



**71<sup>st</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly**  
**First Committee**  
*Thematic Debate on the Nuclear Weapons cluster*

Statement by  
The delegation of Sri Lanka to the United Nations

17<sup>th</sup> October, 2016

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Mr. Chairman,

The threat to humanity posed by the existence of nuclear weapons and the catastrophic consequences of the detonation of any nuclear weapon are the grim reality we face today.

The risk of these catastrophic consequences will remain as long as nuclear weapons exist. Total elimination of nuclear weapons would be the only absolute guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. Yet, nations do not appear to let go of them, though they know very well that the transboundary and global impact of the existence of nuclear weapons lowers the protection and security of their populations.

As Albert Einstein very rightly put, “the unleashed power of the atom has changed everything save our modes of thinking and we thus drift toward unparalleled catastrophe.”

While the elimination of stockpiles by nuclear weapon States remains slow, nuclear weapon tests carried out by Member States compromise peace and stability of the world.

The danger of nuclear material falling into terrorist hands and its unthinkable consequences have added a further dangerous dimension to the threat posed by nuclear weapons, in a world where established states are increasingly being destabilized.

The bottom line, Mr. Chairman, is that the situation is extremely grave and bleak.

Mr. Chairman,

I often wonder whether we, as a global community, have done enough to negotiate in good faith, and reach a solution to this situation.

The Conference on Disarmament, the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum of the international community, has not been able to carry out negotiations pursuant to an agreed programme of work in two decades.

The UN Disarmament Commission, the sole specialized and deliberative body within the UN multilateral disarmament apparatus that consider specific disarmament issues and submit concrete recommendations to the General Assembly has not produced a substantive outcome since 1999.

The 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the parties failed to reach an agreement on a substantive final document.

Though the multilateral nuclear disarmament machinery has shown slow progress, the solution to counter the challenge of the nuclear weapons, Mr. Chairman, is within multilateralism itself.

The NPT, as the central instrument, has always provided the normative framework for nuclear disarmament. The 2010 NPT Action Plan and the 13 Practical Steps to disarmament agreed at the 2000 NPT Review Conference, Physical Protection of Nuclear Material Convention and the International Convention on the Suppression of Nuclear Terrorism, among others, have served to alleviate the threat of nuclear weapons.

Building on these normative frameworks, a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination, would be a giant step forward in the process of nuclear disarmament.

Sri Lanka supports the convening of a Conference open to all States in 2017, as recommended by the Open-ended Working Group, taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations, to negotiate and conclude such an instrument.

However, it would be imperative for all Member States to negotiate in good faith if we are to realize such a legally binding instrument that would create a world free of nuclear weapons. In fact, all states have a responsibility to negotiate in good faith. Additionally, there is a clear responsibility on nuclear weapons states to take effective measures towards eventual elimination of nuclear weapons as provided for in Article VI on the NPT.

Mr. Chairman,

Sri Lanka is committed to the elimination of the threat posed by nuclear weapons. This commitment is enshrined in our obligations to international treaties. Sri Lanka will make all possible endeavours to make nuclear disarmament realizable and to bring peaceful uses of nuclear technology within reach.

Thank you.