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Report on Indian Foreign Policy and Nuclear Disarmament

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Summary:

Over the years, in the United Nations and elsewhere, India has patiently and persistently continued her efforts to help in finding a solution for the global nuclear disarmament

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Transcript - English

An important objective of India's foreign policy has been to help in the realization of the goal of total disarmament. In our nuclear-missile age, when the military arsenals of the big Powers possess the capacity to destroy the world several times over, wars are unthinkable and have to be ruled out as instruments of national policy. Disarmament has become essential for the survival of mankind. India has therefore consistently maintained that disarmament is the most vital and the most urgent question facing mankind today.

2. Disarmament is, however, a highly difficult and complicated matter, linked as it is with the national security interests of sovereign nations. Over the years, in the United Nations and elsewhere, India has patiently and persistently continued her efforts to help in finding a solution to this vital and complex problem. India's constructive role has been universally acclaimed and her efforts have been recognized by her inclusion in the Eighteen Nation Disarmament Committee currently meeting in Geneva.

3. India's approach to disarmament negotiations is based on the conviction that ultimately a solution to the problem of disarmament can be found only if there is an agreement among the Great Powers, particularly the two superpowers vis. The USA and USSR. This is so not only because they have most to disarm but also because without their cooperation no disarmament agreement can be implemented. The smaller Powers who have a particularly high stake in the preservation of peace in view of their efforts to raise the living standards of their people can play a useful role by promoting agreements. Further, as an agreement on total disarmament is bound to take time in view of their efforts to raise the living standards of their people can play a useful role by promoting agreements. Further, as an agreement on total disarmament is bound to take time in view of the unprecedented nature of the objective and deep-seated suspicious and mistrust among nations, an attempt should be made simultaneously to reach agreements on measures to slow down the arms race and build up confidence. India's efforts in the field of disarmament have to be seen against this background.

4. Some of the concrete and practical proposals made by India and steps taken in pursuance thereof are as follows:

□i) India tabled draft resolutions in the General Assembly as early as 1948 and 1949 proposing effective international control of atomic energy to ensure its use only for peaceful purposes, and calling for the elimination of atomic weapons from national armaments.

□ii) It was as a result of India's initiative in 1953 that the Disarmament Sub-Committee of the UN was formed

□iii) India sent a representative to the UN Disarmament Commission in 1956 to present her views on disarmament. India also submitted a memorandum which inter alia suggested the following four initial steps in the direction of disarmament: □□□ experimental explosions of nuclear and thermonuclear bombs should be suspended pending their abandonment;

. There should be a total dismantling of at least some bombs, and thus a reversal of the process of piling them up;

. The parties concerned should publicly declare to the United Nations and to the world their willingness not to manufacture any more of these dreadful weapons;

. Military budgets should be published in all countries, and no further expansion of military strength should be made; any possible reduction should be effected immediately

□□

iv) In 1960, India along with 11 other States submitted a draft resolution to the 15th session of the UN General Assembly which contained directive principles which could form the basis of an agreement on general and complete disarmament. This was the first effort to formulate basic principles on which a general disarmament programme could be initiated and agreed. This resolution was not pressed to a vote since the

representatives of the USA and the USSR informed the General Assembly that their governments would exchange views relating to disarmament.

□ The Governments of the USA and the USSR held such exchange of views from June to September 1961, and as a result reached agreement on principles for disarmament negotiations. These principles were later endorsed by the General Assembly and now provide the guidelines for the current Disarmament Conference in Geneva. It is a matter of satisfaction to India that these principles more or less conform to the formulations submitted by her in her joint draft resolution.

□ (v) India has been the first country to draw the attention of the world community to the grave consequences of continued testing of nuclear weapons, both from the point of view of hazards to the health of present and future generations of mankind and of aggravation of arms race. As early as 1954, the late Prime Minister called for a suspension of all such tests and suggested the conclusion of some sort of a standstill agreement pending their complete abandonment. India has since continued her efforts in that direction and has sponsored resolutions in successive sessions of the General Assembly calling for the urgent need for their suspension.

□ India has welcomed and signed the treaty banning nuclear tests in the atmosphere, in outer space and underwater, concluded in Moscow in August 1963, and is happy that three-fourths of the purpose has been achieved. However, some countries like France and China have refused to sign the treaty and underground tests have yet to be prohibited.

(vi) India believes that the Eighteen Nation Committee on Disarmament, which consists of five nations from the Western bloc, five from the Socialist bloc and eight among the non-aligned countries provides the best forum for negotiating a treaty on general and complete disarmament under effective international control. India has therefore been taking an active part in promoting constructive discussions and has acted in concert with the other non-aligned nations. India has also made several suggestions both of a procedural and substantive nature.

The following procedural suggestions made by India have been accepted and have proved helpful

□ □ □ The Committee should meet in informal sessions on specific questions, in addition to the regular formal plenary meetings

. Committees should be formed to deal with particular items of work

. A sub-committee should be formed to work out an agreement on the question of nuclear weapon tests.

□ □

Among proposals of a substantive character made by India, the following merit special mention:

□ □ □ April 1962, India along with the seven other non-aligned members sponsored a joint memorandum on nuclear testing with a view to devising a system of control based on a purely scientific and non-political basis.

. India has suggested that a non-dissemination agreement, on the lines of partial nuclear test ban treaty, should be signed whereby the nuclear powers would not transfer nuclear weapons or technology to nations not now possessing them and the non-nuclear nations would similarly pledge not to accept or acquire such weapons.

□ □

5. The progress in the field of disarmament has been rather slow and only four agreements have been reached so far. These agreements are: The partial nuclear test ban treaty, a direct communications link between Washington and Moscow, agreement on non-orbiting of nuclear weapons in outer space, and reduction in the production of fissionable materials for weapons use. This slow progress should, however, not by itself be a cause for despair, for unresolved political issues, mistrust among nations and the complicated nature of the problem of disarmament make agreements in this field of difficult achievement. India believes that circumstances

now are more favorable than ever before and is determined to continue her efforts along with like-minded nations to strive for the goal of a world without arms and without war.