



## **Chair's Remarks**

### **Framework Forum Roundtable: Reviving Nuclear Threat -Reduction and Disarmament Through the NPT, Conference on Disarmament and UN High - Level Conference on Nuclear Disarmament**

**By**

**A. L. Abdul Azeez**

**Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka in Geneva  
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Hon. Members of Parliament, Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me begin by thanking the organizers of this Roundtable Discussion for inviting me to Chair the Panel Session on '**Reviving the NPT and Conference on Disarmament: Measures and Processes to ensure Success**'.

First, I would briefly touch upon the most recent development that took place within the Conference on Disarmament, namely the adoption of its Decision 2119 under the Presidency of Sri Lanka. Thereafter, I would endeavor to focus on a few aspects of the NPT, which the Prep Com, due next week, would hopefully address in detail, with a view to generating momentum towards 2020 NPT Review Conference. I do not intend to go into hitherto familiar viewpoints or arguments attending upon the NPT discussions.

Decision 2119, in my view, provides a window of opportunity to advance the agenda of disarmament within the CD – the single forum for negotiating multilateral disarmament issues. Through the consensus manifested in that Decision, which was a delicately negotiated outcome, facilitated by Ambassador Ravinatha Aryasinha, the Member States have demonstrated a clear propensity towards taking forward a focussed discussion on all key aspects in the CD Agenda, in the months to come.

Sri Lanka was privileged to have enjoyed the trust of all members of the CD, in fulfilling this important task, which it performed, respecting and promoting the cardinal principles such as transparency, inclusiveness and objectivism.

Looking ahead to the future, it is evident that we are now left with the most challenging task of effective follow-up. I recall in this regard the words of UNSG Antonio Guterres, who urged us **to ‘work to translate the Decision into the resumption of negotiations’**. This applies to NPT as well.

It is noteworthy at this point to stress that the CD under the Presidencies of Sweden and Switzerland, through the informal coordination of the 6 Presidencies (The P6) worked towards the operationalisation of the Decision. This included the establishment of 5 subsidiary bodies and appointment of coordinators. Following the principle of equitable geographical representation, coordinators were selected, representing each region. A schedule of activities was also agreed with an allocation of equal time for all five bodies so that discussions would be time-bound and focused. Each of the coordinators will now endeavour to bring clarity and in-depth understanding as well as convergence on all issues within their respective body.

The issues covered by these bodies are among the most critical ones which need to be addressed in a comprehensive manner to advance the disarmament agenda.

- Subsidiary body 1: Cessation of the arms race and nuclear disarmament
- Subsidiary body 2: Prevention of nuclear war, including all related matters
- Subsidiary body 3: Prevention of an arms race in outer space
- Subsidiary body 4: Effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons
- Subsidiary body 5: New types of weapons of mass destruction and new systems of such weapons; radiological weapons - Comprehensive programme of disarmament - Transparency in armament - Emerging and other issues relevant to the substantive work of the Conference could also be considered, in accordance with CD/2119.

With this Decision, I should stress, the 22 year logjam in the CD has been broken. The mechanism established can ensure continuity, eventually helping maturity to be achieved on issues for negotiations in time.

There is no doubt that this development has come up at a critical time when there is growing impatience among the non-proliferation and disarmament community over the long spell of 'inaction', spanning over two decades.

We must recognise however, that there is much at stake in the operationalisation of that Decision. Substantive work should, first, continue in the 5 subsidiary bodies that have been established, and thereafter in the CD, manifesting a broad consensus on taking forward the work relating to the development of POW. Only then would follow questions relating to negotiations on a programme of work which should include progress on nuclear disarmament as or necessary.

For now, **it would appear it is a battle half won**, but no doubt, the positive energy thus released and the spirit of consensus manifested would continue to guide deliberations and substantive work, going forward.

There is a wider understanding today that the NPT Prep-Com that convenes next week is an appropriate forum, both to carry through this positive spirit as well as to creatively look at ways and means of arriving at a negotiated outcome at the 2020 NPT Review Conference.

The NPT constitutes a treaty regime that provides a framework for achieving nuclear non-proliferation, peaceful use of nuclear energy and nuclear disarmament. Here, I would like to avoid describing these components as **pillars** since the use of that term has become threadbare without any practical value, given our collective failures in the past.

In my view, and I believe, perhaps in the view of many of you who are present here today, all these components are inter- linked and are mutually reinforcing. While non-proliferation should receive a clear focus along with a pronounced emphasis on peaceful use of nuclear energy, the advancement of these objectives would be effective and meaningful when sustained efforts towards the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons follow in tandem.

We need now to seriously brainstorm as to what would make a consensus possible at 2020 NPT Review Conference. This, in my view, should extend to reconsideration of the procedures followed so far, what confidence building measures would in fact create the “confidence” needed, the importance of transparency as well as other issues such as, if and how bridging can be made between the NPT and other treaties.

‘Incremental progress’, ‘step-by-step approach’, ‘progressive realization’ or any language to that effect, are all terminologies which have been bandied around, to highlight the importance of moving towards that goal. However, I am afraid we have come to a stage in the peace and security discourse today, where taking refuge behind terminologies may even harm any chances of a comprehensive package seeing the light of day at the 2020 NPT Review.

The path ahead is challenging, but we must move on. We need to be imaginative, yet pragmatic.

I thank you all for all your active participation and contributions to this Forum.