

## **STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR ANUPAM RAY, PRESIDENT, CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT, JANUARY 23, 2024**

Let me begin by stating that it is an honour for my country and me, personally, to preside over this august body.

It is a solemn responsibility that we take with the utmost seriousness.

Excellencies and Distinguished colleagues,

We meet in the Palace of Nations, a building that represents a certain aspiration. It is an aspiration that has survived world wars, cold wars, and conflict amongst nations. It is an aspiration for a better world, a greater freedom, a more just community of nations, and most importantly, peace, security, and amity amongst nations.

That aspiration recognizes the devastation caused by war and its ultimate futility.

The work of disarmament, and arms control, including nuclear disarmament, have a particularly significant relevance to this higher purpose.

Those of us who are in this room are charged by the General Assembly of the United Nations to work towards lasting peace, through disarmament and arms control, in fulfillment of that aspiration.

Our predecessors have contributed, through their efforts in negotiating legally binding instruments and other texts, to the creation of a collective security architecture that is unprecedented in history in its extent, scope and ambition.

We meet today in the midst of conflict. We meet under the terrible thought of the possibility of war. We meet under the sobering realization, in this Palace of Nations, that this security architecture might prove unequal to the stresses that it is confronted with.

Excellencies and Distinguished colleagues,

Diplomacy is built upon the notion that conflicts can be resolved without recourse to violence. It is built upon the principle of compromise.

Today, when we are confronted with an understanding of the fragility of peace, those of us in this Conference have the responsibility, more than ever, of going back to our vocation, and to the basics of our craft - to compromise, to negotiate, and to arrive at agreements and understandings.

We are reminded of the importance of our work. We are reminded about the costs of failing in what is expected of us. We are reminded of the urgent importance of working together to do our part to fight off the challenges to our collective security.

Excellencies and Distinguished colleagues,

It is important for me at this stage, and in these circumstances, to draw the particular attention of the Conference to Para 47 of the final document of SSOD-1.

I quote: “Nuclear-weapons pose the greatest danger to mankind and to the survival of civilization. It is essential to halt and reverse the nuclear arms race in all its aspects in order to avert the danger of war involving nuclear weapons. The ultimate goal in this context is the complete elimination of nuclear weapons.”

Excellencies and Distinguished colleagues,

The Conference on Disarmament is a unique international body. It is the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum of limited size taking decisions on the basis of consensus.

It is no secret that the Conference has not been able to conduct substantive negotiations on legally binding instruments for a quarter of a century.

The reasons for which it has been unable to do so are understood by those of us who are in the room. There are reasons related to the substance of what we work on and there are reasons related to procedure. More importantly, there are reasons related to the broader geopolitical and diplomatic environment in which we function. We are constrained by the circumstances of that environment.

Excellencies and Distinguished colleagues,

My delegation has prepared for its turn at the Presidency diligently.

I would like to acknowledge the work of our predecessors at this collective Presidency. Through our participation in the proceedings of the P6+2 in 2023 we have witnessed the efforts made by successive Presidents to seek compromise in the working of the conference and also in the efforts to revitalize its functioning.

We have consulted widely and extensively in our preparations. I thank all delegations and all my colleagues for their cooperation and their forthrightness in these consultations.

It is clear to me that all delegations accord considerable importance to their participation in the work of this Conference. Delegations agree that disarmament and arms control, and therefore platforms such as this Conference, have acquired greater significance in the current security environment. It is evident that there are areas of convergence in their approaches. It is also evident that there are divergences.

It is my view that both the convergences and divergences are significant.

It is my conclusion after conducting these consultations that broadening the convergences and narrowing the divergences may be in the realm of the possible. It is my understanding that there is scope for compromise and scope for finding common ground.

This will require continuous and joint effort by the collective presidency and by all delegations. I can assure the Conference that the Indian presidency will, in good faith, do its utmost to give expression to the will of the Conference in furthering its work. We will leave no stone unturned.

Excellencies and Distinguished Colleagues,

We have taken action on the Agenda of the Conference for 2024.

The proceedings and the results of the consideration on the Agenda confirm that the spirit of compromise is very strong in the membership of the Conference. I would also like to thank all delegations for their pragmatism and for their understanding. An imperfect solution, particularly in the current circumstances, is better than no solution.

I would like to congratulate all members and thank them for their constructive attitude on this issue.

We now turn our attention to the challenging question of deciding on the participation of non-members in the work of this Conference and on the Programme of Work. I have consulted widely on such issues. It is my understanding as President that there is broad agreement amongst members that the best way forward on Programme of Work is to build on existing understandings and commonalities.

Consultations on Programme of Work are ongoing process and I solicit the cooperation and support of all members for this effort.

Finding agreement on the Programme of Work will be the focus of the Indian Presidency for the length of its tenure. We will proceed, as we are doing now, transparently and in good faith. I will continue to keep the membership briefed about our efforts.

The issue of participation of non-members in the proceedings of the conference is also pending. I request members to approach this matter in the spirit of compromise and mutual understanding that has been displayed in the consideration of the agenda. That is what is expected of us and that is what is good for the conference. Many colleagues whom I have consulted feel like as in the case of the agenda that an imperfect solution is better than no solution in the current circumstances. I share that feeling.

Excellencies and Distinguished Colleagues,

I would like to end with a prayer in Sanskrit. It is as old as time and represents some of the central aspirations of our character:

*Om Saha Navatu  
Saha Nau Bhunaktu Saha Veeryam Karavaavahe  
Tejasvinavati Tamastu ma vidhwishavahai  
Om Shanti Shanti*

A loose translation is:

May we find safety together,  
May we find strength together,  
May we be united in purpose,  
May we find harmony,  
May our efforts be successful,  
May we find peace, peace.

Thank you.

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