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Permanent Mission of Pakistan to the UN
Geneva

Statement by Pakistan at the Second Meeting of Subsidiary Body 4,
Conference on Disarmament, Geneva
13 May 2025
"Review of existing assurances, including on their effectiveness as well as the role and significance of nuclear-weapon-free zones"

Thank you for convening today's meeting.

Mr. Coordinator,

In the first meeting of Subsidiary Body (SB) 4, my delegation recalled previous work done on Negative Security Assurances (NSAs).

Today I will share our views on the existing assurances, including on their effectiveness.

In our working paper titled, **"International Convention to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons"** as contained in CD/2317, we addressed questions relating to sufficiency and efficacy of existing assurances.

The existing assurances are provided through:

- Unilateral declarations,
- UN Security Council resolutions, and
- Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones.

Let me begin with the first two.

While some nuclear-weapon States have issued unilateral declarations, and others have extended assurances under Security Council resolutions—namely resolutions 255 (1968) and 984 (1995)—these measures remain insufficient and partial.

First, many of these unilateral assurances are hedged with qualifiers and caveats. The interpretation of these caveats lies solely with the States issuing them. These declarations fall short of any credible standard of verification, enforceability, or compliance.

Second, the Security Council assurances raise fundamental concerns. For example, these declarations provide that the "Security Council, and above all its nuclear-weapon State permanent members, will act immediately in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter of the United Nations, in the event that [a non-nuclear weapon State is] the victim of an act of, or object of a threat of, aggression in which nuclear weapons are used".

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?

A clear majority in the international community has long raised this legitimate question: if some permanent members of the Security Council do not have any intention of using nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon States, then what prevents them from formalizing the assurances into an international legally binding instrument?

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.

Now turning to Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones (NWFZs).

Nuclear Weapon Free Zones have served some useful purpose and even helped solidify certain international norms in their individual contexts. Yet, 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.

Those States which are outside existing nuclear weapon free zones, especially those non-nuclear weapon States that belong to regions where the establishment of such zones is extremely problematic due to the existence of nuclear weapons in these regions, should not be denied their legitimate right to receive legally binding NSAs.

Renouncing the right to acquire nuclear weapons should be an adequate baseline to obtain legally binding NSAs. Subjecting the grant of legally codified NSAs to another layer of non-proliferation commitment, such as a NWFZ, is neither a requirement nor in accordance with the principle of equal and undiminished security for such States, especially in areas where such zones are not possible.

Second, the insertion of qualifiers and caveats by some nuclear weapon States in the NWFZs treaties raises some key questions. In some instances, such qualifiers undermine the spirit of the very treaties establishing such zones i.e. by limiting the obligations to self-interpretive declarations.

Significantly, the very States that are meant to be assured by such unilateral declarations and NWFZ Protocols have themselves repeatedly stressed that they do not find them adequate because of the attached conditionalities and interpretative statements.

Mr. Coordinator

For all these reasons, my delegation firmly believes that only a legally binding international instrument can constitute “effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons,” as envisaged in the mandate of this Subsidiary Body.

In the meetings ahead, we look forward to engaging substantively on the possible elements of such an instrument.

I thank you.

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