



**Address by H.E. Himalee Arunatilaka Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka
at the Conference on Disarmament**

Madam President,
Distinguished delegates,

It is an honour to address this august assembly and to share my country's perspectives on the work of the Conference on Disarmament, at a time the world is facing myriad of security threats which are at the core of issues discussed at the CD for decades, primarily the threat of nuclear escalation. Other current global security challenges such as transnational organized crime, terrorism, advanced weapon delivery systems add to the dangers associated with the existence of WMD. The situation has heightened the need for progress in global disarmament and the non-proliferation regime which remains the primary purpose of this Conference.

Madam President,

The times are difficult, and our responses require swift action with a sense of collective responsibility, conviction and firm determination. We are deeply concerned about our collective failure to reach a consensus outcome at the 10th Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference, a missed opportunity indeed given our increased vulnerabilities and growing nuclear threats. The implementation of disarmament commitments and obligations have stalled to a great extent, while the expansion and modernization of nuclear arsenals, and the introduction of advanced nuclear weapons continue to take place. We emphasize the equal importance of the three pillars of the NPT; nonproliferation, disarmament, and peaceful uses of nuclear energy and urge for meaningful dialogue to find possible convergence building on our work during the last review conference. Sri Lanka remains committed to the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons, the only guarantee against their proliferation.

Madam President,

My country attaches great importance to the adherence to multilateralism as a basic principle of disarmament and non-proliferation negotiations. We express our deep concern about the current security dilemma due to serious deterioration of trust and mutual respect amongst states and the dangerous implications of a return to strategic competition and international armed conflict. More than ever before, and in relation to current theaters of conflict, there is a need to bring renewed impetus to multilateral dialogue in the interest of enhancing global security. In no uncertain terms, the current global security situation has made it clear to us that multilateralism is the only option.

In view of the increasing danger of the proliferation of WMD, nuclear weapons in particular, it is imperative that the nuclear weapon states provide unconditional, non-discriminatory and irrevocable legally binding assurances against use or threat of use of nuclear weapons to non-nuclear weapon states. Given that the existing unilateral assurances are conditional and that those assurances under regional nuclear weapon free zones contain geographical limitations, we reiterate the importance and urgency to commence negotiations on negative security assurances, which is only an interim step until the total elimination of nuclear weapons is achieved.

On nuclear disarmament, we are not only concerned about the expansion and modernization of nuclear arsenals and the increasing reliance on nuclear deterrence arguments by states but equally worrying is the very real threat of weapons of mass destruction falling into the hands of non-state actors, which is the subject of UN Security Council resolution 1540. It is

imperative that the international community work together efficiently to prevent non-state actors from gaining access to WMDs.

Due to the increased reliance on space technologies in our day-to-day activities we are faced with increased vulnerability, more importantly a shared vulnerability that would be caused by any disruption to space-based services such as civil navigation systems or satellite communications. Security of outer space therefore is closely linked with the security and development of human civilization. This is why the growing exploration and use of space by both state and commercial entities raise increasing concerns regarding the possibility of weaponization and arms race in outer space.

We follow closely the ongoing discussions on responsible behavior in outer space and acknowledge the value of such deliberations that would deepen the understanding on perceptions about threats to security and safety of outer space. We also note the proposed Group of Governmental Experts on Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space (GGE on PAROS) as a step in the right direction. Sri Lanka remains firmly convinced that a verifiable legally binding agreement on the prevention of an arms race in outer space is necessary and that voluntary transparency and confidence-building measures cannot be a substitute for such binding regulations.

With regard to the adoption of binding regulations on the use of advanced technologies including AI in weapon systems, Sri Lanka remains deeply concerned regarding the slow progress in spite of the discussions in this regard that have been ongoing in Geneva for nearly a decade now. Sri Lanka is among many other states that have consistently voiced our concerns regarding legal, military, security, technological and ethical considerations of autonomous weapon systems and the importance of maintaining centrality of meaningful human control in weapon systems. We welcome in this regard the Joint Statement delivered at the UNGA last year with the support of 70 states. We believe that this is a progressive step to build momentum towards the development of legally binding prohibitions and regulations on autonomous weapon systems, the urgency of which cannot be over emphasized.

Madam President,

The Conference on Disarmament, as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum of the international community, has exceptional history of negotiating key disarmament and non-proliferation treaties. We emphasize on the importance of this forum to rise up to its mandate as a negotiating body rather than a forum for deliberation. Given the deteriorating and fluid international security landscape, we have every reason to make the CD work. Even as I close my statement it is my earnest hope that the Conference will be able overcome the prolonged impasse at least this year so that we could decide how best we could utilize our resources to advantage. Sri Lanka stands ready to contribute to all efforts on disarmament and nonproliferation within the work of the CD through a balanced and comprehensive programme of work.

I thank you Mr. President.