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**Statement by Ambassador Khalil Hashmi, Permanent Representative of
Pakistan, at the Plenary Meeting of the Conference on Disarmament, Geneva**

20 May 2021

Mr. President,

Thank you for convening this plenary meeting. We also thank the panellists for their presentations.

We commend you for framing the topic of fissile materials in a correct, objective and balanced manner. We are at a loss to understand the discomfort of one delegation to description of a treaty that would not grant exemption to hundreds of tonnes of weapons-grade fissile material stocks.

This sense of unease on an accurate characterization can only be explained by the desire of those seeking to perpetuate asymmetries at the regional level.

We align ourselves with the statement made by Iraq on behalf of G-21.

Mr. President,

As we continue our discussions on item 2 of the CD's agenda which is "Prevention of a nuclear war, including all related matters", I would like to start from where we left the discussion two days ago.

This agenda, as we said before, is organically linked to the larger goal of nuclear disarmament, which is to prevent a nuclear war.

Mr. President,

My delegation, as have others, highlighted the context within which nuclear disarmament must happen and to which the CD cannot be oblivious.

Today, we have heard yet again laments over the CD's deadlock, attributing it solely to lack of negotiations on a fissile material production ban instrument.

The CD's inability to fulfil its *raison d'être* i.e. negotiating a nuclear disarmament treaty predates proposals on fissile materials in this body. And this impasse continues even today not because of FMCT but because of other reason and I would draw attention to them subsequently.

Attempts to frame the CD's work to a non-proliferation measure i.e. prohibiting the production of fissile material are self-serving.

We have also heard today the mantra that FMCT alone is ripe for negotiations and that it alone can unlock the deadlock in the CD. The high priests of FMCT have also argued that the CD should proceed with purely a non-proliferation centric FMCT and its nuclear disarmament aspects can be "discussed" or "raised" during the negotiations.

Mr. President,

These assertions are neither new nor surprising. They are decades old ploys to deflect attention from scrutiny over non-compliance with nuclear disarmament obligations. They are also a smokescreen to repeated blocking of nuclear disarmament negotiations in this very body.

The insistence on a single topic negotiation is inconsistent both with historical facts and are an attempt to ignore the contemporary global and regional strategic environment as well as its drivers.

This arbitrary obsession with FMCT ripeness can hardly stand the test of any objective criteria. The 120-member Non-Aligned Movement has for decades insisted on nuclear disarmament negotiations as a global priority.

The litmus test for those who argue discussing fissile materials stocks during negotiations is to express their readiness to join a fissile material treaty that would conform to the majority and long-standing demand for nuclear disarmament.

Mr. President,

Let me briefly touch on the drivers that heighten risks of a nuclear war, either by accident, or miscalculation or perhaps even by choice.

In the past 25 years, the global strategic landscape has undergone a major transformation with ripple effects at regional levels as well.

Apart from non-fulfilment of legal obligations to eliminate nuclear armaments, some have pursued policies of hegemony and domination. Many of the powerful states have undermined long-standing international rules and norms, including in the nuclear domain.

These approaches have been accompanied by strategies to refine and modernize nuclear weaponry and the multiple means to deliver them. Development and deployment of ballistic missile defence systems has gathered pace. The outer space has been increasingly militarized. Not only the number of conventional weapons has grown but their sophistication has reached new levels. There is a palpable integration between the existing and emerging weapons through Artificial Intelligence capabilities.

The cumulative effect of these drivers does not remain confined to global level. They have direct impact and implications for regions, especially those mired in disputes and resulting tensions.

Seen in the backdrop of this strategic environment and its drivers, the growing geopolitical competition, the eroding trust and confidence, it has to be said the CD's agenda and its priorities require a fundamental rethink.

The CD can no longer afford to be held hostage to a single topic. It must revert to its *raison d'être*, be responsive to the pressing global and regional challenges and the rapid advancements in military technologies, platforms and tools.

The CD can no longer afford to dignify lip service by some to FMCT to mask unsafeguarded fissile material acquisition and its stocks. Neither can this body be convinced by pretensions of those who enjoy nuclear umbrella and extended deterrence, while lending legitimacy to a flawed FMCT modelled entirely on non-proliferation measures.

Mr. President,

It is in this larger context that the messianic zeal for banning the future production of fissile material alone has to be discarded. The earlier the better.

In a hypothetical scenario, were such a so called FMCT be in effect, it would have in no manner limited the ability of a state possessing nuclear weapons to increase its nuclear arsenal, as has happened.

Similarly, declarations of unilateral moratoria of fissile material production are hardly a virtue, as its proponents claim. It is merely an indicator that such states have acquired fissile material far in excess of their legitimate defence needs. It is neither verifiable nor irreversible.

If all states supporting a so called FMCT are ready for such a moratorium, they should seriously consider transforming these declarations into a legal instrument to demonstrate their commitment to nuclear disarmament.

As for stocks, two and a half decades ago, a fudging was allowed to let the CD adopt a mandate with the hope of genuine progress on nuclear disarmament. Subsequent discussions, however, made it plain that some states remained singularly fixated on ensuring that stocks are not covered under the treaty, so as to preserve their respective strategic advantages and perpetuation of the status quo. It explains their insistence on retaining a mandate that has far outlived its utility.

Time has passed for such ambiguity and fudging. Past lessons and contemporary realities necessitate that our new mandate includes explicit and upfront treatment of fissile material stocks.

Mr. President,

Pakistan is not opposed to a treaty on fissile material per se; rather, we are against a treaty that only results in a cut-off in the future production of fissile materials only. Pakistan's consistent position on a Fissile Material Treaty, or FMT, is well known and remains unchanged. It is based on the following overarching principles:

First, the treaty should provide equal and undiminished security for all States. As recognized by SSOD-I, in the adoption of disarmament measures, the right of each state to security should be kept in mind, and at each stage of the disarmament process, the objective should be undiminished security at the lowest possible level of armaments and military forces.

Second, the treaty should contribute both to the objectives of nuclear disarmament as well as non-proliferation.

Third, in addition to a ban on future production, the treaty must also cover the past production of fissile materials, in order to address the asymmetries in fissile material holdings at the regional and global levels.

Fourth, the treaty should neither discriminate between the different nuclear-weapon states, nor between the nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear weapon states. All States Parties should assume equal obligations without any preferential treatment for any category of States.

Fifth, the treaty should be free of any loopholes by encompassing all types of fissile materials usable in nuclear weapons including their transfers.

Sixth, the treaty should include a robust verification mechanism implemented by a representative and independent body under adequate oversight of States parties.

Seventh, the treaty should promote both regional and global stability and enhance confidence among all States Parties.

Eighth, the treaty should not affect the inalienable right of all States to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes under effective safeguards preventing diversion to prohibited purposes.

Lastly, the treaty should be negotiated in the Conference on Disarmament, the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum. The CD includes all the relevant stakeholders and strictly operates under the consensus rule allowing each Member State to safeguard its vital interests. A treaty negotiated outside the CD will lack legitimacy and ownership, similar to the pseudo progress sought through UNGA-led divisive processes like GGEs and High Level Expert Groups.

Mr. President,

In 2015, Pakistan submitted a working paper to the CD (CD/2036) which included a proposal for dealing with the existing stocks of fissile material. It offers a viable and comprehensive option. The practicality of our proposal posed a challenge to those who have a dogmatic opposition to the inclusion of existing stocks.

Particularly discomfited are those that have stockpiled vast amounts of unsafeguarded fissile material under the garb of civilian uses. Such hedging is also done by those who have ostensibly announced upper ceilings for their nuclear arsenals, but continue to hold on to hundreds of tons of fissile material far in excess of their self-declared needs. Our proposal urges these states to, first, account for all their fissile material production; second, accurately characterize all their fissile material stocks; and third, preclude the possibility of their use in nuclear weapons by safeguarding them under a verification regime.

Our proposal ensures that, in addition to a ban on future production, the existing fissile material stocks would not be used for manufacturing nuclear weapons. It also calls for mutual and balanced reduction of stocks on a regional or global basis to address their existing asymmetries. Such a treaty would genuinely promote nuclear disarmament, arrest vertical proliferation, and contribute to regional and global security and stability.

Mr. President,

It is high time to realize that progress on fissile material can neither be achieved by changing the format or forum, nor through creative drafting, fudging

or imposition of so-called solutions that ignore the views of major stakeholders. Real progress can only be achieved by addressing the security concerns of all states.

We also need to reconsider the negative effects on any future treaty's prospects generated by misguided policies, based on discrimination and double standards, driven by strategic and commercial considerations. The entire issue needs to be viewed in the broader security and strategic context.

And lastly, **Mr. President**, we have noted with concern that diversity of views and representation remains amiss in the panellists that are invited to the thematic discussions.

While views shared by the panellists were useful and valuable from their vantage point, they were not necessarily sufficient. Other perspectives would have added further value and presented a broader picture on the relevant topics.

We would therefore urge that in future, adequate geographical representation and perspectives are taken into account in the selection of panellists.

Mr. President, I thank you.