



**77th Session of the UNGA**

**First Committee Thematic Debate Cluster 01- Nuclear Weapons**

**Statement by Mr. Sugeeshwara Gunaratna, Deputy Permanent  
Representative of Sri Lanka**

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Mr. Chairman,

My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. I wish to make the following points in my national capacity.

Mr. Chairman,

As someone said, ours is a world of nuclear giants and ethical infants. We know more about war than of peace, more about killing than of living. We have grasped the mystery of the atom and rejected the Sermon on the Mount. That is a tragedy of our times.

It has been said ad nauseam in this conference as well as elsewhere that nuclear weapons constitute the most destructive, non-discriminatory, inhumane weapons ever invented. In fact, its destructive potential was so evident after the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki that the first United Nations resolution, adopted on 24<sup>th</sup> January 1946 was on the establishment of a commission to deal with the problems raised by the discovery of atomic energy. While, we have come a long way since then, with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty gaining near universality, with much substantive progress made on

non-proliferation and its verification regimes, the disarmament pillar of the NPT remains stagnant posing a continued threat to humanity and its very existence.

Sri Lanka's principled position on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation has been strong and consistent. Therefore, it is a matter of disappointment that two consecutive NPT Review Conferences failed to adopt a consensual outcome, adding to the heightened tensions in the current international security environment. We continue to emphasize the need for nuclear weapon states to comply with their legal obligations, to eliminate nuclear weapons totally in a transparent, irreversible and internationally verifiable process. Any attempts to modernize and, develop new types of nuclear weapons, including new delivery vehicles, go against the fundamental principles of the disarmament pillar of the NPT which unfortunately, the nuclear weapon states have observed in the breach, putting in peril our collective existence. We underscore the fact that non- proliferation derives its legitimacy from disarmament and the lack of it erodes the credibility of the current non-proliferation regime.

Mr. Chairman,

Sri Lanka also continues to underline the importance of a universal, unconditional, non-discriminatory and legally binding instrument on negative security assurances for non-nuclear weapon states, pending the achievement of total elimination of nuclear weapons. In this regard, it is a matter of concern to hear nuclear threats being made, implicitly or explicitly, on non- nuclear weapon states.

I am reminded of what Arundhati Roy said in one of her publications; 'it is such a supreme folly to believe that nuclear weapons are deadly only if they are used. The fact that they exist at all, their presence in our lives, will wreak more havoc than we can begin to fathom. Nuclear weapons pervade our thinking, control our behavior, administer our societies, inform our dreams. They bury themselves like meat hooks deep in the base of our brains. They are purveyors of madness. They are the ultimate colonizer.' Mr. Chairman, the elimination of nuclear weapons is therefore a sine qua non.

Mr. Chairman,

Sri Lanka welcomes all attempts to create nuclear weapon free zones, which adds to furthering the cause of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation and strengthens our collective security. In this regard, Sri Lanka also joins others in welcoming the convening of the First Session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone free of Nuclear Weapons under the Presidency of Jordan and the Second Session of the Conference under the Presidency of the Kuwait. We welcome further progress at the third session of the conference scheduled to be held in November this year.

Mr. Chairman,

Sri Lanka is also of the firm belief that non-proliferation policies should not in any way inhibit a state's right to access, produce, import, export and use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. It is the inalienable right of each state to research, develop, produce and use nuclear energy in keeping with its energy priorities. Given the current challenges faced by states to access cheap energy, it is imperative that access to the full nuclear fuel cycle be made available, in line with relevant international safeguards.

Sri Lanka's involvement with nuclear science and atomic energy began in 1957 when it became the member of the IAEA and established the Atomic Energy Authority in 1969. Under the Atomic Energy Act of Sri Lanka, all nuclear activities are carried out exclusively for peaceful purposes and in compliance with relevant international obligations. We value our cooperation with the IAEA including the existing cooperation through the Safeguards Agreement. We emphasize that while the primary responsibility for nuclear security lies with individual states, multilateral norms and guidelines should be pursued strictly within the framework of the IAEA and should not be arbitrary and restrictive.

Finally, Mr. Chairman,

We reiterate the need for result-oriented multilateral engagement that seeks to achieve the objective of the total elimination of nuclear weapons and removes the constant threat that continues to hang over the existence of humanity, for protecting our planet and preserving the human race is the responsibility of every rational human being.

Thank you Mr Chairman.