



Statement by H.E. Dr. Pankaj Sharma,

**Ambassador and Permanent Representative of India to the Conference on
Disarmament, Geneva**

**Seventy-fifth Session of the First Committee
of the United Nations General Assembly**

October 2020

General Debate

Mr. Chairperson

India congratulates you on your assumption of the Chair of the Seventy-fifth Session of the First Committee and our delegation assures you of our full support and cooperation. We associate ourselves with the statement made by Indonesia on behalf of the NAM.

2. 2020 being the Seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations, marks an important milestone for multilateral diplomacy. At the same time the world is battling the Covid pandemic which has disrupted the world in a manner and on a scale that none of us here have ever experienced. The pandemic has also served as a clarion call for strengthening multilateralism,

global solidarity and international cooperation, to formulate a robust and resilient response to the ensuing economic, political and security challenges. It is therefore, timely, for the First Committee, at this crucial juncture, to reflect on developments in disarmament and international security that have profound implications for global peace and security.

3. The unravelling of the global disarmament architecture and landmark arms control agreements raises deep concerns about the edifice built over several decades and the uncertainties that lay on the road ahead. The Disarmament triad of the Conference on Disarmament (CD), the UN Disarmament Commission (UNDC) and the First Committee, more than ever, face an urgent and important responsibility to fulfill their respective mandates.

Mr. Chairperson,

4. There is indeed an urgent need to preserve the CD's status as the world's single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, as mandated by the final document of the First Special Session of the General Assembly devoted to Disarmament (SSOD-I) and to commence negotiations on the core issues on its agenda. India stands ready to work with other delegations on all the core items on the CD's agenda. The inability of the UNDC to hold its substantive sessions for two years, in 2019 and 2020, are certainly an opportunity lost for deliberations among Member States on crucial issues of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. While India would have preferred a First Committee session with full and equal participation of all delegations, we still have this opportunity now to work with a spirit of solidarity and continuity to forge dialogue and cooperation on these important issues.

Mr. Chairperson,

5. India is steadfast in its commitment to the goal of universal, non-discriminatory and verifiable nuclear disarmament. Our call for complete elimination of nuclear weapons through a step by step process, enunciated in our Working Paper on Nuclear Disarmament submitted to the UNGA in 2006 and later to the CD in 2007 (CD/1816), has a wide resonance and continuing relevance. India reiterates its call to undertake the steps outlined in the Working Paper, including negotiation in the CD of a Comprehensive Nuclear Weapons Convention. Furthermore, India's annual resolutions at the UN General Assembly, also to be tabled this year, namely, the 'Convention on the Prohibition of the Use of Nuclear Weapons' and 'Reducing Nuclear Danger' have consistently drawn the attention of the world to the crucial and pertinent issues in disarmament and international security and have enjoyed wide support of the membership.

Mr. Chairperson,

6. As a responsible nuclear weapon State, India is committed as per its nuclear doctrine, to maintain credible minimum deterrence with the posture of no-first use and non-use against non-nuclear weapon States. Without diminishing the priority we attach to nuclear disarmament, India supports the immediate commencement of negotiations in the CD of a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty on the basis of CD/1299 and the mandate contained therein, which remains the most suitable basis for negotiations to commence, as reinforced by the outcomes of the GGE on FMCT as well as the High-Level Expert Preparatory Group on FMCT. India participated in the recent GGE on Nuclear Disarmament Verification and looks forward to constructively participating in the upcoming GGE on NDV to further contribute in this important area of our work. India has supported the

commencement of negotiation by the CD of a legally binding instrument on the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space (PAROS), also building on the work of the GGE on PAROS that concluded in March 2019.

Mr. Chairperson,

7. Recent instances of the alleged use of chemical weapons in various parts of the world, have once again underlined the importance of the full and effective implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. India attaches very high importance to the CWC and supports all efforts to strengthen the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to enable it to fulfill its mandate within the framework of the Convention.

8. India reiterates the high importance attached to the BWC as the first global and non-discriminatory disarmament Convention, prohibiting an entire category of weapons of mass destruction and accords high priority to its universalization. As we prepare for the Ninth Review Conference of the Convention in 2021, we reiterate our call for institutional strengthening of the Convention, including negotiation of a comprehensive and legally binding Protocol, providing for an effective, universal and non-discriminatory verification mechanism to strengthen the implementation of the Convention by States Parties. The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the need for further strengthening cooperation amongst the States Parties to the BWC.

Mr. Chairperson,

9. India is mindful of the rapid pace of developments in science and technology which are affecting every aspect of our lives. While they bring tremendous benefits, some of them also pose potential challenges to international peace and security. India will also be tabling its annual

Resolution at the UNGA on the "Role of science and technology in the context of international security and disarmament" which has traditionally been adopted without a vote and highlights these important issues.

10. We reiterate our concerns on the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems, which endangers international peace and security. There is also a growing concern in the international community about the possibility of terrorists acquiring weapons of mass destruction. Through its annual Resolution at the UNGA, titled "Measures to prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction", India has been drawing the attention of the world towards these threats and the need to strengthen international cooperation to address them.

Mr. Chairperson,

11. We would like to reiterate our concerns on the grave threat to international peace and security posed by the illicit transfers of conventional weapons, including small arms and light weapons, in particular to terrorists and non-State actors. India attaches high priority to the CCW which serves as one of the most important legal instruments to address the legitimate defence requirements of States while striking a balance with humanitarian concerns. In this context, India has been actively participating in the deliberations of the GGE on LAWS within the framework of the CCW and looks forward to concrete recommendations to be agreed by consensus.

13. India continues to attach high priority to promoting arms control, disarmament and international security education. In this regard, India's Annual Disarmament and International Security Affairs Fellowship launched in 2019 has been well received by various member states, particularly the younger generation of diplomats.

Mr. Chairperson,

14. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, speaking on the occasion of the Seventy-fifth Anniversary of the United Nations in July this year, laid out India's belief that the path to achieve sustainable peace and prosperity is through multilateralism. He has also called for giving a new direction and energy to multilateralism and to the United Nations. It is with this goal in mind that the Indian delegation will work with other delegations under your able leadership and guidance.

We wish the Seventy-fifth Session of the First Committee all success.

Thank you.
