



INDIA भारत

Permanent Mission of India Conference on Disarmament

Statement by Ambassador Anupam Ray at the CD Plenary meeting during thematic debate on “The challenges of new and emerging threats: Assessing the impact of emerging technologies on international security and arms control efforts”, Geneva, June 11, 2024

Mr. President,

Let me begin by thanking you for convening a thematic debate on this topic.

Since 1988, India has sponsored a resolution adopted by consensus in the First Committee, and most recently adopted as A/RES/78/22, on the “Role of science and technology in the context of international security and disarmament. My delegation would also like to acknowledge the reports of the UN Secretary General, mandated by this resolution, including its most recent report A/78/268.

Mr. President,

A/RES/78/22 states that “the accelerating pace of technological change necessitates a system-wide assessment of the potential impact of developments in science and technology on international security and disarmament, with due regard to avoiding duplication and complementing efforts already under way in United Nations entities and in the framework of the relevant international conventions.” It also calls upon member states to “remain vigilant in understanding new and emerging developments in science and technology that could imperil international security.”

India acknowledges the concerns that have arisen due to these emerging technologies. We are committed to doing our utmost to address these concerns.

We note, however, that the topic of “Emerging technologies” is by itself not listed under the Agenda of the CD.

May I take this opportunity to remind the Conference that the Disarmament Commission, another part of the Disarmament Machinery, is already discussing recommendations on common understandings related to emerging technologies in the context of international security”? The nation states that are represented here today are also present in the Disarmament Commission which is universal in its membership.

The CD has unfinished business. Its unique vocation is to negotiate legally binding instruments on items on its Agenda. The most pressing item on the CD's agenda is to urgently commence negotiations on a FMCT on the basis of CD/1299 and the mandate contained therein.

New topics should not divert attention from existing items in the Conference's Agenda. We should therefore proceed with an element of caution.

Mr. President,

It is an unfortunate fact of history that the development of new, and often, revolutionary technologies and their application in warfare frequently proceed together.

Discussions on the new technologies are not, therefore, new for the world of disarmament and arms control. The advances that are currently being discussed are different in that they pose a unique set of challenges.

Firstly, it is not one technology that is being discussed. There are several new technologies that are usually understood to fall under the description of emerging technologies. There is no commonly agreed list of such technologies and we note that a comprehensive listing may not be possible because of the speed and the rapidity of innovation.

Secondly, different technologies are in different stages of the technology life cycle. Most are in the innovation or development stage. Some are more mature. Effects of technologies, benign or malignant, become clearer with greater maturity and deployment, particularly deployment in scale. We are therefore dealing with varying degrees of knowledge about the nature, potential application, and effects of many of these technologies.

Thirdly, innovation and change are occurring at unprecedented speed. They are often difficult to anticipate. This often imparts an element of the unexpected or uncertain.

Fourthly, not all technologies that are being discussed will find application.

Lastly, these technologies can be combined with each other and with older technologies and platforms. The application of Artificial Intelligence to military platforms using other emerging and/or legacy technologies, for example, has drawn much attention.

All of the above have been acknowledged in the work of various bodies that are already working on specific technologies or aspects of technologies both in the civilian and military domain.

Mr. President,

India also believes that emerging technologies can have transformational effects on reducing poverty and improving the lives of our people. This is particularly relevant in the case of developing countries like ours. Therefore, we should avoid stigmatization of such technologies.

Many or most of these technologies are dual-use in nature. It follows that for a developing country like India access to technology that can have such transformational potential is a substantial concern. We speak for the Global South when we seek assurances that developmental priorities will not be affected by processes on emerging technologies, including in the military domain.

India was privileged to chair the G20 in 2023. The Leaders Declaration of the G20 acknowledges this transformational potential of technology in areas as diverse as climate change, sustainable development and in the creation of Digital Public Infrastructure that can improve public service delivery in developing countries. (“Safe, secure, trusted, accountable and inclusive digital public infrastructure, respectful of human rights, personal data, privacy and intellectual property rights can foster resilience, and enable service delivery and innovation.”)

In the specific context of AI, the G20 noted that “The rapid progress of AI promises prosperity and expansion of the global digital economy. It is our endeavour to leverage AI for the public good by solving challenges in a responsible, inclusive and human-centric manner, while protecting people’s rights and safety. To ensure responsible AI development, deployment and use, the protection of human rights, transparency and explainability, fairness, accountability, regulation, safety, appropriate human oversight, ethics, biases, privacy, and data protection must be addressed. To unlock the full potential of AI, equitably share its benefits and mitigate risks, we will work together to promote international cooperation and further discussions on international governance for AI.”

Mr. President,

I need not remind this august gathering that a number of discussions are taking place in other diplomatic platforms on various technologies. These include, but are not restricted to, the CCW GGE on Emerging Technologies in the area of LAWS; the OEWG on Security of and in use of ICTs; the GGE on Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space and proposed OEWGs on the same issue as well as on Reducing Space Threats through Responsible Behaviours and the work of the UNDC on TCBMs in Outer Space. Some emerging technologies have a particular relevance to the subject matter of the Biological Weapons Convention.

We must acknowledge that a considerable amount of work has been done in these bodies and needs to be built upon. We also need to be careful to respect mandates, avoid prejudging or prejudicing proceedings in other fora, and avoid duplication.

Mr President,

In conclusion, my delegation would like, without downplaying many of the legitimate legal and ethical questions that arise from emerging technologies, to support the view that has been expressed about the potential of such technologies to actually improve compliance with international humanitarian law.
