

India and CTBT

Since independence, pursuit of nuclear disarmament has been an important objective of India's foreign policy. India believes that the existence of nuclear weapons poses a threat to international peace and security. Creating a nuclear weapon free world by eliminating all nuclear weapons through a multilaterally negotiated treaty, which is effective and verifiable, will enhance global security and the security of every man, women and child.

In pursuit of nuclear disarmament, India has taken many initiatives. India was among the first countries to call for a ban on nuclear weapon testing, as early as 1954. Such a ban would have prevented the nuclear arms race, which the world has witnessed in recent decades. During the period, the UN General Assembly adopted nearly hundred resolutions on this highlighting the concern of the world community on this issue.

India has always believed that such a treaty should be comprehensive and bring an end to the qualitative development of nuclear weapons. At the same time, a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty should mark the first definitive and irreversible step in the process of nuclear disarmament. Therefore, a CTBT must reflect a commitment to achieving elimination of all nuclear weapons within a time bound framework.

During the negotiations on a CTBT in the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, India participated actively and constructively, putting forward its

proposals, in keeping with its longstanding position. It is a matter of regret that the text, as has finally emerged, does not do justice to the negotiating mandate. It is not a comprehensive ban but merely a ban on nuclear explosive testing. It also lacks a definitive commitment to nuclear disarmament.

India remains committed to pursuing global, nuclear disarmament with a view to creating a nuclear weapons free world and a non-violent world order.

- Information on India's nuclear tests
- Statements made by I.K. Gujral, Minister of External Affairs, in the Indian Parliament on CTBT

July 15, 1996

July 31, 1996

August 2, 1996

August 26, 1996

September 11, 1996

- Nuclear Non-Proliferation – a note by the Embassy of India
- Statement by Sharad Pawar at the General Debate of the First Committee, United Nations General Assembly on October 14, New York.
- Statement by Ambassador Savitri Kunadi, Permanent Representative of India to UN in the plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament, Geneva on August 6, 1998.
- Statement by Ambassador Savitri Kunadi, Permanent Representative of India to UN in the plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament, Geneva on June 2, 1998.
- Negotiating the CTBT: India's Security Concerns and Nuclear Disarmament.

- ❑ Statement in explanation of vote by Ambassador Arundhati Ghose, Permanent Representative of India to the UN at Geneva, on Item 65: CTBT at the 50th Session of the UN General Assembly at New York on September 10, 1996.
- ❑ Statement by Ambassador Prakash Shah, Permanent Representative of India to UN on CTBT at the 50th Session of the UN General Assembly, New York on September 9, 1996.
- ❑ Statement of Arundhati Ghose, Ambassador of India to UN in the Plenary Meeting of the Conference on Disarmament, Geneva on August 20, 1996.
- ❑ Statement made by Ambassador Arundhati Ghose, Permanent Representative of India to the UN at Geneva in the Plenary of the Conference on Disarmament, on August 8, 1996.
- ❑ Statement made by Ambassador Arundhati Ghose, Permanent Representative of India to the UN at Geneva in the Plenary of the Conference on Disarmament, on June 20, 1996.

“India has never made a secret of its reservations over the CTBT’s contents and its overall thrust, not only at the Geneva Conference but at various other global fora during the last couple of years. India has made it clear that it was distancing itself from the CTBT in its present form. Within India, the decision to declare unacceptance of the CTBT has found overwhelmingly favourable response, cutting through party and political lines. Indeed, just as India’s refusal to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and its rejection of the move to give it a permanent tenure enjoyed national backing, the rejection of the CTBT

also enjoyed national consensus. It will be no exaggeration to say that on both the NPT and the CTBT, India as a nation, has displayed unanimity in endorsing and supporting the government's nuclear policy and decisions arising from it. This is not surprising, considering that, not unlike domestic policies which get caught in contention, and controversy stemming from different perceptions, among political parties, India's foreign policy, its nuclear policy and the national commitment to total, universal and immediate nuclear disarmament, have always enjoyed bipartisan support through the post-independent decades.

India's championship of the cause of nuclear disarmament is well known. For the last four decades, India has stood at the vanguard of the campaign against nuclear weapons and their use, and it has advanced numerous proposals and programmes for bringing about a nuclear-weapons-free and non-violent world into being. At the same time, it has remained consistently opposed to the objectives of the CTBT on the ground that its provisions do not address India's major concerns. If the NPT was one-sided, discriminatory, and favoured the nuclear weapon states, India thought that the CTBT was even more inadequate in safeguarding its security interests.

India's campaign against nuclear proliferation indeed started even before independence as part of the demand of its leaders for international cooperation to maintain world peace. The campaign received a stimulus after independence, with Jawaharlal Nehru launching a movement to mobilise world opinion in favour of ending the confrontation between the super-powers who were carving out their respective areas of influence in the post-Second World War period. The campaign intensified after the birth of the Non-aligned Movement, which gave top priority to the cause of nuclear disarmament and world peace.

Consistent with this ethos, there has always been a continuous debate within the country on the issue of total disarmament – both conventional and nuclear. The decision to reject the CTBT was preceded by an extensive national debate. It is not as if the objectives underlying the concept of a global ban on nuclear testing did not find favour within the country. On the contrary the reservations in respect of the CTBT were precisely on the ground that it did not contain a genuine commitment towards disarmament. And, while announcing its inability to sign the CTBT in the form in which it was drafted, India has presented a strong and credible case in support of its stand. It is noteworthy that the principle stand that was enunciated at Geneva Conference in 1996 has been the same one which succeeding governments have adopted in respect of a global nuclear policy and objective.

Addressing the Geneva Conference, India's Ambassador and Chief Delegate, Ms. Arundhati Ghose pointed out that India had put forward a number of proposals consistent with the mandate adopted by the Conference, aimed at ensuring that the CTBT must be a truly comprehensive one – that is, a Treaty which bans all nuclear testing without leaving any loopholes which would permit nuclear-weapon-states to continue refining and developing their nuclear arsenals of their test sites and in their laboratories. These proposals had underscored the importance of placing the CTBT in a disarmament framework, as part of a step-by-step process, aimed at achieving a complete elimination of all nuclear weapons within a time-bound framework.

The Ambassador then proceeded to point out how the negotiations had skirted around the principle, which India had enunciated. "At this late state", she said. "We are obliged to conclude that the basic prohibitions as drafted so far,

which define the scope, remain very narrow and do not fulfil the mandated requirement of a comprehensive ban. This approach would give us only a 'nuclear weapons test explosion ban treaty' and not a Comprehensive Test ban Treaty." Ms. Ghose said that the nuclear weapons states were determined to continue to rely on nuclear weapons for their security and visualise the CTBT not as a serious disarmament measure but merely as an instrument against horizontal proliferation. Nuclear weapons states seemed loath to relinquish their monopoly and regard nuclear weapons as integral to their military strategy.

"The CTBT that we see emerging, appears to be shaped more by the technological preferences of the nuclear weapon states rather than the imperatives of nuclear disarmament. This was not the CTBT that India envisaged in 1954. This cannot be the CTBT that India can expect to accept." Ms. Ghose said, adding, "We cannot accept that it is legitimate for some countries to rely on nuclear weapons for their security while denying this right to others. Our capability is demonstrated, but as a matter of policy, we exercise restraint. Countries around us continue their weapons programme, either openly or in a clandestine manner. In such an environment, India cannot accept any restraint on its capability if other countries remain unwilling to accept the obligation to eliminate their nuclear weapons."

The Ambassador reminded the delegates that India had not signed the NPT because that Treaty sought to legitimise the indefinite possession of nuclear weapons by the five countries (P – 5) – Britain, Russia, United States of America, France and China. "Today", she continued, "the right to continue development and refinement of their arsenals is being sought to be legitimised and is not in India's national security interest. India, therefore, cannot subscribe to it in its present

form.” India’s stand has been understood and appreciated by non-nuclear nations who are mostly in the developing and poor world. India’s stand is based on principles and not on political expediency, as it cannot ignore the threat to its security arising from nuclear cooperation and collusion between its neighbours.”

(S. Viswan, Associate Editor of “The Deccan Chronicle”, with thanks.).