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STATEMENT BY
H.E. AMBASSADOR D.B VENKATESH VARMA,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF INDIA TO
CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT, GENEVA,
THEMATIC DEBATE ON NUCLEAR WEAPONS
AT THE
FIRST COMMITTEE OF THE
68TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

NEW YORK

OCTOBER 18, 2013

Mr. Chairman,

India associates itself with the statement made by the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Nonaligned Movement on 17 Oct 2013. India's External Affairs Minister participated in the HLM on Nuclear Disarmament on 26th September and we support the follow up resolution proposed by NAM contained in document L6.

Mr Chairman,

India's Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru was among the first world leaders to champion the cause of nuclear disarmament. In 1988, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi proposed an Action Plan for a Nuclear-Weapons-Free and Nonviolent World Order to attain the goal of nuclear disarmament in a time-bound, universal, non-discriminatory, phased and verifiable manner. We remain committed to the objective of that Plan and the realization of its vision of ushering in a nuclear weapon free and non-violent world order.

While addressing the UN Special Session on Nuclear Disarmament, the catastrophic consequences of the use of nuclear weapons to humanity was foremost in Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's mind. He said "We cannot accept the logic that a few nations have the right to pursue their security by threatening the survival of mankind. It is not only those who live by the nuclear sword who, by design or default, shall one day perish by it. All humanity will perish."

Even though nuclear weapons are now an integral part of India's security policy as part of our credible minimum deterrence, our support for global, non-discriminatory nuclear disarmament has not diminished. As Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh stated in the Indian parliament in 2007 "the possession of nuclear weapons only increases our sense of global responsibility and does not diminish it."

We believe that nuclear disarmament can be achieved through a step-by-step process underwritten by a universal commitment and an agreed global and non-discriminatory multilateral framework. We have called for a meaningful dialogue among all states possessing nuclear weapons to build trust and confidence and for reducing the salience of nuclear weapons in international affairs and security doctrines. Steps for the progressive de-legitimization of nuclear weapons are essential to the goal of their complete elimination.

In a working paper submitted to the UNGA in 2006, India suggested a number of measures, including reaffirmation of the unequivocal commitment by all nuclear weapon states to the goal of complete elimination of nuclear weapons, measures to reduce nuclear dangers arising from accidental or unauthorized use of nuclear weapons, increasing restraints on the use of nuclear weapons, de-alerting of nuclear weapons and specific legal measures such as a Global No First Use Agreement, Convention on the Prohibition on the Use of Nuclear Weapons leading finally to a Nuclear Weapons Convention for the global non-discriminatory and verifiable elimination of nuclear with a specific timeframe.

India supports efforts aimed at building awareness and political will to move in a step-by-step manner towards the goal of nuclear disarmament: from reducing nuclear risks and the role of nuclear weapons in security doctrines, restraints on use

leading thereafter to a universal, non-discriminatory Convention on prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons. In taking this process forward we stress the need for dialogue. India participated in the Oslo Meeting and believes that further discussion on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons should be conducted in an inclusive manner with the participation of all states. In terms of substance, it should do no harm to the non-proliferation regime or the goal of a nuclear weapon free world. In terms of process, it should do no harm to the established disarmament machinery.

Mr Chairman,

Without prejudice to the priority we give to nuclear disarmament, we support the negotiation in the Conference on Disarmament of a multilateral, non-discriminatory and internationally verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices that meets India's national security interests. We remain committed to maintaining a unilateral and voluntary moratorium on nuclear explosive testing. India supports the CD as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum. Even though we abstained on the resolution establishing an Open Ended Working Group on Nuclear Disarmament, we participated actively in its meetings and India's proposals are reflected among the various proposals in the report of the Group.

Mr. Chairman,

India is committed to working with the international community to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons and their means of delivery, including through strong national export controls and membership of the multilateral export control regimes. All states should fully and effectively implement the obligations arising from the agreements or treaties to which they are parties. India's position on the NPT is well-known and needs no reiteration. There is no question of India joining the NPT as a non-nuclear weapon state. At the same time, India would make its contribution to the strengthening of the global non-proliferation regime.

Mr. Chairman,

India's resolutions in the First Committee give expression to our desire to work with other member states of the United Nations to achieve the goal of nuclear disarmament.

We are introducing on behalf of the sponsors a draft resolution on "Reducing Nuclear Danger" contained in document L20. The resolution highlights the need for a review of nuclear doctrines and immediate steps to reduce the risk of unintentional or accidental use of nuclear weapons, including through de-alerting and de-targeting of nuclear weapons. It is a matter of satisfaction that the issues raised by this long-standing resolution are finding greater resonance and recognition in the international community.

Further, we have the honour to present on behalf of the sponsors a draft resolution on a Convention on the Prohibition of the Use of Nuclear Weapons contained in L21. This traditional text reflects our belief that a multilateral, universal and legally binding instrument prohibiting the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons will contribute to the process of the step-by-step de-legitimization of

nuclear weapons and create a favourable climate for negotiations on an agreement on the prohibition of nuclear weapons.

We would like to highlight that first introduced in 1982 this is one of the long standing resolutions in the First Committee and has consistently received majority support. We would like to convey our appreciation for this support and to those countries which have co-sponsored this resolution which is only gaining in significance with the passage of time. However, a sizeable minority of member states – some of them nuclear weapon states, some with nuclear weapons stationed on their soil and others with alliance partnerships underwritten by policies of first use of nuclear weapons have voted against this resolution. We regret further that a few states that do not belong to such partnerships and in fact today are in the forefront of current efforts to highlight the humanitarian impact of use of nuclear weapons, for reasons that are difficult to understand, have also voted against this resolution. We appeal to these states to review their position and bring their voting on this resolution at par with their public support for addressing the humanitarian impact of use of nuclear weapons. We also would like to invite NGOs and civil society to take another look at this resolution in the context of the current discussions on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons.

As in previous years, India will be tabling draft resolution entitled “Measures to prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction” contained in document L23. We would like to convey our appreciation to the membership of this Committee for the consensus support extended to this resolution and to the large number of co-sponsors who have joined us in highlighting the importance of this resolution which gives expression to the deep concerns of the international community with respect to the risks posed by terrorists gaining access to WMDs and sensitive materials and technologies. We hope that the First Committee will adopt this resolution by consensus.

Thank you.