Introduction of the resolutions “Convention on the Prohibition of the Use of Nuclear Weapons” and “Reducing Nuclear Danger” in the First Committee of the 61st UNGA

Statement by Jayant Prasad, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of India to the Conference on Disarmament, Geneva.

New York, October 10, 2006

Madam Chairperson,

I am taking the floor to introduce two resolutions tabled by India under the cluster on nuclear disarmament. We thought it appropriate to introduce the draft resolutions in conjunction with the thematic debate on the subject. Both of these proposals constitute integral elements of the Working Paper on Nuclear Disarmament presented by my delegation during the course of the general debate at the end of last week. While the secretariat receives and prints the resolutions as L documents, we have transmitted the text of the two resolutions to the New York based missions of all Member States.

First, on behalf of the co-sponsors, I would like to introduce the draft resolution entitled “Convention on the Prohibition of the Use of Nuclear Weapons.”

The resolution underlines that the use of nuclear weapons poses the most serious threat to the survival of mankind. At the Non-aligned Summit held at Havana last month, participating heads of State or government had stressed their concern at the threat to humanity posed by the continued existence of nuclear weapons and of their possible use or threat of use.

The resolution reflects the belief of the co-sponsors that a multilateral, universal and legally binding instrument prohibiting the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons will contribute to the mitigation of the nuclear threat as an important interim measure until we reach agreement on a step-by-step process for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

This will serve to diminish the salience of nuclear weapons in maintaining international security and contribute to changes in doctrines, policies, attitudes and institutions required for a nuclear weapons-free world.

Moreover, a multilateral agreement prohibiting the use of nuclear weapons would strengthen international security and create a climate for negotiations leading to the elimination of nuclear weapons.

The operative part of the resolution reiterates the call to the Conference on Disarmament to commence negotiations to reach agreement on an international convention on prohibiting the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons under any circumstances. A positive vote for this resolution will be a vote by the international community in favour of a decisive step towards the elimination of nuclear weapons.
Madam Chairperson,

I also have the honour to introduce the draft resolution on “Reducing Nuclear Danger.”

All constituents of the United Nations had unanimously agreed in 1978 that nuclear weapons pose the greatest danger to mankind. The Member States had also agreed that effective measures of nuclear disarmament and prevention of nuclear war have the highest priority. Meanwhile, measures for reducing nuclear dangers are necessary for safeguarding our collective security interests.

The resolution offers modest and pragmatic proposals for the safety and security of mankind, pending the complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

First, it calls for a review of nuclear doctrines, as also immediate steps to reduce the risk of unintentional or accidental use of nuclear weapons. The Final Document of SSOD-I had recommended that, to ensure that mankind’s survival was not endangered, all States, in particular nuclear weapon States, should consider various proposals designed to secure the avoidance of the use of nuclear weapons and the prevention of nuclear war. Strategic experts have identified one or other of the measures proposed in this resolution as feasible in the present circumstances, including through de-alerting and de-targeting of nuclear weapons.

The resolution manifests the conviction of the co-sponsors that the hair-trigger posture of nuclear forces carries the unacceptable risk of unintentional or accidental use of nuclear weapons, which could have catastrophic consequences. The threat posed by the increased risk of nuclear weapons or its components falling into the hands of non-State actors, including terrorists, has further aggravated existing dangers. While unilateral, bilateral or plurilateral nuclear confidence-building measures are useful, our aim is to reach international understanding or agreements for reducing nuclear danger, as also the risk of accidental nuclear war.

A positive vote for this resolution will be a reaffirmation by the international community to take decisive steps towards reducing nuclear danger.