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STATEMENT BY THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF ZIMBABWE  
PLENARY SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT –  
GENEVA 3 JANUARY 2022

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Thank you Mr President

Allow me to first of all extend warm congratulations to you on your assumption of the CD Presidency; to wish you every success and to assure you of the full support and cooperation of my delegation as you navigate the CD ship in what are increasingly turbulent waters.

We meet against the backdrop of a seriously deteriorating global security situation. one which is, or should be of very great concern to all of us; and one which really should focus our minds on the critical relevance of this Forum and the urgent need for us to find a way to bring it back to life; to allow it to focus on live issues - including new or emerging security issues which, as State Councillor Wang Yi so correctly said, in his Message of 25 January, are now deeply intertwined with what we might term the more traditional challenges to global security.

We need to find a way to migrate back to our treaty-negotiating mandate. We need to find the political will to begin that migration.

Whilst my delegation, like many others, was disappointed that the 10<sup>th</sup> Nuclear Weapons Non Proliferation Treaty Review Conference was, once again, postponed, we nevertheless welcomed the January 3<sup>rd</sup> Joint Statement issued by the P5, on the prevention of nuclear war and the need to avoid arms races.

This joint-effort sends a powerful and timely message to all of us here, that there is much work to do and, that it is incumbent upon us to find

or to re-generate the will which delivered the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty, the Chemical Weapons Convention and other disarmament instruments.

Over the past two decades or so, whilst the CD has basically marked-time, new technologies, new weapons-systems - some with obvious nuclear capability or application - and new delivery-systems, have been developed and deployed.

The possibility of so-called “dirty-bombs”, of nuclear know-how falling into the hands of extremists of various persuasions, remains real.

Along with many other parts of the world, the past decade or so has seen an alarming rise of such extremism on the African continent - further compounding the already significant developmental challenges posed by climate-change and, of course, the devastating socio-economic impact of the pandemic.

Whilst we should all be pulling together to address such global challenges, the fact is that we remain far apart : divisions rooted in long-held suspicions and entrenched positions.

You were very correct in the opening statement of your Presidency when you cited ‘lack of trust and confidence’ between and among member states as the underlying cause of our inability to move; and when you spoke of the growing politicisation of the CD which, in turn, has led to polarisation and an increasingly pronounced ‘them and us’ situation : often reflected in both the content and tone of debates in this chamber.

Of course, we are all equal here. The reality, of course, is that Zimbabwe has a very small voice within the CD. But we are determined to play a constructive, positive role in support of our own vision of a nuclear-free world, and the total elimination of all nuclear weapons : the only really cast-iron guarantee against their use.

Mr President, we are therefore, very willing to work with you in full support of your efforts to rebuild levels of trust and confidence which, as we know, have been severely eroded over the past two decades.

Obviously, the key to making progress, will be for there to be some form of agreement on a Programme of Work - to take us forward.

During our own Presidency of the CD, in 2019, we supported the concept of a multi-year Programme of Work - to promote continuity across Sessions and to avoid the annual tussle with detailed procedural issues.

Many speakers before me have referred to important areas of concern and challenges which require our attention - including the need to address the production of fissile material; the need to prevent an arms-race in space; and, of signal importance to my delegation, the need for binding negative security assurances;

We are hopeful that, under your leadership, and with some flexibility from Member States, we may be able to avoid becoming bogged-down in procedural detail and to move beyond thematic debates towards more substantive work : more in line with our mandate.

If we cannot reach agreement on a Programme of Work and if consensus on the Subsidiary Bodies format remains elusive , then, clearly, a return to thematic discussions is an option - but, in our view, it is our least best option.

My delegation has no objection to an address by the CTBTO Executive Secretary. Indeed there is precedence for this and we look forward to welcoming Dr Floyd.

On the question of applications by Observers, my delegation believes that the CD should be as inclusive as possible. In this regard, we welcome the very constructive start to our work this morning, and commend you, Mr President, for the efforts you have made to lead us in this positive direction.

Mr President,

Let me conclude my remarks by once again congratulating you and wishing you every success with your Presidency of the CD in this Year of the Tiger.

I Thank You.