



MISION PERMANENTE DE COLOMBIA  
ANTE LA OFICINA DE LAS NACIONES UNIDAS  
Y LOS ORGANISMOS INTERNACIONALES  
GINEBRA

**CONFERENCE ON DISARMEMENT**

**Statement by Ambassador Camilo REYES RODRIGUEZ,  
Permanent Representative of Colombia,  
on behalf of the Group of 21**

**Geneva, 31 January 2002**

STATEMENT BY THE GROUP OF 21  
31 January 2002

1. The Group of 21 expresses its satisfaction that the Conference has adopted its Agenda for the 2002 session. This session of the CD commences its work against a backdrop of serious and multi-farious challenges facing the international community in the field of disarmament, non-proliferation in all its aspects, and international security, particularly the attempts to justify the perspective of indefinite possession of nuclear arsenals, related concepts of nuclear deterrence including a revised strategic framework and elements aimed to open more scope for possible use or threat of the use of force.
2. The Group stresses that as the single multilateral negotiating forum in disarmament, the CD's programme of work should be responsive to these challenges and the interests and priorities of all its members and the aspirations of the international community in the field of disarmament, non-proliferation in all its aspects, and international peace and security. The Group expresses its concern that the Conference on Disarmament was unable to undertake substantive work on the basis of an agreed Programme of Work since 1999, in spite of the demonstrated flexibility shown by the Group and the number of formal and informal proposals introduced by some of its members during their Presidency of the Conference; namely "Rodríguez Cedeño's Proposal", "Dembré's Proposal", and "Amorim's Proposal". The Group reaffirms its readiness to participate constructively in all efforts aimed at reaching agreement on a Programme of Work which is comprehensive and reflects the priorities of all CD Member States.
3. In this context, the Group reaffirms its proposals contained in CD/1570 and CD/1571 on the Programme of Work and a Draft Decision and Mandate for the Establishment of an Ad Hoc Committee on Nuclear Disarmament.
4. The Group emphasizes that nuclear disarmament remains the highest priority for the Conference on Disarmament. It stresses the importance of the possibility of nuclear war, the threats to humanity derived from the continued existence of nuclear weapons and the possible use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. It underscores the need to accomplish the total elimination of nuclear weapons and emphasizes, in this regard, the urgent need to commence negotiations without delay.
5. The group is seriously concerned about the lack of progress as expected following the unequivocal undertaking by nuclear-weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals leading to nuclear disarmament, made during the 2000 NPT Review Conference.

6. The Group has already expressed, in document CD/1549 of 12 August 1998, its position with regard to the establishment of an Ad Hoc Committee under agenda item 1 entitled "Cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament", which shall negotiate on the basis of the report of the Special Coordinator (CD/1299) and the mandate contained therein, a non-discriminatory, multilateral, internationally and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

7. The prevention of an arms race in outer space has assumed greater urgency because of legitimate concerns that existing legal instruments are inadequate to deter imminent attempts for the further militarization of outer space. The possible consequences of the decision by one of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missiles (ABM) to withdraw from the Treaty brings new challenges in this issue. In accordance with United Nations General Assembly Resolution 56/23, the Group emphasizes the urgent need for commencement of substantive work on the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

8. While various approaches exist, the Group expresses its conviction that efforts for the conclusion of a universal and legally binding instrument on security assurances to non-nuclear weapon States should be pursued.

9. Having in mind the context of the Conference on Disarmament, the Group is deeply concerned about the progressive erosion of multilateralism and emphasises the importance of collective international efforts to enhance and maintain international peace and security. This can be best addressed through multilaterally negotiated non-discriminatory disarmament and non-proliferation treaties.

10. The Group hopes that the Conference will commence early substantive work during the 2002 annual session and, to this end, affirms its readiness to participate constructively in all efforts aimed at reaching agreement on the Programme of Work. The Group urges other Groups to display matching flexibility and calls upon the President of the Conference to intensify efforts aimed at finding agreement on a Programme of Work, so that the substantive work of the Conference can commence without delay, in accordance with the Rules of Procedure.