Statement by Ambassador Sujata Mehta, Permanent Representative of India to the CD, at the OEWG on “Taking Forward Multilateral Nuclear Disarmament Negotiations”, Geneva, May 15, 2013

Mr. Chairman,

The Indian delegation would like to congratulate you on your election as the Chair of this Open Ended Working Group of the UN General Assembly on taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations. It is a painful reality that nuclear disarmament continues to be a distant goal several decades after the first UNGA resolution called for the elimination from national armaments of atomic weapons and all other major weapons adaptable to mass destruction. It is also more than three decades since the First Special Session of the General Assembly on Disarmament reaffirmed that nuclear disarmament is the highest priority for the international community.

Mr. Chairman,

Before outlining our views on nuclear disarmament and the work of this Group, I would like to address some issues of procedure that my delegation deems important. We are committed to the principle that disarmament matters which have a bearing on national security interests of states can only be pursued through decision making by consensus. However, we recognize that this is a body established by the UNGA and as such is a subsidiary to it. In the view of my delegation it is a body that is required to function under the Rules of Procedure of the UNGA and not deviate from them. You had confirmed to us yourself that the UNGA Rules of Procedure would govern this OEWG, mutatis mutandis, which in our view implies that the only modifications would be to the extent that this is not the UNGA. In other words, that as in the case of the UNGA it is the views of Member States that are paramount and that Member States should have the opportunity to decide on the manner of work and on the content of work. As an OEWG of the UNGA this is a formal body and this Group has to approve every aspect of its work including its methods of work. We would have liked to have the opportunity to address this and other procedural aspects at the very start of this meeting. In any event we would like to underline that the working methods that are being pursued for the OEWG cannot constitute a precedent in any way for other such bodies that the UNGA may establish and their outcome cannot be binding on Member States.

Mr. Chairman,

India has been unwavering in its support for universal and non-discriminatory nuclear disarmament and the complete elimination of nuclear weapons and other WMDs. India’s first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru was among the first world leaders to champion the cause of nuclear disarmament.
Addressing the Third Special Session of the UN General Assembly on Disarmament in 1988, our late Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi proposed an Action Plan for a Nuclear-Weapons-Free and Non-violent World Order to attain the goal of nuclear disarmament in a time-bound, universal, non-discriminatory, phased and verifiable manner. As a nuclear weapon state, India is cognizant of its responsibility and our support for global, non-discriminatory nuclear disarmament has not diminished. As Prime Minister Manmohan Singh stated in the Indian parliament in 2007 “the possession of nuclear weapons only increases our sense of global responsibility and does not diminish it.” Unlike other weapon states, India is strongly committed to universal, non-discriminatory nuclear disarmament in a time bound manner.

India subscribes to a policy of credible minimum nuclear deterrent. We do not subscribe to any arms race, including a nuclear arms race. India has espoused the policy of no first-use and non-use against non-nuclear weapon states and is prepared to convert these undertakings into multilateral legal arrangements. We support negotiations with a view to reaching agreement on effective arrangements to assure non-nuclear weapon States against the use and threat of use of nuclear weapons. India supports a Global No-first Use Treaty. India remains committed to maintaining a unilateral and voluntary moratorium on nuclear explosive testing. Without prejudice to the priority we attach to nuclear disarmament, we support the negotiation in the CD of a non-discriminatory and internationally verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices that meets India’s national security interests. We are committed to working with the international community to advance our common objectives of non-proliferation, including through strong export controls and membership of the multilateral export regimes.

India is convinced that the goal of nuclear disarmament can be achieved by a step-by-step process underwritten by a universal commitment and an agreed multilateral framework that is global and non-discriminatory. This recognition has to be at the heart of the discussions in this Group. There is need for a meaningful dialogue among all states possessing nuclear weapons to build trust and confidence and for reducing the salience of nuclear weapons in international affairs and security doctrines. India’s resolutions in the First Committee on measures to reduce nuclear danger arising from accidental or unauthorized use of nuclear weapons and negotiations on a Convention on the prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons give expression to some of these ideas and have found support from a large number of States as steps for the progressive delegitimization of nuclear weapons. Further, in a working paper submitted to the UNGA in 2006, India had suggested a number of such measures. These include the following specific steps:

- Reaffirmation of the unequivocal commitment of all nuclear weapon States to the goal of complete elimination of nuclear weapons;
• Reduction of the salience of nuclear weapons in the security doctrines;

• Taking into account the global reach and menace of nuclear weapons, adoption of measures by nuclear-weapon States to reduce nuclear danger, including the risks of accidental nuclear war, de-alerting of nuclear-weapons to prevent unintentional and accidental use of nuclear weapons;

• Negotiation of a global agreement among nuclear weapon States on ‘no-first-use’ of nuclear-weapons;

• Negotiation of a universal and legally-binding agreement on non-use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon States;

• Negotiation of a Convention on the complete prohibition of the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons;

• Negotiation of a Nuclear Weapons Convention prohibiting the development, production, stockpiling and use of nuclear weapons and on their destruction, leading to the global, non-discriminatory and verifiable elimination of nuclear weapons with a specified timeframe.

Successive NAM Summit documents have consistently supported commencement of negotiations in the CD on Nuclear Disarmament and the complete elimination of nuclear weapons in a time-bound manner.

Mr. Chairman,

We believe that all countries who support multilateral negotiations on nuclear disarmament should pursue this objective in the Conference on Disarmament which brings together all the relevant countries. We should avoid setting up alternative forums or processes parallel to the CD that might create a mere illusion of progress or emotionalize the issue. We urge all concerned to make efforts for the adoption of a Programme of Work in the CD that gives due priority to negotiations on nuclear disarmament. While we share the disappointment that the CD has not been able to commence negotiations based on a programme of work, we believe the CD continues to have the mandate, the membership, the credibility and the rules of procedure to discharge its responsibility as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum.

My delegation had abstained on the UNGA resolution 67/56 by which this OEWG was constituted. We had abstained as we did not want to prejudge the utility or otherwise of this Group. We had also done so in view of the assurances of the co-sponsors of the resolution that this effort was not intended to supplant or damage the UN disarmament machinery including the
CD and that all proposals made by delegations would be considered in the OEWG. This is an important consideration for my delegation and our position on that has not changed in any manner. Any recommendations or suggestions which cast a shadow on the CD or its methods of work will not be acceptable to my delegation. In other words, this Group should not seek to supplant the CD as the sole disarmament negotiating forum of the international community. In fact, the only meaningful contribution it can make is to facilitate commencement of negotiations on nuclear disarmament in the Conference on Disarmament, which India along with the members of the NAM have always maintained as the highest priority enshrined in the consensus Final Document of SSODI.

In conclusion, I wish to state clearly that while my delegation is participating in this Group, India will not be bound by any outcome of any discussions in this OEWG which in our view do not conform to India's national security interests. Our expectation is that this Open Ended Working Group will be inclusive and will reflect all views and proposals on nuclear disarmament. We wait to see if the actual deliberations of this Group meet our expectations.

Thank you.