



**Opening Remarks by
H.E. Mr. Ravinatha P. Aryasinha
Ambassador/Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka,
President Conference on Disarmament**

2018 Session of the Conference on Disarmament (CD)

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**The Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka to the United Nations
and other International Organizations in Geneva**



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Conference on Disarmament – 2018 Session
Part –I, Sri Lankan Presidency
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Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka to the United
Nations in Geneva, and to the Conference on Disarmament

Madam Izumi Nakamitsu, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs,
Ms. Anja Kaspersen, Deputy Secretary General of the Conference on
Disarmament,
Distinguish members of the CD, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Sri Lanka is honoured to assume the responsibility as the President of the
Conference on Disarmament.

It is yet another manifestation of our steadfast contribution and consistent
engagement in the field of disarmament over several decades. As a Member
State of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), Sri Lanka made its advent into the
Committee on Disarmament in 1979 as one of the eight new members admitted
following the first United Nations General Assembly Special Session On
Disarmament (SSOD –I), and since then has been playing key roles in its
deliberations, and subsequently in the Conference on Disarmament as well.

International Treaties and initiatives on disarmament and non-proliferation
have helped in shaping the world security architecture in order to achieve the
common objective of complete disarmament. Whilst the international
community has been active in galvanizing that architecture, it is evident that
much is left to be desired in enhancing international security. The pace of
multilateral disarmament, as well as non-proliferation must be accelerated
taking into account the security interests of all States and on the basis of the
principle of undiminished security for all. There is general recognition that a
transparent, sustainable and credible plan for multilateral nuclear
disarmament is necessary so that both disarmament and non-proliferation
could advance in a mutually reinforcing manner in effectively realising the
objective of a safer world.

In working towards a common and sustainable solution, Sri Lanka attaches great importance to the Conference on Disarmament as the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum of the international community, as mandated by the SSOD -I. However, we are conscious that Sri Lanka assumes the Presidency of this Conference, at a time this august body has critical challenges and some opportunities before it.

Given the over two-decade long impasse, many appear to be disheartened over the prospects of the CD.

- We are conscious that the underlying factors for this long stalemate are not necessarily limited to this room, but are also connected to **the complex global security environment**.
- The situation is further complicated due to **the increasing threat posed by Non – State Actors**, which warrants serious consideration within the CD Agenda. UN Secretary-General Mr. António Guterres, in his New year message alerts the world to this stark reality, observing that “*conflicts have deepened and new dangers have emerged,*”, while “*Global anxieties about nuclear weapons are the highest since the Cold War.*”
- **The advancement in technology** will be the key driver in the future of warfare and the rapid advances in military technology poses an additional challenge to global security. Therefore, in line with other fora such as the CCW, which in recent years has taken on issues such as LAWS, the CD must also consider a fresh approach on these issues in order to remain relevant and responsive to the contemporary developments in the field.
- The CD also cannot function in a vacuum. As was envisaged in the SSOD -1, while fulfilling its mandate as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, it must be receptive and be enriched by the **parallel discussions and deliberations that are taking place outside the CD**, in other disarmament fora and initiatives, as well as by giving due cognition to the contributions from civil society and academia and entrepreneurs. In this context I note that the 2018 disarmament calendar provides us with many such opportunities, including the second Preparatory Committee for the 2020 NPT Review Conference, and the UN High-Level Conference on Nuclear Disarmament. Furthermore, we also welcome the proposal by the Secretary – General of the Conference to hold a 3rd informal civil society forum this year.

Although presently facing a stalemate, we also have some reasons to be hopeful.

- **At times when the international security environment was even more complex and challenging, the CD was able to make progress on important issue areas.** This underlines the capacity and ability of the CD mechanism to deliver results within its current format, should the Member States wish to utilise it effectively.
- The CD also draws its strength from the fact that **it is the forum where all key stakeholders are available to engage.** The Conference should make use of this critical composition, which is lacking in other disarmament initiatives outside this Conference.
- With **the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,** where the entire UN architecture has reformulated its work to better respond to the realisation of the SDGs within its respective mandates, the CD as the single negotiating body for multilateral disarmament treaties, should also contemplate as to how its work could contribute to the collective realisation of the 2030 Agenda, given the importance of durable peace for sustainable development and vice versa.

Excellencies,

The CD holds a significant responsibility with regard to a rule –based international order that we as Members of the UN family are seeking to uphold. The CD’s continued inaction sets a negative precedent by not measuring up to effectively preventing or responding to new and emerging security challenges through the adoption of appropriate international instruments. Therefore, it is time to avoid the temptation of subjecting the work of this Conference to the vagaries of the ever changing international strategic landscape, and instead we must endeavour to harness its potential to build common ground to achieve collective security. Sri Lanka hopes to remain proactively engaged within the Conference on Disarmament to help achieve this objective.

As the first President of the 2018 Session, conscious of the expectations of this Conference, we began our **consultations** immediately after the conclusion of the 2017 session, including meeting with Ambassador Julio Herráiz of Spain, the last President of the 2017 session, and Ambassador Htin Lynn, Chairperson of the ‘Way Ahead Working Group’. Since then, I have held more than 30 consultations - multiple times with some delegations, including the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, the 5 Presidents to follow in the 2018 session, as well as other Member States, in an effort to understand the opportunities, and the challenges before us.

One significant point that emerged from these consultations is the **need for greater coordination among the P-6**, given that 4 weeks is not sufficient for any President to bring about a meaningful result. The other P-6 member states have not only been bilaterally consulted by the first President, they also have jointly engaged in informal consultations with the SG of the Conference on three occasions over the past 7 weeks in trying to build coordination among the six Presidencies. This should contribute towards a positive start of our work for the year, as well as to facilitate a continuous flow of work throughout the year.

Sri Lanka fully acknowledges the importance of establishing a Programme of Work (PoW) for the CD early. We believe, however, that it should evolve through an expeditious process of consultations and consensus making. During my consultations so far, delegations have reaffirmed their willingness to engage in this regard. However, further efforts are required to build convergence on any of the agenda items, with a view to developing a PoW. Nevertheless, we note that over the past years a number of sound proposals, were presented, some even reaching near consensus, but due to circumstances failed to sustain momentum. It would be worthwhile for this Conference to revisit these proposals, in their original packages, or as individual agenda items, as part of a **'stock taking exercise'**, with a view to explore commonalities and possible modifications that may be required to adapt them to the current circumstances and realities. Such an approach may help us in finding points of convergence on a possible PoW.

We therefore hope that the document compiled by the CD Secretariat, which was circulated last week will facilitate an open and informed discussion. I look forward to this discussion next week, and invite delegations to consider presenting fresh ideas and innovative approaches, including through written submissions, which could bridge the existing gaps. The process suggested could be result oriented if the key players and other members show willingness to engage.

As we make all efforts to achieve consensus on a programme of work, it is important to ensure that the very little time we have in the Conference is put to good use. Therefore, it is my intention to seek to have **substantive discussions on the CD agenda items**, which could lead to greater understanding on each other's positions, as well as to enlighten ourselves on related developments that are taking place outside this Conference.

Excellences and dear colleagues,

It is the collective will of the membership that will shape the future actions of the CD. Therefore, the ultimate burden rests on both your countries and mine - as Members of this Conference, to remain engaged in trying to build mutual trust and confidence as well as to find common ground in order to reach consensus. While defending respective national positions in this forum, it is

also the responsibility of all of us to communicate and advice our respective capitals on where flexibilities and new thinking could pave the way to positives developments and to deliver tangible results. We should also seek to bring back the necessary attention at the highest political levels to the CD, in order to maintain the integrity and credibility of the Conference, as well as to create forward movement and momentum.

I assure you of the commitment and dedication of my delegation to work closely with all members of the Conference, in an open and transparent manner in discharging this important duty as the first President of the Conference of its 2018 session.

That concludes my remarks as the President.