

**Statement by the Foreign Secretary of Pakistan Muhammad Syrus Sajjad
Qazi at the High-Level Segment of the Conference on Disarmament
28 February 2024**

Mr. President,

I congratulate Indonesia on assuming the Presidency of the Conference on Disarmament.

It is indeed a pleasure for me to speak at this High-Level Segment of this important Body.

CD is an indispensable part of the UN disarmament machinery. Pakistan values its role in advancing the global disarmament and arms control agenda on a consensus-based approach. This body has successfully delivered important treaties and conventions.

The current impasse in the CD is a reflection of the prevailing geo-strategic realities. Pakistan looks forward to working closely with you and subsequent CD Presidencies to break this impasse.

Mr. President,

Today's global security landscape is beset by turmoil.

There is a disturbing normalization of threat of use of force and aggression. The risk of unresolved disputes turning into full-blown conflicts has never been greater.

States continue to expand and upgrade their arsenals for dominance, accentuating risks of nuclear war, with cavalier threats made too often.

Militarily significant states have demonstrated little appetite for treaties which require compromises on their strategic advantages. Polarization and contestations beset their mutual ties. These States are only willing to advance proposals which are cost-free to them.

Cumulatively, these trends and developments have led to a stalemate in the CD for over two decades now.

Mr. President,

This Conference must find ways to address the pressing risks to security and stability at the international and regional levels. At present, three such risks if left unaddressed, can cascade into major threats:

- i. *Firstly*, at the strategic level, nuclear weapon systems are being modernized. Simultaneously, destabilizing weapon systems such as the hypersonic systems and ABMs are being deployed along with doctrinal innovations.
- ii. *Secondly*, the nature of warfare is undergoing transformation with rapid advancements in new technologies. Militarization and integration of cyber technologies, Artificial Intelligence, Big Data analytics, quantum computing with outer space are being applied for strategic dominance. There is clear resistance by leading technology holders to regulate their new and lethal tools of modern warfare.
- iii. *Thirdly*, the UN disarmament forums have failed to adapt their agendas to deal with prevailing and emerging global threats and remain stuck in anachronisms. The technology holders are averse to discussions about legally binding arrangements to prevent the weaponization of new technologies. Similarly, the CD is also stalled to take up in earnest negotiations on a legally binding treaty for the Prevention of Arms Race in Outer Space (PAROS) – one of the core issues on its agenda since its inception. Weaponization of outer space, threat or use of force against outer space objects, integration of ABMs with space assets and offensive doctrines and postures in outer space continue to constitute threats to space security, safety and sustainability.

The developments I have just highlighted generate new types of nuclear risks besides impacting global and regional security in other ways. Clearly, we need to evolve a new paradigm that includes risk reduction across various domains including conventional, nuclear, space and emerging technologies, whether they are specifically weaponized or not.

Mr. President

The *raison d'être* of the CD is nuclear disarmament. The CD must advance nuclear disarmament by addressing the underlying security concerns that drive states to rely on nuclear weapons for self-defense.

This body has been prevented to make progress on the two of its oldest agenda items since its inception: nuclear disarmament and Negative Security Assurances. For several decades, we have also been unable to negotiate a treaty to prevent an arms race in outer space.

Pakistan believes that negotiating an international legal instrument on Negative Security Assurances is the lowest hanging fruit in this body and has the significant potential to create the necessary environment for confidence building and easing of tensions.

Furthermore, the significant implications of Artificial Intelligence in military applications demand our immediate attention, necessitating development of effective guardrails.

Given the direct and causal relationship between conventional weapon asymmetries and reliance on nuclear deterrence, Pakistan considers that the issue of balanced reduction of armed forces and conventional armaments deserves the attention of the CD as a part of its comprehensive and balanced programme of work.

These are the most immediate areas on which we should work on. At the same time, we do acknowledge that our ability to start negotiations in this Conference remains contingent on the policy priorities of its members, their threat perceptions and their core national security concerns.

It is disingenuous when some members of the Conference choose to insist on pursuing self-serving and cost-free proposals such as banning the future production of fissile materials, which impinge on security of others.

We are not averse to conversations on fissile materials. All we ask is to discuss this subject in all its dimensions. We have therefore proposed a Fissile Material Treaty that addresses this subject comprehensively, effectively and verifiably.

We call for crafting a new mandate for such a treaty. It should stipulate explicitly in its scope fissile material stocks. And it should apply equally to all States without discrimination.

Mr. President,

In South Asia, the largest country in the region continues to be a beneficiary of nuclear exceptionalism and generous supplies of advanced conventional and non-conventional weapons and technologies, while pursuing aggressive and destabilizing policies in the neighborhood.

Such supplies are straining the security environment; heightening risks to peace and stability in the region; reinforcing a sense of impunity in the recipient state and freezing pathways to conflict resolution through peaceful means.

While these developments directly infringe on Pakistan's security, we continue to adhere to and call for restraint and responsibility. Our proposal on a strategic restraint regime in South Asia still remains on the table.

Peace and stability in South Asia cannot be achieved without resolving the underlying disputes; without agreeing on reciprocal measures for nuclear and missile restraint and risk reduction; and without instituting a balance between conventional forces through a sustained process of dialogue and confidence building.

We have an unequivocal policy for a peaceful neighbourhood on the basis of mutual respect, sovereign equality, undiminished security for all States; no threat or use of force and pacific settlement of disputes under the UN Charter.

Mr. President,

Our commitment to revitalizing this forum, through persistent and constructive dialogue, is imperative for overcoming longstanding obstacles.

Pakistan will continue to call for a renewed paradigm for arms control, away from arms races and towards restraint at the global and regional levels.

A balanced, comprehensive and objective approach must permeate the CD's work for it to transcend vexing interests of its Member States and pursue global arms control & disarmament in an equitable and balanced manner, in accordance with the agreed principles.

A pre-requisite for such a direction is to restore trust, both inside and outside this Conference.

In these endeavors, you will find Pakistan a willing and constructive partner.

Thank you.