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STATEMENT BY
AMBASSADOR D.B. VENKATESH VARMA
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF INDIA
TO THE CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT
AT THE GENERAL DEBATE
OF THE FIRST COMMITTEE
OF THE
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

NEW YORK

OCTOBER 12, 2015

Mr. Chairman,

We congratulate you on your election as Chair of the First Committee and assure you and the Bureau of the full support and cooperation of the Indian delegation. We associate ourselves with the statement made on October 8, 2015 by the distinguished Vice Minister of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. We would also like to thank acting High Representative Mr. Kim Won-soo for his important statement.

Mr. Chairman,

India has been unwavering in its support to global, non-discriminatory, verifiable nuclear disarmament. Addressing the UNGA on 1 October 2015, India's External Affairs Minister Smt Sushma Swaraj said that India was aware of its responsibilities as a nuclear weapons state and that its support for this goal was undiminished.

Mr. Chairman,

The goal of the complete elimination of nuclear weapons can be achieved by a step by step process underwritten by a universal commitment and an agreed multilateral framework that is global and non-discriminatory. All states possessing nuclear weapons can make a contribution by engaging in a meaningful dialogue to build trust and confidence by reducing the salience of nuclear weapons in international affairs and security doctrines. We believe that increasing the restraints on the use of nuclear weapons is not only an essential first step it is also necessary in the current complex international environment in enhancing strategic trust globally.

India considers the Conference on Disarmament as the appropriate forum for the commencement of negotiations on nuclear disarmament and believes that there are inherent dangers in some recent proposals to fragment the disarmament agenda or splinter the established disarmament machinery.

We supported UNGA resolution 69/58 and the working paper CD/2032 submitted by member states belonging to the G21 seeking the commencement of negotiations in the CD on a Comprehensive Nuclear Weapons Convention. Without prejudice to the priority we attach to nuclear disarmament, India supports the commencement of negotiations on FMCT in the CD on the basis of the mandate in CD/1299, and shares the widely felt disappointment that such negotiations continue to be blocked. India welcomes the adoption by consensus of the Report of the GGE on FMCT established pursuant to UNGA resolution 67/53 which underlined that the Treaty and its negotiation in the CD remains a priority enjoying international support and CD/1299 and the mandate contained therein remains the most suitable basis on which negotiations should commence.

As a responsible nuclear power, India's nuclear doctrine continues to stress a policy of credible minimum deterrence with a posture of no-first use and non-use against non-nuclear weapon states. We remain committed to maintaining a unilateral and voluntary moratorium on nuclear explosive testing.

Mr. Chairman,

We have contributed to international efforts in enhancing nuclear safety and security standards through various programmes of the IAEA and look forward to the success of the 2016 Nuclear Security Summit to be hosted by the United States. The international community should continue to exercise utmost vigilance against terrorist groups gaining access to WMDs and related materials and technologies.

We welcome the successful conclusion of the negotiations between the EU/E3+3 and Iran resulting in the agreement on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

Mr. Chairman,

The CWC and BWC are worthy examples of global non-discriminatory treaties for the complete elimination of the respective categories of weapons of mass destruction. India has completed its obligations on stockpile destruction under the CWC. The timely destruction by other state parties of the remaining stockpiles is critical for upholding the credibility and integrity of the Convention. India contributed to efforts under the UN and the OPCW for the destruction of Syria's declared chemical weapon stockpiles.

We share the widespread interest among BWC state parties to strengthen the effectiveness and improve the implementation of the Convention through a Protocol negotiated for that purpose. We support a robust consultation process leading to the Eighth Review Conference next year, so as to contribute to its success through adequate preparations on substantive issues.

Mr. Chairman,

As a major space faring nation, India has vital developmental and security interests in space. India supports strengthening the international legal regime to protect and preserve access to space for all and to prevent without exceptions, the weaponization of Outer Space. We support the substantive consideration of PAROS in the CD. While not a substitute for legally binding instruments, TCBMs can play a useful and complementary role. Discussions on a draft International Code of Conduct for Outer Space Activities should be inclusive, covering all space faring nations to ensure a product of universal acceptance adopted by consensus and through a process anchored in the UN.

India continues to keep under review the ATT from the perspective of our defence, security and foreign policy interests. We would be watching how the treaty is implemented especially in view of some of the gaps in the Treaty that India had pointed out during its negotiation and which have become only more pronounced since then. India attaches importance to the CCW process and the holding of a productive Review Conference in 2016. We welcome the consensus outcome of the Fifth Biennial Meeting on Implementation of the POA on Small Arms and Light weapons held in June 2014. We hope that this Committee will support measures to ensure the improved functioning and long term sustainability of UNIDIR as a premier disarmament research body.

Mr. Chairman,

As in previous years, India will be tabling three draft resolutions; namely 'Convention on the Prohibition of the Use of Nuclear Weapons', 'Reducing Nuclear Danger' and 'Measures to Prevent Terrorists from Acquiring Weapons of Mass Destruction' and one draft decision on the 'Role of Science and Technology in the context of International Security and Disarmament.'

We look forward to an opportunity to elaborate on some of these issues during the thematic debate.

Thank you.