Statement by India on Nuclear Disarmament at CD Plenary on March 5, 2013

Madam President,

For India, the foremost priority issue in the CD has been and continues to be nuclear disarmament. This is a priority we share with other members of the Non-Aligned Movement, and here in Geneva with the Group of 21. More than two decades after the end of the Cold War and despite a radically re-configured political and security landscape, we are not any closer to beginning negotiations on global nuclear disarmament within a time bound framework, than we were in 1978 when SSOD-I enshrined nuclear disarmament as the primary mandate of this Conference.

2. We are conscious that global nuclear disarmament lies at the end of a long and arduous process but a beginning can be made in this forum if a subsidiary body would start consultations on specific measures that have the potential to command consensus, leading we would hope to a mandate on negotiations such as the one proposed by the G21 in document CD/1571. India is convinced that the goal of nuclear disarmament can be achieved through a step-by-step process underwritten by a universal commitment and an agreed multilateral framework that is global and non-discriminatory. 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.

3. In the current international climate there is greater support for progressive steps for delegitimization of nuclear weapons. Measures to reduce nuclear danger arising from accidental or unauthorized use of nuclear weapons, increasing restraints on the use of nuclear weapons and dealerting of nuclear weapons are pertinent in this regard. India’s resolutions in the First Committee give expression to some of these ideas and have found support from a large number of States. Our Working Paper CD/1816 tabled in the CD in February 2007, which was developed in the spirit of the 1988 Rajiv Gandhi Action Plan, also suggested specific measures, including a Global
No First Use Agreement and a Convention on the Prohibition of the Use of Nuclear Weapons. As part of the G-21 and NAM, India has supported the conclusion of a universal, unconditional and legally binding instrument on security assurances to non-nuclear weapon states as a matter of priority. The negotiation of such an instrument in the CD will complement other measures to reduce the salience of nuclear weapons in security doctrines and improve the international climate for promoting nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation in all its aspects. For India the concept of delegitimisation is not a magic wand that could make nuclear weapons disappear instantly; it is a potentially powerful process, and the operative word is process, that can help ease the CD on to the path to achieve a global zero.

4. Madam President, to conclude we are grateful for this opportunity to share with colleagues briefly India’s position on nuclear disarmament. We hope that the CD will continue to make its contribution to progress on disarmament issues, in particular nuclear disarmament. We are conscious that no forum can have an exclusive right to discuss an issue as important as nuclear disarmament. Indeed nuclear disarmament is always on the agenda of both the UNDC and the UNGA, and now an Open-Ended Working Group has been mooted to consider proposals to take forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations for the achievement and maintenance of a world without nuclear weapons. At the same time we need to remember that if our goal is indeed the global, non-discriminatory and verifiable elimination of all nuclear weapons through negotiations, our discussions need to link with and lead to concrete negotiating proposals in the CD as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum.