Mr. President,

I congratulate you on assuming the Presidency of the CD and assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation. We welcome the distinguished Ambassadors of China, Ecuador and India to the CD, as well as the new Secretary of the Conference, and look forward to working with all of them. We also thank Mr. Moller for his thoughtful remarks last week.

My delegation supports the request made by Palestine to participate in the work of the CD as an observer, and regrets that it could not be approved.

Pakistan attaches very high importance to the work of the CD and remains committed to its effective functioning. As the world's single multilateral disarmament negotiating body, the CD is an integral and vital part of the UN disarmament machinery, and has produced landmark treaties in the past. The strength of the CD lies in the fact that all militarily significant states participate in it on an equal footing and are able to protect their vital security interests under the consensus rule. These attributes are indispensable for any forum dealing with disarmament and security issues.

The impasse faced by the CD is a result of the prevailing strategic environment and the lack of political will to cooperatively advance the goals of international and regional peace and security, and disarmament, on a non-discriminatory basis. It is not related to the CD's working methods or rules of procedure.

Pakistan remains committed to the goal of complete nuclear disarmament in a universal, verifiable and non-discriminatory manner and supports the start of negotiations towards this goal in the CD. As recognized by SSOD-I, the objective of this process should be undiminished security at the lowest possible level of armaments and military forces.

Pakistan also supports the commencement of long overdue negotiations on negative security assurances. This issue has been on the CD's agenda since its very first session held 40 years ago. Pending nuclear disarmament, the genuine aspiration of non-nuclear weapon states to receive legally binding guarantees against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons from all nuclear weapons possessing states should be embodied in a universal treaty concluded by the CD.

The issue of PAROS is also eminently ripe for negotiations on a legally binding treaty supported by Pakistan. Such a treaty would contribute to international peace and security by preventing outer space – the common heritage of all humankind – from emerging as a new realm of conflict and military competition.

Pakistan also stands ready to join substantive work in the CD on other emerging issues with direct impact on international peace and security such as cyber warfare, autonomous weapons, and chemical and biological terrorism.

Mr. President,

Any prospective treaty on arms control, non-proliferation or disarmament that does not provide equitable security benefits to all States would be a non-starter – as evidenced by the failure to start negotiations in the CD on a treaty partially dealing with fissile material production. Pakistan's consistent position on a Fissile Material Treaty remains unchanged. We believe that a treaty which only results in a cut-off in the production of fissile material, as envisaged under the Shannon Mandate and favoured by the other nuclear weapon States holding large stockpiles of such materials, would contribute little to nuclear disarmament. It would jeopardize Pakistan's security unless it addresses the vast asymmetries in existing stocks of fissile material. The situation has been further compounded by the blatant disregard for non-proliferation norms and the exercise of double standards for achieving short-sighted political objectives and economic benefits which endanger strategic stability in South Asia and beyond.

Pakistan cannot join any discussion, pre-negotiation, negotiation or preparatory work on FMT on the basis of the Shannon Mandate. The Shannon Mandate has outlived its utility and validity as the basis for substantive work on a treaty. Major divergences continue to persist on the most fundamental aspects of the treaty's objective and scope, which need to be resolved *beforehand*, to the satisfaction of all parties. And as long as consensus on these two fundamental aspects eludes us, as is the case now, any work towards other closely inter-linked elements such as definitions, verification, and legal and institutional arrangements, etc. would be premature and lopsided.

Mr. President,

My delegation is of the view that disagreement over the start of formal negotiations in the CD should not prevent us from undertaking substantive discussions on all agenda items. The informal discussions held in the five Subsidiary Bodies last year, as well in earlier years in the format of the Way Ahead Working Group and Schedules of Activities, featured valuable and in-depth consideration of all relevant issues. It helped in developing a better understanding of each others' concerns and expectations, providing an opportunity to build on the convergences and to narrow down the differences. We see merit in sustaining this work.

Mr. President,

We take note of your opening remarks last week in which you expressed the intention to develop a draft Programme of Work for our consideration. For a consensus-based body like the CD, any draft decision must only be presented after holding thorough consultations in a transparent and inclusive manner, and should be geared towards meeting the approval of all member states.

Let me assure you that my delegation – within the confines of our national position outlined by me just now – will cooperate with you most constructively in reaching at a balanced and comprehensive framework for holding substantive work in the CD this year that can enjoy consensus. We need to be realistic and practical by focusing on areas that have the potential of uniting us, rather than those that would prove divisive.

I thank you, Mr. President.