

Statement by His Excellency Mr. Murari Raj Sharma, Permanent Representative of Nepal to the United Nations at the third session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
(New York, April 28, 2004)

Mr. Chairman,

I wish to extend my heartiest felicitations to you on your election as Chairman of this important Committee. We are confident that with your wisdom and consummate diplomatic skill you will be able to steer the session to a productive outcome.

My delegation endorses the statement delivered by the representative of Malaysia on behalf of the NAM countries.

Mr. Chairman,

Nuclear weapons are the most horrendous monsters the finest brains have ever invented. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation signed in 1968 and subsequent agreements had raised our hopes that the monster would be locked out of the civilized world to perish. But that did not happen. All three objectives of the Treaty – nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation, and peaceful uses of nuclear energy – have witnessed setbacks. The world community needs to make full use of this preparatory process to advance these objectives in an expeditious manner.

To be sure, progress did happen over time, albeit limited, in both bilateral and multilateral domains. Permanent extension of the NPT in 1995 as a major step forward. Bilateral agreements between the two erstwhile superpowers assuaged the fear of nuclear confrontation. Several NAM countries, including Libya very recently, abandoned their nuclear weapons programs, so did several CIS countries; and we highly commend them all. The Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty has been concluded. And the 13 practical steps for systematic nuclear disarmament have been undertaken in the 2000 Review Conference.

But most commitments nuclear weapons states have made in the multilateral realm remain in paper. The CTBT remains far from coming into force. Not much has been done to implement the 13 practical steps for nuclear disarmament. New members of the nuclear club have emerged. Strategic doctrine of some powerful countries, some of the bilateral agreements that provided some measure of assurance have been abrogated; multilateral disarmament forums have been rendered dysfunctional, as they have not been able to agree on their agenda and program of work; and the process of nuclear disarmament on the whole has hit the wall.

Opinions may vary about the imminence of nuclear annihilation today. But the fact remains: the threat of such an eventuality continues to haunt humanity as intensely as ever.

Mr. Chairman,

Nepal believes the foremost significance should be attached to complete and general nuclear disarmament, without which the two other objectives will not be met fully, and international peace and security could not be secured effectively. But the disarmament aspect has fallen by the way side, prompting proliferation based on the perception that nuclear weapons offer effective deterrence.

The marriage of convenience displayed by nuclear weapons states with regard to nuclear disarmament has been the key trigger for nuclear proliferation. These states, inconsistent with the NPT, have been augmenting the killing power of their nuclear weapons. They have also failed to provide credible assurances that they would not use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapons states.

Consequently, those states that find themselves on the wrong side of the prevailing political current and those that fear that their rival would receive support from nuclear weapons states have often sought deterrent capability by pursuing nuclear weapons programs.

The temptation to acquire nuclear weapons increases as some nations take interest only in non-proliferation, but not in disarmament, and try to knock nuclear disarmament off the global public agenda. No doubt, non-proliferation has assumed an added urgency as non-state actors, particularly terrorists, are trying to get hold of nuclear weapons and weapons technology. But it must be born in mind that if the weapons and technology are there, non-state actors will continue to strive for them.

Mr. Chairman,

Nepal is fully committed to the NPT and its objectives. We underscore the imperative to make it universal and urge those who have not done so to join the Treaty and those who have withdrawn from it to rejoin it. More importantly, nuclear weapons states must do what it takes to reduce and eventually eliminate their arsenals to lead other countries by example.

The reason is simple. Nepal has neither the desire nor the resources to pursue a nuclear program. Therefore, with some measure of objectivity we can say this: As long as nuclear weapons are not outlawed, as long as such weapons continue to command status and prestige, and as long as non-nuclear states continue to feel threatened by nuclear powers, there will always be temptation for one country or the other to acquire nuclear weapons. And the goal of effective non-proliferation will continue to elude us.

More specifically, non-nuclear states ought, as a first step, to have full and irrevocable guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. For this, initiative must be undertaken for the early conclusion of a universal, unconditional and legally binding instrument on security assurances to non-nuclear weapon-states.

We support the nuclear-weapons-free-zones (NWFZ) under the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Bangkok and Pelindaba as effective ways towards promoting nuclear disarmament and welcome all regional efforts towards this end. We extend wholehearted support to Mongolia's nuclear-weapon-free status.

It is our long-held principle that universal adherence to the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) is a step forward to achieve nuclear disarmament. We call on all states to accelerate the process of joining the CTBT and making it effective.

We strongly feel that the proposed fissile material cut off treaty (FMCT) should be pursued in right earnest. It is also our view that the IAEA's Safeguards system must be strengthened so as to reinforce the existing verification mechanism for the non-proliferation regime.

To garner a broad consensus from all countries, co-operation should be promoted for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. As a common heritage, outer space ought to remain free of weapons.

Mr. Chairman,

It is a matter of serious concern for my delegation that the commitments made by world leaders at the Millennium Summit to eliminate the weapons of mass destruction, in particular, nuclear weapons have not been sincerely pursued. We support the call made at that time by our Heads of State and Heads of Government to convene, at the earliest, an international conference to consider ways and means to eliminate all nuclear weapons within an agreed timeline.

In concluding, we are hopeful that this Preparatory Committee would be able to produce a consensus report for the 2005 Review Conference, as mandated by the 2000 Review Conference. We also hope that there will be agreement on discussing proposals under article VI of the 1995 Decision on "Principles and Objectives for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament". For a successful outcome, the session should strive for a balanced approach that addresses all concerns with respect to the Treaty on Non-proliferation.

Only sincere implementation of the NPT and the 13 practical steps by all sides will bury the monster of nuclear weapons and help usher in a new era of durable peace and security in the world.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.