

**Statement by Ambassador A.L.A. Azeez, Permanent Representative
of Sri Lanka at the Plenary Session of the Conference on
Disarmament – 19.02.2019**

Mr. President,

On behalf of the delegation of Sri Lanka, let me express our sincere best wishes to you, Ambassador Aidan Liddle, on your assumption of the Presidency of the CD today.

We would like to assure you, and through you, other delegations present here, that Sri Lanka remains ready and willing to support all efforts towards generating and achieving consensus within the CD. We need to seriously attempt at negotiating a Programme of Work, and find a way forward that could facilitate, or create momentum, for work on all core issues.

I take this opportunity to thank Ambassador Yurii Klymenko, for the relentless efforts he had made as the first President of the CD for this year. We could have collectively done more, building upon the positive momentum of the consensual outcome achieved last year, but we have a second chance under your leadership, to evolve consensus only if we are forward-looking enough.

Mr. President,

Almost all delegations which addressed the CD in the past 4 weeks have highlighted the urgency and importance of making progress in negotiating a Programme of Work and in getting down to actual task, addressing the challenges that lie ahead; challenges- some of which have persisted for far too long, and some new and emerging. We cannot afford to continue with a divisive approach any longer.

It is important that CD should be representative enough of the whole range of views and perspectives that are out there, on critical issues in the disarmament and non-proliferation arena.

In this context, we need to have a clear focus and pronounced emphasis on two important aspects as enablers of fresh thinking and initiative:

First, there is an acute need for education and training in disarmament and non-proliferation to help address substantive aspects including new and emerging issues. The lack of opportunity or exposure in the form of training may only contribute to the perpetuation of the current impasse. India, for instance, has showed the way forward, by hosting the first Annual Disarmament Fellowship recently. Others may follow suit by providing opportunities to countries in need.

Second, a gender perspective, fully integrated into disarmament and non-proliferation discourses, is all the more important.

These two factors, we believe, could help advance a fully informed, well-represented, result-oriented negotiation on most critical issues.

Rules of Procedure should aid, not prevent, deliberations on substantive issues. Deliberations on the other hand, should aid negotiation since the CD is the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum.

Having said this, let me take this opportunity to urge to all delegations to take a hard look at the challenges that lie ahead, and to consider taking a constructive approach to address such challenges, through seriously negotiating a Programme of Work as early as possible. We would like to once again assure you, Mr. President, that Sri Lanka would work closely with you and other delegations to see if we could together help break the continuing impasse that has marked the CD for long years now.

We wish you well, Mr. President.