



BANGLADESH

**Statement by H. E. Mr. Masud Bin Momen, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Bangladesh
to the UN in New York at the General Debate of the First Committee at the 71st Session of the UN
General Assembly, Friday, 07 October 2016**

Mr. Chairman,

I wish to congratulate you/ Ambassador Boukadoum on your/ his assumption of Chair of the First Committee. We assure you/ him and members of the Bureau of my delegation's fullest support in discharging your/ their responsibilities.

Bangladesh aligns itself with the Statement delivered by Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

Mr. Chairman,

Bangladesh's commitment to general and complete disarmament is anchored in our Constitution and remains a fundamental pursuit of our foreign policy objectives. This perhaps explains why Bangladesh has usually been one of the first to come forward in South Asia in assuming obligations under all major multilateral disarmament treaties.

For obvious reasons, we note with concern some egregious political rhetoric emanating from our region in recent times on the possible threats of using nuclear weapons. Even as we wish to believe any such fall-out to be a remote possibility, the inherent danger underlying such threats can only further escalate regional tension and sense of insecurity.

We remain convinced that the ultimate guarantee of peace and security in our region, and in other parts of the world, can be ensured only by the total elimination of nuclear weapons. We believe this to be the resounding message we heard on the International Day of the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons that we observed here on 26 September 2016.

There is no doubt in our mind that all responsible Member States share a firm commitment to having a world free of nuclear weapons. There are, however, divergences of views on the ways, means and pace of achieving that objective. This is perhaps to be expected in a multilateral system striving to uphold a rules-based system in a rather volatile international context. We are, therefore, inclined to hear all the diverse views and approaches, and would favour a way forward that is built on synthesizing the various approaches culminating in our shared objective.

In course of Member States' sustained pre-occupation with the nuclear disarmament agenda, we have indeed gathered sufficient understanding and insights into the complexities involved to propel us into meaningful action. Yet, despite our professed political will, we have reached a stage where we have

allowed the UN disarmament machinery to yield no tangible results for decades, resulting in a deepening sense of frustration and insecurity all around. There is perhaps no compelling reason for us to point fingers at a large part of the membership for seeking alternative yet legitimate routes for getting us out of this impasse.

We, as a delegation, make no mistake in recognizing the steady nuclear arms reduction efforts by two of the major nuclear weapons possessing States. Like many others, we, however, share concerns over the pace and progress over such reductions - more so in the backdrop of continued qualitative improvement of nuclear weapons and their means of delivery. We hear arguments in favour of retaining nuclear weapons in the interest of "strategic stability", and yet see regular cases being made about the alleged actions or designs to undermine any such notion of stability by one actor or the other. Perhaps in parallel measures, we witness the proliferation of a number of exclusive groups or initiatives that tend to prescribe the norms and standards for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, maintaining the so-called prerogatives of the nuclear weapons states.

It is our contention that the notions of stability, security and deterrence from a strategic point of view are not necessarily premised on the possession of nuclear weapons. The claim of having the right international environment for renouncing nuclear weapons would perhaps remain an ephemera since the perception of any such favourable situation would most likely be clouded by subjective interpretations. From our vantage point, with three nuclear weapons states in our neighbourhood, any tenuous notion of security assurance provided by nuclear weapons pales vastly in comparison to the humanitarian exigencies resulting from the use, or even the threat of use, of nuclear weapons.

It is crucial to recognize that without universal, non-discriminatory and verifiable nuclear disarmament, the threats of nuclear proliferation and nuclear terrorism are likely to persist notwithstanding all efforts at finding solutions, imposing sanctions or building firewalls. Bangladesh has, therefore, always joined others in advocating for mutually reinforcing implementation of the three pillars of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), with matching priority given to both nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation.

Likewise, we have consistently supported the call for a Comprehensive Convention on Nuclear Weapons, addressing the entire spectrum of issues concerned. Pending such development, we remain open to exploring other possibilities that can essentially serve as building blocks towards that goal and also complement the existing legal regime, particularly the NPT provisions. We believe certain new approaches being brought to the table for negotiations in this Committee should merit our consideration from that perspective.

In the same spirit, we recognise the Security Council Resolution 2310 (2016) adopted last month as yet another shot in the arms of promoting universalization of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). We remain seriously concerned over recurrent reports of conduct of nuclear tests that casts a shadow over the overall security situation in the Asia Pacific and beyond.

We are similarly concerned over reports of continued use of chemical weapons in a protracted conflict situation in the Middle East, and flag our abiding support to any constructive initiative to investigate such reports, eliminate any remaining chemical weapons stockpiles, and ensure accountability for those responsible for such use, if proven beyond reasonable doubts. We are equally disturbed by the grievous

harms caused by the use of improvised explosive devices in populated areas, particularly in the same conflict situation.

The chilling prospects of terrorists and other non-state actors seeking and obtaining access to nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction are perhaps becoming more real than previously assumed. With rapid progress in new technologies, including with nanotechnology and artificial intelligence, there is a potential for such threats being further aggravated. Without causing undue alarm, it is perhaps advisable to further mainstream these issues into our discussions in the First Committee and other relevant fora. We see merit in a recent proposal for the Conference on Disarmament (CD) to consider negotiating an international instrument on suppressing acts of chemical and biological terrorism.

Mr. Chairman,

In Bangladesh, as we enlarge our initiatives to promote peaceful use of nuclear energy for development purpose, we remain committed to working with IAEA and other international partners in ensuring due diligence in nuclear safety and security. We look forward to the Nuclear Security Summit to be convened by IAEA later this year to mobilize further international support for ensuring nuclear security across the board, including in the area of cyber-operations of nuclear facilities.

With our development pursuits now gradually extending to the oceans and outer space, Bangladesh is taking greater interest in preventing arms race in those domains, including through legal codification of norms. While trust and confidence building measures can be useful for preventing weaponization of the outer space, there is no denying the importance of concluding an international legally binding instrument to this effect under the purview of CD.

Bangladesh remains seized with consideration of possible ratification of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), as we continue to attend the Meetings of the State Parties in our capacity as an observer. We appreciate the consensus reached at the Sixth Biennial Meeting on Implementation of the Programme of Work on Small Arms and Light Weapons held here in June this year. The recognition of the emerging threats posed by new technologies in manufacturing and reproducing small arms and light weapons should help gear up international cooperation efforts to prevent such proliferation, especially in resource-constrained settings. In this context, we reiterate our appreciation for the support we continue to receive from the UN Regional Centre for Peace and Development in Asia and the Pacific, based in Kathmandu, Nepal.

Mr. Chairman,

As a nation in transition, Bangladesh has legitimate interest in aligning itself to the cause of general and complete disarmament, and exhort channeling the massive resources deployed for arms build up to deserving concerns of sustainable development and sustaining peace. In our modest way, we have continued to make efforts to exert moral leadership for collective international action on combating poverty, hunger and climate change impacts. In a similar fashion, we shall continue to pursue the disarmament agenda within the United Nations and beyond. Our record of refraining from voting against any resolution or motion in this Committee perhaps speaks for itself.

I thank you.