



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

**Statement by Ambassador Bilal Ahmad, Permanent Representative of
Pakistan at the Plenary Meeting of the Conference on Disarmament,
Geneva
08 February 2024**

Mr. President,

Thank you for convening today's plenary meeting.

Members may recall the views expressed by my delegation on what could constitute a Programme of Work during the plenary meeting held on 6 February.

We had underlined three key considerations in this context.

First, to fully take into account the contemporary realities of international security landscape in all its dimensions.

Second, to pursue genuine multilateralism i.e. the notion of security should be responsive to the interest of all states, by practicing the principle of undiminished and equal security for all.

Third, the continued importance of a balanced and comprehensive programme of work as a means and a basis to fulfil this body's mandate.

Mr. President,

We note that the non-paper proposal before us fails to be responsive to all of these three considerations.

When our consultations on Program of Work began this year, we were informed that there was broad support for the 2022 decision in this Conference.

We were asked to consider, and I quote, “minimal changes”, unquote, to the 2022 decision. We cautioned against going down that road, as we have been highlighting the delicate balance of compromise unlocked in the 2022 decision.

When we look at the circulated draft non-paper, we cannot help but feel perplexed by the approach taken by the CD President.

This non-paper is neither comprehensive nor balanced. It certainly is not the 2022 model for which we have been hearing nothing but support in this room in the course of past two weeks.

Mr. President,

While highlighting time and again that you were not seeking amendments in the timetable of the subsidiary bodies of the 2022 decision, now we have seen that significant language amendments have been introduced in the timetable on a deeply polarizing and a controversial issue, even before the debate on priorities of Program of Work could be concluded in our plenary and while ignoring the priorities of a large majority of the membership of this body.

Mr. President,

The sombre task assigned to the President of this Conference as laid out in the rules of procedure involves serving as a presiding officer and to draw Program of Work based on the collective aspirations of this body and to make a determination and facilitate, where consensus was likely to be achieved. It is neither an opportunity to propagate national priorities nor an avenue to advance concerns of one group of states.

Arms control, like diplomacy, is the art of the possible. This means recognizing the realities as they are.

And it also requires striving towards what can be agreed by all members of the Conference, as common priorities.

Mr. President,

I would like to speak on the misguided obsession and the messianic zeal with the FMCT.

It is an evidence of how this body is deliberately hamstrung by some, unless it only pursues cost free approaches meant to perpetuate absolute dominance of the few.

Make no mistake. The assertion that national priorities are or should constitute CD's priorities has not worked in the past. Nor will it in the future. These self-serving assertions have indeed been the principal cause of reinforcing the deadlock in this Conference for more than two decades. The top priority of the Conference remains crystal clear i.e. nuclear disarmament.

By now, we are well familiar with the ritual attempts by a handful states to try and portray the so called FMCT as a magic wand or an elixir to fix the contemporary international security challenges. In their most benign form, these attempts are designed to deflect and deliberately undermine prospects of progress at this Conference.

As my delegation has underlined clearly, the time for an FMCT that seeks to freeze existing asymmetry in nuclear arsenals and fissile material stocks held by some nuclear weapons States, has long passed.

The proposition to only ban fissile material production while insisting to retain thousands of tones of these stockpiles neither serves the goal of enhancing international or regional security nor does it promote strategic stability at any level. Focusing solely on what has not been produced yet and ignoring thousands of tones of what is already there is simply unrealistic.

Let me reiterate: any potential nuclear war would not be fought with what is going to be produced in the future, but most likely with what is already possessed, stockpiled and deployed in huge numbers.

The sophistry that a magical FMCT will cap the number of nuclear weapons globally has also been laid bare by real world developments; nuclear arsenals of states ostensibly committed to the so-called moratoria on fissile material production continue to increase.

On our part, Mr. President, not only have we elaborated in painstaking detail, time and again, the implications of the so called FMCT on our core national security interests, we have also presented a viable formal proposal to pursue work in this area.

The reality is that some wish to hide behind ritualistic calls on FMCT to avoid pursuing nuclear disarmament. The five decades old track record of unfulfilled nuclear disarmament obligations speaks for itself.

More importantly, we have also not heard from these very states how commencing negotiations on nuclear disarmament impacts their fundamental security interests, or for that matter how formalizing NSAs into a legally binding instrument undermines the core national security interests of these states.

To us, then, this deflection in the garb of ripeness of an outdated proposal is clearly aimed at keeping this body paralyzed.

Mr. President

We fully respect the right of each member to have their preferences and to present them for consideration by the Conference. The G21 states have presented their preference i.e. nuclear disarmament and negative security assurances. In addition, we have also highlighted the need to make urgent progress on military applications of Artificial Intelligence. Then there is the urgent need for commencing negotiations of a legally binding instrument on Prevention of Placement of Weapons in Outer Space and of the Threat or Use of Force against Outer Space Objects, on which a handful of states continue to block progress for a number of years.

It is perplexing to see how all these issues have been brushed aside, while assigning priority to one controversial topic.

We have been expecting the naysayers to clearly outline their rationale and any fundamental security concerns tied to opposing pursuit of the priorities of vast majority of the membership of this body.

Let us be clear: mere reiteration of unrealistic proposals as a response to genuine queries will simply not cut anymore. It is disingenuous, to say the least, to urge others to negotiate their core national security interests while continuing to rehash cost free measures to ensure absolute security for themselves.

Mr. President,

We have seen the proposals introduced by the Russian Federation today. We will give them due consideration as many correspond with the priorities that we had voiced earlier.

Recognizing the differences in priorities, we had highlighted the need to adopt the least common denominator i.e. 2022 decision, which has worked in the recent past.

However, the draft non-paper represents an insurmountable chasm - a bridge too far to cross. The larger point must always remain forefront, and it is that proposals designed solely to protect the interests of and dominance by a few at the cost of others are doomed to fail from their inception.

The only option is to take on board the genuine concerns of all states and move beyond known dead ends.

Some degree of consistency, transparency, genuine multilateralism, and demonstration of adherence to the fundamental principle of undiminished security for all, by some of this body's members may go a long way.

We will continue to hope that this indeed happens under your Presidency.

I thank you.