

**STATEMENT BY MANI SHANKAR AIYAR, MP,
CHAIRMAN, PRIME MINISTER'S INFORMAL GROUP
ON ADVANCING
THE RAJIV GANDHI ACTION PLAN
FOR
A NUCLEAR-WEAPONS-FREE AND NONVIOLENT WORLD ORDER**

GLOBAL SECURITY INSTITUTE AND EAST WEST INSTITUTE

Conference on Nuclear Disarmament

Panel Discussion on
**SEIZING THE MOMENT
HIGHEST PRIORITY STEPS FOR 2012**

UN HEADQUARTERS, UN DAY
24 OCTOBER 2011

Hon'ble Mr. Ban Ki-moon, distinguished UN Secretary-General,
Mr. Chairman, President, Pugwash, my friend Jayanta Dhanapala,
Chairman Finlay and President Granoff of
Global Security and East West Institutes,
Excellencies,
Fellow Panelists, and
Fellow crusaders for a world without nuclear weapons,

Forgive me for beginning on a sour note but I must express my disappointment, and even resentment, at there being no mention of the Rajiv Gandhi Action Plan, 1988, or the Indian Working Paper, 2006, in the otherwise comprehensive compendium of "official, semi-official and unofficial proposals" on nuclear disarmament issues prepared by the UN Office of Disarmament Affairs. The document, in the shape of a chart, has been circulated by the sponsoring Institutes of this conference.

An amazing 23 years after it was first presented to the Third United Nations Special Session on Disarmament, the Rajiv Gandhi Action

Plan, RGAP 88, remains the most detailed, practical and persuasive of any official roadmap towards ridding the world of these dreadful weapons of mass destruction and eventually anchoring such a world without nuclear weapons in the principles and practice of nonviolence. Happily, a number of such roadmaps have since been prepared by semi-official and unofficial bodies, some of which are listed in the UN Disarmament Office document referred to earlier. It is precisely because we believe these proposals, most especially the distinguished UN Secretary-General's Five-Point programme and India's own Working Paper 2006, to be entirely compatible with RGAP 88 that we believe RGAP 88 should be among the proposals placed before this panel – which is to consider ways of “Seizing the Moment in 2012.”

For the moment has never before been so favourable. The Report of our Group, which has been circulated in CD form to all participants, identifies a series of “general” reasons and as many as 19 India-specific reasons why this moment, in contrast to the grim situation prevailing in 1988, provides an opportunity not to be missed to carry forward the agenda of universal, non-discriminatory, phased, and verifiable steps, backed by the required collateral measures, for the elimination of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction within an internationally agreed time-frame.

The general reasons are well known to participants and I do not need to dwell on them at any great length. They include President Obama's commitment to nuclear arms elimination, reinforced by the significant changes introduced in the US nuclear doctrine by the

latest Nuclear Posture Review. It is also reassuring that elements of a bipartisan consensus can be discerned in the US, beginning with the *Wall Street Journal* article of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, Kissinger, Nunn, Perry and Schultz. There is reason too to be encouraged by the recent US-Russian agreement on restricting nuclear arsenals and bringing them down further. We also see much intensive cogitation on these issues taking place in other NWS who are members of the UN Security Council. Further, many beneficiary states of extended nuclear deterrence are now in the forefront of the nuclear disarmament campaign. The last NPT Review Conference edged matters forward; its real hope lies in the commitment of Nuclear Weapon States parties to the NPT to report to the next Review Conference on what they have done, are doing and intend to do to fulfill their obligations under Article VI of the NPT. The promise of the very first resolution ever adopted by the UN trembles on the edge of realization, albeit 65 years after it was adopted. The UN Secretary-General's initiative is, of course, a path-breaking initiative in this direction. These and other such general beacons of hope are well-known to participants, even as the hurdles, particularly the deadlock at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, are also well-known.

I shall, therefore, concentrate my remarks on the India-specific reasons for which my Group believes that the coming year, 2012, could and should mark India's re-emergence as a leading champion of nuclear disarmament. First, is the difference in nuclear status between India 1988 and India in the 21st century. Then, we were a threshold nuclear weapon state; now we are a State with Nuclear

Weapons. 23 years ago, many believed RGAP 88 was a cover for a far-advanced programme of nuclear weaponry. Today, we are a self-declared State with Nuclear Weapons. My Group believes this enhances, rather than diminishes, India's credibility and claim to being the only State with Nuclear Weapons to be officially committed, and that too since the explosion of the nuclear device in 1998, to the time-bound ideas contained in RGAP 88. Significantly, both the major Indian national parties and their allies, stretching across virtually the entire spectrum of political opinion, are committed to these essential principles and the roadmap that flows from that. As a State with Nuclear Weapons, and, moreover, one that has declared it will limit its arsenal to a credible, minimum nuclear deterrent and a well-articulated commitment to No First Use and non-use against non-nuclear weapon states, India can lay claim to already being ahead of its fellow-nuclear weapon powers in urging the cause of elimination. The updated 2006 Working Paper, circulated in the First Committee and at the Geneva Conference on Disarmament, confirms this official position.

At the same time, our Group recognizes that no country is more threatened than India is by the growing nuclear arsenals in our neighbourhood and the prospect of terrorists accessing nuclear materials or even weapons. Unilateral nuclear disarmament is, therefore, difficult to envisage; on the other hand, within the framework of an international convention for the universal elimination of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction, India could rid itself of these weapons which it was compelled to acquire when there was no discernible movement towards even negotiating,

let alone agreement on, eliminating WMD even close to a decade after the end of the Cold War. Our Report concludes in its final sentence:

“India must continue to pursue its vision of a non-nuclear world since a Nuclear-Weapons-Free-World would be good for the Planet, good for the region and good for India’s national security.”

In laying down a programme for “seizing the moment”, the Report focuses on the “strategic partnerships” that India has in recent years forged with all major players on the international stage, including the Russian Federation and the United States, besides the intensive dialogue process initiated with Pakistan and China. It urges that RGAP 88/WP 06 be brought on the agenda of the on-going diplomatic discussions with all our partner countries, with special emphasis on the Nonaligned Movement which emerged as such an important player at the last NPT review, with a view to preparing the ground, through bilateral dialogue, for multilateral engagement on elimination issues. The Report urges that although CD is deadlocked, there remains open to the possibility of multilateral “discussions”, as distinct from multilateral “negotiations”, at CD. If bilateral dialogue could lead to multilateral discussions in Geneva, the door might be wedged open for eventual multilateral negotiations on an international convention or treaty for the universal, non-discriminatory, phased, and verifiable elimination of nuclear weapons within an agreed time-frame, backed by the required collateral measures of international collective security. We have also urged official or expert Indian participation in any other conferences on disarmament that might be convened by interested States or civil society organisations. I would hope this conference would give

impetus in the broader comity of nations, including international civil society, to the considerations we have urged on our Government.

There remain the outstanding issues of the non-proliferation agenda: CTBT; FMCT; and universalization of NPT. India has long declared that it will not stand in the way of the entry into force of CTBT; it is actively involved in the FMCT negotiations; and has declared its willingness to consider membership of NPT as a duly recognized Nuclear Weapons State. But non-proliferation is no substitute for elimination. Indeed, the fundamental weakness of the non-proliferation regime is its failure to recognise the symbiotic relationship between non-proliferation and elimination. The less the Nuclear Weapon States do about eliminating their nuclear arsenals, the more is the danger and real prospect of proliferation. The more the NWS cling to their nuclear arsenals and base their security doctrines on the retention of the nuclear deterrent, the greater is the danger that non-NWS will learn the same lessons and decide that if nuclear weapons are good for some, they must be good for others. Moreover, armed intervention to effect regime change in states without nuclear weapons, or who have given up their nuclear weapon programmes, only encourages states apprehensive of external intervention to acquire nuclear weapons with all deliberate speed. Also, steps that reduce the risk of un-deliberated nuclear war, such as de-alerting, while desirable in themselves are no substitute for time-bound elimination. So long as nuclear weapons are in existence, they can be used – or stolen. Eliminate them and you eliminate the threat of both mass genocide by terrorists and mass suicide by states. There is no third way.

This is being slowly realized, if painfully slowly, the world over. Therefore, this moment of hope must indeed be seized to put on the table proposals such as RGAP 88 and WP 06, which could yet free us of the threat of eliminating the Earth itself and all its denizens – you, me and our children.

Thank you.

