



**Statement by Ambassador Munir Akram, Permanent
Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations, at the General
Debate of the UN Disarmament Commission**

(1st April 2024)

Mr. Chairman,

Pakistan is honoured and proud at your election as Chair of this important Commission. We also congratulate other members of the Bureau.

2. This Commission was entrusted with important responsibilities by SSOD-I – to formulate recommendations on “various problems” in the field of disarmament; follow-up on the special session, and consider elements for a “comprehensive programme for disarmament”.

3. The Disarmament Commission’s recommendations are especially relevant today. The world confronts a challenging security environment, marked by renewed great power confrontation and tensions; the brazen violation of the principles of the UN Charter, particularly the self-determination of peoples and the erosion of major arms control treaties; an escalatory and multidimensional arms race, encompassing nuclear, conventional and new weapons and domains of warfare – cyber, AI, outer space and the oceans.

4. Not since the Cuban missile crisis has the danger of the use of nuclear weapons been as high. Meanwhile, conflicts rage in several parts of world – in Europe and the Middle East. Genocide is being committed in Gaza, in front of the eyes of the whole world. Military blocs are reviving, not only in Europe but across the Asia-Pacific. States see threats to their security from foreign aggression, domination and coercion by major powers. Expenditures on armaments and trade in armaments have achieved record levels. Disputes fester and proliferate. Dangerous doctrines, including those for the use of nuclear weapons and pre-emptive strikes, have been adopted by States seeking to preserve or impose their dominance at the global and regional levels.

5. The two topics selected by the Disarmament Commission to be addressed in its Working Groups – Nuclear Disarmament and the implications of emerging technologies – are apposite in the current challenging strategic context. We look forward to important progress on both issues in the Commission’s forthcoming deliberations.

6. Yet, it is our hope that the Disarmament Commission could consider the “elements” for a comprehensive programme of disarmament as it is mandated to do by SSOD I.

7. My delegation believes that the following could be important “elements” of such a programme:

One, the overriding goal is general and complete disarmament. Nuclear disarmament and “removing the threat of a world war – a nuclear war – is the most acute and urgent task of the present day” – as SSODI declared. The primary onus rests with the States with the largest nuclear arsenals.

Two, the SSODI Programme of Action also stated that, along with measures for nuclear disarmament “negotiations should be carried out on the balanced reduction of armed forces and of conventional armaments based on the principle of undiminished security of the parties with a view to promoting or enhancing stability at a lower military level...”

Three, the insecurity of States – big and small – is the principal propeller of arms acquisitions, and of arms races at the regional and global levels. Such insecurity should be ameliorated through the resolution of disputes, the elimination of threats of aggression and the use of force and dangerous war-fighting doctrines; the end of hybrid and sub-conventional operations, including the state sponsorship of terrorism and unilateral coercive measures; maintenance of a regional and global balance of armaments; and security assurances, especially negative security assurances to non-nuclear weapon states;

Four, concrete efforts at the global and regional levels are needed to moderate, if not end, inter-State military rivalries and confrontation, especially between major powers and other militarily significant States, through dialogue, CBMs, dispute resolution and arms control agreements;

Five, early and effective measures are essential to prevent the development, deployment and use of new weapons and technologies which can destabilize international security and disrupt disarmament – such as cyber, AI, LAWS; and

secondly the extension of the arms race into new domains – outer space, cyber space and the oceans;

Seven, effective international and sectoral measures should be agreed to ensure non-discrimination in the transfer and use of technologies for peaceful purposes, including those essential for economic and social development and to address climate change and other global challenges;

Finally, to realize these goals and promote general and complete disarmament, Member States must be required to adhere fully and consistently to the fundamental principles of the UN Charter as well to abide by and implement the resolutions of the Security Council.

Mr. Chairman,

8. Pakistan has sought consistently to achieve the objective of undiminished security at the lowest possible level of armaments. We proposed the creation of a nuclear weapon free zone in South Asia. We were heartened that paragraph 63 (e) of the SSOD-I Programme of Action stated that: “All States in the region of South Asia have expressed their determination to keep their countries free of nuclear weapons”. And that “No action should be taken to deviate from that objective.”

9. Unfortunately, twenty years after the adoption of this commitment, one South Asian State unilaterally conducted nuclear weapons explosions. To preserve strategic deterrence and stability, Pakistan was obliged to follow suit. In the immediate aftermath of South Asia’s nuclearization, Pakistan offered to conclude a “Strategic Restraint Regime,” envisaging reciprocal limitations on nuclear, missile and conventional capabilities, together with efforts to resolve outstanding disputes, especially the festering dispute over Jammu and Kashmir. This proposal remains on the table.

10. The security environment in South Asia has deteriorated sharply in recent years, as the region’s largest State has embarked on a programme of massive armament. It is now the world’s largest arms importer, and is being supplied by its “strategic partners” with nuclear, missiles, conventional and other destabilizing weapons. It has

adopted war-fighting doctrines – such as “Cold Start”, envisaging a surprise attack on Pakistan, and a “limited war under the nuclear overhang”. Needless to say, these developments impinge on Pakistan’s security.

11. With a long-standing dispute - where the right of the people of occupied Jammu and Kashmir are being brutally suppressed; with two major armies deployed in close proximity; with the induction of major destabilizing weapons and war fighting doctrines; with the sponsorship of terrorism against Pakistan; and with the absence of dialogue or international action - the security environment in South Asia is volatile and explosive. Unless determined steps are taken by the international community to address this situation, it could emerge as the proximate cause of a regional and global catastrophe.

Mr. Chairman,

12. In the dismal and dangerous global security environment, Disarmament Commission, with its universal membership and democratic structure, can make a singular contribution to promoting global and regional security. I hope the Commission will rise to this challenge.

I thank you.