



**Statement by Honorable H.M. Vijitha Herath, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Foreign
Employment and Tourism of Sri Lanka
High Level Segment of the Conference on Disarmament
25 February 2025**

Madam President

Excellencies

Distinguished delegates

First, let me congratulate Her Excellency ICHIKAWA Tomiko, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Japan on assuming the Presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. I wish to assure you of my country's fullest support and cooperation for the success of the CD. I also sincerely thank Italy; the First President to the CD this year for the leadership in adopting the programme of work and setting the ground for this year's work. Let me reiterate the support of Sri Lanka to Kazakhstan, Kenya, Malaysia and Mexico; the incoming presidents for 2025 and wish them strength to unlock the deadlock the CD has been in for over two decades and resume its substantive work.

Madam President,

We are at a critical juncture of human history where International Humanitarian Law (IHL) is at grave risk. Undoubtedly, our actions today will determine the peace, security and stability of tomorrow. In the backdrop of escalating geopolitical rivalry, and the erosion of trust in the multilateral system, we need to come together to restore the trust in the multilateral processes to ensure a secure world for future generations.

Madam President,

Sri Lanka's disarmament legacy is a testament to our farsightedness, unwavering commitment and contribution in achieving the goals of the global disarmament agenda in the best interest of humanity.

Sri Lanka's recent accession to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) in 2023 and ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) in 2023 are further demonstrations of our long standing commitment and advocacy for nuclear disarmament which dates back to 1960s.

While noting that total elimination and non-proliferation remain the only guarantees against the use of nuclear weapons, Sri Lanka urges that the legitimate expectation of non-nuclear weapons states to have unconditional, non-discriminatory and legally binding Negative Security Assurances (NSAs) should be guaranteed through the work of the Conference on Disarmament.

Sri Lanka has also been a pioneer supporter of Nuclear Weapon Free Zones (NWFZs), since its significant contribution to the declaration issued at the NAM Summit held in Cairo in 1964 in favour of establishing global "denuclearized zones". We remain hopeful to see a tangible way forward with establishment of nuclear weapons free zones particularly in the Middle East.

Sri Lanka is also an active partner of key humanitarian disarmament treaties including notably the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) where it is a current member of the Victim Assistance Committee as well as its Gender Focal Point, and the Cluster Munitions Convention where we held the presidency in 2019.

Madam President,

Today, the global disarmament architecture faces unprecedented challenges due to rapid development of technology including application of Artificial Intelligence in weapons systems. In keeping with our position that preserving the principles of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) is a cornerstone of world peace and stability, Sri Lanka strongly supports the early commencement of negotiations on a legally binding instrument to prohibit lethal autonomous weapons systems (LAWS). In this direction, Sri Lanka became one of the main sponsors of the first ever UNGA First Committee Resolution on LAWS adopted by an overwhelming majority in 2023.

Similarly, while noting with concern the growing threats to peace in outer space due to the rapid development of space technology blurring the line between commercial and military activities, Sri Lanka has consistently been supportive of negotiating a legally binding instrument in preventing an arms race in outer space and will continue to engage actively towards that goal.

Madam President,

Sri Lanka wishes to recall the mandate of the Conference on Disarmament as a single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum and reiterates that all nations should collectively work towards overcoming the present challenges that hinder substantive outcomes, through inclusive dialogue and building trust and transparency.

In line with the UN Secretary-General's call for updated strategies to prevent an arms race in outer space, addressing the challenges posed by advanced technologies and autonomous weapons systems and reinvigorating commitments to eliminate nuclear weapons and non-proliferation as outlined in the Pact for the Future, Sri Lanka reiterates the call for renewed multilateralism to achieve these objectives.

Madam President,

The time has come to stand against division and deterrence and speak in one voice to define our shared vision for global peace and security through the disarmament agenda while honouring our collective responsibility to humankind.

In conclusion, I reiterate that Sri Lanka stands ready to work with all nations to make this goal not just an aspiration, but a reality.

Thank you.