

Statement by Ambassador Sujata Mehta, Permanent Representative of India to Conference on Disarmament, Geneva, on Thematic Debate on UN Disarmament Machinery at the First Committee of the 67th Session of the United Nations General Assembly on November 02, 2012

The thematic debate on UN disarmament machinery has assumed greater importance in recent years. This year in particular the disarmament machinery faces several challenges to its integrity. We believe that there is a need to recommit ourselves to the disarmament machinery set up by the Member States for the UN to discharge its central role and primary responsibility in the field of disarmament in accordance with the Charter.

Mr. Chairman, my delegation associates itself with the statement delivered by Indonesia on this subject on behalf of NAM.

The First Special Session on Disarmament, SSOD-I, created the present disarmament machinery comprising of the triad of First Committee of the General Assembly, UN Disarmament Commission and the Conference on Disarmament. This triad is the mechanism by which we give expression and coherence to international efforts in the area of disarmament and international security. At a moment when there is renewed interest in the issue of the revitalization of the disarmament machinery and multilateral disarmament agenda, it is also important to recall that this was one of the motivations that led to SSOD-I. Let me explain India's perspectives on various bodies of the UN disarmament machinery.

We recognize the importance of and are committed to the work of the First Committee which is the main deliberative organ of the disarmament machinery. The First Committee embodies our faith in the benefit of collective action and of multilateral approaches to disarmament and related international security issues. It provides countries with diverse perspectives an opportunity to voice them and submit resolutions on issues of priority to them. We are open to suggestions to strengthen the work of the First Committee including by rationalizing its agenda as well as improving housekeeping and time management.

The UN Disarmament Commission is the only universal forum that provides for in-depth consideration of disarmament issues and can help in building greater understanding and consensus on issues on the international disarmament agenda. The Commission has produced several important sets of guidelines and recommendations for the General Assembly in the past including guidelines on CBMs, verification and international arms transfers. However, in recent years, including this year, the Commission has had to struggle to achieve consensus even on the agenda for its three-yearly cycles. This despite the fact that the General Assembly has decided that nuclear disarmament should remain one of the agenda items for the Commission's meetings. We appreciate Peru's efforts as the Chair of this year's Commission meetings in ensuring consensus on the agenda for the next three years. We hope that all Member States would engage more seriously in the Commission to provide vitality

to its work.

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. We do not believe that the continuing impasse in the CD stems from the forum per se or its Rules of Procedure. There is no 'design flaw' as CD Secretary General Tokayev noted last week. On the contrary, the CD's Rules of Procedure provide the necessary assurance to Member States that their security interests are fully protected while they engage substantively with others in the CD on issues that have a bearing on vital national security interests. It is up to the Member States to make the CD work by negotiating multilateral treaties which can be signed, ratified and implemented universally. We believe that proposals which question the viability or relevance of the CD or even suggest unrealistic alternatives need to be viewed with utmost caution.

Mr. Chairman, The UN Secretariat, in particular the ODA, has an important responsibility in assisting States in pursuing the multilateral disarmament agenda. We believe that the ODA should be strengthened to facilitate the implementation of permanent treaty bodies under the UN such as the BWC and CCW. There is also a need to ensure greater coherence between disarmament work in New York and Geneva, including on small arms and light weapons.

There are two related bodies of the UN disarmament machinery to which we perhaps do not give as much attention as we should. These are UNIDIR and Secretary General's Advisory Board. Both these bodies find their origins in SSOD-I and in their own right play a role in shaping the multilateral disarmament agenda and discharging the important and impartial research function mentioned in SSOD-I. We believe that UNIDIR needs to be enabled fully with resources to realize its potential. The particular way in which UNIDIR was established gives us, Member States, a special responsibility in ensuring its viability. It deserves greater support from the regular budget of the UN so as to maintain its autonomy and impartiality and fulfill its role of providing in depth and long term research on disarmament issues. The Secretary General's Advisory Board should be made 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.

Mr. Chairman, in conclusion, I would also like to underline that the UN disarmament machinery cannot be looked at in isolation from the larger architecture of global governance. There is a need for revitalization and reform of the United Nations and its principal organs, the General Assembly and the Security Council, to bring them in line with contemporary realities. India would continue to work towards strengthening multilateralism and UN's role in accordance with its Charter.

Thank you.

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