Effective multilateralism is a sine qua non for fostering international peace and security and addressing the contemporary challenges to disarmament and non-proliferation efforts. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has highlighted that strengthened multilateralism, enhanced international cooperation and a stronger United Nations are the need of the hour.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in his address to the General Assembly at its seventy-sixth session, recalled that if the United Nations is to keep itself relevant, it must improve its effectiveness and increase its reliability. India, as a non-permanent member of the Security Council for the period 2021–2022, had the honor of presiding over the Council presidency twice. During its presidency, India drew the attention of the world to important issues affecting international peace and security, including maritime security, peacekeeping and counterterrorism. In the context of current geopolitical developments, India strongly believes that every effort must be made to advance multilateralism in the area of disarmament to make a meaningful contribution to global peace and security.

India’s nuclear policy history provides perspective on its relentless advocacy for multilateral efforts towards global general and complete disarmament. As early as 1953, India’s efforts led to the inclusion, in paragraph 1 of General Assembly resolution 715 (VIII), of an affirmation of its “earnest desire to reach agreement as early as possible on a comprehensive and coordinated plan, under international control, for the regulation, limitation and reduction of all armed forces and all armaments, for the elimination and prohibition of atomic, hydrogen, bacterial, chemical and all such other weapons of war and mass destruction, and for the attainment of these ends through effective measures”.

India’s conviction that a nuclear-weapons-free world is safer for all world nations is as strong today as it was in 1954, when India became the first State in the world to make a call for a “standstill agreement” to ban nuclear testing pending progress towards a comprehensive disarmament agreement. Recognizing early on that a treaty on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons is not an end in itself but only a means to an end, which is the achievement of general and complete disarmament, in 1965, India, along with seven other States of the Non-Aligned Movement in the Conference of the Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarmament, presented a joint memorandum on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, which called for non-proliferation efforts to be coupled with or followed by tangible
steps to halt the nuclear arms race and to limit, reduce and eliminate the stocks of nuclear weapons and the means of their delivery.

In 1982, India called for a “nuclear freeze” – a prohibition of the production of fissile materials for weapons and of nuclear weapons and related delivery systems. India’s action plan for a nuclear-weapon-free and non-violent world order, presented at the United Nations in 1988, called for the attainment of the goal of nuclear disarmament in a time-bound and phased manner. In 1996, India, along with the Group of 21, presented a programme of action to the Conference on Disarmament for the elimination of nuclear weapons within a specified time frame. India has been consistent in its support for global, verifiable and non-discriminatory nuclear disarmament.

India strongly believes that this can be achieved in a time-bound manner through a step-by-step process underwritten by a universal commitment and an agreed global and non-discriminatory multilateral framework. India’s working paper presented to the Conference on Disarmament in 2007, CD/1816, precisely sums up this approach through a number of proposals that remain relevant to date. In line with our vision, India has supported the negotiation in the Conference on Disarmament of a comprehensive convention on nuclear weapons to prohibit their possession, development, production, acquisition, testing, stockpiling, transfer and use or threat of use, and to provide for their destruction, as also supported by the Non-Aligned Movement.

As the world’s single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, as mandated by the special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, the Conference on Disarmament should demonstrate the requisite political will to agree on a comprehensive and balanced programme of work and to commence negotiations on legally binding instruments on the core items on its agenda. India was pleased to preside over the Conference on Disarmament - as its first Presidency - for the year 2024.

Without prejudice to the priority we attach to disarmament, India looks forward to negotiations commencing immediately at the Conference on Disarmament on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices based on CD/1299 and the mandate contained therein. Acknowledging the utility of technical work on nuclear disarmament verification, as well as its value as an essential element of a comprehensive convention on nuclear weapons, India participated in the meetings of the Group of Governmental Experts to consider the role of verification in advancing nuclear disarmament. India is pleased that the Disarmament Commission, a vital part of the disarmament triad, which also comprises the Conference on Disarmament and
the First Committee of the General Assembly, successfully concluded its current cycle, with the adoption of a report by consensus. As the main deliberative body within the United Nations on disarmament issues, the Commission’s role as a platform for dialogue and cooperation, bringing together universal membership of all Member States, is significant.

India’s annual resolutions at the General Assembly, namely on the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use of Nuclear Weapons and on reducing nuclear danger, which enjoy the support of the majority of the Member States, have consistently highlighted the need for the Conference on Disarmament to commence negotiations to reach agreement on an international convention prohibiting the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons and urgent steps to reduce the risks of unintentional and accidental use of nuclear weapons, respectively.

India is cognizant of the need for enhanced international cooperation and for the promotion of peaceful uses of science and technology through technology transfer, the sharing of information and the exchange of equipment and materials. Its annual resolution on the role of science and technology in the context of international security and disarmament, adopted by consensus, calls on Member States to remain vigilant in understanding new and emerging developments in science and technology that could affect international security. Through its annual consensus General Assembly resolution on measures to prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction, India has been drawing the attention of the world to these threats and the need to strengthen international cooperation to address them.

As a major spacefaring nation and developing country, India is committed to maintaining outer space as an ever-expanding frontier for cooperative endeavors of all spacefaring nations. India continues to support substantive consideration of the prevention of an arms race in outer space within the multilateral framework of the United Nations. We remain committed to negotiation of a legally binding instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, to be negotiated in the Conference on Disarmament.

India is a party to various disarmament conventions and treaties, including the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction; the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction; the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects;
and the Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies.

Besides proactively pursuing disarmament efforts at the Conference on Disarmament, the Disarmament Commission and the First Committee, India, as a responsible member of various multilateral export control regimes and with its stringent national export controls, contributes to advancing common objectives of non-proliferation.

India attaches great priority to the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects as an important consensus-based multilateral instrument on small arms and light weapons.

India is committed to an open, secure, stable, accessible and peaceful information and communications technology (ICT) environment and underlines that the United Nations should continue to play a leading role in promoting dialogue on the use of ICT by States. India appreciates the ongoing work in the Open-Ended Working Group on the security of and in the use of information and communications technologies 2021–2025 and is working closely with other members of the Working Group to deliver practical international cooperation measures. India continues to highlight the role of capacity-building as being of vital importance in ensuring ICT security. Taking forward the progress on ICT discussions, India has proposed the establishment of a global cybersecurity cooperation portal that uses an integrated approach of combining other relevant sub-portals for broader understanding of the latest developments in cyberspace.

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