

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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LETTER DATED 30 MARCH 2005 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF INDIA TO THE CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE CONFERENCE TRANSMITTING THE TEXT OF THE INAUGURAL ADDRESS DELIVERED BY THE MINISTER FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS OF INDIA AT THE CONFERENCE ON EMERGING NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION CHALLENGES IN NEW DELHI ON 28 MARCH 2005

I have the honour to forward to you the text of the inaugural address delivered by India's Minister for External Affairs, Mr. K. Natwar Singh, at New Delhi on 28th March 2005 on "India and the NPT", at the Conference on "Emerging Nuclear Proliferation Challenges" organized by the Institute for Defense Studies and Analyses and Pugwash-India.

I shall be grateful if you would issue this paper as an official document of the Conference on Disarmament and distribute it to all member states and non-member participants of the Conference.

(Signed):

Jayant Prasad
Ambassador &
Permanent Representative of India
to the Conference on Disarmament

**Inaugural Address by
Mr. K. Natwar Singh, Minister for External Affairs of India
on “India and the NPT”
at the Conference on Emerging Nuclear Proliferation Challenges organised by
the Institute for Defense Studies and Analyses & Pugwash-India**

New Delhi, 28 March 2005

It gives me great pleasure to inaugurate the seminar on “Emerging Nuclear Proliferation Challenges” jointly organised by the Institute of Defence Studies and Analysis and Pugwash-India Conference. The instances of onward proliferation which have come to light in the last two years and the growth and spread of international terrorism lend a sense of urgency to these discussions. The fact that this Conference is being held a few weeks before the Seventh Review Conference of the Non-Proliferation Treaty makes this initiative timely as well as relevant to the principal concerns of our time.

The non-proliferation order is coming under increasing stress both on account of the failure to make any significant progress towards nuclear disarmament as well as the failure to prevent clandestine proliferation by members of the Non Proliferation Treaty as well as some who are outside it. The infirmities of the non-proliferation order have imposed costs on India and have had an adverse impact on our security, as much of the clandestine proliferation which is today the focus of attention has tended to flow into or emanate from our neighbourhood. The response of the international community over the years has been, from our point of view, inadequate at best or permissive at worst, leading to the present adverse situation. Unfortunately, even today we see the same inconsistencies in approach with selective focus on the recipients of such clandestine proliferation but not enough attention on the sources of supply. This uneven approach does not lend credence to the resolve of the international community to deal seriously with this issue.

India has an abiding interest in non-proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction not just for its own security but for peace and security of the world at large. It is now little remembered that India was amongst the initiators of the proposal for an international instrument to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons. We held, however, that such an instrument should involve not only a commitment by non-nuclear weapon States to abjure nuclear weapons but also a commitment from those in possession of nuclear weapons to cease the further production of fissile material for weapon purposes and to move towards complete elimination of nuclear weapons within a time-bound framework. The Treaty, as it eventually emerged, unfortunately addressed only one part of the proliferation challenge.

During Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi’s tenure, India again took a major initiative in 1988 in presenting an Action Plan for the eventual and complete elimination of nuclear weapons in a time-bound manner. However, this practical and non-discriminatory proposal did not find favour with those possessing nuclear weapon arsenals.

The end of the Cold War, bringing with it an end to the nuclear confrontation between the two super powers, once again presented a unique opportunity to move forward in the direction of

reducing and eliminating nuclear weapons. These hopes have, however, been belied and instead of progressive steps towards nuclear disarmament there has been in general a move to reassert the primacy of nuclear weapons in the security calculus of states, especially those with the largest nuclear arsenals. New doctrines and justification for use of nuclear weapons have been developed. Such an attitude feeds and strengthens the belief that nuclear weapons are a currency of power. These developments also raise a question: Are we going to see a new nuclear weapons race? While it may be premature to call it that at present, the fact remains that this is not a welcome development for achieving nuclear disarmament and by extension the goal of non-proliferation.

India may not be a party to the NPT, but, our conduct has always been consistent with the key provisions of the Treaty as they apply to nuclear weapon States. Article I of the NPT obliges a nuclear weapon state not to transfer nuclear weapons to any other country or to assist any other country to acquire them. India's record in this regard is impeccable and a matter of public knowledge. This is in contrast to the poor record of some of the nuclear weapon States who have been active collaborators in, or silent spectators to, continuing clandestine and illegal proliferation, including export of nuclear weapon components and technology. Article III requires a party to the Treaty to provide nuclear materials and related equipment to any other country only under safeguards. India's policies of international cooperation in the nuclear field have always conformed to this principle. Article VI commits the parties to the Treaty to pursue negotiations to bring about eventual global nuclear disarmament. India is not only committed to commencing negotiations for a Nuclear Weapons Convention, it is also the only nuclear weapon State ready to do so.

India is a responsible nuclear power that practices a policy of utmost restraint. We have announced a policy of no first use and non-use against non-nuclear weapon states, providing thereby negative security assurance to all non-nuclear weapon states. We have repeatedly declared that we shall maintain only a minimum credible deterrent. We have stated that the role of India's nuclear weapons is entirely defensive. Our unilateral moratorium on nuclear tests continues to remain in place.

Friends, it is our view that if the emerging proliferation challenges are to be effectively addressed, the international community should review and re-evaluate existing frameworks with a view to adapting them to current political realities. There needs to be a realization that treating existing non proliferation structures in inflexible ideological terms, as though they were cast in stone, will yield limited results. There is a need for a mind set change in dealing with emerging nuclear proliferation challenges. Approaches which have failed to restrain, let alone punish those guilty of proliferation need to be replaced by a new framework which, on the one hand, is effective in curbing proliferation and, at the same time, does not inhibit legitimate cooperation in peaceful uses of nuclear energy by states whose non-proliferation records are beyond doubt.

As I said in the beginning, we have a shared interest in preventing proliferation, since our security has been undermined by such proliferation. We remain ready to work towards this objective in a manner consistent with the requirements of our national security. From our perspective, to meet these challenges several steps would need to be taken, as part of a composite whole, rather than in isolation as the issues are inter-linked.

The first step should be a reaffirmation by the nuclear weapon States of their commitment towards irreversible and verifiable cuts in their nuclear arsenals and to reduce the role of nuclear weapons. This cannot be just an articulation of mere rhetoric but would have to be matched by concrete action. Our goal should be to have a universally applicable and multilateral Nuclear Weapons Convention similar to the one adopted in the case of Chemical Weapons. India remains ready to participate in agreed and irreversible steps to prepare the ground for such a Convention. During the Cold War, it was said that a 'nuclear war cannot be won and must not be fought'. The need now for all the nuclear weapon States is to reaffirm this logic. In parallel to this reaffirmation, the nuclear weapon States should take visible steps to reduce the salience of nuclear weapons in their strategic calculus. Since nuclear weapons are not really usable, efforts should be directed at taking steps, in the first instance, towards reducing their importance in security approaches. India believes in this approach and has therefore followed a policy of "No First Use". A step in this direction would be a global No-First-Use agreement. An agreement by Nuclear Weapon States ruling out the use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon states would also be an important step. The nuclear weapon States should also take practical steps to lower the alert status, through gradual de-alerting actions of their strategic weapons, consistent with the defensive role of nuclear weapons. Such concrete steps would reaffirm the solemn commitment of the international community, in particular nuclear weapons States, to nuclear disarmament and mark concrete progress in that direction.

The tendency so far has been to work on an exclusivist approach. Such an approach, we have witnessed, has neither succeeded in stopping, nor in punishing, those who are guilty of proliferation, either as a source or a recipient. Quite the contrary, it has led to putting undue constraints on those who are responsible and who have followed transparent policies. The international community needs to discard the old mindset and acknowledge the record of states, like India, who have proved time and again that they are reliable partners in the global effort to ensure non-proliferation.

India has developed a comprehensive indigenous infrastructure and a pool of skilled manpower in the nuclear sector, to meet both its energy requirements generated by the development aspirations of a billion people as well as to enhance national security. India's nuclear programme, civilian or strategic, has not violated any international obligations. At the same time, conscious of the responsibilities that such technologies bring, we have taken stringent measures to safeguard them. We are committed to further strengthening our regulatory framework in this regard in keeping with changing technical and security challenges. India has never been and will never be a source of proliferation. This has been reiterated at the highest political levels and is an article of faith of our foreign policy.

Today a key development goal across the globe is to raise the living standards of people. A critical ingredient in this process is the availability of a cheap and clean source of energy. As an energy deficit nation, India has placed considerable importance on nuclear energy in its energy mix. We will continue on the path of indigenous development. The pace of this development can be accelerated with greater international cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Such cooperation would not only help bring greater prosperity to a large number of people but would also help in meeting the concerns arising out of green house gas emissions. We have repeatedly said that every cooperation project in nuclear power would be open to international safeguards. However, such cooperation, today, remains hostage to restrictive denial regimes.

The need of the hour therefore is to move away from an exclusivist approach and to create a more inclusive framework based on principles of equality. We should evolve a framework which, on the one hand, effectively curbs and prevents proliferation and, on the other, does not unduly restrict cooperation in peaceful uses of nuclear energy with states, who by their actions have strengthened the objective of non-proliferation. It has been noted in recent discussions, that international frameworks need to adapt to the rapid development and diffusion of technology. I would also like to add here that international frameworks must be dynamic and keep pace with the present day political realities.

Our actions have always been guided by the principle that we should be able to retain our freedom of thought and action to take steps necessary for our national security as well as to meet international concerns arising out of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction especially its linkages with terrorism. Consistent with this basic position, we remain ready to engage and cooperate on the basis of equality, in all multilateral consultations, to develop such an effective framework, and to bring about a stable, genuine and lasting non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Our eventual goal must remain the complete elimination of such weapons.

I wish you well in your deliberations and look forward to a substantive outcome.
