

**Statement by Ambassador (Dr.) Pankaj Sharma,
Permanent Representative of India
to the Conference on Disarmament, Geneva
during Plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament
held on January 21, 2021**

**Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Members of the Secretariat,
Fellow Colleagues,**

At the outset, let me convey my delegation's best wishes for the New Year to all colleagues.

2. It is a great pleasure for India to see Belgium preside the Conference on Disarmament. India and Belgium enjoy excellent bilateral relations and have been working closely at various multilateral forums including the CD. We assure you of the full support of the Indian delegation in the discharge of your responsibilities. I would also like to place on record our sincere appreciation to your predecessor Ambassador Yuri Ambrazhevich of Belarus for the able manner in which he conducted the work of the Conference. I thank H.E. Dr. Tatiana Valovaya, Secretary General of the Conference on Disarmament, for her valuable remarks at the Conference earlier in the session.

3. I would like to welcome our new colleagues in the CD Ambassador Lazhar **Soualem** of Algeria, Ambassador Mustafizur **Rahman** of Bangladesh, Ambassador Yuri **Sterk** of Bulgaria, Ambassador Juan **Roman** of Cuba, Ambassador Salomon **Eheth** of Cameroon, Ambassador Grata **Werdaningtyas** of Indonesia, Ambassador **Myint Thu** of Myanmar, Ambassador C. A. **Chandraprema** of Sri Lanka, Ambassador Héctor **Rosales** of Venezuela as well as you Mr. President.

4. India associates itself with the statement made on behalf of the G-21.

Mr. President,

5. We commence the 2021 session of the Conference against the backdrop of an unprecedented year for humanity in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Multiple challenges to global peace and security and particularly to the disarmament architecture during recent times serve as a constant reminder of our responsibility to uphold the mandate of the Conference to negotiate legally binding instruments which, while addressing challenges to international security, will also safeguard vital national security interests.

6. India is committed to the goal of universal, non-discriminatory and verifiable nuclear disarmament and has called for complete elimination of nuclear weapons through a step-by-step process, as also outlined in our Working Paper on Nuclear Disarmament submitted to the CD in 2007 (CD/1816). India attaches high importance to the CD as the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum drawing its mandate from the consensus final document of SSOD-1 and reaffirmed most recently in UNGA resolution 75/83. India hopes for an early start of substantive work in the CD in keeping with its mandate as a negotiating forum. Without diminishing the priority, we attach to disarmament, India has supported 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 negotiations to commence as also endorsed by the GGE on FMCT and the High-Level Expert Preparatory Group on FMCT.

7. Despite considerable efforts in the past, the CD has not been able to snap out of its longstanding stalemate and has failed to adopt a Programme of Work by consensus for more than a decade now. It is important that we work together and preserve the effectiveness and credibility of the Conference to negotiate multilateral disarmament instruments, and lay to rest any scepticism about its efficacy.

8. Effective multilateralism is the need of the hour and requires participation by all interested States. Thus, it becomes important that no State is denied the opportunity to participate in the work of the

Conference. It is provided for in the Rules of the Procedure itself and denying such an opportunity has the potential to undermine the collective spirit of working together to achieve our shared objectives.

Mr. President,

9. Paragraph 28 of the CD's Rules of Procedure calls upon the Conference, on the basis of its agenda and at the beginning of its annual session, to establish a programme of work. We appreciate the early start given by you Mr. President, through the circulation of the Draft Programme of Work for the CD's 2021 session and commend your efforts in holding extensive consultations with Member States in this regard. We will share our views on the draft Programme of Work during the upcoming plenary session.

10. The new year brings new possibilities and renewed opportunities to work together and bridge our divergences. We are confident that under your expert leadership and guidance, the CD will achieve a consensus on a Programme of Work for this year. India stands ready to support your endeavour as well as those by the subsequent Presidencies during the year.

Thank you, Mr. President.
