

**Statement delivered by H.E. Priyaneer Wijesekera,
Ambassador and Permanent Representative for Sri Lanka
at the First Session of the Preparatory Committee for the
2020 Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear
Weapons**

General Debate on 02 May 2017

Mr Chairman,

1. I wish to extend my warm felicitations to you on your assumption of the Chair of the First Session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. I also wish to congratulate other Bureau Members on their election.
2. Let me also thank Her Excellency Taous Feroukhi, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Algeria, President of the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, for her opening remarks and important work during the previous session.
3. Sri Lanka aligns itself with the statement delivered by H.E. Mr Jesse Alonso Chacon Escamillo, Ambassador of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on behalf of the Non Aligned Movement.

Mr Chairman,

4. Before reflecting on the substantive aspects of relevance for our deliberations today, I wish to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the late Justice C.G. Weeramanthry whose dissenting opinion in the 1996 ICJ Advisory Opinion on the legality of the Threat or use of Nuclear Weapons enunciated the notion of illegality of nuclear weapons and thus inspired the nuclear disarmament community and advocates for over twenty years.
5. This meeting marks the beginning of the 2020 Review Cycle of the NPT and provides the opportunity to chart the way forward and work towards a successful Review Conference in 2020 with tangible and productive outcomes. It is important therefore to commence this process with the constructive and inclusive dialogue to find agreement on moving the disarmament and non-proliferation agenda forward.

6. My delegation wishes to reiterate the centrality of the NPT as the cornerstone of the global regime for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. Sri Lanka is in favour of a balanced and non-discriminatory approach in addressing the three pillars of the NPT.
7. It is essential that this Review Process aims to strengthen the three pillars of the NPT, namely nuclear disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, in order to safeguard the world from devastation by nuclear weapons and to contribute to economic development and prosperity through the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.
8. Disarmament and non-proliferation are mutually re-enforcing and absolutely essential in the present global context for international peace and security. It is crucial therefore, that the slow pace of progress in efforts to reduce and eliminate nuclear weapons as well as proliferation concerns are addressed through multilaterally negotiated, universal, comprehensive and non-discriminatory agreements.
9. The NPT is the essential foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament and also for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, which is vital for economic development, particularly in developing non-nuclear weapon states. Non-proliferation policies should therefore not undermine the inalienable rights of States to acquire, have access to, import or export nuclear material, equipment or technology for peaceful purposes. It must be kept in mind that countries which are Party to the Treaty have an inalienable right to peaceful uses of nuclear energy, without discrimination, as provided for in Article IV of the NPT.

Mr Chairman,

10. Sri Lanka has always been at the forefront of global non-proliferation and disarmament efforts and is committed to striving with other States and Stakeholders to make nuclear disarmament realizable through a transparent, sustainable and credible plan in order to achieve the shared goal of a world free of nuclear weapons.
11. This is reflected in the international treaty obligations we have undertaken in the field of disarmament.
12. The threat posed by nuclear weapons to humanity and its catastrophic humanitarian consequences is a matter for serious concern, as no State or

international organization can adequately address a humanitarian emergency caused by a nuclear detonation. At the 2015 Review Conference, 159 State Parties including Sri Lanka supported the view that awareness of the consequences of nuclear weapons must underpin all approaches and efforts towards nuclear disarmament. We extend our fullest support to finding a solution to counter the challenge of nuclear weapons.

13. Further, the threat posed by the possibility of nuclear material falling into the hands of non-state actors or terrorist entities and its terrible consequences highlights the need for international efforts to address this danger. We recommend widest possible adherence to the International Convention for the Suppression of Nuclear Terrorism of 2005, which provides a comprehensive legal framework to prevent nuclear material falling into unlawful hands.

14. It is clear that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. States therefore, have an obligation to negotiate in good faith to achieve this objective, as provided for in Article VI of the NPT.

15. Sri Lanka supports negotiating a comprehensive, legally binding international instrument which builds on existing normative frameworks in the field of disarmament, to prohibit the use, possession as well as production and transfer of nuclear weapons leading towards their total elimination, within a time bound framework. We therefore welcome the convening of the United Nations conference in March 2017 to negotiate such an instrument, which will build on the existing disarmament framework including the NPT.

Mr Chairman

16. In conclusion, Sri Lanka fully supports efforts by all States Parties to the NPT towards achieving a successful conclusion of the First Preparatory Committee and looks forward to a constructive engagement during the forthcoming deliberations.