Mr President, respected Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is indeed a great honor for me to be able to present on behalf of the International NGOs, before this august body, our concerns regarding the continuing proliferation of nuclear weapons - both globally and especially in South Asia. On May 3, 2000, my friend and colleague, Mr Achin Vanaik, speaking at this very forum, laid before you the situation obtaining in South Asia. He also outlined recommendations for countering proliferation in South Asia and promoting more rapid global disarmament. Since then some things have remained the same but other developments have raised the stakes and the risk to humanity. It is on these aspects that I will focus in the course of this presentation.

Let me begin by flagging certain important events since that have shaped, in more ways than one, the destiny of the world in general and South Asia in particular. While there may be others I would like to highlight the following:

- The failure to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) by the United States of America.
- Pakistan's reversal of its long time support to the Taliban, joining the US War against terrorism and supporting military operations in Afghanistan.
- Domestic unrest in Pakistan over its support to the U.S. war on terrorism, raising questions about the safety and control of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal.
- The ongoing war on terrorism by the International Coalition led by the United States.
- The setting aside of the Anti Ballistic Missile Treaty (ABM) by the US and its policies regarding national missile defense (NMD) programs.
- The withdrawal of economic and military sanctions imposed on India and Pakistan subsequent to their nuclear tests in May 1998.
- The leaked details of the U.S Nuclear Posture Review indicating the country’s nuclear war plans against non-nuclear states that are party to the NPT and possible move to develop and test more usable nuclear weapons.

Current Security Conditions in South Asia:

A number of post-Sept 11, 2001 developments have had a huge impact on the Indian sub-continent and their full consequences have yet to be realized and understood. These include the ongoing “war on terrorism” in Afghanistan by the US-led global coalition, the policy turnabouts
and subsequent reactions in neighboring Pakistan, the `melting away' of large numbers of militants - be they Al Qaeda or Taliban – across the porous borders in the area, and increasing extremism in India and Bangladesh.

The domestic upheaval in Pakistan following President Pervez Musharraf’s decision to support U.S. military operations in Afghanistan and his announced crackdown on Islamic militants also raised questions about the safety and control of Pakistan’s nuclear arsenal.

Reports of Pakistani nuclear scientists having met Al Qaeda representatives in Afghanistan have led to serious concern that terrorist groups like Al-Qaeda, with assistance from disgruntled nuclear scientists, could be closer than previously thought to acquiring either nuclear or radiological devices.

The terrorist strike on the Indian Parliament on Dec 13, 2001, allegedly by two militant groups based in Pakistan, was also possibly a manifestation of the frustration of the Al Qaeda and the Taliban groups turning their attention outwards. Clearly this and future attacks can be attributed in large measure to the militants’ deep sense of frustration and anger at their abandonment by the Pakistani Government after decades of moral and material support and the massive military strikes launched by the United States in Afghanistan.

In response to the December 13th attack on the Indian Parliament, the Indian government mobilized its armed forces, resulting in an `eyeball to eyeball' confrontation between India and Pakistan along the international border and the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir. This situation continues to this day with all its attendant risks.

The 'War on Terrorism' appears to have given the major players in South Asia yet another excuse for settling old scores - but this time with a difference - as both of them are now nuclear weapon capable. This threat is real. Both sides have readied bombs and missiles and these preparations have been accompanied by a great deal of `hype' and rhetoric. In addition, and despite the claims to the contrary made by both India and Pakistan, they have rudimentary command and control systems. The chances of a nuclear exchange due to miscalculation, misinterpretation or by accident are therefore very real indeed. Notwithstanding their stated nuclear doctrines, there is no doubt that in the event of one or the other side being pushed into a corner in a conventional exchange, there is every possibility of nuclear weapons being used.

After intense U.S. and international pressure on India and Pakistan, the tensions along the LOC have somewhat subsided, but the danger of a military confrontation between the two South Asian rivals is not over by any account. India and Pakistan still have no agreement addressing the disputed region of Kashmir, over which they have fought three times in the past (in 1947, 1965 and, more recently, in the Kargil conflict, an undeclared but serious military confrontation in May 1999).

Nuclear deterrence is not likely to work in South Asia. In the case of the United States and Russia, the competition was mostly ideological and there existed ample geographic distance between the two nations. India and Pakistan, however, share a long but bitterly disputed border.
with a much longer and deeply seeded history of direct military confrontation with each other. In fact, recent events indicate that the possession of nuclear weapons has hardly taught caution to the two sides. The May 1999 war in the Kargil region and the massive mobilization of troops and continued clashes along the LOC early this year demonstrate that nuclear weapons have not deterred conflict between the two rivals.

In this situation, what can be done to help our world, and especially South Asia, become a safer place? This question can be divided into two sections - action at the national and regional levels and action at the local level. There are active platforms, forums and individuals in the region who continue to address these concerns within the regional and national contexts. However, the nature of the issues is such that, without continuous and active involvement with International elements, there is little hope of achieving concrete progress within any one country or region. It is within this context that we would suggest through this important organ of the United Nations the following set of actions for the international community:

- **Apply appropriate pressure to de-escalate the current face-off between India and Pakistan.**
- **Persuade India and Pakistan to withdraw their armies to their normal peacetime locations.**
- **Ensure a ceasefire along the Line of Control.**
- **Pressurize the two nations to commence a dialogue.**
- **Facilitate the conclusion of a Nuclear Protocol to include risk reduction measures.**
- **Implement the ‘unequivocal’ commitment made in 2000 to convene an International Convention on Global Nuclear Disarmament in accordance with Article VI of the NPT.**
- **Encourage India and Pakistan to sign the CTBT and also to participate in FMCT.**
- **Prevail upon the USA to rescind from its policies with respect to the ABM treaty, missile defense, and the Nuclear Posture Review - all of which run counter to the overall objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.**

Recent steps taken by the NWSs, the United States in particular, have undercut the credibility of calls for India and Pakistan to refrain from developing and deploying nuclear weapons. The decision by the Bush Administration to unilaterally withdraw from the ABM Treaty is not helpful. Nor are the administration’s plans for the possible use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon states (NNWSs), research and development of new nuclear weapons, and the resumption of nuclear testing, all advanced recently in the U.S. Nuclear Posture Review. These decisions are likely to influence other countries’ perceptions of the military utility of nuclear weapons and damage international and regional efforts toward non-proliferation and disarmament.

It is time, therefore, that the over 180 NNWS signatories to the NPT demand that the United States, along with the remaining four nuclear weapon states, demonstrate their commitment to the legal obligations of complete and general disarmament under this treaty.

The NNWS signatories to the NPT also need to present a united opposition to India and Pakistan’s nuclear weapon programs.
The non-nuclear weapon states in South Asia, like Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Bhutan, must especially unite in opposition to India and Pakistan’s plans to develop and deploy nuclear weapons in the region. The use of these weapons by either India or Pakistan would have impacts beyond the boundaries of these nations and would threaten the survival of them all.

Finally, in conclusion, I can do no better than to quote from a recent joint article titled “India, Pakistan and the Bomb.” Authored by Indian and Pakistani physicists and peace activists Ramanna and Nayyar, the article was published in the December 2001 issue of Scientific American. Therein, the authors conclude that “the Indian sub-continent is the most likely place in the world for a nuclear war.” It is important to note however their linking of Western policy with the present dangers in their concluding paragraph:

“The limitations of Western nonproliferation policy are now painfully obvious. It has relied primarily on supply-side export controls to prevent access to non-nuclear technologies. But Pakistan's program reveals that these are inadequate. Any effective strategy for nonproliferation must also involve demand-side measures - policies to assure countries that the bomb is not a requisite for true security. The most important demand-side measure is progress toward global nuclear disarmament.”

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