Statement by Ambassador DB Venkatesh Varma,
Permanent Representative of India to the CD
Thematic Debate on Nuclear Weapons at the First Committee.

20 October 2014

Mr. Chairman,

India associates itself with the statement made by Indonesia on behalf of the Nonaligned Movement

Mr Chairman,

India has been unwavering in its commitment to universal, non-discriminatory, verifiable nuclear disarmament. Our working paper submitted to the UNGA in 2006 recounted India’s important initiatives in the past including the Action Plan of 1988 and suggested a number of measures for achieving the goal of nuclear disarmament in a time bound manner.

In our view, nuclear disarmament can be achieved through a step-by-step process underwritten by a universal commitment and an agreed global and non-discriminatory multilateral framework. We have called for a meaningful dialogue among all states possessing nuclear weapons to build trust and confidence and for reducing the salience of nuclear weapons in international affairs and security doctrines. Given the complex current international situation, the need for building global trust has become all the more imperative. Pursuant to UNGA resolution 68/32, India has supported the commencement of negotiations on a Comprehensive Nuclear Weapons Convention in the Conference on Disarmament on the basis of CD/1999.

As a responsible nuclear power India has a policy of credible minimum deterrence based on a No First Use posture and non-use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon states. We are prepared to covert these into bilateral or multilateral legally binding arrangements.

We believe that increasing restraints on use of nuclear weapons would reduce the probability of their use – whether deliberate, unintentional or accidental and this process could contribute to the progressive de-legitimization of nuclear weapons, an essential step for their eventual elimination, as was achieved for chemical and biological weapons.
India participated in the Oslo and Nayarit meetings on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons in the hope that renewed attention on the most serious threat to the survival of mankind posed by the use of nuclear weapons would help generate momentum for increased restraints on use of such weapons and thus correct an imbalance in the international legal discourse that has focussed almost exclusively on restraints on possession. For these discussions to be meaningful, it is important that they be inclusive with the participation of all states including the nuclear powers. In terms of substance, they should do no harm to the non-proliferation regime or impede genuine progress towards the goal of nuclear disarmament. In terms of process, they should do no harm to the established disarmament machinery.

Mr Chairman,

Without prejudice to the priority we attach to nuclear disarmament, we support the negotiation in the Conference on Disarmament of an FMCT that meets India's national security interests. We hope that the GGE on FMCT established under UNGA resolution 67/53 will strengthen international resolve for the early commencement of treaty negotiations in the CD on the basis of the agreed mandate contained in CD/1299.

Mr. Chairman,

India is committed to working with the international community to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons and their means of delivery, including through strong national export controls and early membership of multilateral export control regimes and in this regard appreciate the strong expressions of support we have received from a number of countries. Compliance with international obligations is important and all states should fully and effectively implement the obligations arising from the agreements or treaties to which they are party. India's position on the NPT is well-known and needs no reiteration. There is no question of India joining the NPT as a non-nuclear weapon state. At the same time, India would make its contribution to the strengthening of the global non-proliferation regime. India ratified the Additional Protocol to its Safeguards Agreement with the IAEA in July this year.

Mr. Chairman,
We are introducing on behalf of the sponsors a draft resolution on "Reducing Nuclear Danger". The resolution highlights the need for a review of nuclear doctrines and immediate steps to reduce the risk of unintentional or accidental use of nuclear weapons, including through de-alerting and de-targeting of nuclear weapons. It is a matter of satisfaction that there is greater resonance in the international community on the objectives of this resolution of avoiding unintentional or accidental use of nuclear weapons.

Further, we have the honour to present on behalf of the sponsors a draft resolution on a Convention on the Prohibition of the Use of Nuclear Weapons. This traditional text reflects our belief that a multilateral, universal and legally binding instrument prohibiting the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons will contribute to the process of the step-by-step de-legitimization of nuclear weapons and create a favourable climate for negotiations on nuclear disarmament.

First introduced in 1982 this is one of the long standing resolutions in the First Committee. We would like to convey our appreciation for the consistent support extended by a large majority of member states but regret that a sizeable minority of member states – some of them nuclear weapon states, some with nuclear weapons stationed on their soil and others with alliance partnerships underwritten by policies of first use of nuclear weapons have voted against this resolution. We hope that they will reconsider their position. For reasons that are difficult to understand, some member states which are today in the forefront of efforts to highlight the humanitarian impact of use of nuclear weapons have also voted against this resolution. We appeal to these states to review their position and bring their voting on this resolution at par with their public support for addressing the humanitarian impact of use of nuclear weapons. The ICRC's 2011 resolution includes an appeal to states to pursue and conclude negotiations to prohibit the use of and completely eliminate nuclear weapons which is entirely consistent with the objectives of this resolution. We hope that NGOs and civil society organizations active in the discussions on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons will extend support to this resolution.

As in previous years, India will be tabling a draft resolution entitled "Measures to prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction". We convey our appreciation to all member states for their consistent support and to the large number of co-sponsors who have joined us in highlighting the importance of this resolution which gives expression to the continuing concerns of the international community with respect to the risks posed by
terrorists gaining access to WMDs and sensitive materials and technologies. We hope that the First Committee will adopt this resolution by consensus.

Thank you.