

Mr. President,

On behalf of the delegation of Sri Lanka, let me convey to you our warm best wishes on your assumption of the Presidency of the CD today. Please be assured of Sri Lanka's consistent and ready support for all efforts that you and the CD envisage to undertake in the coming weeks towards generating consensus and creating much needed momentum within this august body.

We acknowledge with thanks the role played by the Presidents of CD for 2019, who have contributed by way of new initiatives and ideas to the deliberations within this body even as CD remains the single disarmament negotiating forum within the UN.

Today we heard the Secretary General of the ASEAN speaking on the regional block's vision and priorities in nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation arena. The profile of ASEAN and its member states in nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation is too well known a source of inspiration for those far beyond the ASEAN region. Today we have also listened to the statement made by Director General Moller, whose absence from among us will be felt sorely as he relinquishes what, in our view, has been a very productive and collegial mission in Geneva. We very sincerely appreciate him for his wise counsel, proper guidance, and exemplary leadership provided to UN Office in Geneva and CD in particular.

Mr. President,

In the past 6 months, the members of the CD, under different Presidencies, have attempted to make progress in fulfilling the core mandate of the CD as the sole multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament issues. Two draft Programs of Work and a Draft Decision aimed at facilitating substantive deliberations through subsidiary bodies, were discussed at length. Yet, the CD remains in a stalemate even as we pass the mid-year mark today.

In our statement during the CD High Level segment in February, we highlighted how the international and regional strategic landscapes were becoming increasingly constrained, thus underscoring the need, more than ever, for the CD to get down to its actual, substantive task of addressing these challenges through negotiation of appropriate disarmament legal frameworks. You would agree that developments in the global security landscape since, have only reinforced this urgency for serious work within the CD.

In this context, Mr. President, we look forward to your Presidency to guide this Conference in an innovative manner, to create momentum for serious and committed negotiations on all core issues. As outlined by us on previous occasions too, the following remain important priorities for us in the disarmament arena:

- We stand for comprehensive disarmament, realized through a step by step approach, underpinned by the adoption of legally binding frameworks and also addressing legal gaps that may exist;
- We attach priority to full compliance with, and effective promotion of, the implementation of the NPT without further delay, and respect for its three pillars and the

delicate balance built into the structure of the treaty in favour of achieving nuclear disarmament;

- We support the preservation of all existing disarmament architecture and the positive gains realized;
- We continue to remain committed to achieving a legally binding instrument on PAROS;
- We advance and promote respect for the objectives of the Biological Weapons Convention and the Chemical Weapons Convention and continue to call for their effective and non-discriminatory implementation;
- We strongly support and call for the effective implementation of the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism;
- We call for practical steps towards establishing WMD-free zones, building upon the nuclear free zones that already exist, and, in particular, in the regions where such zones are not in place;
- We express commitment to, and call for negotiation on, a legally binding instrument on Negative Security Assurances;
- We support the identification of and deliberation and negotiation on new and emerging issues including Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems

As I conclude my remarks, let me sound a note of renewed optimism - not one of hope-after-hope-after-hope kind, which has poignantly characterised our efforts towards negotiating a balanced and comprehensive Program of Work all along. Practically speaking, and without prejudice to the ability of the last Presidency for this year to guide CD to deliver on its core mandate, the Vietnam Presidency, in our view, is perhaps the last opportunity, given the developing fatigue over the status quo, or as we may call, stalemate, as well as time constraints, to attempt to achieve a package that can open up the path for a substantive PoW.

Mr. President, you have both the ability as well as our confidence, to successfully build on the constructive work done by previous presidents and rally members around a consensus document that would pave the way for serious and committed negotiations on many of these issues. While this may sound too ambitious a goal to reach for at this juncture, let us remember that it is from the darkest and the most challenging hours of our history that our best achievements in multilateralism have often emerged. Sri Lanka remains committed to working closely with you and other delegations present here, towards this end. That, in essence, is the cause for renewed optimism today.

I thank you, Mr. President.