



**Address by the Hon. State Minister of Regional Co-operation of Sri Lanka to the
Conference on Disarmament, February 2021**

Mr. President,
Madam Secretary General and
Distinguished delegates,

I am pleased to join this important international forum to reiterate the importance Sri Lanka attaches to the Conference on Disarmament as the world's sole multilateral disarmament negotiation forum. Our delegation assures you, Mr. President, of its full support and cooperation to find common grounds for fulfilling the Conference on Disarmament's obligations towards strengthening international peace and security.

We take this opportunity to reaffirm Sri Lanka's strong commitment and support for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. Sri Lanka continues to remain concerned about the lack of progress on nuclear disarmament and the threat such weapons pose to survival of humanity.

Today, we are faced with one of the most challenging moments in human history. Like all obstacles, resolving the current crises requires renewed willingness to think and act collectively, especially to ensure the safety and security of the world we live in. The need for genuine efforts towards achieving this goal is now more important than ever.

As we approach the tenth review conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, it is disheartening to note a clear lack of political will to realize the important objectives of this Treaty. The implementation of disarmament commitments and obligations have stalled to a great extent; while the modernization of nuclear arsenals, and the introduction of new types of nuclear weapons continue to take place.

It is in this context that we welcome the extension of the New START Treaty which is a positive step towards strategic stability and mutual confidence.

Mr. President, we believe a legally binding instrument on unconditional negative security assurances is equally important for non-nuclear weapon states. Despite repeated calls in this forum, we are yet to see any concrete action on this issue.

We support ensuring nuclear non-proliferation calls for effective and comprehensive control of the use of fissile materials, which will contribute to the gradual, yet meaningful process of nuclear disarmament.

Sri Lanka underscores the importance of negotiating a binding agreement on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. While we support any new initiative in this regard in the spirit of multilateralism, our objective for a comprehensive legally binding instrument on PAROS remains unchanged.

Mr. President, we are deeply concerned of the possibility of advanced weapon systems falling into the hands of terrorists. Their intentions and active efforts to acquire nuclear, biological and chemical weapons is certainly no longer within the realm of imagination. This is why we believe that the full implementation of all multilateral disarmament treaties, including those covering Biological and Chemical weapons, will contribute immensely in our common fight against international terrorism. Commencement of early negotiations on new nuclear weapon free-zones would also contribute to this objective.

Sri Lanka follows closely the ongoing deliberations in Geneva on autonomous weapon systems and remains convinced that the centrality of human control is fundamental. It is our hope that the discussions that have been continuing on LAWS would not be overcome by the fast-moving technological realities on the ground.

Mr. President, we are reiterating our disappointment on the stalemate of achieving consensus on the programme of work at this conference. Nevertheless, Sri Lanka's reaffirms its commitment to revive the much-delayed machinery of this conference as was evident in the adoption of the decision CD/2119 during Sri Lanka's presidency of the Conference on Disarmament in 2018.

Mr. President, we need to be conscious of the fact that emerging threats posed to humanity through challenges such as the ongoing pandemic and effects of climate change, coupled with the resultant socio-economic and environmental fallout could prompt various parties to utilize these weapons as a last resort as political leverage to pursue their interests. Therefore, the significance of the work of this conference has become more important than ever before.

While, Sri Lanka appreciates the individual and collective commitments of all countries in the efforts of attaining the objectives of this conference.

We strongly believe the enhancing weapons and the prevailing threat of their use will only feed into strengthening a vicious cycle that has so far seen no end.

This could only be ended through a commitment to a peaceful and safer world.

I leave you with the words the Dhammapada,

Hatred is, indeed, never appeased by hatred in this world. It is appeased only by loving-kindness. This is an eternal law.

I Thank you.