

Statement by H.E. Dr. Rohan Perera,
Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka to the United Nations

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Thematic Discussion on Nuclear Weapons

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We associate ourselves with the statement delivered by Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The need for achieving a world free of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction is now more urgent than ever. Sri Lanka's commitment to the elimination of the threat posed by nuclear weapons is reflected in the international treaty obligations we have undertaken in the field of disarmament. It is our belief that a transparent, sustainable and credible plan for multilateral nuclear disarmament is required in order to achieve the ultimate goal of a world free of nuclear weapons.

The total elimination is the only absolute guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. In this regard, all States have an obligation to negotiate in good faith to achieve the objective of total elimination of nuclear weapons, which remains largely unfulfilled despite the 1996 Advisory opinion of the ICJ.

While the outcome of the 2015 NPT Review Conference was disappointing, it should not deter our resolve. We need to strive towards realizing a world, free of nuclear weapons and other forms of weapons of mass destruction. A fundamental shift in the mindset of reliance on nuclear armaments is essential if we are to achieve the 3 pillars of the NPT namely nuclear disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation, and peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

Strengthening the disarmament treaty regime is essential to ensure a rule-based regime for nuclear disarmament. In this connection, Sri Lanka wishes to recall and reiterate our support to the key recommendations of the Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission (WMDC) (2006) namely the paramount value of multilateralism and the overall importance of treaties and international law in reaching the goal of disarmament.

Sri Lanka remains committed to striving with all States and other Stakeholders, to make nuclear disarmament realizable and bring peaceful uses of nuclear technology within reach. As with other States Parties to the NPT, we consider that we have an inalienable right to peaceful use of nuclear technology as provided for in Article IV of the NPT.

Equally, there is a clear responsibility on nuclear weapons States to take effective measures towards eventual elimination of nuclear weapons as provided for Article VI of the NPT. Therefore, it is imperative that nuclear weapons States implement this obligation in good faith. We must recognize the inextricable linkage between nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. We call upon all States Parties to give effect to the 13 practical steps adopted at the 2000 Review Conference including the Principle of Irreversibility.

While efforts should continue towards the objective of general and complete disarmament, a new paradigm has resulted in the nuclear discourse, which makes it imperative to achieve nuclear disarmament based on humanitarian norms. This is pursuant to the emphasis placed by the NPT Review Conference in 2010, which expressed concern at the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of the use, or threat of use of nuclear weapons. This movement has now made steady progress. Sri Lanka values the work being done in this area including by civil society and think tanks and extend its fullest support for this initiative.

As part of our nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation priorities, ratification of CTBT is now recognized as an imperative need. Sri Lanka has reiterated in the 2010 NPT Review Conference that it is moving towards the ratification of the CTBT as early as possible. In the meantime, Sri Lanka is planning a number of support activities with CTBTO in the coming years, with a regional on-site Inspection Training programme towards end of this year. This is a manifestation of Sri Lanka's commitment to realizing the goals set by CTBT.

We do not need to over-emphasize the increasing role of nuclear security in an era where nuclear material and technology reaching the hands of non-state actors remains a distinct and dangerous possibility. The emergence of new forms of terrorism including cyber terrorism, asymmetric conflicts, and new types of weapons make the emerging scenario and alarming one. We call for support for IAEA's safeguards mechanism, including emergency and incident reporting system. The Convention on Physical Protection of Nuclear Materials is a centerpiece in the legal architecture for nuclear security. In addition, the International Convention on the Suppression of acts of Nuclear Terrorism provides a comprehensive legal framework to prevent nuclear material falling into unlawful hands and to deal with crisis situations in such an eventuality.

We support the establishment of nuclear weapon-free zones, and we consider such zones as a form of mutually assuring security networks among members. Our support especially extends to the call for a Zone free of Weapons of Mass Destruction in the Middle East.

We would also like to highlight the importance of peace education and disarmament education. We refer, in this context, to the initiative taken in Sri Lanka by Judge C.G. Weeramantry, former Judge of the International Court of Justice, in establishing the Weeramantry's International Center for Peace Education and Research (WICPER) in 2001. The Centre has taken a series of meaningful measures to disseminate peace education, cross-cultural understanding, and international law.

There is a greater need, as well to support disarmament education, particularly in developing countries and to provide expertise needed to understand and analyze the new trends and developments in the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation field, including the dynamics and particularities of nuclear weapon-free zones.

In conclusion, it is Sri Lanka's earnest hope that all States will summon the courage to demonstrate the required political will and initiative that is essential for creating a world that is free from nuclear weapons.
