

Introduction of the Resolution "Reducing Nuclear Danger"

Statement by Mr. Rakesh Sood, Permanent Representative to Conference on Disarmament, on October 23, 2001

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation has requested the floor to introduce draft resolution entitled "Reducing Nuclear Danger" contained in A/C.1/56/L.14 and co-sponsored by Bhutan, Cambodia, Colombia, Fiji, Jordan, Kenya, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Malaysia, Mauritius and Sudan.

2. Mr. Chairman, with the end of the Cold War over a decade ago, there can be no justification for thousands of nuclear weapons that are maintained in a state of hair-trigger alert creating unacceptable risks of unintentional or accidental use of nuclear weapons. There is a need to save humanity from the catastrophic consequences of such a situation. Therefore, India had taken the initiative of introducing a resolution "Reducing Nuclear Danger". This resolution received widespread support in the General Assembly in the past three years.

3. The resolution puts forward a modest and practical proposal calling for a review of nuclear doctrines, and in this context, immediate and urgent steps to reduce the risk of unintentional and accidental use of nuclear weapons. Many nuclear weapon States and their allies opposed this resolution on grounds that there were a number of technical aspects involved. While acknowledging the technical complexities, we believe that these can be overcome once the necessary political commitment is made. There is no doubt that the elimination of nuclear weapons under a non-discriminatory and multilaterally verifiable treaty requires complex negotiations. But that is no reason to avoid taking interim steps to reduce the nuclear danger. In fact, the audacity of recent terrorist acts increases the urgency for implementing steps contained in this resolution.

4. A number of programmes and measures for achieving global nuclear disarmament put forward by States, eminent individuals or non-governmental organisations have also attributed the highest priority to the need for steps to be taken that reduce the risk of unintentional or accidental use of nuclear weapons.

5. In March 2000, the Secretary General in his report to the Millennium Assembly proposed the convening of a major international conference that would help to identify ways of eliminating nuclear dangers in order to help focus attention on the risks posed by the hair-trigger alert of thousands of deployed nuclear weapons. The consensus Declaration adopted at the UN Millennium Summit on September 8, 2000 has resolved to convene an international conference to identify ways of eliminating nuclear dangers. We appreciate the initiative taken by Mexico in this Committee this year calling for specific preparatory steps, which are entirely consistent with our proposal.

6. The report prepared by the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters, and conveyed by the Secretary-General in pursuance of Resolution 55/33N contains the following seven recommendations which enjoyed broad agreement; for further action:-

- a) Promoting a wide-ranging international dialogue on cooperative security;**
- b) Preliminary political and technical measures in preparation for the possibility of convening, at the appropriate time, a major international conference that would help to identify ways of eliminating nuclear dangers;**
- c) De-alerting of nuclear weapons;**
- d) Review of nuclear doctrines;**
- e) Further reduction of tactical nuclear weapons as an integral part of the nuclear arms reduction and disarmament process;**
- f) Enhancing security at a global and a regional level by promoting increased transparency of all nuclear weapons programmes.**
- g) Creating a climate for implementing nuclear disarmament measures. Programmes of education and training on the dangers of nuclear weapons would foster an informed world public opinion that would be able to exercise a positive influence on the political will to eliminate nuclear weapons.**

7. These recommendations are pragmatic and feasible, and we would urge all delegations to extend all possible support to the Secretary-General for the implementation of these recommendations.

8. In order to make the resolution as widely acceptable as possible we have kept the resolution simple and free from references to contentious issues. We believe that the resolution "Reducing Nuclear Danger" advocates a desirable objective and hope that it will receive wide support in this Committee.