



**Open - Ended Working Group (OEWG) on Taking Forward Multilateral
Nuclear Disarmament Negotiations
Third Session - August 2016
Agenda Item 06 - Report to the General Assembly at its seventy-first
Session
Statement by Sri Lanka**

Mr. Chairman,

Thank you for circulating the revised draft of the report. Let me also take this opportunity to commend your stewardship demonstrated in building this draft, notwithstanding the difficult task of reconciling divergent viewpoints.

On a **general note** Mr. Chairman,

As already expressed by many States, Sri Lanka is also of the view that, over the years, the nuclear disarmament pillar of the Non - Proliferation Treaty (NPT) has been consistently overlooked. The Art VI of the treaty establishes obligation on Parties to the treaty to pursue negotiations on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control, the obligation which was further reaffirmed by the 1996 ICJ Advisory Opinion.

With 191 State Parties, the NPT has largely fulfilled the non - proliferation objective of the treaty. Nevertheless, it is regrettable to note that, nearly after a half a century (46 years), we are yet to see progress on the commitment towards the nuclear disarmament pillar of the treaty. This raises the question as to whether the NPT is merely meant to be a non - proliferation treaty only.

Thus, we consider that the mandate of this Group is an opportunity for us, to come up with concrete steps, on multilateral nuclear disarmament and to make forward-looking recommendations to the GA for appropriate early action. In doing so, we need to be mindful of the fact that we are here to deliberate on measures to 'Take forward' nuclear disarmament, and not just to 're-establish' the already existing commitments, thereby maintaining the status-quo. Sri Lanka also believes that the work of the OEWG could further strengthen our collective obligation towards the full implementation of the NPT.

Turning to the **content of the report** Mr. Chairman,

My delegation is of the view that the narrative part of the report accurately reflects the deliberations we had in February and May sessions. While minor

drafting changes could be considered in order to improve the text, Sri Lanka is not in favour of re-opening the entire discussion we had in the previous two sessions.

Mr. Chairman,

The current report will have comparatively greater importance than the 2013 and 2014 reports of the OEWGs, given its content in section V on conclusions and agreed recommendations. Therefore, in line with the large majority of States, Sri Lanka attaches greater interest in crafting its language to reach consensus on a forward-looking recommendations to the GA. While the narrative part of the report could contribute for future negotiations, the recommendations will be the seed for operationalizing the core of the GA resolution 70/33, to take forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations.

Mr. Chairman, we also observed the debate on criteria applied in describing various view points in the report. While this is not a debate which we observe very often during a multilateral negotiation, Sri Lanka believes that the view of the majority, in support of the content of the report is apparent, as expressed through statements and working papers submitted during the last two sessions. In fact, this support was further affirmed yesterday by the number of Group Statements delivered. However, if some delegations have concerns on the qualification of 'majority support' and wishes to have a numerical verification in this regard, we note Mr. Chairman, that the rules of procedure of this OEWG does not preclude it. However, in the interest of consensus building, we would not advocate resort to such a procedure.

We have noted that a question has been raised with regard to the position of the Members of the G- 21. Mr. Chairman, the position of G- 21, including that of Sri Lanka in favour of a Comprehensive nuclear weapons convention has already been re-iterated at the CD, including during the current session of the CD. We encourage the CD to return to its substantive work including on negotiations of a comprehensive nuclear weapons convention. Sri Lanka on its part considers that it is reasonable for the G-21 States to also extend support for other processes on nuclear disarmament, which can lead to the ultimate objective of complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

It is in this context, Mr. Chairman we would like to affirm Sri Lanka's support for the proposal of convening a conference in 2017, to negotiate a legally - binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination. This would not only ensure the fulfillment of the wish of a majority of States in this Group but also in the UN membership at large.

Mr. Chairman,

I wish you all the best for a consensual conclusion of the work of this Group, and let me assure the full support of my delegation in this regard. I also

encourage States to show flexibility, and extend their full cooperation to you, in order to make this common endeavor a success. Thank you.