

STATEMENT BY MR. MANI SHANKAR AIYER, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT, ON
THEMATIC DISCUSSION ON NUCLEAR WEAPONS AT THE FIRST COMMITTEE
OF THE 65TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON
OCTOBER 15, 2010

Mr. Chairman,

22 years ago, on 9 June 1988, India's then Prime Minister, the young Shri Rajiv Gandhi, presented to the Third Session of the UN Special Session on Disarmament an Action Plan for a Nuclear-Weapons- Free and Nonviolent World Order which set out a road map to attain the goal of nuclear disarmament, followed by general and complete disarmament, in a time-bound, universal, non-discriminatory, phased and verifiable manner within 22 years, that is, by this year, 2010.

Tragically, we are no nearer attaining that goal today than we were 22 years ago. The promise of a nuclear weapon free world, which seemed a real possibility near the end of the Cold War, has been belied. There has been welcome reduction in numbers by the two largest possessors of nuclear weapons but the global threat posed by nuclear weapons has not abated. The possibility of non state actors acquiring weapons of mass destruction has added a new dimension to that threat.

The one ray of hope is that there is a far wider measure of consensus on the imperative need to move towards that goal than there was 22 years ago. The Cold War has been over for almost two decades. And voices of wisdom, particularly on the part of those who were once the most ardent advocates of a policy of deterrence based on nuclear weapons, are beginning to be heard.

Several world leaders have expressly acknowledged the necessity of moving towards global zero. We are **greatly** encouraged by President Obama's statement in Prague on 5 April 2009 **which led to his richly deserved Nobel Prize for Peace where he reiterated his commitment to "seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons"**.

The UN Secretary General too has called for consideration of a Nuclear Weapons Convention in his Five-Point Plan. Yet, negotiations are still to

commence in the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva aimed at ensuring the universal, non-discriminatory, time-bound, phased and verifiable elimination of nuclear weapons as presaged in the Rajiv Gandhi Action Plan.

For its part, India remains committed to the objective of that Plan and the realization of its vision of ushering in a nuclear weapon free and non-violent world order. We believe that nuclear disarmament can be achieved **by a universal commitment for global elimination of nuclear weapons** through a step by step process undertaken in the **Conference on Disarmament in Geneva**. We believe that progressive steps for the de-legitimization of nuclear weapons are essential to achieving the goal of their complete elimination. Measures to reduce nuclear dangers arising from accidental or unauthorized use of nuclear weapons, increasing restraints on the use of nuclear weapons, de-alerting of nuclear weapons, measures to prevent terrorists from gaining access to nuclear weapons are all pertinent in this regard. India's resolutions in the First Committee give expression to a large number of these proposals, which are justifiably gaining increasing international support. **We have also co-sponsored resolutions by others seeking to initiate with all deliberate speed the processes which could lead to an international convention or conventions in this regard. We reiterate our desire to work with all fellow member states of the United Nations to achieve this goal.**

Addressing the threat posed by nuclear weapons to international peace and security in a sustainable and comprehensive manner requires their global elimination on a non-discriminatory basis. While non-proliferation is important and all states should fully and effectively implement the obligations arising from the agreements or treaties to which they are parties, we must not lose sight, **as the UN Secretary General has underlined**, of the essential and mutually reinforcing linkage between disarmament and non-proliferation. Progress on nuclear disarmament would reinforce non-proliferation like no other measure can. And progress on non-proliferation cannot be a pre-condition for progress on nuclear disarmament.

International efforts in this regard should build the necessary confidence among states so that international treaties and agreements are multilaterally negotiated and freely accepted which remains the true test of their legitimacy and credibility. India has acceded to and is in full implementation of the two non-discriminatory international Conventions banning Biological and Chemical Weapons. **I recall in this connection Premier Rajiv Gandhi saying, while presenting his Action Plan to the Special Session of the UNGA in 1988:**

"We have an international convention eliminating biological weapons by prohibiting their use in war. We are working on similarly eliminating chemical weapons. There is no reason in principle why nuclear weapons cannot be so eliminated. All it requires is the affirmation of certain basic moral values and

the assertion of the required political will, underpinned by treaties and institutions which ensure against nuclear delinquency.”

India’s position on the NPT needs no reiteration. There is no question of India joining the NPT as a non-nuclear weapon state. Nuclear weapons are an integral part of India's national security and will remain so, pending non-discriminatory and global nuclear disarmament.

It is but natural that the countries with the largest nuclear arsenals bear a special responsibility for nuclear disarmament. In this regard we welcome the new Russia-U.S. agreement to cut their nuclear arsenals. Between them the two still hold more than 90% of the nuclear weapons in the world and the new START is a step in the right direction. Even as we applaud the revitalisation of the Russia-U.S. bilateral arms control process, we believe that this is not a substitute for a step by step process underwritten by a universal commitment and an agreed multilateral framework for achieving global and non-discriminatory nuclear disarmament.

Mr. Chairman, as part of its credible minimum nuclear deterrent, India has espoused the policy of ‘No First Use’ against nuclear weapon states and non-use against non-nuclear weapon states and is prepared to convert these undertakings into multilateral legal arrangements. We support negotiations with a view to reaching agreement on effective arrangements to assure non-nuclear weapon States against the use and threat of use of nuclear weapons. We are committed to a unilateral and voluntary moratorium on nuclear explosive testing. As a nuclear weapon state and a responsible member of the international community, we will participate constructively in the negotiation of an FMCT in the Conference on Disarmament as part of its programme of work. India is also ready to work with others in the international community to strengthen nuclear security against the threat of nuclear explosive devices or fissile material falling into the hands of non-state actors.

Mr.Chairman, our highest priority, however, remains nuclear disarmament, as it has been since Mahatma Gandhi in 1945 expressed his horror at the use of nuclear weapons and Premier Rajiv Gandhi outlined in his Action Plan a roadmap which, if accepted then, would have given us this year a world free of nuclear weapons and anchored in Nonviolence.

In a working paper submitted to the UNGA in 2006, India suggested a number of measures in this regard, including reaffirmation of the unequivocal commitment by all nuclear weapon states to the goal of complete elimination of nuclear weapons and specific legal measures such as a Global No First Use Agreement, a Convention on the Prohibition of the use of Nuclear weapons and a Nuclear Weapons Convention for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, within a specified timeframe. On 13 August 2007, Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh reiterated India’s position:

"...we must not forget India's long-standing commitment to the noble ideas of nuclear disarmament and our refusal to participate in any arms race, including a nuclear arms race. Our commitment to universal, non-discriminatory and total elimination of nuclear weapons remains undiminished. It is this vision of a world free of nuclear weapons which Shri Rajiv Gandhi put before the UN in 1988 and this still has universal resonance."

More recently, at the start of this UNGA session, our Minister of External Affairs, Shri S.M. Krishna, stressed our

"...abiding commitment for achieving universal, non-discriminatory nuclear disarmament within a specified timeframe, a vision that was most eloquently articulated here in the General Assembly by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1988."

In that same context, speaking at the High Level Meeting on Revitalizing the Conference on Disarmament and Taking Forward Multilateral Disarmament Negotiations, India's External Affairs Minister has called for intensification of dialogue amongst UN member states for strengthening the international consensus on disarmament and non-proliferation.

This was also the intent of our 2006 Working Paper containing proposals that reflect the spirit and substance of the Rajiv Gandhi Action Plan. The idea was to stimulate debate and discussion on what could be done today to implement the abiding vision of that Plan. **The time for action is now. In this 22nd year of the presentation of our Action Plan, there is a growing international consensus which signposts the need for this session of the UN General Assembly to take, with the broad consent of all concerned, the vitally required step of authorising the commencement of intergovernmental negotiations in Geneva which take into account the 1988 Rajiv Gandhi Action Plan, previous and present resolutions of the UN General Assembly, the Working Paper we circulated in 2006 and several proposals made by concerned members of international civil society, and high authorities like the UN Secretary General.**

Hence, with a view to taking action aimed at achieving nuclear disarmament, we call for an intensification of discussion and dialogue among Member States, to seek an international consensus, **if possible during this session of the UN General Assembly**, to commence the process of inter-governmental negotiations at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva. The Conference on Disarmament would be the appropriate forum to consider India's proposals, as also numerous other proposals that the international community has received and that have been floated by the larger non-governmental communities.

Thank you.

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