**Statement by Ambassador Pankaj Sharma, Permanent Representative of India to the Conference on Disarmament, Geneva during the Plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament held on January 24, 2022**

Mr. President,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Members of the Secretariat,

Fellow Colleagues,

Let me start by conveying my delegation’s best wishes for the New Year to all colleagues.

Mr. President,

2. India congratulates the People’s Republic of China and you, Ambassador Li Song, on assuming the first Presidency of this year. We assure you of the full support and cooperation of the Indian delegation, as you guide our work. I would also like to place on record our sincere appreciation to your predecessor, Ambassador Frank Tressler of Chile, for his having ably steered the work of the CD as the last President of 2021 and facilitating successful adoption of the Annual Report of the CD as well as the relevant Resolution in the UNGA. We thank Dr. Tatiana Valovaya, Secretary General of the CD for her statement at the last Plenary Session of the Conference. I also take this opportunity to welcome our new colleagues to the CD family, including Ambassador Dusan Matulay of Slovakia, Ambassador Febrian Ruddyard of Indonesia and Ambassador Chuquihira Chil of Peru.

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

Mr. President,

4.  We had hoped that after the severe difficulties being faced by the world for the last two years due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, 2022 will offer a new beginning. However, with yet another new variant of the Corona virus, our hopes have been belied once again, hampering our ability for full and effective participation in various multilateral forums. Similarly, the international community also continues to face strong challenges to global peace and security. The events around us raise more questions than provide answers. However, one fact that clearly stands out in all this is, that we need an effective and functioning Conference on Disarmament, more than ever; a Conference that is able to fully discharge its mandate to negotiate legally binding instruments.

Mr. President,

5.  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 76/62. 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 n FMCT and the High-Level Expert Preparatory Group on FMCT.

6. India has welcomed the joint statement by the P5 leaders, which reaffirms the importance of addressing nuclear threats and underscores the desire to work towards creating a security environment more conducive to progress on disarmament with the ultimate goal of a world without nuclear weapons with undiminished security for all.

7. As a responsible nuclear weapon state, India has a doctrine of maintaining a credible minimum deterrence based on a No First Use posture and non-use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon states.

8. India’s annual resolution at the UNGA on ‘Reducing Nuclear Danger’ calls for steps to reduce the risk of unintentional or accidental use of nuclear weapons, including through de-alerting and de-targeting of nuclear weapons. Our annual resolution on a ‘Convention on the Prohibition of the Use of Nuclear Weapons’ seeks the commencement of negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament of an International Convention prohibiting the use, or threat of use of nuclear weapons under any circumstances. Both resolutions are adopted with substantive support at the UNGA.

9. India will continue to contribute further to the global nuclear disarmament agenda.

Mr. President,

10. Despite considerable efforts in the past, the CD has not been able to adopt a Programme of Work by consensus since May 2009. The Conference agreed to work in the format of Subsidiary Bodies in 2018, however even that has not been possible for the last three years.

11. Paragraph 28 of the CD’s Rules of Procedure requires the Conference, on the basis of its agenda and at the beginning of its annual session, to establish a programme of work.  In this context, we appreciate your efforts in holding extensive consultations with Member States including that with the Indian delegation. We look forward to receiving the draft Programme of Work during the upcoming plenary session.

12. We are hopeful that under your leadership and guidance, the CD will achieve a consensus on a Programme of Work for this year. You may count on the support of my delegation in this endeavour.

Thank you, Mr. President.