



**Sri Lanka Statement at the Plenary of the Conference on Disarmament  
23 January 2023**

Mr President,

[I thank you Mr. President, for your kind words of welcome.]

Sri Lanka congratulates Egypt and you, Ambassador Ahmed Gamaleldin, on assuming the first Presidency of the 2023 session of the Conference on Disarmament. My delegation assures you and other P6 Presidencies of our full support and cooperation to find common ground for fulfilling CD's obligations towards strengthening international peace and security. We also thank the Secretary General and the CD Secretariat for their continuous support.

I have the honour to make a statement at the plenary of this august Conference following my assumption of duties as the Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka to the UN in Geneva earlier this month. It is a pleasure to be back in the Conference on Disarmament after 20 years; however it is sad to see that the CD is still going through excessive institutional pain year after year with no real progress on fulfilling its negotiating mandate. I look forward to working with all delegations in a spirit of cooperation and wish to reiterate our position that only through confidence building and equal respect for the security of all Member States that we will be able to achieve the much-needed consensus towards adopting a programme of work.

Mr. President,

We are going through one of the most turbulent times ever in the human history and in human security in particular. Great power competitions that were limited to strategic doctrines on paper have come into reality with devastating real-life conflicts and our planet is becoming increasingly fragile due to growing tension and mistrust among states. We are meeting today in the backdrop of this serious global security situation and the ever so increasing relevance of this body to address these challenges cannot be over emphasized. Unfortunately, its negotiating mandate has not been invoked for many decades.

My delegation is profoundly concerned by our collective failure to adopt a consensus outcome document for the second consecutive time, at the 10<sup>th</sup> NPT Review Conference held in last year. As reiterated by the UN Secretary General in September 2022 in his remarks at the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons 'Nuclear weapons are the most destructive power ever created. They offer no security — just carnage and chaos.' Unfortunately, instead of implementing effective measures towards cessation of the nuclear arms race, and nuclear disarmament at an early date, there is an alarming trend that is moving towards expansion and modernization of nuclear weapon technology. We cannot but emphasize the growing threat of nuclear weapons pose an

existential threat to human kind and we reiterate our call for swift action for the actual advancement of total and irreversible elimination of nuclear weapons.

Sri Lanka respects the right of all state parties to peaceful use of nuclear energy to increase and diversify their respective power production capacities through nuclear energy which is a reliable and low carbon footprint source of energy in keeping with the spirit of realizing the sustainable development goals.

Mr. President,

It is Sri Lanka's respectful view that points of convergence and understandings of each other's positions that emerged through the deliberations over four weeks in New York at the NPT Review Conference are of serious value and should be executed to find further common ground and built upon in the spirit of multilateralism.

While we do acknowledge the importance of risk reduction measures and related strategies, we remain convinced that the only way to guarantee against the use of nuclear weapons is the total irreversible and verifiable elimination of nuclear weapons. In the interim, my delegation supports immediate commencement of negotiations on a legally binding treaty on negative security assurances which has been in the agenda of this Conference for decades with no real progress, particularly in the present context of the growing risk of the use of nuclear weapons.

Mr. President,

With regard to outer space, we remain concerned of the potential risk of an arms race in outer space as the space environment becomes increasingly congested with the rapid advancement of technology. Furthermore, the fast-blurring line between civilian, commercial and military uses of space technology is a matter of concern in maintaining the stability and safety of space. This is all the more reason why we emphasize on the need for retention of space, the last frontier of humankind as a peaceful domain for exploration for the benefit of entire humankind. A treaty on PAROS is long overdue and any discussion on space security should be a stepping stone towards the direction of a verifiable binding legal instrument on PAROS.

Advancement of autonomous weapon systems and related emerging technologies devoid of meaningful human control also remains a matter of grave concern to my delegation. Early commencement of negotiation of binding limitations and regulations of such weapon systems are an absolute necessity. In view of the technological advancements in the weapon systems on the ground we regret to note that the window for action in this regard is fast closing.

Mr. President,

Sri Lanka stands strong in its conviction that the threat of nuclear weapons persists as one of the most daunting challenges to humankind and one that requires urgent, concerted and committed action from all of us as Member States. We thus urge all States to continue taking steps towards a world free of nuclear weapons.

To that end, My delegation extends fullest support and cooperation towards your efforts, Mr. Chairman, to achieve consensus on a Programme of Work for this year and to bring the CD back to its past glory as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum. Will the CD continue its impasse or rise up to its true role remains to be seen and we choose to remain hopeful keeping in mind that when there is a will there is a way

Thank you!