



Statement by Ambassador ICHIKAWA Tomiko
Permanent Representative of Japan to the Conference on Disarmament
Plenary of the Conference on Disarmament
Thematic discussion on the Prevention of Nuclear War and related
materials
12 March 2024

Mr. President,

Japan has long been advocating for a realistic and practical approach to nuclear disarmament. Within this approach, Japan prioritizes both qualitative capping, by comprehensively banning nuclear testing, and quantitative capping, by banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. We believe the instruments that realize most effectively these qualitative and quantitative capping are respectively the CTBT and an FMCT.

Now, for the first time since the peak of the Cold War, the world is on the verge of a reversal of the decreasing trend of the global number of nuclear arsenals. The rapid buildup of nuclear arsenals by a certain country could spark a nuclear arms race involving other countries. Against this backdrop, it is now more imperative than ever to limit the quantitative development of nuclear weapons by banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons to maintain the declining trend of global nuclear arsenals.

To this end, Japan stresses the importance of the immediate commencement of long overdue negotiations on an FMCT, as the highest priority for the CD, and deeply regrets that this august body has not been able to come to an agreement on this point for more than 30 years since the adoption of the United Nations General Assembly resolution calling for an FMCT.

Last year, Australia, Japan, and the Philippines co-hosted a high-level event during the UNGA High-Level week in September to refocus political attention on the FMCT. Building on this achievement, Japan is determined to continue its efforts to heighten momentum for commencing negotiations of an FMCT.

In addition, Japan calls for voluntary moratoria by all the nuclear-weapon States on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices to be declared or maintained, without waiting for the start of FMCT negotiations.

Mr. President,

With regard to the possible elements of an FMCT, Japan is of the view that the core purpose of an FMCT should be to stop any increase in the amount of fissile material available to any state party for production of nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. Any activity that increases the amount of fissile material for this purpose should be treated as being effectively synonymous with “production”. Therefore, the core obligations under an FMCT must include the obligation, not only to prohibit “production” of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, but also, inter alia, to close down or to dismantle any production facilities for fissile material for this purpose or to convert them to civil purposes.

Regarding verification within an FMCT, Japan is of the view that verification should confirm that production of fissile material is not taking place. In addition, implementation of other possible obligations should also be verified. For example, it is crucial to verify the non-increase of stock of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, compared to the initial amount at the date when the country in question starts being bound by FMCT. This is because the amount of stock may be increased by other means than the new production, such as the reversion of fissile material previously assigned for dismantlement.

As to how to deal with existing stock of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, Japan is of the view that this issue should be discussed and resolved during negotiations. The inclusion of existing stocks within the scope of an FMCT should not be a condition for commencing negotiations.

Mr. President,

The United Nations General Assembly resolution entitled “Steps to building a common roadmap towards a world without nuclear weapons” (A/RES/78/40), submitted by Japan and adopted with 148 votes in favor last year,

also “calls on the Conference on Disarmament to immediately commence and bring to an early conclusion, negotiations on a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices in accordance with CD/1299 and the mandate contained therein”.

Furthermore, another UNGA resolution entitled “Treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices” (A/RES/78/28) “calls upon those States that possess or produce fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices to engage in transparency and confidence-building measures among themselves with a view to launching negotiations”. We strongly support this initiative, and hope that necessary follow-up action will be taken by all relevant States to implement this resolution.

Mr. President,

I am pleased to inform the Conference that UNIDIR, with the cooperation of Japan, is currently implementing a research project on an FMCT in order to summarize and analyze the current status surrounding fissile materials and moratoria, as well as to capture main obstacles to commence negotiations. Under this project, a hybrid seminar is expected to be held toward the end of March, to which all CD Member States will be invited. We hope that this initiative will also provide another opportunity to deepen practical discussions on an FMCT.

Mr. President,

The preparations for the commencement of negotiations have already been addressed in an extensive manner. The only remaining factor is political will. In view of repeated commitments to this goal, I would like to call again on all Member States to exert the necessary political will to commence negotiations within the CD as soon as possible.

Thank you, Mr. President.

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