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Report by the Department of External Affairs, Disarmament Unit, 'India and Nuclear Disarmament'

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Summary:

this document describes India's overall stances towards nuclear disarmament

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General and Complete Disarmament

The Government of India have consistently given expression to their firm belief that disarmament is the most important single problem facing the world today. Accordingly, in the United Nations and elsewhere, the Government have continued their efforts to help in finding a solution to this very vital and complicated problem. India has supported various resolutions brought before the UN General Assembly from time to time regarding disarmament. More recently it has lent its support to resolution 1378(XIV) setting forth the goal of general and complete disarmament and resolution 1722(XVI) laying down the agreed principles for disarmament negotiations and establishing the Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarmament. India's efforts in the field of disarmament have been recognized by her inclusion in the Eighteen-Nation Disarmament Committee currently meeting at Geneva.

2. India's approach to disarmament negotiations is based on the conviction that ultimately a solution of this problem can be reached only by the two principle Powers and that all that we can do is to help them to reconcile their differences. In keeping with this approach India has emphasized certain basic principles and has offered suggestions, both substantial and procedural, to promote an agreement between the two sides. Among the principles, which have been stressed by India, the important ones are the need for a speedy achievement of disarmament, continuity of disarmament process, sufficient intensity or impact of each stage of disarmament, urgent solution of the problem of nuclear disarmament and the importance and possibility of an early accord on what have been called partial disarmament measures pending the conclusion of a disarmament treaty. Among the Indian suggestions of a substantial nature, which have been considered helpful, are those relating to the question of transition from one stage to another and the problem of control and verification of disarmament measures. The procedural suggestions made by India, which have already been adopted by the Eighteen-Nation Disarmament Committee, are those relating to informal meetings and the formation of a sub-committee on nuclear test ban. India's suggestion to postpone a discussion on the cessation of war propaganda, when the debate on that subject tended to become acrimonious, and to take up a concurrent discussion of two subject's viz. non-dissemination of nuclear weapons and prevention of accidental war has averted a deadlock in the Committee of the Whole. Both sides have acknowledged India's contribution to the drafting of the preamble of the disarmament treaty, which is the only document besides the first four articles of the treaty, on which an agreement has been reached so far.

3. Nuclear Test Ban

India has been the first nation to ask through the United Nations for a ban on all weapons tests. On the 8th April 1954 India asked the UN Disarmament Commission to consider the proposal of Prime Minister Nehru, which he had made in parliament on the 2nd April, that pending progress towards a solution prohibiting and eliminating weapons of mass destruction, some sort of standstill agreement be reached to cancel future test explosions. Although the Disarmament Commission took no action on this proposal, the Indian delegation has renewed its request each year. The XIVth and XVth session of the General Assembly passed resolutions, co-sponsored by India, calling for a continuation of suspension of tests.

4. In the sixteenth session of the UN GA, the Indian test ban proposal was embodied in resolution No. 1648(XVI). This resolution, sponsored by Ethiopia, Ghana, Nepal, UAR and Yugoslavia as well as India, called upon the States concerned "to refrain from further test explosions pending the conclusion of necessary internationally binding agreements in regard to tests." The resolution was adopted by the General Assembly with 71 votes in favor, 20 against, and 8 abstentions, in spite of opposition for different reasons by both the principal powers. The USA opposed it on the ground that it called for an uncontrolled and uninspected moratorium. Russia criticized the resolution saying it delinked the problem of the cessation of nuclear weapon tests from the historic task of achieving general and complete disarmament.

5. Taking into account the grave consequences and continued nuclear testing, more particularly relation hazards, intensification of the arms race and the aggravation of the international situation, India has again taken the initiative in calling for a discussion in the current seventeenth session of the UN General Assembly of the urgent need for suspension of nuclear and thermonuclear tests pending conclusion of necessary agreements in this regard.

6. At the Eighteen-Nation Disarmament Conference India has maintained pressure on the nuclear powers to arrive at an agreement on nuclear test ban and has along with the other seven non-aligned Powers submitted a joint memorandum as a compromise plan to break the deadlock. Although this eight-power plan has been welcomed by both sides and has remained as the only plan accepted by them as a basis for negotiations, no progress has been possible so far because rival parties have interpreted it in their own ways.