



**Tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the
Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons**

1 - 26 August 2022, New York

Statement by Sri Lanka

Mr. President,

My delegation extends warm congratulations to you on the assumption of the Presidency of the 10th Review Conference. We are confident that your inclusive approach and continuous engagement with regional groups will steer our deliberations to a meaningful conclusion of the Conference. Let me assure you Mr. President, of my delegation's fullest support to you and your Bureau in guiding our work over the course of the next few weeks.

Sri Lanka aligns itself with the statement delivered by Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) [*– Mission to include as appropriate*].

Mr. President,

This Review Conference takes place at a time when the world is grappling with several global crises, including the effects of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic; witnessing an increase in nuclear related activities; and facing an alarming deterioration of the international security sphere. In this context, we cannot but emphasize the relevance of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the importance of a substantive consensus outcome for this Conference. After more than five decades since its entry into force, the NPT remains the cornerstone of the global nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation regime. It is an invaluable instrument that provides a balanced and non-discriminatory approach to maintaining international peace and security, while safeguarding equal access to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and technology.

Whilst we have no doubt concerning the devastating effects of the use of nuclear weapons, there are different opinions on how to address the issue in the context of the importance of nuclear deterrence in the security policies of states. It might be pertinent to recall the 1996 advisory opinion of the ICJ when it said that the threat or use of nuclear weapons should be compatible with the principles and rules of international humanitarian law and that such a threat or use would be generally contrary to the principles of international humanitarian law. This opinion seems to have influenced later developments in nuclear disarmament which we observe in the final document of the 2010 NPT review which led to delivery of a joint statement by 16 states in the 2012 preparatory committee which declared that it is of utmost importance that these weapons never be used again under any circumstances and that the only way to guarantee this is the total irreversible and verifiable elimination of nuclear weapons.

Mr. President,

Sri Lanka has always stood at the forefront of global non-proliferation and disarmament efforts and reaffirms our steadfast commitment and support for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. This is the only guarantee against the threat that they pose to humanity, and all States have an obligation to engage in good faith to achieve the objective of the total elimination of nuclear weapons. Our efforts in this regard go as far back as the 1976 Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement, chaired by Sri Lanka, during which the idea of a special session on disarmament was mooted. It is also recalled that the historic NPT Review Conference of 1995 was also chaired by Sri Lanka.

As a non-nuclear State, we underscore that there is a legitimate right, as well as concerns, for countries such as us, to receive assurances against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons under any circumstances. In this context, the expansion of existing nuclear arsenals raises questions of credibility. Ongoing or planned efforts towards modernization of nuclear weapons, including the idea of low-yield nuclear weapons that will convert nuclear weapons to regular battlefield weapons is of grave concern. This undermines the spirit and aim of the NPT, in particular Art. 6 of the Treaty.

Sri Lanka welcomes the joint statement by the five permanent members of the Security Council (P5) issued in January this year, affirming *inter alia* that 'a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought' – a recognition of the unimaginable

humanitarian consequences of a nuclear catastrophe. We also welcome the extension of the New START Treaty which is a positive step towards strategic stability and mutual confidence. We also emphasize the relevance of nuclear weapon-free zones, and their role in mutually assuring security.

Allow me also to take this opportunity to highlight the importance of disarmament education in furtherance of the total elimination of nuclear weapons. It is our firm conviction that sustaining progress in non-proliferation and disarmament greatly relies on investing in our youth. This would include development of expertise in the political, technical, scientific, and legal areas of disarmament for the capacity building and empowerment of youth in the campaign for disarmament. We encourage Member States and the UN to continue to invest in disarmament training and education.

Mr. President,

We wish to re-iterate the continued validity and relevance of the concept of peaceful uses of nuclear energy and nuclear technology in the advancement of socio-economic development of States as provided for under Article IV of the NPT. Sri Lanka firmly believes that the peaceful use of nuclear technology should be made a lasting reality and an important priority through meaningful, sustained and practical measures. Whilst cognizant of the potential of the duality of the use of nuclear technology it is noted that there are norms and standards which serve to ensure that effective safeguards are in place. The relevance of verification in this arena is of the utmost importance. In this regard, we take this opportunity to thank the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) for the critical role it plays in NPT implementation, both to promote the cooperation on the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and to apply safeguards and verify that nuclear programs that are entirely peaceful.

Mr. President,

We note that there are initiatives to promote the idea of 'Nuclear Risk Reduction' as the focus of this Conference. While it certainly can be an element of the process it should not be viewed as an end in itself. It is important to be mindful that the Conference should not be diverted from the core objectives of the Treaty, resulting in settling the bar too low. In our view, the approach of nuclear risk reduction seems to emerge as a compromise for the unsatisfactory pace of progress on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation objectives of the treaty. If we are to progress in

this approach, we believe that it should be accompanied by a commitment to report annually on the specific risk-reduction actions taken. We also wish to highlight in this regard the importance of transparency, verification mechanisms and irreversibility of all nuclear disarmament measures.

Mr. President,

The threat of nuclear weapons is one of the most significant and pressing global challenges of our time. It is therefore important that we promote cooperation, reciprocity, and inclusiveness as important features in our approach to building confidence among states as an effective mechanism to prevent doubts and as a consequence reduce the risk of accidental attacks. Having regard to the fact that nuclear weapons are the most destructive, inhumane, and indiscriminate weapons ever used. We have today nearly 13000 nuclear weapons in the world many of which are ready to be used within minutes.

We, as States Parties to the NPT, are collectively responsible to reaffirm the central role of this Treaty in the global non-proliferation regime, the foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament, and an important element in facilitating the benefits of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, for the common benefit of the humanity. With the Review Conference of 2015 concluding without concrete outcomes, and with emerging challenges related to nuclear disarmament, there are great expectations from this Conference. We must ensure that these 6 years of preparation and 4 weeks of deliberations, result in forward-looking actionable outcomes. Genuine political will to implement obligations is essential. Sri Lanka stands ready to play its role in this process.

Mr President, the task at hand is urgent. Our earthly sojourn is limited and during that time we need to secure the planet for the benefit of our future generations in keeping with the intergenerational trust we have covenanted to keep. There is only one compromise and that is a compromise for the sustenance of a peaceful world in which all humankind can live in peace and dignity. I am sure the youth of today would tell us in simple terms that we can do without nuclear weapons.

Thank you.