

# Conference on Disarmament

10 February 2021

Original: English

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## **Note verbale dated 19 January 2021 from the Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China addressed to the Secretariat of the Conference on Disarmament and requesting the Secretariat to issue the full remarks by Ambassador Li Song at the 1549th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament as an official document of the Conference on Disarmament**

The Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the United Nations Office at Geneva and Other International Organizations in Switzerland presents its compliments to the Secretariat of the Conference on Disarmament and kindly requests the Secretariat to issue the full remarks by Ambassador Li Song at the 1549th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament on 19 January as an official document of the Conference's 2021 session.

At the Conference's 1549th plenary meeting, after delivering a shortened version of remarks to save time for other delegations, Ambassador Li requested that his full remarks, as circulated to the Secretariat and member States on 19 January, be incorporated in the verbatim record of the aforementioned meeting.

The Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China requests the Secretariat to make the necessary arrangements to incorporate Ambassador Li's full remarks into the verbatim records of the 1549th plenary meeting of the Conference, held on 19 January.

The Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Secretariat of the Conference on Disarmament the assurances of its highest consideration.



**Annex****Intervention of Li Song, Ambassador for Disarmament Affairs of China, at the first plenary session of the Conference on Disarmament in 2021**

[English  
Original: Chinese]

**Geneva, 19 January 2021**

Mr. President,

The Chinese delegation and I personally would like to congratulate you on your assumption of the first rotating presidency of the Conference in 2021 and to warmly welcome Ambassador Mustafizur Rahman of Bangladesh, Ambassador Lazhar Soualem of Algeria, Ambassador Myint Thu of Myanmar, Ambassador C.A. Chandraprema of Sri Lanka, Ambassador Héctor Constant Rosales of Venezuela, Ambassador Yuri Borissov Sterk of Bulgaria, Ambassador Juan Antonio Quintanilla Román of Cuba and Ambassador Mxolisi Sizo Nkosi of South Africa. We are also very pleased to participate in the work of the group of the six Presidents of the current session, together with the last President of the previous session and the first President of the next session of the Conference, and we are ready to make a positive contribution in putting the work of the Conference back on track. China believes that all Member States of the United Nations have an equal right to participate in multilateral arms control work. We hope to see more countries participate in the activities of the Conference as observers this year, and we support the President's efforts to maintain active consultations with the relevant parties in this regard.

Before I make my statement, I must voice my strongest opposition to and total rejection of the malicious attacks levelled against China in the statement of the United States of America, just now. Over the past two years, China has repeatedly responded to such attacks in many international forums, including the Conference, setting out our relevant policies and positions in detail. The current Administration in the United States has taken to telling lies and undermining arms control, to the extreme. Their absurdities will do nothing to shroud the open, poised national defence and arms control policies of China. The international community is fed up with this chicanery, where they accuse others of their own actions. From tomorrow on, the Conference should not have to hear such noise. I believe the overwhelming majority of member States share this wish. I request that the Secretariat kindly put my words on the record.

Mr. President,

For all of us, 2020 was an extraordinary year. The sudden outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic shook the world in every conceivable way. The international political and security environment required for arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation efforts faced the most serious challenges since the end of the cold war. In such difficult times, with both the novel coronavirus and a political virus wreaking havoc, the international community has had to take a hard look at questions related to the future and destiny of humankind, including the overall international situation, relations between the major powers and multilateralism, as well as competition and cooperation and security and development. Now, as winter draws to a close and with spring around the corner, we have reached an important juncture, to look back and look ahead. As we welcome the new year, we are all the more determined to completely defeat the COVID-19 pandemic through solidarity and cooperation among all countries. We are also looking forward with confidence and anticipation to opening a new chapter in multilateralism and multilateral arms control. Here, I would like to share with you three points:

First of all, arms control must be built on the basis of its original premise and aspiration, on strong trust and observance of commitments. The original aspiration of arms

control is to improve the security of all countries through international dialogue and cooperation so as to achieve equitable, shared and universal security for all. Arms control or disarmament that serves just one side's interests at the expense of the others or gives free reign to one side while restricting others cannot be accepted by other States. For more than a century, the substance and means of arms control and disarmament have undergone constant adjustment, following changes in the international situation. Their basis and objective have always been the maintenance of strategic balance and stability. While arms control needs to keep pace with the times, it cannot go against the course of history. As far as arms control in the new era is concerned, hegemony, unilateralism and exceptionalism are the most dangerous enemies, and the cold war mentality, zero-sum games and power politics are the biggest obstacles. The existing international arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation system, including the bilateral disarmament treaty regime of the Russian Federation and the United States, constitutes an important part of the international security system and should not be weakened or abandoned; it should be consolidated and strengthened. It is precisely for this reason that the international community is placing high expectations on the United States to seize the last window of opportunity to agree to extend the New START Treaty with the Russian Federation and continue to assume its special and primary responsibility for nuclear disarmament, as set out in the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament and the final documents of the review conferences of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

Secondly, there is today an urgent need to strengthen dialogue and enhance mutual trust. In recent years, the international arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation system has suffered more damage than at any time since the end of the cold war. The root cause is the fact that the United States has chosen to violate the principles of strategic balance and stability, regarding other countries as strategic rivals and bringing ideological conflict into multilateral arms control, in an attempt to launch a new cold war and build a new iron curtain. The establishment of this kind of competition among the major powers is a threat to world peace and stability; it has met with strong resistance from the vast majority of the international community and will be swept aside by the march of history. To replace the dark winter with a bright spring, the major powers must once again engage in dialogue to bring their relations back on track and rebuild mutual trust. China is actively promoting dialogue and cooperation in the framework of the five nuclear-weapon States. Such a structure should become a major platform for more intensive dialogue among the five States on a wide spectrum of issues relating to strategic security and stability, reducing suspicion and enhancing confidence and cooperation. We are also prepared to have positive and open bilateral dialogues on strategic security and arms control with the other nuclear-weapon States, as such dialogues will help us to manage our differences and strengthen cooperation. This kind of dialogue is actively being carried out at the broader international level and with the new springtime, it will hopefully be in vogue. In a video commemorating the fortieth anniversary of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, we used different languages to call out one and the same slogan: "Dialogue matters". Not only does dialogue matter; it also inevitably will work.

Thirdly, the Conference on Disarmament is neither an arena for confrontation between the major powers nor an instrument for bigger countries to exert control over smaller ones. It is rather a platform for the promotion of common security. As we all know, the lack of progress in the Conference last year was attributable to the influence of COVID-19, and above all the impact of the political virus. The coronavirus has only had an impact on the scale and format of our meetings, while the political virus introduced by the United States against other member States is the principle reason for the Conference's work being derailed in recent years. As the sole multilateral disarmament negotiation mechanism entrusted by the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament with a historic mission, the Conference must give full expression to the core principle of undiminished security for all States. All members of the Conference, large or small, are equal and must respect one another. The legitimate security concerns and interests of all countries must be fully taken into consideration and reasonably addressed. Therefore, the Conference's work must progress on the basis of consensus and in a balanced and comprehensive manner. We will eventually overcome the hardship caused by COVID-19. We must strive to also vanquish the

political virus, conscientiously learn from the experiences and lessons of recent years and build the consensus and confidence required to move forward.

Mr. President,

Because of the delays in our meeting schedule caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, this year, we have in front of us an exceptionally heavy workload in the field of multilateral arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. The Tenth NPT Review Conference will undoubtedly be our priority. The Conference's work will still face constraints this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. That notwithstanding, the Chinese delegation believes that the Conference has the obligation, and is well placed, to proceed with its business in an orderly fashion, paving the way for a successful Tenth NPT Review Conference. For our part, we are prepared to work on the basis of the draft package proposed by the six States holding the rotating presidency of the Conference and to engage in active consultations with other delegations, with a view to reaching a comprehensive and balanced framework for the Conference's work, acceptable to all, and with a corresponding calendar of meetings covering the establishment of subsidiary bodies to carry out substantive work on all the important agenda items in preparation for future treaty negotiations. At the same time, all members of the Conference should make the best use of its plenary as a platform for in-depth discussion on the new international political and security situation, multilateral arms control and the role of the Conference itself, and for pooling our efforts in order to reach a new consensus genuinely in line with the shared security interests of the Conference's members. In addition, we also face the important task of considering, through the Conference's methods of work, membership and key agenda items, how to bring it to better respond to the needs of our times and the aspirations of the international community. The Chinese delegation is ready to actively join all others in carrying out serious discussions on those issues with an open and fresh mind.

Thank you, Mr. President.

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