

Mr. President,

The Indian delegation congratulates you on your assumption of the Presidency. We would like to assure you of our full cooperation in the discharge of your responsibilities. We would also like to thank you for the able manner in which you have undertaken consultations with the membership of the Conference. We associate ourselves with the Statement made on behalf of the G 21.

We commence the 2009 Annual Session against the backdrop of an uncertain international situation resulting from multiple challenges to global peace and security. As member states of the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum of the international community, we have a responsibility to work together to fulfill the mandate of this Conference to negotiate multilateral treaties which while addressing the challenges to international security also safeguard our vital national security interests.

That this Conference has been unable to move forward on its main vocation- negotiation of multilateral treaties of universal application- for over a decade now is a cause for disappointment. The obstacles to such progress are not the CD's Rules of Procedure or its Rule of Consensus. We hope that Conference is able to reach common agreement on substantive issues to take forward our work. As in previous years, India will contribute constructively to discussions with the aim of the CD commencing substantive work by reaching consensus on its Programme of Work.

Mr. President,

India attaches the highest priority to the goal of nuclear disarmament. India's Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh reiterated in UN General Assembly on 26th September 2008, India's proposal for a Nuclear Weapon Convention, banning the production, development, stockpiling and use of nuclear weapons and to provide for their complete elimination within a specified time frame. This is consistent with India's long standing and steadfast commitment to universal non-discriminatory and total elimination of nuclear weapons which was put forward in the Rajiv Gandhi Action Plan in 1988.

India has put forward a number of proposals at the General Assembly on Nuclear Disarmament. The 63rd session of the General Assembly approved a Resolution sponsored by India on a Convention on the prohibition of use and threat of use of nuclear weapons, which calls upon the CD to commence negotiation on an international convention prohibiting the use and threat of nuclear weapons under the any circumstances. India tabled a working paper (CD/1816) in the CD containing several proposals on nuclear disarmament.

We welcome the renewed and active debate amongst scholars and statesmen on nuclear disarmament. A number of countries have also launched initiatives to add new life to the global disarmament agenda. Even amongst those nuclear weapon states that were reluctant supporters of nuclear reductions there appears to be a new willingness to ponder over the relevance and future of nuclear weapons. These trends must be further strengthened with the effort to achieve complete elimination of nuclear weapons, rather than ad-hoc steps on non-proliferation, an approach whose limitations we have seen in the past.

We feel that there is a responsibility on the Conference of Disarmament to meaningfully respond to growing international opinion in favour of nuclear disarmament. At the same time, we recognize that these are complex issues and achieving the goal of global nuclear disarmament in a verifiable and irreversible manner will be a long and arduous process. But in order to commence consideration of these complex issues, India would like to reiterate its proposal made last year that the CD consider the appointment of a special coordinator to assist in carrying out consultations on specific measures or a set of measures that have the potential of commanding consensus which can form the basis of a mandate for a possible Ad hoc Committee on nuclear disarmament.

Mr. President,

India supports the establishment of an Ad hoc Committee on FMCT as part of CD's Programme of Work. India was one of the original co-sponsors of UNGA Resolution 48/75L, adopted in 1993 which envisaged FMCT as a significant contribution to nuclear non-proliferation in all its aspects. India was able to join the 1993 international consensus on FMCT as it reflected with clarity the common understanding of the basic objective of the treaty. Clarity on the mandate enabled India to join consensus and on that basis support the negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices in 1995 and 1998.

India has had a consistent position on FMCT. We believe that the CD is the appropriate forum for negotiating the FMCT. These negotiations should be conducted through an Ad hoc Committee or a subsidiary body of the CD in accordance with its Rules of Procedure and as part of a formal decision by the Conference on its Programme of Work. We believe that common understanding and clarity on the mandate would ensure smooth conduct and successful conclusion of negotiations. India will participate actively to build the necessary international consensus so as to enable CD to move forward on this

important issue to negotiate and conclude a universal, non-discriminatory and verifiable treaty banning the future production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other explosive devices. It is obvious that the treaty would have to meet India's national security interests.

India supports negotiations with a view to reaching agreement on effective arrangements to assure non-nuclear weapons States against the use and threat of use of nuclear weapons. On this important issue, the CD can make a meaningful contribution by undertaking negotiations of an appropriate agreement in an Ad hoc Committee on Negative security assurances. India has espoused a policy of no first use and non use against non-nuclear States and is prepared to convert these undertakings into multilateral legal arrangements.

There is growing concern that current technological developments, in particular related to ASAT, may impact negatively on the present international legal framework on outer space. We, therefore, support international efforts to reinforce safety and security of space based assets and to prevent the placement of weapons in outer space. There are number proposals on the table, including a draft treaty tabled by Russia and China, which deserve further consideration.

There is no legal regime of universal applicability governing the possession and use of Missiles. Any proposal to address the issues of missiles should be based on the principle of equal and legitimate security and should be universal and non-discriminatory in its application.

Mr. President,

I would like to conclude by placing on record our deep appreciation for the efforts that have been undertaken by you and your predecessors to build on the momentum of previous years, with the aim of finding common ground to enable the CD to commence substantive work. India will work with other delegations to make progress towards our common goal which is reaching consensus on Programme of Work to enable the CD to move forward. We are hopeful that our common efforts will bear substantive fruit in the coming months.

Thank you.