

Statement delivered at the Plenary Session of the Conference on Disarmament (CD) – 15.05.2018

Madam President, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates

Today is the first occasion I take the floor in the Conference on Disarmament. I am pleased to do so as you preside over this Plenary. I thank the Permanent Representatives of Sweden and Switzerland for giving leadership to the CD at this most crucial time, followed by Sri Lanka early this year.

I do not need to labour the point that the CD is the single negotiating forum for multilateral instruments on disarmament, established by the UN General Assembly pursuant to the First Special Session on Disarmament (SSOD). Negotiations, by their very nature, involve addressing challenging issues, exchange of perspectives, and understanding. The essential task of that process remains as one of endeavouring to achieve consensus outcomes. The eventual goal of general and complete disarmament underpins the fulfilment of that task.

With regard to the state of progress in the work of the Conference on Disarmament over the past 20 years, I wonder whether anything significant had happened in the CD during this long period, that we could consider a positive development in the area of disarmament. The two decades of inaction and prevarication have created a generation gap. While the CD should have endeavoured enough to progress in the area of arms control and disarmament, there is a resultant loss of a generation of experts and professionals in many countries, who could understand and address disarmament related issues. The gap in disarmament education and fellowship is all too glaring, and if continued, could only perpetuate the already uneven security landscape that has resulted from the lack of progress in the disarmament.

Against this backdrop, we consider it an important consolation that the CD adopted Decision 2119 in February this year. This Decision, complemented by Decision 2126, has led to the establishment of five Subsidiary Bodies to work on specific areas of interest to all members of the CD as well as the disarmament community. We need to ensure that the momentum continues, and that we should move forward expeditiously with substantive discussions.

It is satisfying to note that the Subsidiary Bodies would be convening their sessions shortly, and that delegations would be addressing different

aspects within the purview of each theme assigned to the Subsidiary Bodies, comprehensively.

I take this opportunity to assure all delegations that are present here, that in the coming weeks, Sri Lanka would remain engaged in this process actively. We need to build consensus even as we maintain differences in individual approaches. What is at stake is the collective security of all humanity.

Ensuring “no one is left behind” is the universal vision underpinning the pursuit of UN Development Agenda and SDGs. We should endeavour to achieve it in the context of development. Any prospect of arms race, proliferation and further armament, on the other hand, would seek the same outcome, ironically in a perverse manner. We should strive collectively to avoid such a prospect.

I thank you, Madam President.