Statement

by

Mr. Raza Bashir Tarar
Deputy Permanent Representative of Pakistan

at the

First Committee Thematic Debate
on Nuclear Weapons
(66th Session of the UNGA)

New York, 13 October 2011
Mr. Chairman,

The post World War II nuclear era witnessed a race for strategic nuclear superiority. During the cold war, the major nuclear powers continued their production and modernization of nuclear weapons despite knowing their catastrophic implications for humanity. Parallel to this, development of nuclear weapons by some states in the regions of conflict forced threatened states also to pursue the nuclear option in order to ensure their security.

Mr. Chairman,

Pakistan, along with Non-Aligned Movement Member States, has been stressing on the need for nuclear disarmament for decades. The end of the Cold War had raised our hope of meaningful progress towards the long unfulfilled goal of total nuclear disarmament. It was hoped that the superpowers, by undertaking drastic reductions in their nuclear arsenal, would lead the way towards complete and comprehensive nuclear disarmament. Yet these ephemeral hopes faded away as nothing changed in terms of the centrality of nuclear weapons to the security policies of major powers and the issue of nuclear disarmament remained confined to exhortations, declarations and rhetoric. Moreover, the current complexity of the international system lends itself to increased risk of miscalculation and accidental use.

Mr. Chairman,

SSOD-I recognized nuclear weapons as an existential threat to humanity. It agreed that disarmament and arms limitation, particularly nuclear disarmament, was essential for averting any possible use of nuclear weapons and to strengthen international peace and security. The only real guarantee against possible use of nuclear weapons is their total elimination. Pakistan, along with other members of the Non-Aligned Movement, has been stressing on the need for nuclear disarmament for decades as the top priority in the field of international security.

Mr. Chairman,

Instead of halting these growing risks and reversing the negative trends, the major nuclear powers have followed discriminatory policies based on double standards that have further increased the nuclear threat. In pursuit of the so called balance of power, containment and commercial gains, they have violated their own principles of non-proliferation and gravely undermined the international non-proliferation regime. The imminent danger posed by these policies in our region has forced us to confront the consequences of these double standards.

Mr. Chairman,

Multilateralism is the only way to craft international instruments in the field of security and disarmament that enjoy legitimacy and respect. Such negotiations should pursue real disarmament and not just a façade.

Moreover, the objectives and principles enshrined in SSOD-I provide the only framework that is comprehensive and non-discriminatory. Based on the principle of equal security of states, SSOD-I consensually agreed to sanctify the principle of consensus for multilateral disarmament negotiations. Several treaties have been negotiated on the basis of this principle.
However, recently, we have heard arguments from some powerful states that this consensus is no more valid. At the same time, they oppose convening of SSOD-IV to build a new consensus on global disarmament. The only possible explanation for such a paradoxical approach is that these states are not willing to abide by their commitment to renounce nuclear weapons.

Mr. Chairman,

The UN Charter obliges nations not to use or threaten to use force. Therefore, the intention to use nuclear weapons or the threat of their use is not only illegal but also morally indefensible. The demand for Negative Security Assurances by the Non-Nuclear Weapon States is based on their desire to remove the ever-existing threat of a possible use of nuclear weapons against them. Denying them these assurances could only mean that the Nuclear Weapon States want to preserve their option to use Nuclear Weapons even against non-nuclear weapons states!

In such a scenario, how could the global environment be conducive to disarmament efforts when the Nuclear Weapon States not only intend to preserve their nuclear arsenals but also the option to use them?

Mr. Chairman,

Some of these major states have now resorted to shifting the focus of the international community towards a much more limited goal of nuclear non-proliferation, albeit with a selective and discriminatory approach. This would not only preserve their eminent nuclear status in the global security architecture but would also enable them to claim a sham “progress” in disarmament. This, perhaps, is the reason for their focus on a treaty banning only the production of fissile materials but not to eliminate their fissile material stockpiles.

From a technical standpoint, an FMCT that only seeks to ban future production of fissile materials is not even a non-proliferation measure, let alone a step towards nuclear disarmament. The retention of huge stocks of fissile material would allow the major nuclear powers to continue producing nuclear weapons even if such a treaty were to be negotiated successfully.

However, if we are desirous of a treaty on fissile materials that has genuine non-proliferation and disarmament objectives, it must include reduction in the huge stocks of existing fissile materials – a belief shared by many countries, in addition to Pakistan. This approach is essential to ensure equal security of states, which is a cardinal principle in disarmament negotiations. This is particularly needed to redress the existing asymmetry in fissile material stockpiles in our region.

The pursuit of discriminatory policies by some major states regarding nuclear cooperation have fundamentally and qualitatively altered Pakistan’s security environment. We cannot remain oblivious to these dangerous developments. An FMCT that only envisages ban on future production of fissile material would accentuate this precarious situation. Pakistan is, therefore, obliged to oppose negotiations on an FMCT due to its legitimate national security concerns.
Mr. Chairman,

Pakistan has repeatedly and unambiguously given the reasons for its opposition to an FMCT. However, Pakistan is ready to support commencement of negotiations on the other three core issues on the CD’s agenda, including nuclear disarmament, NSAs and PAROS. After all, the CD is not there to only negotiate an FMCT.

Some delegations argue that FCMT is ripe for negotiations. The question is what criteria are being used to make this judgment. If the ripeness is to be determined on the basis of the passage of time then surely negotiations on nuclear disarmament should commence immediately since it is the oldest issue on the CD’s agenda. If the criterion is security interests then we should proceed to negotiate NSAs since this does not directly impact the security interests of any state and it would contribute to the overall improvement of the global security situation.

Since CD has not been able to commence negotiations on any of these agenda items, it is clear that there are states in the CD that are opposed to commence negotiations on these three agenda items. Since they argue that Pakistan’s concerns can be addressed during the negotiations on an FMCT, why do they maintain that their concerns on the other three core issues cannot be addressed in the same manner? With their logic, for example, the contentious elements pertaining to the issue of nuclear disarmament should not have prevented commencement of negotiations on this single most important agenda item for 32 years. However, if they have legitimate security concerns, they should openly state their reasons for opposing commencement of negotiations on the other three equally, if not more important, issues on the CD's agenda. The fact that they have chosen not to do so raises serious questions regarding their motives and commitment to nuclear disarmament and indeed to the work of CD itself.

Thank you Mr. Chairman