



**Inaugural Statement to the Conference on Disarmament by
Ambassador Stuart Comberbach, Permanent Representative of
the Republic of Zimbabwe to the United Nations Office in Geneva**

Mr President

Excellencies

Allow me to first of all congratulate you, Mr President and Dear Colleague on your assumption of the Presidency of the Conference on Disarmament; and to assure you of my Delegation's full support and cooperation during the execution of your mandate.

This is the first time I am addressing the Conference on Disarmament since taking up my assignment as Permanent Representative of Zimbabwe to the United Nations and other international organisations in Geneva. It gives me much pleasure to join the very distinguished community of Permanent Representatives accredited to the CD. I wish to thank you, Mr President, for your warm words of welcome : thanks which I also extend to all other Colleagues.

Mr President,

The Conference on Disarmament has played a critical role in the negotiation and conclusion of key arms control agreements in the past : the last of which - the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty - was successfully negotiated and concluded over two decades ago.

Zimbabwe shares the sense of disappointment that we have not been able to achieve much since 1996 when the CTBT was adopted by the UN General Assembly.

In the interim, the weapons landscape has become increasingly complicated, with nuclear weapons and the means of delivering them becoming much more sophisticated - further threatening humanity and life as we know it.

Mr President,

Zimbabwe stands for the total elimination of nuclear weapons as the only absolute guarantee against the use, or threat of use thereof. We also call for the conclusion of a universal, unconditional and legally-binding instrument to effectively assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use, or threat of use of such weapons, pending the achievement of the total elimination objective.

Let me reiterate, however, that any eventual provision of negative security-assurance to non-nuclear weapon States might only offer a false sense of security because it is only by way of the total elimination of nuclear weapons that any such assurance or guarantee can be fully honoured or upheld.

We therefore reiterate our call on nuclear-weapon States to engage in serious, good-faith negotiations aimed at the reduction, elimination and, ultimately, the banning of all such weapons.

Mr President,

During the 2019 Session, my predecessor submitted an ambitious proposal aimed at facilitating some continuity in the work of the Conference. That proposal - for a multi-year Programme of Work - whereby an agreed PoW could or would be rolled-over to future Sessions of the Conference - reflected the frustration I believe we all feel with the individual CD Presidency's limited 4-week time horizon.

We listened carefully and were encouraged by comments and other ideas emerging from the proposal during what we viewed as a constructive debate among Colleagues genuinely looking for a practical way forward.

Mr President,

We believe that we must collectively take the necessary steps to address what could be termed institutional drift or mandate creep now affecting the CD, and to try to bring the Conference back on track from being the deliberative forum - which it currently is - to the negotiating forum which it is intended to be.

This will require political will and greater understanding on all sides - specifically to avoid further polarisation and politicisation of issues, and a deliberate, concerted commitment, by all, to restore confidence in and the credibility of this crucially important Institution.

I Thank You

Geneva

11 June 2021