

Statement by Ambassador Rakesh Sood, Permanent Representative of India to the Conference on Disarmament, Geneva, at the U.N. Disarmament Commission, New York, April 10, 2001

Madam Chairperson,

Please accept my delegation's congratulations on your election as the Chairperson of UNDC 2001. We would also like to place on record appreciation for the diligent efforts of the Chairpersons of the two Working Groups.

Nuclear Disarmament

India's unwavering commitment to global nuclear disarmament and the complete elimination of nuclear weapons within a specified framework of time, is well documented and has been stated unambiguously in this very forum last year. I will not therefore, belabour on them again. I would like instead, to focus on the 'ways and means' that have evolved from my country's principled position, which should help our collective efforts 'to achieve nuclear disarmament'.

When we met last year, perhaps there was a feeling among some participants that the UNDC needed only to echo and take note of certain tantalising promises made in the NPT framework, without engaging in substantive discussions here. The developments since then, during the past year, have belied that euphoria. Instead of reinforcing the disarmament agenda in bilateral or multilateral settings, we saw the reality of unfulfilled promises, missed opportunities, search for unilateral advantages, hardening confrontational postures, threats to unravel instruments that form the basis of global security and a Conference on Disarmament that is kept in suspended animation. An unjust and discriminatory framework has proved once again that it is fundamentally flawed and is incapable of providing a fair and equitable system that respects the legitimacy of equal and undiminished security for all. This realisation will hopefully infuse a greater degree of sobriety and seriousness to our deliberations this year.

Madame Chairperson, let us in the UNDC, which is the deliberative leg of the triad of disarmament machinery having a more universal representation than most other disarmament fora, set down the principles and measures that will pave the way to agreed, multilateral, non discriminatory and irreversible nuclear disarmament:

- Recognise and respect the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice of July 1996, that "there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control". It is necessary to translate the obiter dictum of the International Court of Justice into a politically binding decision and eventually a legal convention. It is in this context that India seeks a convention on the prohibition of the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.
- Seek a review of nuclear doctrines that claim the unacceptable posture of 'First Use'. Pursue a global 'no first use' agreement which include legally-binding assurances of non use against non nuclear weapon States and recognising NWFZs established on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region. India has already

made unilateral commitments in this regard and would exhort other nuclear weapon states to do so in the interim while the international community works towards converting these into legal obligations.

- Implement the resolve made at the Millennium Summit to convene an international conference to identify ways of eliminating nuclear danger. There is no justification to maintain thousands of weapons on hair trigger alert. All nuclear weapon States need to commit themselves to reduce the risk of un-authorized as well as accidental or unintentional use of nuclear weapons.
- Insist on the irreversibility of nuclear reductions by honouring bilateral commitments on tactical and strategic nuclear weapons. This should be complemented by reductions in a multilateral framework.
- Discourage unilateral action that may be perceived as inconsistent with existing treaties, or which threaten the concept of legitimate security for all.
- Prevent the weaponisation of outer space rather than having to resort to arms control or disarmament measures later.
- Enable the Conference on Disarmament to commence work in Ad Hoc Committees established with appropriate mandates relating to Nuclear Disarmament, FMCT, PAROS and Negative Security Assurances.

We are ready Madame Chairperson, to engage in substantive discussions relating to each of these points, as they merit fuller consideration.

Conventional Disarmament

As for "Practical Confidence Building Measures in the Field of Conventional Arms", we have made clear that we must avoid duplication of work undertaken elsewhere, while taking into account the guidelines on certain aspects already agreed and adopted by consensus in the Disarmament Commission itself. We hope to achieve greater progress on this subject in this Session than was possible during the last year.

We have actively participated in the preparatory process for the International Conference on Small Arms and Light Weapons, 2001. We are hopeful that a successful Conference will contribute to the creation of substantial confidence building measures by addressing the problems of illicit transfers and its close nexus with cross border terrorism, drug trafficking and organised crime.

India has ratified all the Protocols of the CCW, including Amended Protocol-II dealing with landmines and Protocol-IV on blinding laser weapons. The universalisation of the CCW process through signature and ratification of its Protocols by more States would constitute a significant CBM in the area of conventional weapons. The Review Conference of the CCW at the end of this year would provide an opportunity for peer review of the Process and its adherence.

Madam Chairperson, India has consistently attempted to rely on confidence building measures in our region in the interest of maintaining international peace and security. India has been the initiator of a number of CBMs and continues to pursue these actively. The price that has to be paid for CBM initiatives could sometimes be excessive and threaten to unravel the best of intentions. We therefore, hope that discussions in the

UNDC Working Group on CBMs will produce substantial results soon in the form of practical and useful guidelines.

My delegation seeks to actively participate in the deliberations in the days ahead with the hope that we will be able to achieve significant results at this session.

Thank you.