

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT  
THEMATIC DEBATE ON NEGATIVE SECURITY ASSURANCES  
STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF BRAZIL

Mr. President,

I will start by congratulating you, once again, Mr. President, on your choice of topics for the thematic sessions. Nuclear Weapons Free Zones and Negative Security Assurances are instruments that complement each other rather nicely. Indeed, in their quest for increased security, Non-Nuclear Weapon States rely mainly on the establishment of such zones and on Negative Assurances extended to them.

Last week in our previous thematic session, my delegation, among many, highlighted the pivotal role played by the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free-zones (NWFZ) in maintaining regional stability, augmenting global security, and promoting peace.

We also mentioned three common traits shared by those zones:

- 1) Complete absence of nuclear weapons in the region;
- 2) Adequate and effective inspection and verification systems in place; and,
- 3) binding guarantees by NWSs not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against zone members.

In practice, the absence of nuclear weapons in a region constitutes an intra-zone NSA, where its members extend to each other the guarantee that they will not produce or will accept the transference and/or stationing of nuclear weapons within the zone. To ensure compliance with the commitment to maintain the NWFZ effectively free of such weapons, a complex system of inspection and verification is required.

Nevertheless, to give concrete meaning and to add value to the intra-zone undertakings, Nuclear Weapons States are to provide unconditional assurances that they will not resort to nuclear weapons against unarmed states. Regrettably, either NWS have not ratified the relevant protocols to the treaties creating Nuclear Weapons Free Zones or have issued carefully drafted interpretative declarations. Those statements can only be understood as

*de facto* reservations, poorly aligned with the tenets and objectives of the NWFZs, if not in full contradiction with them.

As we see it, there are two ways to revive the full potential of NSAs: NWS can withdraw their reservations to the treaties creating nuclear free zones or move ahead in the negotiation of a legally binding, universal, unconditional and multilateral instrument. The latter appears to us to be the least controversial deliverable before the CD. It would imply the fewest changes on nuclear doctrines and would have considerable impact on the security level enjoyed by NNWS. Regrettably, very little, if any, progress was made on the development of an instrument of this sort.

Let's get to the bottom of the matter. On appearance, we are very close to an ideal scenario: a modicum - if not a mere symbolical - decrease in the security levels enjoyed by Nuclear Weapon States is to be amply compensated by a huge increase on the security of the large community of states that is not pursuing nuclear armament.

Nevertheless, NWS persist in being clearly disinclined to pursue this course of action. Stubbornly, they continue to adhere to the strictest possible interpretation of the principle of "increased and undiminished security for all". Repeated *ad nauseum* this mantra predicated on the qualifier "undiminished" stands clearly in the way of increased security. It is implied that we are confined to a situation similar to what is known in economy as Pareto optimality or Pareto efficiency: No one can be better off unless someone decreases its well-being. Hardly can anyone argue that we are in the vicinity of that ideal situation.

In brief, should the appraisal of security lie exclusively in the eyes of the beholder, the reluctance to address NSAs means that NWS place a higher value to their absolute security ahead of the overall international security. Seeking absolute security is not only futile, but also can lead to paradoxical results. As once famously said, in another context, by a well-known pundit in international relations: "while seeking absolute security, a country will only generate absolute insecurity to all other countries".

This is very disturbing. If such is the case, in a matter of relatively marginal importance to the security of NWS, like NSAs, we are compelled to conclude that we are in big trouble to advance nuclear disarmament on issues of critical importance.

Dear colleagues, Mr. President,

Let's look around and see how things have been deteriorating in the last twelve months. Whichever direction we look, the security landscape has taken a marked turn. New applications to join already very large nuclear military alliances, constitutions changed to allow stationing of nuclear weapons, hardening of doctrines on nuclear weapons use, not to mention statements of intent of developing nuclear weapons. Let me clarify that we are not passing judgment on such decisions. But we cannot fail to acknowledge that, by collectively giving up on negative security assurances for the sake of positive military assurances, we are worse off. Well worse off.

If we are to stop this race to the bottom, we should take a modest step and agree to build on the prolific discussions held in 2022 under the able leadership of Ambassador Febrian Ruddyard on Subsidiary Organ 4 and advance our discussions on NSAs. Let me reiterate once again a point that is not to be lost. We are not supplicants for NSAs. We are reaffirming that they are the bare minimum of what NWS should have been doing for quite some time to allay the NNWS legitimate security concerns. After all, NSAs constitute a second best, an interim measure until the total elimination of nuclear weapons, the only absolute guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.

Thank you.