



## **Permanent Mission of Pakistan to the UN Geneva**

### **Statement by Mr. Muhammad Omar, First Secretary, at First Meeting of Subsidiary Body 2, Conference on Disarmament, Geneva 17 March 2022**

**Mr. Coordinator,**

Let me begin by congratulating you on your appointment as the Coordinator for Subsidiary Body 2 to consider agenda item entitled prevention of nuclear war including all related matters.

I assure you of my delegation's constructive participation.

Allow me to make some points on the relevance of the agenda item with the topics you have proposed before sharing our perspective on strategic considerations of preventing a nuclear war.

**Mr. Coordinator,**

We note that your letter of 15 March has generally framed the proposed topics within the title of agenda item 2, pursuant to decision CD/2229.

Let me make some observations and proposals to fully align the proposed topics with the title and relevance of agenda item 2.

First some observations. The historic and contemporary salience of agenda item 2 is obvious.

In terms of historic relevance, the question of nuclear war was first placed on the agenda of the Conference in 1983, as part of what is now agenda item 1. Since 1984, the issue of "prevention of nuclear war, including all related matters" has featured as a standalone item on the CD's agenda – previously as item 3 and currently agenda item 2.

As was pointed out in our discussion under SB-1 two days ago, the distinction between this agenda item and agenda item one on nuclear disarmament remains somewhat unclear. As a result, similar issues have been discussed under both as is duly reflected in the annual reports of the CD.

The splitting of two items in 1984 was apparently in response to calls for urgently addressing the threat of nuclear war. Many had hoped that progress would be made on aspects of the broader agenda surrounding nuclear disarmament i.e. prevention of a nuclear war.

Unfortunately, at the time and since then, negotiations on the CD's premier agenda item have been blocked by a group of states.

**Mr. Coordinator,**

Let me also recall in this regard the relevant provisions in the Final Document of SSOD-I and I quote, "all States, in particular nuclear-weapon States, should consider as soon as possible various proposals designed to secure the avoidance of the use of nuclear weapons, the prevention of nuclear war and related objectives, where possible through international agreement, and thereby ensure that the survival of mankind is not endangered."

Apart from SSOD I, several UN General Assembly resolutions have called upon the Conference on Disarmament to commence negotiations on the prevention of nuclear war.

The nature and purpose of this item has always been to achieve the larger goal of preventing nuclear war by the pursuit of nuclear disarmament.

UNIDIR's 1991 extensive research entitled 'nuclear issues on the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament', attests to this fact. Let me quote from the UNIDIR report, "*agenda item 3 emerged from a debate on the legality of the possession and use of nuclear weapons, and on how to control, reduce or eliminate these weapons in order to prevent nuclear war*" End quote.

As is obvious, the notion of preventing nuclear war is grounded in two interconnected streams. The first one is nuclear disarmament as a means to achieve the larger objective of preventing a nuclear war. The second aspect is measures to prevent nuclear war until the elimination of nuclear weapons.

Our work in this body should therefore cover both these elements.

**Mr. Coordinator,**

The strategic considerations of preventing a nuclear war are an understandable element based on the genesis and rationale of this item.

The present strategic considerations have been illustrated by the UN Secretary General when a few days ago when he said that the prospects of nuclear war are and I quote "back within the realm of possibility" unquote.

The Secretary General has also pointed out the inseparable link between prevention of nuclear war and prevention of war itself.

**Mr. Coordinator,**

We agree that any substantive work geared towards preventing a nuclear war should include strategic considerations. Such work would, by definition, diagnose the causes and triggers, not just manifestations of the strategic environment.

Even more importantly, it should include nuclear disarmament measures to prevent nuclear war. We therefore see your proposal on technical considerations of preventing a nuclear war as meant for achieving nuclear disarmament.

Sequencing is equally important. In other words, diagnostics should precede therapeutics. Accordingly, we propose the work of this subsidiary body should focus on two mutually reinforcing areas. First, the strategic considerations and secondly the normative considerations.

As for technical considerations, these can only flow from securing an agreement on the fundamentals. It is not clear how discussions on technical aspects of preventing nuclear war can jump from strategic to technical considerations without the intermediate agreement on normative considerations.

Technical considerations would therefore appear to be a long shot, given the elusive progress on nuclear disarmament and continued opposition to it by some nuclear weapon states, including those enjoying nuclear umbrella.

**Mr. Coordinator,**

The normative considerations are well known. At their core, these are derived from the existing body of universal principles enshrined in the UN charter. It would only be logical to coalesce them under this subsidiary body to provide us with solid grounding to pursue further work related to prevention of nuclear war.

I would elaborate on the normative considerations in further detail later. Briefly, however, the existing normative framework is anchored in the UN charter as follows:

“to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war”; prohibition on the threat or use of force and pacific settlement of disputes.

Additionally, the principle enshrined in the consensus Final Document of SSOD-1 is clear, “disarmament measures should be pursued in such an equitable and balanced manner as to ensure that no individual State or group of States obtain advantages over others at any stage”. Another agreed SSOD-1 principle is clear i.e. equal security for all States and progressively lower levels of nuclear armaments,

On top of UN charter and SSOD-I Final Document, these principles have been repeatedly reaffirmed by numerous UN General Assembly resolutions unanimously i.e. to save future generations from the scourge of war, including nuclear war, and pursuit of measures to prevent nuclear war.

**Mr. Coordinator,**

My delegation has deemed it necessary to provide the backdrop of this agenda item and its salience for nuclear disarmament. This backgrounder is also meant to shine light on attempts made by some in the Conference to deflect attention from the foundational purpose of this body and to artificially transplant peripheral subjects under this agenda item.

Certainly, considerations of preventing a nuclear war cannot be insulated from nuclear weapons and their associated components. It remains an objective reality that any nuclear war in the foreseeable future would not be fought with nuclear material that is yet to be produced, but by what has already been produced, stockpiled, weaponized, deployed or reserved for such purposes.

It is therefore imperative and only logical that substantive work in this subsidiary body is grounded in the original intent and purpose of this agenda item.

**Mr. Coordinator,**

Let me now turn to the topic of strategic considerations vis-à-vis prevention of nuclear war.

The fundamental question for this subsidiary body to examine is why nuclear war has returned to the realm of possible. Why are we as international community where we are? What has caused this and what is required to prevent eruption of a conflict involving nuclear weapons?

In our view, the diagnostics identifies four layers.

The first layer is evident in the gradual erosion of the normative glue i.e. fundamental and affirmative principles of equal security, equitable approaches to disarmament measures and pacific settlement of disputes. And the prohibition of the threat or use of force.

The second layer points to non-compliance with respective nuclear disarmament obligations.

The third layer is the discriminatory application of international rules and violation of established norms, particularly in the nuclear and security domains.

And the fourth layer is the gradual breakdown of existing legal instruments in the field of arms control and security.

**Mr. Coordinator,**

Therapeutics should correspond to the diagnostics. They should be evidence, not opinion based. Prescriptions for medicines to actual maladies are needed. Not the prescription of vaccine by those who do not need them since their immune system is already robust.

The complexities of strategic landscape have been often highlighted by my delegation and others. The manifestations have been visible for some time such as the rise in geopolitical tensions, growing strategic asymmetries, the pursuit of absolute security and domination by powerful states, the growth in global military expenditures and the full swing modernization programmes of conventional and non-conventional weaponry.

It is important to remember that conflicts do not exist because of nuclear weapons. While some states have pursued and retained nuclear weapons primarily due to considerations of status and power, in handful other cases States have been obliged to rely on nuclear deterrence in the face of existential threats to their security, lingering disputes and power asymmetries.

Together with geopolitical and political factors, the drivers of strategic risks have been evident for some time also such as development of new weapons, particularly in the outer space, the cyber space and the military application of AI.

The enhanced risks and the triggers of a nuclear war, both in the weapons domain and the geopolitical arena require faithful adherence to foundational principles and reversal of measures that my delegation has outlined above. In addition, my delegation would like to underscore the following:

**First**, it is paramount that this agenda item is pursued in line with its true intent. It is vital to refrain from recycling proposals aimed at limiting the agenda item to peripheral considerations and non-proliferation measures alone.

**Second**, the strategic considerations must revert to the fundamentals i.e. addressing security concerns and threat perceptions – covering traditional military, including nuclear as well as non-nuclear, and non-military threats. These considerations must also deal with regional asymmetries and destabilizing arms build-ups both in the strategic and conventional realms.

**Third**, universal and consistent application of the principle of refraining from the threat or use of force in international relations to reduce the danger of war, in particular nuclear war.

**Fourth**, demonstration of the commitment to the principle of peaceful settlement of disputes, conflict resolution and addressing longstanding disputes to prevent development of situations that could lead to dangerous exacerbation in relations of states.

**Fifth**, examination of the nature of security doctrines, both offensive and defensive, and their role in strategic stability. States must refrain from adopting doctrines and concepts that could endanger regional and international peace, lead to the deterioration of the international situation and further intensification of the arms race and which are detrimental to the generally recognized necessity of international cooperation for disarmament. Military doctrines that envisage the preemptory use of force; the resort to surprise attacks against and fighting a limited conventional war under the “nuclear overhang” must be renounced.

**And lastly**, to review the role of extra-regional actors and their geopolitical objectives and the implications arising therefrom for global and regional strategic stability.

**Mr. Coordinator,**

At the genesis of this item in 1984 the CD established a contact group which submitted a proposal on this agenda item and I quote *“as a first step, to consider all proposals relevant to agenda item, including appropriate and practical measures for the prevention of nuclear war.* End quote.

It is unfortunate that consensus could not be reached owing to position of a group of states belonging to a military alliance. Their rationale as documented by the CD report of the same year, inter alia stated and I quote *“the terms in which the agenda item had been formulated clearly meant that the prevention of nuclear war could not be dealt with separately from the prevention of war itself including conventional war. The issue in their view was the problem of how to maintain peace and international security in the nuclear age. It was therefore particularly necessary to reflect upon concepts of security and to develop the concept of co-operative security as an essential objective of our time”.* End quote.

In fact, some among these very states suggested that an appropriate framing of the agenda item would inter alia include: (i) risk of an outbreak of armed conflict in general and nuclear war in particular; (ii) the UN Charter’s prohibition of the threat or use of force; (iii) obligation for all States to maintain a policy of restraint; (iv) military doctrines; (v) security guarantees; (vi) regional security arrangements; (vii) significance of military balance, stability and undiminished security for all States; and (viii) effectiveness of measures to stop the further development, testing, and deployment of certain weapon categories.

Over the course of years, other states also stressed on the need to see this item in the context of, inter alia, exclusions of use of force, avoidance of surprise attack, accidental or unauthorized use, spread of nuclear arms to other spheres including outer space, a need for decreasing levels of armaments, peaceful settlement of disputes and a larger treaty on prevention of war, etc.

We agree with the framing of this item by these states, including of that military alliance, which I just recalled. The question is whether they still have the will to adhere to their own rationale and the fundamental principles on which their approach was built. This would determine the fate of our work in this subsidiary body, and eventually the Conference.

**Mr. Coordinator,**

To conclude, a key deliverable for this subsidiary body should be the reaffirmation of these fundamental principles i.e. coalesce the existing normative framework on preventing nuclear war into a single set that lays the foundation of any future work in this area. This would be central to future efforts to translate them into legal instruments.

Another option to consider is the establishment of a dedicated Working Group of the CD to deliberate on all issues relevant to the prevention of nuclear war, including all related matters, to identify measures that can be agreed by consensus leading to the launch of negotiations on legally-binding instruments.

This proposed Working Group should be exclusively focused on agenda item 2 to address, inter alia, the following issues: one, reducing the operational readiness of nuclear weapons; two, addressing the link between nuclear deterrence and conventional forces, weapons and doctrines, including Anti-Ballistic Missiles and other new types of destabilizing weapon systems; and three, role of extended nuclear deterrence including the stationing of nuclear weapons in the territory of non-nuclear weapon states.

My delegation stands ready to elaborate further on these proposals in this subsidiary body.

**I thank you, Mr. Coordinator.**

-----