

**Thematic Debate in the First Committee  
on Disarmament Machinery**  
**Statement by Ambassador Masood Khan, Pakistan's Permanent Representative,  
Geneva,**  
New York; October 18, 2006

Two questions are asked frequently about the disarmament machinery. Is it effective? Do you need to change it?

The intent of the questions is not fully clear. The General Assembly, its subsidiary bodies – the First Committee and the Disarmament Commission – and the Conference on Disarmament are the core standard setting and law-making organs. In addition to that, we have the Secretary General's Advisory Board. The DDA is the Secretariat in New York, Geneva, and regional centres. The disarmament machinery's basic three tier architecture – deliberative (the UNDC); consensus-building (the First Committee); and negotiating treaties and conventions (the CD) – is sound, flexible and resilient. Its current weaknesses stem from a political malaise not from structural or functional defects.

All these bodies and entities are adequate and have the huge potential for producing optimum results. If the member states have deep divergences, they cannot shift the blame to the machinery. Machinery will take member states where they want to go. Of its volition, the machinery cannot take initiatives for an unregulated movement. If there is no direction at the strategic level, the bodies dealing with disarmament and non-proliferation are bound to suffer from varying degrees of inaction, even diffidence to move forward.

During the past three years, there has been enhanced focus on disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons as well as their means of delivery; small arms and light weapons; and landmines. The area that has been neglected is conventional weapons. There was enhanced focus and dialogue on the broad areas I have highlighted but there were no results because of the deep differences within member states. This is seen as a setback, particularly the lack of an outcome the NPT RevCon and the 2005 UN Summit. The Secretary General had pointed out that the lack of a reference to disarmament and non-proliferation was due to the posturing by states but the malaise is deeper than that.

Pakistan has repeatedly pointed out that these well publicised "failures" are symptomatic of the serious erosion of the existing consensus on the most critical issues - nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. They are faults of the disarmament machinery *per se*. We have therefore proposed convening of an international conference to revisit the old consensus and craft a new to enable the international community walk out of a prolonged impasse. The WMD Commission has also recommended a UN General Assembly Summit on disarmament, non-proliferation and terrorist use of WMD, which could also discuss the efficiency and effectiveness of the disarmament machinery. We have deliberately kept the level of the conference vague, and suggested that this could be a special conference of the UNDC or the CD. SSOD IV could also be a perfect venue for such discussions.

The 2005 Outcome Document did, however, partially address conventional arms in the context of peacekeeping. Implementation of the Programme of Action on SALW was

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supported and states parties of the CCW were asked to give greater assistance to the mine affected states.

The picture in using the machinery under the well-known constraints has not been bleak. The First Committee has taken steps to streamline incremental but highly commendable steps to streamline its conduct of meetings, particularly with regard to work methods, general debate, interactive debates, and thematic clustering. Rationalisation of the agenda, however, should not be used to remove subjects of vital importance, because some countries are not comfortable with them. If the recommendations in the resolutions, presented year after year, are not heeded, ways should be explored to implement them more effectively, not to move them away from the table.

The Conference on Disarmament this year was energised through structured debates. It is true that the CD is a negotiating, not a deliberative, forum, though discussion would always precede serious treaty making. We do not yet have a programme of work without which we cannot break the chronic logjam in the CD. There is nothing wrong with the rule of consensus followed by the CD. The proposal to adopt its Programme of Work by a qualified majority of two thirds of the members present and voting would lead to an interminable debate in the CD and deepen its impasse.

The UN Disarmament Commission this year started making a transition towards a better appreciation of the threats to peace and security. Its new working methods should help make it more effective.

The existing machinery includes treaty bodies some of which have performed well. The IAEA is in good shape. The OPCW has been repeatedly a success story during this session. The states parties of the Biological Weapons Convention have been holding annual meetings to discuss CBMs; new scientific and technological developments; biosecurity; and codes of conduct. Let's hope the Sixth RevCon will produce a solid outcome. The states parties to the CCW have been particularly busy. All these regimes have once again enhanced the confidence of the international community in the legitimacy, longevity and effective of multilateralism, as opposed to short-lived non-institutionalised and exclusive forums.

We believe the new Secretary General should give fresh impetus, strength and direction to the DDA. We have full confidence in Mr. Nabuaki Tanaka who is heading the UN Disarmament Affairs at the most opportune time. No attempt should be made to weaken the DDA in any way. Its institutional and intellectual sinews must be strengthened.

It is also important to use the full potential of the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters. It should not merely replicate what member states are doing or are not doing. It can take up the challenge of advising how the existing agreements on disarmament and non-proliferation can be revalidated or how a new security consensus can be built. It should keep itself above minutiae and address strategic questions.

Undersecretary General Tanaka has given a good motto to the disarmament machinery: take "positive, practical steps" within our reach. We should continue to do so until we have new security consensus. We shall also reiterate our proposal of last year that every year the Chair of the First Committee should hold informal consultations to help the Committee focus on a host of institutional and substantive issues.