

STATEMENT BY MR. NIRUPAM SEN, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE, AT THE
SUBSTANTIVE SESSION OF UNITED NATIONS DISARMAMENT COMMISSION [NEW
YORK, 7-24 APRIL 2008] ON APRIL 08, 2008

Mr. Chairman,

Please accept our congratulations on your election as the Chair of the UNDC. We will extend all possible support to you and the members of the Bureau. We would also like to place on record, our appreciation for the efforts of the Chairpersons of the 2 Working Groups. We value the statement made by the UN Secretary General at the UNDC yesterday. We thank the High Representative of the Secretary General for Disarmament, Mr. Sergio Duarte for his contribution to our common endeavors.

Mr. Chairman,

India attaches high importance to the UNDC, which is the deliberative leg of the triad of the disarmament machinery put in place by consensus by the 10th Special Session of the General Assembly on Disarmament. As the universal deliberative forum, it provides for in-depth consideration of specific disarmament issues for submission of recommendations to the General Assembly. We cannot over emphasize the role of this body at a time when the international disarmament agenda is under severe strain. The UNDC offers a unique opportunity for Member-States to bridge differences and arrive at common approaches of a universal character. We feel that this body can play a central role in bringing back coherence and consensus to address the security challenges of our time. Member-states should resist the temptation to transplant in the UNDC, frameworks and parameters that may be relevant elsewhere. The deliberations of the UNDC will yield positive and substantive results, if Member-States are willing to use this body to draw-up guidelines and recommendations of a universal character conveying a forward looking vision for a more secure world.

Mr Chairman,

India joins the statement made by Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Mr Chairman,

With regard to Working Group No. 1 "Recommendations for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons" India has made detailed and substantive interventions in previous sessions of the UNDC, including a Working Paper that was submitted on 9th April last year. India joins NAM in reaffirming that achieving nuclear disarmament continues to be the highest priority of the international community, as underlined by the Final Document of the 10th Special Session of the General Assembly devoted to Disarmament.

The International Court of Justice, in its land-mark advisory opinion of 1996, pointed out that there exists an obligation to pursue in good-faith and bring to a conclusion, negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament under strict and effective international control. The UN Millennium Declaration underlined need to strive for the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, in particular, nuclear weapons. Successive NAM Summits have underlined the importance of nuclear disarmament.

Mr Chairman,

This year we mark the 20th Anniversary of the Rajiv Gandhi Action Plan, which provided a holistic framework for seeking negotiations for a time-bound commitment for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons to usher in a world free of nuclear weapons and rooted in non-violence. This Action Plan remains by far the most comprehensive initiative on nuclear disarmament. India has co-sponsored Resolutions, which have been adopted by significant majorities in General Assembly, on a Convention Prohibiting the Use of Nuclear Weapons and on Reducing Nuclear Danger. We have also co-sponsored a Resolution, adopted by consensus by the General Assembly, on Measures to prevent terrorists gaining access to Weapons of Mass Destruction.

Mr Chairman,

The UNDC must send a strong signal of the international community's resolve to initiate concrete steps towards achieving objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. Member-States should use this forum to intensify dialogue so as to build consensus that strengthens the ability of the international community to initiate concrete steps towards achieving goal of nuclear disarmament based on the following elements:

- Reaffirmation of the unequivocal commitment of all nuclear-weapon States to the goal of complete elimination of nuclear weapons.
- Reduction of the salience of nuclear weapons in security doctrines
- Taking into account the global reach and menace of nuclear weapons, adoption of measures by nuclear-weapon States to reduce nuclear danger,

including the risks of accidental nuclear war, de-alerting of nuclear weapons to prevent unintentional and accidental use of nuclear weapons.

- Negotiation of a global agreement among nuclear-weapon States on “no-first-use” of nuclear-weapons.
- Negotiations of a convention on the complete prohibition of the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.
- Negotiation of a nuclear weapons convention prohibiting the development, production, stockpiling and use of nuclear weapons and on their destruction, leading to the global, non-discriminatory and verifiable elimination of nuclear weapons with a specified time frame.

Mr Chairman,

We draw satisfaction from the fact that a large measure of common-ground already exists with regard to issues discussed in Working Group II on Practical Confidence-building Measures in the field of conventional weapons. UNDC deliberations between 2001 and 2003, though inconclusive, were also useful. India supports practical CBM initiatives - unilateral, bilateral, regional or global. We believe that such measures can promote a stable environment of peace and security amongst states by building trust and confidence and enhancing transparency to minimize misunderstandings. Guided by this principle, India has initiated several confidence building measures with countries in our neighbourhood, including with China and Pakistan.

The implementation of appropriate types of confidence building measures in specific regions should take into account the specific political, military and other conditions prevailing in that region. Such arrangements have to be freely agreed upon by the States of the region concerned while taking into account specific conditions and characteristics of the region. A step-by-step approach should be adopted. A prescriptive approach that negates the sovereign right of States to choose CBMs best suited to their interests should be avoided. We believe that focus on extraneous political issues will only erode the large measure of agreement that already exists in this Working Group and also dilute and weaken the practical confidence building measures that we hope to adopt during this session.

Thank you,

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