

Introduction of the resolution "Convention on the Prohibition of the Use of Nuclear Weapons"

Statement by Mr. Rakesh Sood, PR to Conference on Disarmament, on October 17, 2000

Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour to introduce the draft Resolution entitled, "Convention on the Prohibition of Use of Nuclear Weapons" contained in A/C.1/55/L.30 under Agenda item 74(d) and co-sponsored by 24 countries.

The draft Resolution has no changes from last year's Resolution 54/55D except for updating in PP9. This Resolution being introduced today goes to the very core of the nuclearised global order which persists even after a decade after the end of the Cold War. Nuclear weapons continue to be viewed as a legitimate currency of power, by certain States which claim the right to possess these weapons in perpetuity.

Doctrines of first-use of nuclear weapons have been re-validated and reaffirmed, even though the threat perceptions that originally led to those doctrines have long disappeared. There are those that reserve the right to use nuclear weapons first even against non-nuclear threats and threats from other weapons of mass destruction.

There is need for addressing this threat to humanity at various levels. At the level of political commitments backed by legally binding agreements, it is important for nuclear doctrines to be reoriented towards a no-first-use and non-use against non-nuclear weapon States, thus beginning the process of de-legitimizing nuclear weapons globally.

The international community needs to take decisive steps in this direction, as an essential element, in the step-by-step process leading to the elimination of nuclear weapons. There is thus a requirement for a legally-binding instrument prohibiting the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. The legal underpinning to such an instrument is provided by the historic Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice of 1996 making international humanitarian law applicable to the use of nuclear weapons.

The draft Resolution L.30, as in previous years, underlines that the use of nuclear weapons poses the most serious threat to the survival of humankind, refers to the ICJ's Advisory Opinion of 1996 that the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons would generally be contrary to the rules of international law, applicable in armed conflict, and expresses the conviction that a multilateral agreement prohibiting the use of nuclear weapons would strengthen international security and contribute to the climate for the negotiations leading to the elimination of nuclear weapons. The Resolution reiterates its request to the Conference on Disarmament to commence negotiations to reach agreement on an international Convention prohibiting the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. It is a matter of regret that due to the inflexible position of certain delegations, the Conference on Disarmament has so far not been able to commence negotiations on this subject.

Mr. Chairman,

In commending the Resolution to this Committee as a measure that would be of far-reaching significance, the Indian delegation along with all those which have co-sponsored this Resolution, expresses the hope that it will receive the widest possible support in this Committee. At the beginning of the new millennium, a vote in favour of this Resolution would also be a vote of confidence that the international community can take decisive steps towards the goal of freeing the world of nuclear weapons.