

**STATEMENT BY DR. SHEEL KANT SHARMA, ADDITIONAL SECRETARY  
(INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS) MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS  
AT THE 58<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE FIRST COMMITTEE UNITED GENERAL  
ASSEMBLY ON OCTOBER 15, 2003**

Mr. Chairman,

Allow me to extend our congratulations on your election to the Chairmanship of the First Committee. The Indian delegation assures you of its full cooperation in the fulfillment of your responsibilities. I would also like to recall how ably Uganda chaired the deliberations of this Committee last year. We welcome the new under secretary general for disarmament, Ambassador Abe and wish him a successful term. May I take this opportunity to convey to the distinguished representative of China and through him to the people of China felicitations for their manned space- flight.

2. The present session of the First Committee is the occasion to reflect on serious challenges to international security and an abiding sense of crisis in the disarmament and non-proliferation agenda. The manifestations of this crisis are numerous – a security anomie resulting from no viable paradigm replacing that of the cold war years; the threat posed by terrorism, assuming even more menacing dimensions including possible linkages with WMD; unviable or failed States emerging as havens of training and transit for international terror networks; renewed quest for new armaments; and a hardening pre-disposition to use force, alongside a heightened perception of threats faced by States to their security interests.

3. It is a commentary on our times that the feeling of insecurity has not spared the powerful; nor have the weak and vulnerable escaped its all-pervasive embrace. While in each case, the sources of in-security may be different, the net result is what we are witnessing today- an international system ripe with suspicion and fear, not just of State versus State, but more ominously the threat posed by non-state actors having access to technologies, perhaps beyond the reach of many States themselves.

4. These factors have placed an enormous strain on existing multilateral structures and institutions. How tenable are the templates of conduct of interstate relations without due regard to the principles of multilateralism as enshrined in the UN Charter? More importantly, the spirit of genuine multilateralism, which for the weak and the dispossessed could provide insurance and draw on their support for, and stakes in, a strengthened international order, has taken a beating. It is our earnest expectation that

the behavior of States, when underpinned by respect for international law, will also provide the rationale and incentive for making forward movement on the disarmament and non-proliferation agenda.

5. Mr. Chairman, it is relevant to recall in the context of First Committee's work the only consensus document adopted by the international community as a whole, namely, the Final Document of SSODI on its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Its Program of Action is of continuing validity, but has remained only partially implemented. In fact in the priority field of nuclear disarmament, progress has been limited, both in numbers and confined to the two biggest possessors of nuclear weapons.

6. Since the end of the cold war, military power, reinforced with nuclear weapons has remained a critical arbiter and shaper of global power equations - a fact-of-life that compelled us to exercise the nuclear weapons option so as to harmonise our security interests with the prevailing environment. In fashioning our nuclear doctrine, one of minimum credible deterrence, we have nonetheless demonstrated a defensive posture, restraint and responsibility. We have a declared policy of no-first use of nuclear weapons and a firm commitment to avoidance of the use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon states - except in the event of major WMD attack.

7. We note with mounting concern that the non-proliferation goals and framework today are beset with a crisis of identity, relevance and effectiveness. Their flawed foundations, albeit endowed with indefinite lifetime extension, have revealed internal fissures that seem to run deep. This does not in the least lessen, however, the obligations accepted by sovereign nations to implement in good faith the international instruments to which they are States Parties. The specter of 'onward proliferation', shadowy and inscrutable, and the manifest immunity of its provenance, compounds the problem.

8. India remains committed to its principled stand on global nuclear disarmament based on the firm conviction that progressively lower levels of armaments globally and imaginative controls over them will guarantee undiminished security for all. So too will genuine and effective non-proliferation. At the same time, we recognize that the evolving nature of threats and their new manifestations require new and innovative methods to deal with them, consistent with the UN Charter and international law. We understand the urgency of exploring, in a constructive manner, how to cope with this problem and believe that through dialogue and consultation, agreement can be found on ways and means of achieving the desired ends, be that counter-proliferation of WMD & their means of delivery or end use based controls on related materials and technologies.

9. In recognition of the widely shared concern of the international community about the heightened dangers posed by the risk of terrorists getting access to weapons of mass destruction, India proposed Resolution 57/83, in the last General Assembly. Its adoption without vote, reflective of wide spread support, is a measure of the shared concerns of the international community and the common determination to combat terrorism, in particular its linkages with WMD. The Report of the Secretary General -- that includes views volunteered by member states and relevant international organizations -- provides further basis for this Committee to revisit this critical issue.

India, with the co-sponsorship of many states will bring before this Committee an updated Resolution, and hopes that it will receive the same unanimous support that it secured last year.

10. As in previous years, my delegation will table a resolution calling for a Convention prohibiting the use of nuclear weapons under any circumstances, as a first step towards reducing the salience of nuclear weapons. The Final Document of the Kuala Lumpur Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement supported the negotiation of such a Convention by the Conference of Disarmament.

11. So long as nuclear weapons remain, it is also necessary for all States with nuclear weapon to take steps to reduce the risk of their accidental or unauthorized use. Our resolution entitled 'Reducing Nuclear Danger' will be presented to this Committee with the expectation of receiving a wide measure of support. We believe that tangible steps to deal with the nuclear danger should be geared to multilateral process and verifiability, that would engender necessary confidence among States.

12. Conscious of responsibilities arising from possession of advanced capabilities and technologies; we have demonstrated in practical ways our role as a responsible and credible partner against proliferation. However, technology-denial to responsible States does not serve non-proliferation but only signals a punitive intent. It also weakens non-proliferation by diversion of international attention away from states of proliferation concern. There is a pressing need for an effective and transparent system of export controls that would conform to the objectives of non-proliferation without affecting the peaceful application of related technologies. On the flip side, long-term need is equally pertinent to check dragooning of advances in science and technology for military applications. We will also table, as before, a Resolution entitled 'Role of Science and Technology in the Context of International Security and Disarmament'.

13. Mr. Chairman, India remains committed to making all possible efforts to realize the full potential of the Conference of Disarmament as the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating body. During our presidency of the Conference, and thereafter, we have contributed actively to efforts within the Conference to break the current impasse, and to reach agreement on a Programme of work that is responsive to the wide spread desire for launching negotiations for long awaited and future oriented agreements.

14. I would like to reiterate our commitment to participate constructively in the FMCT negotiations for a non-discriminatory and verifiable treaty to prohibit the future production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. We also remain committed to join international efforts to prevent weaponization of outer space, and control its further militarization.

15. As an original State Party to the CWC, India is fully committed to ensuring that all the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention are implemented fully and effectively. The results of the first Review Conference of CWC are reassuring in terms of continuing undertaking by all of its parties to meet their respective obligations. On our part we have a record of verified compliance with our obligations to keep the timelines for destruction of these weapons transparently. At the same time, there is need to

ensure that the actions of others do not impair the integrity of the CWC, and its objective of timely and global chemical disarmament.

16. Mr. Chairman, India is deeply concerned by the lack of substantive progress in meaningful multilateral efforts to strengthen the Biological weapons Convention, particularly at a time of heightened threat of BW proliferation and bio-terrorism. While every effort should be made in reviving this process without delay, we must uphold at all cost the uneroded thirty-year norm against Biological Weapons

17. India remains committed to constructive engagement for the timely implementation of the Programme of Action to address the illicit trade in Small arms and light Weapons. Ambassador Rakesh Sood of India chaired the Group of Governmental Experts, pursuant to Resolution 56/24V, which recommended a decision to negotiate under UN auspices, an international instrument to enable states to identify and trace, in a timely manner, small arms and light weapons. We hope that no effort will be spared in maintaining the momentum generated by the substantive consensus reflected in the work of this Group.

18. We attach particular importance to carrying forward the CCW process, which offers a unique forum for progressive controls over certain category of weapons through international consensus building and cooperation. It will be India's privilege to chair the next annual meeting of states parties to be held in Geneva in December. India has also contributed to efforts to review the continuing operation and further development of the UN Register of Conventional Arms.

19. We find in our debate notions of cold war balance-of-power returning piggy back on military expenditures' theme. Ground realities are that the post Cold War peace dividend which was witnessed in the West somehow escaped most of our region and Asia. While India reduced spending in early nineties, around us high levels of it persisted. Even now our spending as percentage of GDP is lowest among major countries and subject to transparent and watchful parliamentary processes. India has joined no arms race. Vast land and sea frontiers, diverse security threats –traditional and non-traditional- and inflationary pressures underlie our budget: averaging about 2.3% of GDP over past decade.

20. Mr. Chairman, despite the daunting challenges that confront us, our efforts must be imbued with a new and reinvigorated spirit of multilateralism – of addressing these challenges collectively, on the basis of equitable and transparent approaches in an inclusive manner. Revitalization of the disarmament and non-proliferation agenda would be crucially dependent on the extent to which this Committee is able to contribute to this objective.

[BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)