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## **Sri Lanka's leadership at the Geneva based Conference on Disarmament commended**



*(Photo caption - Following his address to the Conference on Disarmament on 26 February, UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres greets Sri Lanka's Permanent Representative to the UN in Geneva Ambassador Ravinatha Aryasinha and Sri Lanka delegation to the CD- Deputy Permanent Representative Mrs. Samantha Jayasuriya and First Secretary Mrs. Mafusa Lafir)*

The Decision arrived at during Sri Lanka's Presidency of the Conference on Disarmament (CD) to resume substantive work, and the role played in this regard by Sri Lanka's Permanent Representative to the UN in Geneva Ambassador Ravinatha Aryasinha, has been commended during the High-Level Segment of the CD held in Geneva this week.

In his address to the CD on Monday (26 February 2018), the UN Secretary-General (UNSG) Antonio Guterres, referred to the recent Decision of 16 February 2018 as an effort "to find ways to break the long-standing stalemate in this Conference". He further said "I believe you are off to the best start in nearly two decades, and I look forward to building on this new momentum".

At a follow-up meeting held on the sidelines of the High-Level segment, UNSG's High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Izumi Nakamitsu said she was "deeply impressed and grateful for the leadership offered by Ambassador Aryasinha in adopting the Decision which is a contribution not only to the CD, but also towards the overall objective of

disarmament". She requested Sri Lanka to help with the immediate next steps in the implementation of the recent CD Decision.

The Executive Secretary of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) Mr. Lassina Zerbo in his address at the High - Level segment noted that *"The decision taken by the Conference on 16 February has sent a very encouraging message to the international community: Concrete steps are being taken to advance the substantive work of the Conference on Disarmament"*.

The Foreign Minister of the current CD Presidency – Sweden, Ms. Margot Wallström observed that, *"It is in these times of hardship that we must multiply our efforts and show that the conference on disarmament, as a platform for diplomacy, can achieve results that bring us closer to our common goal of disarmament. During the past weeks, intensive consultations have been conducted under the able leadership of the Ambassador of Sri Lanka. During these consultations we sensed that there was an emerging will, underpinned by a spirit of compromise, to get the CD back on track. That sense proved correct. The CD eventually managed to adopt a decision that paves the way for structured discussions."* *"My gratitude also goes to the Ambassador of Sri Lanka Ravinatha Aryasinha for his hard and successful efforts to establish Subsidiary Bodies of the CD"*, the Minister added.

In their statements to the High-Level segment, Ministers and Deputy Ministers of Foreign Affairs from Brazil, Egypt, Iran, Ireland, Japan, Kazakhstan, Mexico, Myanmar, Romania, Russia, Slovenia, Slovakia, Switzerland and Venezuela commended the recent Decision and Sri Lanka's leadership role. Earlier, the delegations from Australia, China, Cuba, France, India, Pakistan, Spain, UK, and the USA had welcomed and extended support for the decision secured during Sri Lanka's Presidency.

Meanwhile, in an analysis written on the 'February 16 decision' titled "The Conference on disarmament agrees to start working: a wake-up call for 'sleeping beauty'?"<sup>1</sup>, Marc Finaud, Senior Programme Advisor and Arms Proliferation Cluster Leader, Emerging Security Challenges Programme, at the Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP), observed;

"On 16 February 2018, after intensive consultations, the current President of the Geneva Conference on Disarmament (CD), Ambassador Ravinatha Aryasinha of Sri Lanka, banged his gavel to mark the decision of the CD to [start substantive work](#). This decision may not have hit the headlines in the world media, but for most members of the disarmament community, it was an unexpected achievement. In recent years, the 65 Members of the [Conference](#), established in 1979, agreed by consensus on a formal programme of work only in 1998 and 2009. Those attempts were short-lived since they were defeated by further disagreements about which items to negotiate on and on linkages established between some of those issues. This is why the CD, which had not negotiated any single agreement since the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty adopted in 1996, was often derided as the 'Geneva Sleeping Beauty' ".

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gcsp.ch/News-Knowledge/Global-insight/The-Conference-on-Disarmament-Agrees-to-Start-Working-A-Wake-up-Call-for-Sleeping-Beauty>

"The compromise achieved thanks to the diplomatic skills of the President paves the way for the establishment of four subsidiary bodies (Ad Hoc Committees) to explore the possible common ground on the so-called four 'core issues' of the agenda (adopted by the UN General Assembly). In addition, a fifth subsidiary body will examine the remaining agenda items. This decision reflects the necessary 'constructive ambiguity' and the flexibility required to rally consensus between the states that wish to jump start the negotiations and those who are less enthusiastic and advocate more exploratory talks".

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