Pakistan’s Views on UNGA First Committee Resolution “Confidence-building Measures in the Regional and Sub-regional Context”

- The current international security environment presents a challenge to the existing norms on non-proliferation and disarmament, while aggravating strategic stability at the global and regional levels.

- Under these circumstances, Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) assumes increased significance to ensure a conducive environment for the resolution of complicated issues between states.

- CBMs should be pursued simultaneously at the global, regional and bilateral levels.

- CBMs cover the whole spectrum of measures ranging from crises management, risk reduction, arms limitation and arms reduction.

- It would be useful to draw upon the previous experiences which have proved to be effective. At the same time, there is a need to evaluate the reasons as to why certain measures did not work in the past.

- It is also important to assess the relevance of the CBMs of the past to the present day complexities.

- It would be useful to look at a new paradigm for CBMs which is holistic and integrated and includes risk reduction across various domains including conventional, nuclear and emerging technologies, whether they are specifically weaponized or not. The risk posed by new technologies, especially the possibility of conventional entanglement which results in greater risks in the nuclear fields, warrant closer attention.

- Multilateral discourse on regulating the hostile use of new and emerging technologies and their militarization has not kept pace with the advancement in such technologies. There is an urgent need for developing clarity and understandings on a multilateral regulatory framework and further development of international norms and the legally binding agreements for avoiding the employment of new technologies in a manner which can threaten deterrence stability at the global and regional levels.

- The need for conventional military doctrines which are defensive rather than offensive in nature cannot be overemphasized. However, in nuclearized environment, doctrines which are offensive in nature or seeks to create space for war are dangerous preposition. CBMs include reversal of such doctrines.

- In most cases, doctrines are declaratory positions and statements. In actual practice, states’ security calculus is shaped by the military capabilities, force postures, types and number of weapon systems deployed by their competitors/adversaries.

- Discussion on CBMs, therefore, should move beyond theoretical constructs and focus on the actual threat perceptions that force states to have reliance on nuclear capabilities.
• CBMS need to go beyond measures for crisis stability and include steps for arms control stability. In the absence of arms control measures and measures for the avoidance of arms race, measures for risk reduction and crisis stability agreed in a particular context tend to lose their utility with new destabilizing inductions in another domain.

• CBMs should seek a broader objective than mere management or avoidance of crisis. Their broader objectives should remain the creation of an environment of trust and stability which is conducive for states to open channels of negotiations for settlement of disputes. In the absence of parallel measures for the settlement of long standing disputes, there will always be potential of conflict and dangerous escalation. Dispute resolution should be accorded priority.

• This has been witnessed in several regional crises whereby due to the underlying disputes, unpredictable events have led to the risk of military escalation. In such situations existing CBMs tend to be ignored.

• Establishment of formal channels of strategic communication, both at the political and military level can contribute significantly to crisis stability and trust building. States should be encouraged to resort to such formal channels during crises.

• Public statements pandering to domestic political constituencies for temporal electoral gains, bypassing the formal communication channels during crises, are subject to misinterpretation. Discussion between states to avoid such irresponsible signaling can help in re-establishing the relevance of established formal channels of communications.

• Given the ever growing influence of media, both traditional and social media, it is imperative to examine options for expanding the ambit of CBMs beyond states.

• In the context of South Asia, Pakistan has made a Strategic Restraint Regime (SRR) proposal, which is premised on three interlocking and mutually reinforcing elements of conflict resolution, nuclear and missile restraint and conventional balance.

• No approach can succeed in the absence of political will at the regional level to engage in meaningful CBMs which can be tailored to specific circumstances, without impinging on any party's extra-regional interests. Reference to extra-regional concerns for avoiding CBMs in a regional context, should not therefore be used as a pretext not to engage bilaterally or regionally.

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Pakistan’s views on
“Conventional Arms control at the regional and sub regional levels”

The resolution was first introduced by Pakistan in 1993 (resolution 48/75 J) as an effort to draw lessons from the success of the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty and apply it in the South Asian context.

2. The resolution recognizes the crucial role of conventional arms control in promoting regional and international peace and security; notes that balance in the preservation of defense capabilities of States at the lower level of armaments contributes to peace and stability and should be a prime objective of conventional arms control; notes with interest initiatives taken in various parts of the world, particularly the CFE Treaty in Europe, which is a cornerstone of European security.

3. In its operative paragraphs, the resolution requests the CD to consider the formulation of principles that can serve as a framework for regional agreements on conventional arms control.

4. Elaboration of these principles should include inter alia:

   • Guidelines on arms transfer with particular reference to regional strategic stability.

   • Identification of destabilizing weapon systems and emerging technologies.

   • Guidance on CBM’s on force postures, avoidance of arms race and optimal force ratios at minimum level of armaments.

   • Guidelines on use of parallel processes for dispute resolution to strengthen the arms control objectives.

   • Facilitate understanding between regional players on practical elements for possible regional arms control arrangements.

   • Linkages between conventional and strategic stability and prospects for nuclear disarmament.

5. Pakistan believes that the destabilizing effects of conventional weapons on security and stability at the regional and sub-regional levels as well as their catastrophic humanitarian toll underscore the need for continued action aimed at controlling these weapons. There is a need of a comprehensive and equitable approach, which takes into account the priorities and security interests of all States and not give way to a destabilizing conventional imbalance. Disarmament measures should be based on the principle of undiminished security of the parties with a view to promoting or enhancing stability at a lower military level, taking into account the need of all states to protect their security.

6. The UN General Assembly in its first Special Session on Disarmament (SSOD-I) in 1978 had agreed that “together with negotiations on nuclear disarmament measures, negotiations should be carried out on the balanced reduction of armed forces and of conventional armaments, based on the principle of undiminished security of the parties” and “these negotiations should be conducted with particular emphasis on armed forces and conventional weapons of nuclear-weapon States and other
military significant countries”. The SSOD-I had also called for “negotiations on the limitation of international transfer of conventional weapons, based in particular on the same principle, and taking into account the inalienable right to self-determination”. In line with the SSOD-I’s recognition of inextricable link between stability at conventional and strategic level, the issue of conventional arms needs to be dealt together with nuclear disarmament. Creating a conducive environment for nuclear disarmament will require assessing security dynamics in various regions and the prevailing conventional imbalances.

7. Pakistan remains concerned over the growing transfers of conventional armaments especially in volatile regions that are inconsistent with the imperatives of maintaining peace, security and stability. This has the potential of fuelling instability and jeopardizing the delicate regional balance. The situation is rendered more complex due to the presence of longstanding disputes and stalled political dialogue, which hinders the realization of the goal of durable peace in our region. Pakistan, for its part, is committed to the establishment of a strategic restraint regime in South Asia, which includes an element of conventional force balance.

8. United Nations should make use of all its available mechanisms i.e. good offices, mediation, facilitation and dialogue processes to play an active role in resolving regional and sub regional conflicts that actually fuel arms race between countries. Effective parallel use of conflict resolution mechanisms would give an important boost to fulfill the objectives of this resolution.