**BUILDING A NUCLEAR-WEAPON FREE WORLD**

PANEL I: Security without nuclear weapons or war: Manifesto “The World in the 21st Century”

**ASTANA**

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**Intervention by Shri Mani Shankar Aiyar, India**

Mr. President,

28 years ago, on 9 June 1988, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi of India presented to the United Nations his Action Plan for a Nuclear-Weapons-Free and Nonviolent World Order.

Nearly three decades later, Rajiv Gandhi’s Action Plan remains the only roadmap ever prepared and presented to the UN by a Head of Government which signposts the road to the elimination of nuclear weapons. In successive phases, spread over twenty-two years, the Action Plan incorporated every proposal for nuclear arms control and limitation and linked these in an unbroken and unbreakable chain to the overarching goal of a world without nuclear weapons. It is that linkage of discrete measures of nuclear disarmament to the immutable goal of freeing the world of nuclear weapons within an agreed time-frame that is the distinguishing feature, the USP, if you like, of the Rajiv Action Plan.

I was present at the UN Second Special Session on Disarmament when Rajiv Gandhi unveiled his Action Plan. I am privileged today to be on the platform where in essence, if not in every detail, we trace the same path to the same end – a world order based on ending the era of nuclear weapons and opening the way to peace and security based on the principles of Nonviolence. As a nation that wrested its freedom through Nonviolence, Rajiv Gandhi believed that we needed to not only rid the world of nuclear weapons but, more importantly, to maintain and sustain the new world order by principled adherence to the tenets of Nonviolence.

What are these tenets? Before me, Mahatma Gandhi’s grand-daughter, Madam Ela Gandhi, spoke and outlined the philosophy of her renowned ancestor, who was probably the greatest man of the 20th century, certainly in India and perhaps in the world. He took on what was then the strongest military power known to history, an economic colossus of its time, renowned for its political muscle as the Empire on which the sun never set. Yet, at the end of the day, the Mahatma won, Nonviolence won. And that is the way we can still ensure the survival of humankind and the flourishing of human civilization after we rid ourselves of the single greatest menace to our future on this Planet Earth, which is the arsenal of nuclear weapons and those who crouch under its umbrella. Let us recall Mahatma Gandhi’s instant reaction when he heard of the destruction of Hiroshima by the atomic bomb. He said, “The moral to be legitimately drawn from the supreme tragedy of the Bomb is that it will not be destroyed by counter-bombs even as violence cannot be destroyed by counter-violence. Mankind has to get out of violence only through Nonviolence.”

When Rajiv Gandhi presented his Action Plan, it found little resonance in the world. Much has changed since then. For one, India that was a non-nuclear weapon state at that time has since 1998 become a state with nuclear weapons. Yet, India remains the only state with nuclear weapons to continue the advocacy of a *time-bound* programme of universal, non-discriminatory, phased and verifiable elimination of nuclear weapons, and to this end has declared a voluntary moratorium on nuclear testing and a proclamation of “no first use” and “non-use against non-nuclear weapon states”. We also have a proven record of non-proliferation and have said we are ready to consider joining the NPT as and when the international community stops splitting hairs and recognizes that we are not only a state with nuclear weapons but a Nuclear Weapons State!

The second major development since Rajiv Gandhi’s Action Plan was submitted is that the Cold War is over. It is now a fading memory. Moreover, Kazhakstan, under President Nursultan Nazarbayev, has boldly shown how to close down nuclear testing sites and throw nuclear weapons into the dustbin of history. The Manifesto issued by him has roused the conscience of men and women of peace everywhere.

Thirdly, an overwhelming majority of members of the UN’s Open Ended Working Group have recommended to the UN General Assembly, convening in New York next month, that they authorize the commencement by next year at the latest of UN-led negotiations on the prohibition of nuclear weapons.

Of highest significance is the probability – if not the certainty - of President Obama announcing before the end of his term a dramatic new “no first use” doctrine for the US nuclear arsenal that one hopes will bind the next US administration.

This is, therefore, a time of hope although the *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists* have just moved their “Doomsday Clock” to three minutes to midnight, the closest to nuclear catastrophe since 1983. Indeed, it might very well be the imminence of the danger of nuclear disaster that is awakening most world leaders to rethink their approaches to nuclear security.

This then is a most apposite moment for us to have come together in Astana to appeal for a transition from a nuclear wasteland to a world without nuclear weapons. The world cannot but heed the voice of such a representative global gathering of those concerned with saving humankind from what Rajiv Gandhi called the “Quest for Dominance”.

Thank you, Sir.

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