

**Statement on Nuclear Disarmament by Ambassador Hamid Ali Rao,
Permanent Representative of India to the CD, Geneva, February 1, 2011**

Mr. President,

We appreciate your effort to keep the CD engaged in discussions on the issues on its Agenda. We participate in these discussions without prejudice to our preference that negotiations in the CD should take place as part of an agreed Programme of Work. We continue to believe that the first priority should be to make every effort for early adoption of a Programme of Work so that CD can begin substantive work, including negotiations, at the earliest.

Mr. President,

As a member of the G-21 and NAM, India has attached the highest priority to nuclear disarmament. India has been consistent in its support for global, complete and verifiable nuclear disarmament. In 1988, Prime Minister Shri Rajiv Gandhi presented an Action Plan for a Nuclear-Weapon-Free and Non-Violent World Order to the Third Special Session of the UN on Disarmament. Unfortunately, we are nowhere near to attaining that goal today than we were in 1988. The end of the Cold War had provided a ray of hope that we will be able to achieve a nuclear weapon free world, but this hope has been belied. Negotiations are yet to commence in the Conference on Disarmament aimed at ensuring the universal, non-discriminatory, time-bound, phased and verifiable elimination of nuclear weapons.

In June 2008, on the twentieth anniversary of the Rajiv Gandhi Action Plan, Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh asked others to join India in taking the critical first step - a commitment, preferably a binding legal commitment through an international instrument, to eliminate nuclear weapons within a time bound framework. President Obama said in his Prague speech in April 2009 that the U.S. will "seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons". Several other world leaders have also supported moving towards global zero. The UN Secretary General too put forth a five-point proposal on nuclear disarmament. A few days back, on January 26, 2011 he told us in this Conference that nuclear disarmament is his strategic priority for 2011.

We believe that nuclear disarmament can be achieved by a step-by-step process underwritten by a universal commitment and an agreed multilateral framework for

achieving global and non-discriminatory nuclear disarmament. We also believe that progressive steps for the de-legitimization of nuclear weapons are essential to achieving the goal of their complete elimination. 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 are pertinent in this regard. India's two resolutions in the First Committee on a "Convention on the Prohibition of the Use of Nuclear Weapons" and "Reducing Nuclear Dangers" give expression to some of these steps and have justifiably found support from a large number of countries. These steps were also part of Working Paper CD/1816 tabled by India in February 2007. The intent of the Working Paper, which reflects the spirit and substance of the Rajiv Gandhi Action Plan, was to stimulate debate and discussion on nuclear disarmament.

Mr. President, the countries with the largest nuclear arsenals bear a special responsibility for progress on nuclear disarmament. In this regard we welcome the ratification of the new START agreement between the US and Russia. The two still hold more than 90% of the nuclear weapons in the world and the new START is a step in the right direction. There is a need 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.

Mr. President,

The only document on nuclear disarmament adopted by consensus by the international community was the Final Document of SSOD-I. The Document accorded the highest priority to the goal of nuclear disarmament. However, for the last three decades the CD has been unable to make progress on this priority agenda item, despite persistent calls by CD members and the G-21. As the single multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament, there is a heavy responsibility on the CD to advance the goal of elimination of nuclear weapons. For its part, India will continue to work with others in the CD to take forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations.

Thank you.