



## Permanent Mission of Pakistan to the UN Geneva

### **Statement by Ambassador Khalil Hashmi at the Panel Discussion on “Nuclear Risk Reduction and its contribution to nuclear disarmament” organized by Finnish Presidency at the Conference on Disarmament 23 March 2023**

**Madam President,**

Thank you for organizing this discussion. We also thank the distinguished panellists for their contribution.

It is evident that nuclear risks and dangers are rising. We agree with the UN Secretary General’s warning that the prospects of a nuclear war are “back within the realm of possibility”.

It is also obvious that what is referred to as nuclear risks often shape threat perceptions of states, especially in regions beset with long standing disputes.

It is hard to ignore the drivers of growing nuclear risks. In our view, these triggers can be classified into three categories.

First, the doctrinal dimension as illustrated by current geopolitical postures, accompanied by growing investments in developing sophisticated arms, weapon systems and platforms.

Second, the normative erosion as evidenced by withdrawal from or suspension of treaties as well as lack of progress on legal obligations vis-à-vis nuclear disarmament.

Third, the deadlock in the deliberative and negotiating bodies which is often manifest in the pursuit of absolute security and domination by powerful states.

The discourse on reducing nuclear risks has its intrinsic merits and we recognize their value. Yet, realizing the full potential of these measures is contingent on understanding and addressing the drivers of risks.

**Madam President,**

The framing of risk reduction discussion around doctrinal, operational and accidental paradigms may be appealing but has its own limitations. Why? Here are five reasons.

**First,** Policy discussion on nuclear weapon risk reduction is often invoked from national perspectives, and there is no common global understanding on it.

**Second,** certain risk reduction measures that have worked in the past or those that have proven to be useful between specific states might not be effective in the contemporary context involving a different set of players and new forms of weapon systems and enabling technologies.

**Third,** more often than not, many commentators underscore the significance of specific nuclear declaratory positions, which in their view, lower the risk of doctrinal use of nuclear weapons. Many tend to underplay or even ignore the salience of conventional military doctrines, which can generate threats to stability, thereby increasing states' reliance on nuclear weapons. This is especially relevant when states actively seek to find space for pre-emptive use of force and fighting limited wars under the nuclear overhang.

**Fourth,** doctrines are declaratory positions and statements. In actual practice, states' security calculus is shaped by the military capabilities, force posture, types and number of weapon systems deployed by their adversaries.

**Fifth,** risk reduction measures are not an end in themselves but means to achieving a larger objective of preventing war especially one involving nuclear weapons. So, the efficacy of these steps should be measured by this metric.

**Madam President,**

For these reasons, discussions on risk reduction measures should move beyond theoretical constructs towards measures that are responsive to actual threat perceptions which oblige states to rely on nuclear capabilities.

It would be useful to look at a new paradigm for risk reduction, which is holistic and integrated, and includes risk reduction across various domains including conventional, nuclear, autonomous weapon systems, cyber and outer space.

Such measures should promote a broader objective than mere management of crisis.

Their broader objectives should remain the creation of an environment of trust and stability, which is conducive for states to open channels of negotiations for settlement of disputes. Dispute resolution should therefore be a fundamental element of risk reduction measures at the global, regional and bilateral level.

Absent such arrangements, sustainability of any such reduction measures will be at risk itself.

We agree that establishment of formal channels of strategic communication at various levels can contribute to crisis stability and should be encouraged. However, such measures often break down as well, for instance, when a nuclear state refuses to employ them even after “accidental” firing of a supersonic missile into territory of another nuclear state.

We believe that risk reduction measures need to go beyond measures for crisis stability and include steps for arms control stability. In the absence of arms control measures, risk reduction and crisis stability in a particular context tend to lose their utility with new destabilizing inductions in another domain.

Risk reduction measures should be pursued simultaneously at the global, regional and bilateral levels. In fact, the success of universal approaches is closely linked to meaningful measures at the regional level.

Regional measures can be tailored to specific circumstances, select weapon systems, deployment limits and other arrangements for avoidance of conflict.

Invoking extra-regional concerns to dismiss risk reduction measures is a naive excuse and betrays lack of understanding and responsibility, which comes with the possession of nuclear capabilities.

**Madam President,**

In conclusion, for nuclear risk reduction measures to be effective, they need to be approached in a holistic manner.

Accordingly, developing a multilateral regulatory framework that includes norms and legally binding instruments to control new technologies should go hand in hand with reduction of risks globally, across various regions along nuclear, conventional, cyber and outer space domain.

While risk reduction measures have a positive correlation with peace and security, they should neither be used as an excuse not to fulfil legal obligations nor deployed as a smokescreen to impede commencement of negotiations on nuclear disarmament.

**I thank you.**