

STATEMENT BY MR. AMANDEEP SINGH GILL, COUNSELLOR, PERMANENT MISSION OF INDIA TO THE CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT, GENEVA, ON THE THEMATIC DISCUSSION ON THE UN DISARMAMENT MACHINERY, AT THE FIRST COMMITTEE OF THE 66TH UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON OCTOBER 21, 2011

Mr. Chairman,

The United Nations plays a central role in the sphere of disarmament in accordance with its Charter. The UN disarmament machinery is the mechanism by which we give expression and coherence to international efforts in the area of disarmament and international security.

2. At a moment when there is renewed interest in the issue of the revitalization of the disarmament machinery and the multilateral disarmament agenda, it is important to recall that this was one of the motivations that led to the First Special Session on Disarmament of the UN General Assembly. SSOD-I assigned the primary responsibility for disarmament to the UN. Its Final Document, adopted by consensus, established the current disarmament machinery comprising of a triad of the First Committee of the General Assembly, the UN Disarmament Commission and the Conference on Disarmament and set its objectives and agenda. Allow me to set out briefly India's views on these forums.

3. India recognizes the importance of and is committed to the work of the First Committee. The First Committee provides countries with diverse perspectives an opportunity to voice them and submit resolutions on issues of priority to them. A process of debate and consultations over the session's three parts - general debate, thematic debate and adoption of resolutions – helps the international community to sort through these different priorities. We are open to suggestions on improving housekeeping aspects and time management so that the quality of the dialogue at the First Committee can be raised. At the same time we wish to preserve the unique nature and strength of the First Committee as a global multilateral forum on disarmament and related international security issues.

4. We also attach importance to the UN Disarmament Commission as the universal deliberative forum for building consensus on disarmament and international security issues. It is the only universal forum that provides for in-depth consideration of specific disarmament issues. In our view the UNDC should play an essential role in bringing back coherence to the currently fragmented international disarmament agenda. The UNDC has made very significant contributions in the past, including important sets of guidelines and recommendations to the General Assembly on issues such as the Guidelines on Confidence Building Measures, on Verification and on International Arms

Transfers. We look forward active engagement by all countries in the next cycle of the Commission's work.

Mr. Chairman,

5. The Conference on Disarmament, recognized by SSOD-I as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, continues to have the mandate, the membership, the credibility and the rules of procedure to discharge its responsibility. Not so long ago, a multilateral, verifiable and non-discriminatory treaty eliminating an entire category of weapons of mass destruction – the Chemical Weapons Convention – was negotiated in the CD. We share the widespread disappointment on the continuing impasse in the CD. However, we do not believe that the current impasse stems from the forum per se or its rules of procedure. Since the CD's decisions impact on the national security of member states, it is logical that the CD remain a member state driven forum and conduct its work and adopt its decisions by consensus. The fault as the UNSG noted recently is not in the vehicle but in the driver. It is up to member states to make the CD work, by negotiating multilateral treaties that can be implemented universally. Proposals that question the viability or relevance of the CD or put forth unrealistic alternatives will not lead to productive outcomes in taking forward the agreed multilateral agenda with the participation of all relevant countries.

Mr. Chairman,

6. The UN Secretariat, in particular the ODA, has an important responsibility in assisting states in pursuing the multilateral disarmament agenda. It is also responsible for upholding the primary role of UN forums in disarmament. We believe that the ODA should be strengthened to facilitate the implementation of permanent treaty bodies under the UN such as the BWC and the CCW. We also need greater coherence between the work undertaken in New York and in Geneva. The UNIDIR too needs to be enabled fully with resources to realize its potential. It deserves greater support from the regular budget of the UN to be able to generate independent, in depth and long term research on disarmament issues. This task cannot be accomplished when the Institute is over-dependent on voluntary contributions and thus cannot devote human resources to priority issues on a sustainable basis. UN should also make greater efforts to promote disarmament and non-proliferation education. The recommendations of the 2002 UN study remain an indispensable guide in this respect.

Mr. Chairman,

7. We have noted the support expressed for the CD in the latest report of the Secretary General's Advisory Board on Disarmament matters, which devoted its 2011 sessions to the issue of revitalization of the CD and the taking forward of the multilateral disarmament agenda. We believe that this body should be more representative so that it can reflect the broadest range of perspectives. It should take

an inclusive and forward looking approach to global disarmament issues, rather than attempt to be a preparatory committee of one or another treaty. There is an impression that our failure in addressing substantive disarmament and international security issues is due to procedural flaws and inherent inefficiency in the disarmament machinery. While there is always scope for improvement, we need to be careful in not unraveling the forums that have been built over time with patience and foresight. In an interdependent world with complex security challenges, it is only inclusive multilateral processes that can balance the interests of important stake holders, identify win-win situations, and advance legally binding agreements that can be sustained over time and applied universally.

8. To conclude, we believe that the UN disarmament machinery cannot be assessed in isolation from the larger international security architecture and the need for reform in the United Nations. As my Prime Minister said in his plenary address to the General Assembly on 24 September:

“We need a stronger and more effective United Nations. We need a United Nations that is sensitive to the aspirations of everyone - rich or poor, big or small. For this the United Nations and its principal organs, the General Assembly and the Security Council, must be revitalized and reformed.”

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