

L.52 : Reducing Nuclear Danger.

Statement by Mr. Rakesh Sood, Permanent Representative, to the Conference on Disarmament, October 16, 2002.

Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour to introduce draft resolution entitled "Reducing Nuclear Danger" contained in Document No. 66 on Agenda Item A/C.1/57/L.52 sponsored by Bhutan, Cambodia, Cuba, Haiti, Jordan, Kenya, Lesotho, Libya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Marshall Islands, Mauritius, Namibia, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Sudan and Zambia..

With the end of the Cold War, there remains no justification for thousands of nuclear weapons to be maintained in a state of hair-trigger alert. The state of high alert of these nuclear weapons poses the risk of accidental launch in response to a false warning or wrong communication - and the hazard of their falling into the wrong hands. We must prevent the irreversible consequences of such a dangerous eventuality.

India took the initiative of introducing a resolution, "Reducing Nuclear Danger", in 1998. This resolution has, every year, received wide support in the UNGA. It has now an increased number of co-sponsors. The resolution, in its modest and practical approach, calls for (i) a review of nuclear doctrines and (ii) immediate steps to reduce the risk of unintentional or accidental use of nuclear weapons.

There may well be apprehensions among some of our colleagues about the complicated nature of the technicalities involved. However, India believes that these can be overcome if there is, at least, a political commitment to do so. Undoubtedly, the elimination of nuclear weapons under a non-discriminatory, multilaterally verifiable treaty would require laborious negotiations. But that should not deter us from taking interim steps to reduce the danger that these nuclear weapons pose - especially now that the global security scenario includes the grave threat from terrorist organizations.

The imperative and urgent need to reduce the serious risk associated with the unintentional or accidental or unauthorized use of nuclear weapons has been endorsed by the Member States of the Conference on Disarmament, Statesmen, Governments around the world and Non-governmental Organizations for years now.

In 1996, the Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons identified that the first step would be to take nuclear forces "off alert". A special statement was made by the Pugwash Foundation in this regard. Non-Governmental Organizations, environmentalists, scientists, lawyers and physicians have joined in making a call for removing the hair trigger alert of nuclear forces. The Tokyo Forum Report of 1999 recognised the importance of moving in the direction of reducing the alert status of nuclear forces.

In March 2000, the Secretary General, in his report to the Millennium Assembly proposed the convening of a major international conference that would help to identify ways of eliminating nuclear dangers in order to help focus attention on the risks posed by the hair-trigger alert of thousands of deployed nuclear weapons. The consensus declaration adopted at the UN Millennium Summit on September 8, 2000, also resolved to convene an international conference to identify ways of eliminating nuclear dangers.

The UN Secretary General's Report submitted in 2002, in pursuance of Resolution 56/24C of November 29, 2001 has indicated that Member States would be encouraged to continue their endeavours to create the conditions that would allow the emergence of an international consensus to hold an International Conference as proposed in the UN Millennium Declaration.

In the said Report, the Secretary General has enumerated the events and activities undertaken in the last year under the auspices of the United Nations, that would contribute to the implementation of the seven recommendations of the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters for reducing nuclear danger, contained in their report A/56/400.

The UN Secretary General has pledged that the United Nations would continue to fulfil its mandate in contributing to reducing nuclear danger through advocating nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, promotion of dialogue on proposals and new ideas in this context and support for disarmament and non-proliferation education and information.

Mr. Chairman, in view of the above, we also propose, in the Resolution, to request the Secretary General to intensify efforts and support initiatives that would contribute towards the full implementation of the seven recommendations identified in the report of the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters vide document A/56/400 and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its 58th Session. I would like to reiterate these recommendations:

- a) Promotion of a wide-ranging international dialogue on cooperative security;
- b) Preliminary political and technical measures in preparation for the possibility of convening, at the appropriate time, a major international conference that would help to identify ways of eliminating nuclear dangers;
- c) De-alerting of nuclear weapons;
- d) Review of nuclear doctrines
- e) Further reduction of tactical nuclear weapons as an integral part of the nuclear arms reduction and disarmament process;
- f) Enhancement of security at a global and a regional level by promoting increased transparency of all nuclear weapons programmes;
- g) Creation of a climate for implementing nuclear disarmament measures. Programmes of education and training on the dangers of nuclear weapons to foster an informed world public opinion that would be able to exercise a positive influence on the political will to eliminate nuclear weapons.

Mr. Chairman, the recommendations contained in the Resolution are pragmatic and feasible. It endeavours to achieve the support of all States necessary to ensure the safety and security of mankind in a world free from danger of accidental launch, false alarms and the

dangers of weapons deployed at hair-trigger alert. It is simple, and unencumbered by any reference to issues that may be contentious. We would urge you to extend all possible support for its implementation. Wide support for the Resolution will enable the First Committee to take another significant step towards reducing nuclear danger.

Thank you.

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