



**Permanent Mission of Pakistan to the UN  
Geneva**

**Statement by Ambassador Bilal Ahmad at the Plenary Meeting of the  
Conference on Disarmament  
14 March 2024**

**Thematic Debate on Negative Security Assurances**

**Mr. President,**

Thank you for convening this important thematic discussion. We associate ourselves with the Statement of G-21 delivered by Zimbabwe. We have following remarks in our national capacity.

The subject of negative security assurances has been on the international agenda for close to six decades.

My delegation has highlighted the salience of this item on a number of occasions during discussions in this body. We have also consistently drawn attention to the consensus contained in SSOD-I Final Document and NSAs being an integral part of CD's agenda from its inception, as one of the three 'original nuclear issues', the other two being nuclear disarmament and nuclear test ban.

**Mr. President,**

There is an international consensus that the only guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons and the prevention of nuclear war is the complete elimination of such weapons. While we remain committed to the goal of a nuclear weapon free world, we do note that the dream of disarmament remains tantalizingly out of reach. This stark reality underscores the pressing need for a legal framework on negative security assurances (NSAs).

Pakistan has long argued for NSAs that are credible, effective, and legally binding within a multilateral framework.

From the late 1960s onwards, then as a non-nuclear weapon State, Pakistan had sought legally binding assurances to safeguard its security from the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. These efforts assumed greater urgency after nuclear weapons were inducted in the South Asian region in 1974.

In 1979, Pakistan tabled a draft “International Convention to Assure Non-Nuclear-Weapon States against the Use or Threat of Use of Nuclear Weapons” at the CD, contained in Document CD/10.

Unfortunately, the failure of the international community to provide credible, effective and legal assurances against the threat or use of nuclear weapons obliged Pakistan to develop a nuclear deterrent of its own. Notwithstanding this defensive capability, Pakistan remains committed to pursuing a legal instrument on NSAs.

This continued commitment to NSAs is demonstrated by our annual tabling of UN General Assembly resolution on this subject since 1990.

Last year, in March, we submitted a new Working Paper in this Conference contained in CD/2317 as yet another tangible contribution in this area to make progress.

The Working Paper proposes elements under the following concepts which have often been brought up in this Conference: **(i) by whom; (ii) to who; and (iii) how.**

On the question of ‘**by whom**’, the Working Paper proposes that all nuclear weapon states, regardless of being a party to any specific international treaty or otherwise, should give such assurances in order for NSAs to be universal and comprehensive.

On the question of ‘**to who**’, the Paper proposes that all non-nuclear weapon states that have renounced the right to develop nuclear weapons under an international treaty and are not parties to the collective or bilateral security arrangements of or alliances with some nuclear-weapon States should receive such assurances.

Alternatively, an additional protocol to the International Convention on NSAs could be incorporated to cover such non-nuclear weapon states, which are in security arrangements or alliances with some nuclear-weapon States, if they can unconditionally oblige the nuclear weapon states not to threaten to use or use nuclear weapons on their behalf, under any circumstances, against any non-nuclear weapon states.

On the question of “**how**”, the Working Paper calls for an international legally binding instrument negotiated at the Conference on Disarmament while proposing general and specific obligations.

**Mr. President,**

Let me now address the most common arguments presented against the commencement of negotiations on NSAs at the CD.

*One*, is that the assurances provided through unilateral declarations and UNSC resolutions are sufficient.

However, over the years, a number of questions have been raised regarding their sufficiency and efficacy. The evidence suggests that they are arguably insufficient and partial, on account of the following.

First, many of these unilateral declarations contain qualifiers and caveats, to be interpreted at the discretion of the States making such declarations.

Second, these qualified declarations envisage that the Security Council, and above all its nuclear-weapon State permanent members, will act immediately.

This proposition remains flawed under any objective examination. How can or will the Security Council “act immediately” if the perpetrator of such an act is also a veto-wielding member that will certainly block any joint action by the Council?

Third, what good would the Security Council’s post hoc action be when the country aggressed upon by the use of nuclear weapons has already been devastated?

For these reasons, the declarations of nuclear weapon states contained in Security Council resolutions do not and cannot substitute for a multilateral legally binding instrument on NSAs.

**Mr. President,**

The *other* argument suggests Nuclear Weapon Free Zones is the only way to extend such assurances.

However, such zones in themselves do not substitute for an international legally binding instrument for the following reasons.

First, the current system of nuclear weapon free zones (NWFZs) remains non-universal, excluding some regions.

Non-nuclear weapon states that are outside established zones or belong to regions where the establishment of such zones is extremely problematic due to the existence of nuclear weapons in such regions, should not be denied their legitimate right to receive legally binding NSAs.

Second, the insertion of qualifiers and caveats by some nuclear weapon States in the NWFZs treaties in some instances undermine the spirit of the very treaties establishing such zones.

**Mr. President,**

One wonders that if some States do not want to unconditionally and legally relinquish their right to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon states, how will they possibly relinquish nuclear weapons at all?

The membership of this Conference deserves an explanation on the rationale for the opposition to commencing negotiations on a legally binding instrument on NSAs, including any security interests that might be at stake. Furthermore, why and which of these concerns cannot be addressed during negotiations in the CD?

Hedging movement on this issue with progress on their own priority areas is not a tenable posture. It only contributes directly to prolonging the CD's deadlock.

**Mr. President,**

A legally binding instrument on NSAs will have a vital role in fostering a more peaceful and stable security environment globally and regionally, and in advancing the objectives of nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation, pending the fulfilment of nuclear disarmament obligations, on account of the following.

One, bridging the security gap between nuclear and non-nuclear weapon States.

Two, help reduce tensions; avoid costly arms races; and mitigate concerns of non-nuclear weapon states on account of new doctrines related to the use of nuclear weapons.

Three, make a significant contribution to augmenting the global non-proliferation regime. Its absence has an opposite effect.

Four, constitute a major CBM between the nuclear and non-nuclear weapon States, thereby facilitating negotiations on other matters related to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

**Mr. President,**

For those who are wedded to the step by step approach, we say that an international convention on NSAs is the next essential and logical step on the pathway to achieving nuclear disarmament.

There are no insurmountable legal, technical or financial obstacles to negotiating and concluding such an instrument. Commencing negotiations on an International Convention on NSAs would also end the decades long impasse in the CD.

The 2022 draft report of subsidiary body-4 contained a recommendation to establish an Ad Hoc Committee on NSAs, to which no CD member had raised objections. While so far, we have been unable to establish subsidiary bodies this year, we continue to hope to undertake substantive work in SB-4, whenever it is established.

We earnestly hope this Conference is able to chart a concrete path on NSAs at the earliest.

**I thank you.**

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