

Conference on Disarmament – 27 January 2026

Statement by Her Excellency Himalee Arunatilaka, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka to the United Nations in Geneva

Madam President,
Madam Secretary-General
Excellencies, Distinguished Colleagues

It is with deep honour, respect and gratitude that I take the floor today for the last time in my capacity as the Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka to the United Nations in Geneva, and to the Conference on Disarmament. I will be concluding my tenure and returning to Sri Lanka in a few days on the conclusion of my tenure in Geneva.

It is a privilege and an honor to have H.E. Madam Tatiana Valovaya, Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, present at my final meeting today.

Allow me to record my sincere appreciation to the Secretary-General and the entire Secretariat for their steadfast support and cooperation with all delegations, including with Sri Lanka.

I take this opportunity to also extend my warmest congratulations to Her Excellency Davaasuren Gerelmaa, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Mongolia, on assuming the first Presidency for 2026 of this prestigious body. I wish her strength and success to lay the foundation for this year's work in the CD.

Similarly, I extend my best wishes to the subsequent presidents of the CD this year to carry forward the collective expectations of the international community to realize disarmament goals within this august body.

I would like to convey my appreciation to Her Excellency Francesca Elizabeth Escobar, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Mexico for her leadership

as the last President of the CD in 2025 in the adoption of the report and the General Assembly Resolution.

I would like to warmly welcome the Permanent Representatives of India, Bangladesh, Austria, Indonesia, Iraq and Kazakhstan, who have joined us recently. I believe that they will bring fresh thinking and energy to this room, and I wish them every success as they contribute to this indispensable forum contributing to global peace and security.

Madam President,

We are living in a period of increasing geo-political and geo-economic tension leading to an extremely fragile global security landscape. This situation calls for strong and courageous diplomacy to reinforce international cooperation and multilateral engagement which has become even more indispensable today. As we heard at the World Economic Forum in Davos last week, the rules-based order is fading. If we are to bring global peace and stability, we **must** recommit dialogue and mutual respect, **and** respect for the UN Charter. In this regard, this august body which has the mandate for negotiating multilateral disarmament must do its part, and we firmly believe that inclusive dialogue, building trust and transparency are essential to overcome the current challenges.

Madam President,

As a nation that championed the First Special Session on Disarmament (SSOD-1) in 1978 and strong supporter of the creation of this Conference, Sri Lanka holds the CD close to its heart and has played a constructive and principled role in advancing global disarmament over the years. Sri Lanka has been a proud partner and supporter of many key initiatives including global nuclear disarmament, establishment of nuclear weapons free zones and prevention of arms race in outer space. In the modern days of disarmament architecture, Sri Lanka has been contributing to the discussions on autonomous weapons systems.

Among several key initiatives within this body, I am proud to recall that the decision to establish subsidiary bodies to resume substantive work of CD was first adopted under Sri Lanka's Presidency of the CD in 2018.

Looking ahead, I see that the year 2026 brings together several major Disarmament milestones including the 11th Review Conference of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT). I call upon all my distinguished colleagues to work with renewed hope, flexibility and mutual respect to bring the desired outcome through the CD as well as other disarmament fora for the ultimate benefit of humanity.

As we are at a very fragile stage in the global security environment, the relevance of the CD must not be questioned but reaffirmed as a forum to rebuild trust and confidence among nations.

Madam President,

I leave Geneva with enduring faith in the mandate of the CD as well as confidence in the collective wisdom and contribution of my distinguished colleagues. It is my sincere hope that the Conference on Disarmament will continue to uphold its mandate and contribute meaningfully to ensuring a more stable and safer world for all.

I thank you, Madam President, and all my colleagues for the support, friendship, and cooperation extended to me and my delegation throughout my tenure.

Thank you