

Conference on Disarmament
Plenary Meeting, 12 February 2019

Statement by Pakistan

Mr. President,

We heard a statement today by the distinguished representative of Canada, Ambassador Heidi Hulan, who chaired the so-called “High-Level FMCT Expert Preparatory Group”. I have requested for the floor to put on record our position on this matter.

We thank Ambassador Hulan for sharing her insights. Notwithstanding our position and difference of views on this matter, we are impressed by Canada’s perseverance and dedication to this issue. We sincerely hope that some of that energy would also be devoted to understanding and addressing the real reasons that are preventing the start of negotiations on a cut-off only treaty.

Pakistan voted against UNGA resolution 71/259 in 2016 that established this expert group. We had earnestly engaged with the three lead sponsors to arrive at a consensus text, but regrettably our key concerns were not addressed. Accordingly, similar to the previous GGE on FMCT that worked in 2014-15, Pakistan decided not to participate in this Group. I would like to briefly elaborate on the three overriding considerations that guided Pakistan’s decision.

First, was the issue of its mandate. The Group had been mandated to, I quote, “consider and make recommendations on substantial elements of a future 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. Document CD/1299, also known as the Shannon Mandate, has outlived its utility and validity. It would only skew the negotiations towards an outcome that would contribute little to nuclear disarmament and prove detrimental to regional and international stability. It is ambiguous on addressing the issue of fissile material stockpiles and their asymmetries – that is not acceptable to us because of our regional security situation, which is being exacerbated by the discriminatory policies of certain countries.

Second was the issue of composition. All States possessing nuclear weapon are direct stakeholders, facing the biggest impact from a treaty dealing with fissile material. Their participation in any international effort dealing with the issue of fissile materials is indispensable and imperative. Moreover, while Pakistan had chosen not to be a part of this Expert Preparatory Group, there are several other CD members with significant nuclear capabilities that were also not represented in it. We feel that only the CD has the ideal composition for considering the issue of fissile material on a consensus basis. The two rounds of open-ended informal consultations convened in New York in 2017 and 2018 could not be a substitute

for the full and substantive engagement by all the major stakeholders. Pakistan participated in those informal consultations in good faith, but found them limited to an exchange of views of a general nature. Not all our views expressed during those consultations on critical aspects of the treaty were incorporated in the eventual report produced by the EPG.

Third was the question of repeating a tried and tested failed approach. The report of the previous GGE revealed the vastly divergent positions on each and every aspect of the treaty, but most importantly on its objectives and scope. Without resolving these two fundamentally critical issues, there can be no forward movement on other closely inter-linked elements, as became evident once again in the final report of the Expert Preparatory Group. Without any change for the better in the ground realities or any change in the strongly held positions of the major stakeholders, the Group was always bound to meet the same fate as the previous GGE. Its terms of reference did not allow it to address the underlying fundamental concerns that are actually preventing the start of treaty negotiations in the CD, and hence failed to contribute in that regard.

Mr. President,

Based on these considerations, Pakistan is not in a position to accept any conclusions or recommendations produced by the Expert Preparatory Group. We reject its final report. It can in no way constitute the basis for further consideration of the fissile material issue by the international community, whether inside or outside the CD. We regret that this Group was established by a vote. A deliberate decision was taken to persist with a divisive approach aimed at seeking pseudo progress towards a contentious treaty with unclear objectives and a contested scope. Progress on FMT can neither be achieved by changing the format or forum, nor by imposing solutions that exclude the views of major stakeholders. We also need to seriously consider the negative effects on the treaty's prospects generated by misguided policies of selectivity, discrimination and double standards. The issue needs to be viewed in the broader security and strategic context.

I thank you, Mr. President.