Mr. President,

My delegation congratulates you on your assumption of the Presidency of the Conference. You have assumed the Presidency at a momentous juncture, when we are resuming work in-person at the Conference amidst the Covid-19 pandemic.

2. Given Austria’s well-known commitment to multilateralism as well as to non-proliferation and disarmament and the depth of your diplomatic experience and skills, we are confident that your Presidency will make a substantial contribution to the work of the Conference. Let me assure my delegation’s fullest cooperation and support to you in steering our work.

3. In this context, we recognize the concerted efforts by the P6+2. My delegation also avails this opportunity to place on record our appreciation to Ambassador Sally Mansfield of Australia and her team for their contribution as President, during challenging circumstances of the Covid-19 pandemic. We welcome and support Australia’s proposal for a technical update to the CD’s Rules of Procedure, to make them gender-neutral.

4. We welcome Ambassador Federico Villegas of Argentina, Ambassador Lim Sang-Beom of the Republic of Korea and Ambassador Sabri Bachtobji of Tunisia as the newest members of our CD family.

5. India aligns itself with the statement delivered by the G-21.

6. India attaches high importance to the Conference on Disarmament as the world’s single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, as has been mandated by the final document of the SSOD-1 and reaffirmed in the UNGA Resolution 74/74. Today’s turbulent global security situation necessitates the Conference on Disarmament to act with responsibility and alacrity, towards discharging its core mandate of negotiating and concluding legally binding instruments.

Mr. President,

7. We are already midway through 2020. While we have not been able to achieve consensus on a Programme of Work till now, it should not deter us from that endeavour. We have missed the UNDC session this year. It is therefore even more important that CD demonstrates tangible progress. In this context, India supports a comprehensive and balanced Programme of Work that would enable the Conference to commence negotiations on all the core issues on its agenda.

8. India is committed to the goal of universal, non-discriminatory and verifiable nuclear disarmament. Without prejudice to the priority attached to
disarmament, India supports the immediate commencement of negotiations in the CD of an FMCT on the basis of CD/1299 and the mandate contained therein, which remains the most suitable basis for commencement of negotiations, as also endorsed by the GGE and HLEPG on FMCT.

9. India also supports the commencement of negotiations on a legally binding instrument for PAROS.

Mr. President,

10. India appreciates your efforts in resuming in-person plenaries at the CD with the possibility of remote participation. My delegation understands that, given the unprecedented challenges of the pandemic, priority lies in the health and well-being of all delegates and the UN Staff. At this juncture, while the CD resumes work with temporary working/technical arrangements, India would like to underline the necessity of upholding the CD's Rules of Procedure and its negotiating mandate.

Mr. President,

11. As rightly predicted, Pakistan has once again made an attempt to present baseless fabrications and resurrect some of the old and discredited ideas and proposals. This is not new as Pakistan has made it an obsession and a habit of abusing every single forum including the CD, the First Committee and the UN General Assembly. Fortunately, the world sees through its lies and deceit every time. Pakistan has lost its credibility as a member of the CD by repeatedly misusing it as a platform to resort to malicious propaganda.

12. Our position on these issues is well known and needs no reiteration. India’s security concerns are not confined to a region and, therefore, India has always approached these issues in a global context. Pakistan has also made a number of baseless and unsubstantiated allegations against India, including in relation to the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, which do not even deserve a response, as they pertain to matters internal to India. As a responsible State, India strictly abides by its obligations under international treaties and needs no lessons from a country which has no credibility, whatsoever. But what else can one expect from a country that uses terrorism as an instrument of its State policy and has distinguished itself as the greatest haven for international and national terrorists.

Mr. President,

13. It would have been better if this country had refrained from making comments on issues that are extraneous to the work of the Conference on Disarmament but old habits die hard. The CD is not the forum to address bilateral or regional issues as its mandate is to focus on agreements of global application. As India has made clear several times, India is opposed to consideration of regional security issues in the Conference on Disarmament.
14. India’s commitment to promoting and maintaining global peace and international security is widely recognized. As such I do not need to respond to the baseless remarks by Pakistan.

15. At a time, when we were looking forward to resume substantive work by this Conference, the statement by Pakistan can only be viewed as unhelpful.

16. This Conference would recall from its proceedings how this one country has served as the biggest roadblock by blocking the negotiations on FMCT on every occasion, including in 2009, when the Conference on Disarmament arrived at a consensus Programme of Work.

17. We once again urge the Pakistani delegation to avoid bringing up extraneous issues designed to create obstacles in the path of the Conference on Disarmament getting down to serious and substantive work. In fact, we would like to call upon this country to behave and act with responsibility. It must demonstrate that responsibility by working towards consensus on the CD’s Programme of Work that would allow the commencement of substantive work at an early date, including the negotiation of an FMCT in the Conference on Disarmament, rather than wasting our precious time on its machinations.

Mr. President,

18. Since I have already said, what I need to say, I will not take the floor again and spend any more time on this issue, out of respect for you, for our colleagues here and the work of the CD.

19. India is committed to multilateralism and supports efforts by the CD towards building mutual trust and understanding. We are ready to work with Member States for the fulfilment of the CD’s core mandate of negotiating legally binding instruments that would strengthen international peace and security.

Thank you.

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