



**Statement at the Thematic Debate on Agenda Item 1
on Cessation of the Nuclear Arms Race and Nuclear Disarmament
11 May 2021**

Mr. President,

Since this is the first time my delegation takes the floor during your presidency, the delegation of Sri Lanka extends greetings and convey sincere good wishes for every success. The delegation of Sri Lanka assures you of its fullest support and cooperation. Our thanks are extended to the distinguished panelists for their contribution to this discussion

While we regret that the Conference fails yet again to reach consensus on a programme of work due to apparent lack of political will, we consider this thematic debate an important opportunity to reiterate our principled position on agenda item 1 on cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament. This agenda item is of particular significance given the importance of the upcoming NPT review conference.

Mr. President,

Nuclear Disarmament remains our highest priority within the work of the CD. As acknowledged by all CD member states including those who possess nuclear weapons, nuclear armament is a direct and constant threat to the very survival of humanity. The danger is real and unimaginable. Perhaps it is important to recall the first paragraph of the SSOD I adopted by consensus in 1978 which provides, I quote

“... the accumulation of weapons, particularly nuclear weapons, today constitutes much more a threat than a protection for the future of mankind. The time has therefore come to put an end to this situation, to abandon the use of force in international relations and to seek security in disarmament, that is to say, through a gradual but effective process beginning with a reduction in the present level of armaments.”

Mr. President, these words declared back in 1978, unfortunately has a continuing direct relevance to all member states sitting in this august body today, in 2021. In our view, the main focus of this debate therefore should be on the implementation of the already agreed disarmament commitments under the NPT regime including pursuance of effective measures through effective verification means in relation to Art. VI of the NPT.

While we do acknowledge the legitimate security concerns of all states and the need to address them in a transparent and comprehensive manner, expansion of existing nuclear arsenals is an approach that raises clear questions of credibility, particularly under the

NPT regime. Nuclear deterrence is used as a justification to legitimize the continuing existence of nuclear weapons, by some states. It is evident that nuclear deterrence does not reduce the risk of accidents, the weapon falling into hands of terrorists and the definite mass destruction of its use. The absence of detonation as evidenced by history is mostly due to sheer luck.

We consider that total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only guarantee against their use or threat of use and that an irreversible, transparent and credible verification regime is an important cornerstone of the disarmament architecture. However, disarmament verification shouldn't be an end in itself. It is important that NWS and NNWS work together to develop shared understanding on irreversible multilateral nuclear disarmament. We are pleased to note the extension of the NEW START between the United States and the Russian Federation and notice positive developments on bilateral disarmament negotiations. Sri Lanka encourages Nuclear Weapon States to engage in genuine dialogue among each other with a view to disarm their nuclear weapons as early as possible based on irreversible, verifiable and transparent verification mechanisms.

We urge all responsible member states not to reverse the hard earned achievements on disarmament and non-proliferation of the past. We simply have no time to waste. Sri Lanka stands ready contribute to all efforts on disarmament and nonproliferation within the work of the CD through a balanced and comprehensive programme of work.

Thank you!