

**Statement delivered by Ms. Rachita Bhandari, Counsellor,
Permanent Mission of India to the Conference on Disarmament
during the Plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament
on August 8, 2019**

Mr. President,

The delegation of India would like to express our appreciation to you for having convened a Panel Discussion on Item 2 of the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament in today's plenary. We would also like to thank the distinguished Ambassadors of Morocco, the Netherlands and France, as well as the representative of UNIDIR, for their informative presentations.

Mr. President,

Without diminishing in any way the priority we attach to nuclear disarmament, the delegation of India supports the immediate commencement of negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament of a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty (FMCT) on the basis of CD/1299 and the mandate contained therein. Like others, we will also assess the outcome of these negotiations from the perspective of our national security.

India was one of the original co-sponsors of the consensus UNGA resolution 48/75L adopted in 1993 which envisaged the FMCT as a significant contribution to nuclear non-proliferation in all its aspects. The resolution reflected with clarity the common understanding on the objective of concluding a universal, non-discriminatory and internationally and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices.

India joined consensus on the Shannon report in 1995 and on the establishment of an Adhoc Committee on an FMCT in the Conference on Disarmament in 1998. Similarly, we did not stand in the way of consensus on the adoption of CD/1864 in May 2009 which provided for the establishment of a Working Group on FMCT as part of the Programme of Work of the Conference on Disarmament. India's position on an FMCT, Mr. President, has therefore been clear and consistent since 1993. We believe that the mandate previously agreed to in this forum and as contained in CD/1299 remains valid and relevant today and continues to command strong support from the international community.

India's support for the negotiation of an FMCT in the Conference on Disarmament is consistent with our interest in strengthening the global non-

proliferation regime that would add a measure of strategic predictability as a baseline for future global nuclear disarmament efforts.

In recent years, Mr. President, India has participated actively and constructively in both the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) and the High-Level Expert Preparatory Group (HLEPG) on an FMCT. The GGE report clearly underlined that an FMCT and its negotiation in the Conference on Disarmament remains a priority enjoying broad international support and that CD/1299 and the mandate contained therein remains the most suitable basis on which future negotiations should commence. In our view, Mr. President, that was the most significant conclusion of the GGE.

In conclusion, Mr. President, the delegation of India would like to reiterate its commitment to join negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on a universal, non-discriminatory and internationally and effectively verifiable FMCT on the basis of CD/1299 and the mandate contained therein. We sincerely hope that the Conference on Disarmament would not be prevented any further from commencing such negotiations in accordance with the agreed mandate. It is unfortunate indeed that the commencement of such negotiations has been blocked for more than a decade now citing reasons that are and have remained unconvincing. What we have heard today is unfortunately a repeat of the same oft-cited points. It is clear that mere repetition does not add to credibility. Blocking the work of the Conference on Disarmament by citing extraneous reasons does disservice to the world's single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum. The point has often been made that any concerns that delegations may have can be taken up during the negotiations. We sincerely hope, Mr. President, that the Conference on Disarmament will be allowed to move forward with the commencement of FMCT negotiations without further delay.

Thank you, Mr. President.
