

Statement by India

during the thematic debate on Disarmament Machinery at the First Committee of the UN General Assembly, New York, October 2021

In an age of interdependence, a reformed, reliable, and effective United Nations is a sine qua non in pursuit of disarmament. The final outcome document of the Special Session on Disarmament (SSOD-1), has observed that the United Nations, in accordance with the Charter, has a central role and primary responsibility in the sphere of disarmament. India is firmly committed to the ideals enshrined in the UN Charter and to multilateralism to achieve them. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in his address at the 76th Session of the United Nations General Assembly has reminded that if the United Nations has to keep itself relevant, it has to improve its effectiveness and increase its reliability.

2. The framework for UN disarmament machinery laid out by the SSOD-1, consisting of the triad of the Conference on Disarmament (CD), the First Committee and the UN Disarmament Commission (UNDC), continue to be the ideal forums for making meaningful progress on matters of disarmament, international security, and non-proliferation.

3. India accords the highest priority to the CD as the world's single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum. The CD's Agenda comprises the most critical issues related to international peace and security. The CD brings together its Member States in sovereign equality and in full responsibility to negotiate legally-binding instruments on disarmament. The CD has the mandate as well as the membership to commence negotiations on the core items on its Agenda based on a comprehensive and balanced Programme of work. Despite several attempts over the years, the CD has regrettably not been able to adopt a Programme of Work.

4. India is committed to efforts aimed at the Conference to agree on a Programme of Work in fulfilment of its important mandate. Instead of being sceptical on the relevance of the CD, what is really needed is a concrete demonstration of political will and to get down to negotiating legally binding instruments. It is equally important not to let the work of the CD be disrupted by some who wish to politicise the work of the CD and for Member States to instead, focus their valuable time and resources on its negotiating mandate. India has expressed its readiness and commitment to work with other Member States on all core items on the CD's Agenda, including a Fissile Material

Cut-Off Treaty (FMCT) on the basis of CD/1299 and the mandate contained therein.

5. The UNDC is the universal forum that provides for in-depth consideration of important disarmament issues and for enhancing understanding and consensus. That the UNDC has lost three years of substantive work in 2019-21 is an opportunity lost for Member States to deliberate on issues of importance to international security and disarmament. India hopes that the UNDC, will be able to conduct its work next year and makes substantive recommendations on the issues on its agenda.

6. India looks forward to the convening of the SSOD-IV, which is long overdue and can be a useful opportunity to take stock of the progress made in the disarmament machinery and to look at ways to further revitalize it.

7. The First Committee, mandated by the SSOD-1 to deal with the questions related to international peace and security is an important platform that brings together all UN Member States to contribute their views. India is pleased that the First Committee has been able to carry on with its important work during the pandemic in exceptional circumstances. India hopes that exchanges in the First Committee would lead to further coalescing of views among Member States to finding collective solutions on matters related to disarmament and international security.

8. India also values the efforts of the UNIDIR which brings immense value to our work. India believes that the disarmament machinery should function as a composite whole, so that the progress made in one could contribute to and be leveraged by another.

9. India's annual Disarmament and International Security fellowship demonstrates the high priority we attach to promoting disarmament education. We look forward to further deepening our engagement through our Disarmament for Youth initiative.

10. India stands ready to work with all Member States in a spirit of cooperation and constructive engagement to revitalize the disarmament machinery to safeguard global peace and security.
