



## Permanent Mission of Pakistan to the UN Geneva

### Statement by Mr. Muhammad Omar, First Secretary, at First Meeting of Subsidiary Body 5, Conference on Disarmament, Geneva 29 March 2022

**Mr. Coordinator,**

Let me begin by congratulating you on your appointment as the Coordinator for Subsidiary Body 5 mandated to consider items 5, 6 and 7 of the CD's agenda. I assure you of my delegation's cooperation and constructive participation.

We thank you for your letter of 16 March, proposing topics and structure for these meetings. We note that the topics presented are relevant to and emanate from the three agenda items and are in line with the mandate contained in decision CD/2229.

In line with your proposal, I shall outline my delegation's perspective on the impact of technology on weapons systems; various new types of weapons of mass destruction and new systems of such weapons; as well as the causes for developing weapons of mass destruction and the resultant way forward.

**Mr. Coordinator,**

The agenda item under discussion today has been on the CD's agenda for over four decades.

Its roots though, go back to even earlier discussions on what were new technologies of 1960s and 70s, including UN General Assembly discussions on military applications of laser technology and radiological warfare among others. Importantly, those discussions also established that as technology evolved, further issues would have to be examined under this item.

The SSOD-I Final Document recognized this aspect in detail and stipulated clearly what ought to be done. I quote *"In order to help prevent a qualitative arms race and so that scientific and technological achievements may ultimately be used solely for peaceful purposes, effective measures should be taken to avoid the danger and prevent the emergence of new types of weapons of mass destruction based on new scientific principles and achievements. Efforts should be appropriately pursued aiming at the prohibition of such new types and new systems of weapons of mass destruction. Specific agreements could be*

*concluded on particular types of new weapons of mass destruction which may be identified. This question should be kept under continuing review.” End quote*

In addition, the SSOD-I also underscored that “*a convention should be concluded prohibiting the development, production, stockpiling and use of radiological weapons*”.

Mirroring what we have seen under various agenda items, a subsidiary body on radiological weapons considered the matter during the 1980s but no consensus emerged and from 1993 to 2018 no subsidiary body was reestablished.

The treatment of this agenda item at the CD has also not been much different and any meaningful progress let alone negotiating and concluding a legal instrument in this body remains elusive.

**Mr. Coordinator,**

The world has changed much since the 60’s and the 70’s. Yet, some foundational principles have shown themselves to transcend the vagaries of time. We have witnessed a reaffirmation and a strengthening of the links between technology, innovation and weapon systems.

In fact, the unprecedented and breakneck pace of developments and emergence of new technologies has only highlighted the need for applying an arms control lens more than ever before.

This heightened pace of technological innovations has and continues to change the way international law can and should govern the development, deployment and use of these weapons. Even as the pace of development and use of new weapons technologies remains inevitable, it is essential to develop commensurate norms, laws and rules to regulate them in all their dimensions.

The way some of these new and emerging technologies are being used has a direct bearing and implications for international as well as regional peace and security, at all levels. It is not surprising, therefore, that this item has assumed high significance over the past years, and is indeed emerging as the fifth core issue in the CD.

**Mr. Coordinator,**

We continue to witness an innovation overflow for various categories of new technologies and means of war, outpacing requisite regulations and controls. Even as we grapple with questions surrounding new domains of war fighting such as cyber, outer space and electromagnetic spectrum, added layers of complexity arise due to the integration of technology to traditional domains, whether at land, air, or at sea.

As a further enabler, technology has integrated all domains from a degree to another, making war fighting a cross-domain construct. Our arms control and disarmament solutions can also no longer remain oblivious to such developments or remain stuck in old binaries – as they no longer provide all the answers.

This growing gap – between innovation, integration and regulation – creates and accentuates vulnerabilities and drivers of tensions for states, generating an increasingly destabilizing vacuum.

**Mr. Coordinator,**

While we justifiably focus on the impact of weapons of mass destruction on international security, especially nuclear weapons, it is important to recognize that the collective impact of and serious threats to peace, security and stability at the regional and global levels by such developments are comparable to any other category of weapons of mass destruction.

This aspect has been well established as evidenced in the security policies and doctrines of states, some drawing explicit links of new weapons with nuclear weapons while others do so implicitly.

An added element of such weapons, which makes a compelling case for urgent consideration by this body is that these new weapons reduce or eliminate the danger of human casualties for the user states and, therefore, increase the propensity for their use and enhanced prospects of symmetric and asymmetric responses. The net result is lowering of the threshold for resort to armed conflict.

**Mr. Coordinator,**

Within this larger edifice of new and emerging technologies, I would draw attention to three particular issues that merit an earnest discussion and consideration by the CD, namely cyber weapons; Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems (LAWS); and the issue of chemical and biological terrorism.

Cyber space has emerged as one of the key domains of modern warfare. The ability to act anonymously, without traditional geographical limitations, at a very low risk to human life, coupled with the ability to mass produce cyber weapons cheaply, makes them extremely attractive and yet dangerous.

Several States have or are developing ICTs as instruments of warfare and intelligence operations, and for political purposes. The spread of sophisticated malicious tools and techniques by States or non-State actors further increases the risk of mistaken attribution and unintended escalation. As disruptive activities using cyber weapons grow more complex and risky, it is obvious that no State is able to address these threats alone. A multilateral response including international cooperation and assistance is therefore essential to reduce risks and secure the cyber space. Given the unique attributes of ICTs, additional norms should be developed over time.

**Mr. Coordinator,**

Rightly describe by a significant number of states as the next revolution in military affairs and fundamentally changing the nature of war, Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems or LAWS are no longer a realm of science fiction, as some may suggest, but a priority concern for many states. As a unique and

novel class of weapons that has given rise to multi-faceted concerns, this category of weapons needs to be regulated multilaterally.

In addition to their legal, ethical and humanitarian dimensions, the issue of LAWS carries serious implications for regional as well as global peace and security. Among other aspects, their introduction will significantly lower the threshold of war; consequently, the resort to use of force will become a more frequent phenomenon.

LAWS would, therefore, undermine peace and security at regional, sub-regional and global levels. Their introduction would also affect progress on disarmament and non-proliferation, as more and more states start tying links of these capabilities with strategic stability and other disarmament questions.

Besides considering the issue of LAWS in the framework of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), its international security related dimensions should be comprehensively addressed by the CD.

**Mr. Coordinator,**

The Conventions prohibiting Biological and Chemical Weapons, the BWC and the CWC, are two important pillars of the international security architecture. We value the contributions by both conventions to global security and their potential for promoting international cooperation in peaceful uses within their respective areas.

However, significant gaps exist, which are being further accentuated with the emergence of new technologies. For the BWC, the questions generated by the lack of a dedicated verification mechanism are only going to be compounded with continued advances in technology, including those related to synthetic biology and nano-bio materials, among others.

It is well known that chemical and biological materials are relatively more easily available and therefore there are greater risks of these being acquired, developed and used by non-state actors. While nuclear terrorism is already covered under existing international instruments, a Convention dealing with terrorist acts involving chemical and biological materials will be a positive development on the international security and counter-terrorism landscape.

We support the commencement of substantive work in the CD on elaborating an international convention on the suppression of acts of chemical and biological terrorism, whether in the form of discussions or negotiations. As a proposal that does not negatively affect the vital security interests of any Member State, it would avoid the issue arising from the competing priorities amongst the CD's so-called other four core issues.

Other new types of weapons, such as directed energy weapons are also in need of a similar focus. Addressing these issues is increasingly not a matter choice, as the impacts of these weapons systems on international security would only continue to grow.

**Mr. Coordinator,**

As for your question on causes for developing or retaining weapons of mass destruction, it is vital to distinguish between what some may try to pass on as two sides of the same coin.

Let us consider the case of nuclear weapons.

The three key motives that may drive States to possess nuclear weapons are: one, existential threats from larger military forces – both nuclear and conventional; two, the existence of unresolved disputes with more powerful States; and three, discrimination in the application of international law and norms.

These legitimate motivations are different from those States that retain nuclear weapons as a matter of prestige, either to maintain or to attain it.

That some with the latter approach also envisage war fighting concepts of full spectrum dominance also clearly undermines the spirit and the primary objective of the disarmament process – the attainment of equal and undiminished security for all States.

The fundamentals of arms control do not change, irrespective of whether we apply the science and technology lens or not.

**Mr. Coordinator,**

This subsidiary body should deliberate and prepare grounds to tackle these developments surrounding new technologies and their military applications, in a manner to provide enhanced security for all states. One option could be to evolve a recommendation that leads to negotiating legal instruments in the three areas of new technologies I identified earlier. We remain open to discussing mechanisms that could be utilized to achieve progress.

Let me conclude by identifying what holds us back. States seeking to perpetuate perceived strategic advantages and maintaining their full spectrum dominance have continued to avoid taking up these issues in an earnest manner, as is the case with other so called core issues. Such an approach only perpetuates the CD's deadlock and needs revisiting, sooner than later.

**Mr. Coordinator,**

It is my delegation's hope that substantive and interactive discussions in this Subsidiary Body would meaningfully contribute to developing a better mutual understanding among CD members and would also pave the way to start negotiations on these important issues to which the CD can no longer remain oblivious.

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

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