



PERMANENT MISSION OF SRI LANKA

GENEVA

**STATEMENT TO THE PLENARY MEETING
BY
AMBASSADOR BERNARD A.B. GOONETILLEKE
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
AND HEAD OF SRI LANKA DELEGATION
TO THE CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT**

Geneva, 1 February, 1996.

(Check against delivery)

Mr. President,

Please allow me to extend to you the warm congratulations and best wishes of the delegation of Sri Lanka upon your assumption of the Presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. I am confident that with your diplomatic skills and experience and your businesslike approach you will be able to set in motion the processes needed for completing the responsibilities entrusted to the Conference.

Let me also congratulate through you Mr. President, the CD's immediate past President Ambassador Benjelloun-Touimi for his contribution to the Conference and particularly his sincere efforts aimed at resolving the inordinately delayed and the vexed issue of expansion of the CD's membership. And let us all hope that the Conference will be able to untie this Gordian knot, at least this year.

Mr. President,

Allow me to place on record my delegation's sincere appreciation of the contributions to the Conference of Mr. Vladimir F. Petrovsky, Secretary-General of the CD and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the UN and his able deputy Mr. Abdelkadar Bensmail.

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome to Geneva and to the Conference on Disarmament our new colleagues from Cuba, Kenya and Nigeria and wish them a fruitful tour of duty.

Mr. President,

The year 1996 brings the Conference to the final phase of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty negotiations. The General Assembly in its resolution 50/65 provided some guidelines in this regard. **First**, it called upon the CD to re-establish the Ad Hoc Committee on a Nuclear Test Ban at the commencement of its 1996 Session in order to complete the final text of the treaty as soon as possible in 1996. **Second**, it declared its readiness to resume consideration of the item before its 51st Session, for endorsing the text of the treaty. It should, therefore, be our earnest endeavour to work harder with the objective of finalizing the treaty text as early as possible to complete this task at least by June to facilitate the reconvening of the 50th Session of the General Assembly for endorsing the treaty before September 1996. Her Excellency Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunge, President of Sri Lanka has instructed my delegation to cooperate fully with the Conference towards realizing this objective.

Mr. President,

My delegation is fully aware of the views expressed by some delegations about the time-frame within which to complete the negotiations. Given the fact that some of us had been urging the Conference to complete the work in 1994, mid 1996 cannot be considered too unrealistic a goal to achieve. In the circumstances, the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on NTB should endeavour to complete the work by June this year.

Mr. President,

Since the commencement of its current Session, what the CD has achieved in respect of the CTBT negotiations is indeed commendable. On the very first day of the CD this year, you moved its business with great agility which enabled the immediate reestablishment of the Ad Hoc Committee on a Nuclear Test Ban. Members of the Conference are fully aware of the crucial role you played in developing a consensus towards this unique achievement. This was followed by the holding of the first meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee on NTB the same day, which by no means is a mean feat. The swiftness with which the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee moved in commencing the work on the CTBT is indicative of the strong desire of all members of the Conference to begin its work in earnest. My delegation is convinced that the momentum we have jointly created will facilitate completion of the drafting work on time. Let me congratulate Ambassador Jaap Ramaker upon his assumption of the chair of the Committee and Ambassadors Berdennikov and Zahran as chairmen of the Working Groups I and II respectively, and assure them of my delegation's continuous support.

Mr. President,

The Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee and the Chairmen of the two Working Groups have an important role to play in the coming months if the Conference were to conclude its drafting work as envisaged. Among the issues that have to be expeditiously sorted out are the scope of the treaty, its verification regime, on-site inspections, IMS architecture and a host of other crucial issues. Resolution of these issues requires a harmonious blending of hard work and political will on the part of the members and great skill and patience on the part of the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee and the Chairmen of the two Working Groups.

Mr. President,

Much has been said about the scope of the CTBT. This fundamental issue is yet to be resolved. However, it is gratifying to note the emerging support for a true zero yield CTBT. Given the very nature of the nuclear test explosions and the indistinguishability of nuclear tests carried out for weapon and peaceful purposes, there should be a clear understanding that there will be no PNEs within the framework of the future CTBT. Absence of such an understanding would only have the effect of circumvention of the treaty.

The treaty scope must also determine the status of sub-critical tests which are claimed to be undertaken for ensuring the safety and reliability of existing weapons; however, these tests could also serve to further improve the existing nuclear weapons. Having banned nuclear-weapon test explosions and other nuclear explosions, should we permit sub-critical tests which would allow the nuclear-weapon States to improve their arsenals and design third generation nuclear weapons? In this chamber and elsewhere, we have heard statements in regard to the discriminating nature of the NPT. If our intention is to have a truly universal CTBT, its provisions should apply equally to both nuclear-weapon States and to non-nuclear-weapon States. These are the issues the CD has to grapple with in the coming months, as it braces itself with the debracketing of more than one thousand pairs of square brackets around the draft text. While we are at it, the Conference must not reject out of hand, constructive proposals made by delegations for strengthening the draft treaty and promoting nuclear disarmament.

Mr. President,

Several delegations which addressed the Conference so far this year have referred to the nexus between the CTBT and nuclear disarmament. Sri Lanka shares the views expressed by those delegations and supports their demand that the CD should focus its attention on nuclear disarmament as well.

For over three decades the international community has tried to ban nuclear-weapon test explosions. It was the UK, the US and the former USSR, three of the five nuclear-weapon States, which initiated work in this direction as far back as 1958. Mutual suspicion, inability to decide on the number of unmanned seismic stations and the number of annual mandatory on-site inspections, reportedly contributed to the failure of that attempt at achieving a nuclear test ban then. However, the international community succeeded in taking limited steps through the PTBT in 1963 and TTBT in 1974.

Furthermore, the horizontal spread of nuclear weapons was stopped through the NPT which came into effect in 1970. Despite these concrete measures vertical proliferation reached dizzy heights in the following decades and it will take many more years before the effects of START treaties become visible. Yet, we are nowhere close to the total elimination of nuclear weapons or safe from nuclear war, while the nuclear-weapon States continue to hold thousands of nuclear weapons and sit on mountains of highly enriched uranium and plutonium. Another disturbing development in this post Cold-War era is the steps taken by the nuclear-weapon States to trade quantity for quality. Such qualitative development of nuclear weapons certainly does not augur well for achieving our final objective, namely the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

Mr President,

It is gratifying to note that there is a common understanding on the part of all of us representing the nuclear haves and the have nots, that our common goal is a world free of nuclear weapons. To begin with, nuclear weapons should have been banned fifty years ago when the destructive potential and the indiscriminate nature of the new weapon were first discovered. Yet, 50 years later we continue to lip the same mantram as if the nuclear weapons could be wished away. Our words have to be matched with concrete steps, if not, another half a century later we shall still be repeating the same mantram without achieving any progress.

The relationship between the cessation of nuclear test explosions and nuclear disarmament was referred to in the final document of the first Special Session of the General Assembly devoted to Disarmament which was adopted by consensus. It clearly states that the "nuclear-weapon States have the primary responsibility for nuclear disarmament". And that was in 1978. Article VI of the NPT signed more than a quarter of a century ago referred to the need to take "effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament". Regrettably, despite these decisions reached by consensus and binding treaty obligations, no decisive step has been taken by the nuclear-weapon States for the total elimination of nuclear weapons. This certainly is not a satisfactory situation. Something has to be done sooner than later to remedy it.

It is in this context that my delegation wishes to refer to resolution 50/70P on Nuclear Disarmament which the delegation of Myanmar, inspired by the call made by the Heads of State and/or Government of Non-aligned countries in Cartagena last year, steered through the General Assembly. Despite its shortcomings as seen by some delegations,

the resolution which was adopted amid the 50th anniversary celebration of the United Nations is seen by many as a beacon that would direct us to the 21st Century, into a world without nuclear weapons or nuclear blackmail. The resolution calls upon the Conference to commence negotiations on a phased programme of nuclear disarmament and for the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons within a time-bound framework.

Mr. President,

My delegation is fully cognizant of the views expressed by some nuclear-weapon States with regard to nuclear disarmament and the role of the Conference, as well as the reference made in the resolution to undertake negotiations within a time-bound framework. Yet, we beg to differ from the views expressed by them to distance the subject of nuclear disarmament from this Conference. If total elimination of nuclear weapons is our ultimate goal, that journey must begin here in this very chamber. There is no alternative to the CD, which is the sole negotiating forum for disarmament matters, to negotiate matters relating to nuclear disarmament. None of the non-nuclear-weapon States would dare hand over this responsibility which affects the interests of the entire world to the five nuclear-weapon States and opt to sit by idly, for the issue affects not only the interests of the five nuclear-weapon States, but also those of all countries. In this regard, Mr. President, allow me to quote from paragraph 28 of the final document of the SSOD 1 devoted to disarmament, "All peoples of the world have a vital interest in the success of disarmament negotiations. Consequently, all States have the right to participate in disarmament negotiations. They have the right to participate on an equal footing in those multilateral negotiations which have a direct bearing on their national security. While disarmament is the responsibility of all States, the nuclear-weapon States, have the primary responsibility for nuclear disarmament". This position has been reiterated in the declaration of Principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament adopted by the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference wherein the nuclear-weapon States reaffirmed their commitment as stated in article VI, to pursue in good faith negotiations on effective measures relating to nuclear disarmament.

Similarly, we see no basis to the position expressed by some nuclear-weapon States that we should patiently wait until the year 2003 for the achievement of the goals of the START treaties and thereafter, allow the subject of nuclear disarmament to be discussed by the five nuclear-weapon States and depending on the outcome of those discussions, decide whether or not to involve the CD in the negotiations. Again, this position is based on the fallacy that the question of nuclear disarmament and the total elimination of nuclear weapons should be the exclusive domain of the nuclear five.

Mr. President,

If we all genuinely subscribe to the final goal of total elimination of nuclear weapons, the time is now for us to take appropriate steps to achieve that objective. Should we fail to act now, another 50 years may go by and we shall still be speaking of our goal without taking concrete measures to achieve it. There is no guarantee that the present propitious political climate will remain unchanged for ever. Future generations will heap the blame on those pundits who thought that the total elimination of nuclear weapons could be achieved by proceeding at a snail's pace. This is the rationale of the demand for the commencement of negotiations on nuclear disarmament within a time-bound framework.

Sri Lanka recognizes the need for the Conference to devote a major part of its time this year to conclude the CTBT negotiations in a timely fashion. Yet, it will not be an impossible task for us to begin, even in a small way, our long and arduous trudge for realizing the dream shared by all of us. In the nuclear field, the Conference has a twofold task, namely, nuclear disarmament and prohibition of the production and stockpiling of fissile material for nuclear weapons. Let us decide to commence work on these two items, at least this year.

Mr. President,

My delegation is happy to note the adoption, *ad referendum* though, of the Agenda for the 1996 Session contained in Document CD/1379 of 23 January and the appointment of Ambassador Hocine Meghlaoui of Algeria as Special Coordinator on the future agenda of the CD. I offer my best wishes and assurances of support and close cooperation to him in his endeavours to resolve all outstanding issues on this score.

Mr. President,

As I referred elsewhere in my statement, the vexed issue of the expansion of the membership of the Conference on Disarmament should be resolved early. In my statement of 21 September last year, I expressed the hope that the 23 delegations would be "permitted to assume membership if not immediately, within months, preferably at the beginning of the 1996 Session of the Conference". Regrettably, despite the attempts made by the previous President, there has been no discernible improvement in the situation. Sri Lanka is for the immediate and unconditional admission of all 23 delegations as members of the Conference. This has been our

consistent, principled and stated position. A member means a member, nothing less and nothing more. My delegation will therefore, not be a party to admitting of any variations, however slight, insignificant or insubstantial they may be, of the state of being a member. To admit of such compromises would be to dilute the universally recognized and well-settled principle of sovereign equality of States which is what the Charter of the United Nations proceeds from. Moreover, it would establish an unhealthy precedent.

Mr. President,

Even as I close my statement, it is my earnest hope that the Conference will speedily conclude its negotiation of the CTBT draft treaty, and commence work on nuclear disarmament and fissile cut-off. Meanwhile, the Special Coordinator could complete his consultations for resolving the outstanding matters concerning the remaining items on the agenda.

Thank you Mr. President.