Intervention by Dr.Vinay Sahasrabuddhe, Hon’ble MP, at the Conference on ‘Creation of the World Without Nuclear Weapons’

(Astana, August 28-29, 2016)

I wish to thank the Government of Kazakhstan for taking the initiative to organise this meeting on a topic, which remains contemporary and on top of the international agenda.

Kazakhstan is, of course, not new to taking initiatives on global issues. Kazakhstan is a voice of responsibility and maturity in international forums. It is President Nazarbayev’s leadership that has helped advance peace and cooperation in the Eurasian region and beyond. It is his vision that has given us the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building in Asia (CICA). I come from land of Mahatma Gandhi and Gautam Buddha and hence for India commitment to peace is integral to its world view.

Since the dawn of the nuclear age, India has been unwavering in its commitment to universal, non-discriminatory, verifiable nuclear disarmament. In fact, the objective of global nuclear disarmament is enshrined in our domestic legislation on non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). Support for nuclear disarmament cuts across party lines in the Indian Parliament.

In India, we believe that nuclear disarmament can be achieved through a step-by-step process underwritten by a universal commitment and an agreed global and non-discriminatory multilateral framework. India has called for a meaningful dialogue among all states possessing nuclear weapons to build trust and confidence and for reducing the salience of nuclear weapons in international affairs and security doctrines.

Increasing restraints on use of nuclear weapons would reduce the probability of their use – whether deliberate, unintentional or accidental - and this process could contribute to the   progressive de- legitimization of nuclear weapons. Just as was the case for chemical and biological weapons, this would be an essential step for their eventual elimination through a universal, non-discriminatory and verifiable Comprehensive Convention on Nuclear Weapons.

We have representatives in our midst of international organisations and His Excellency, Mr Tokayev, the Chairman of the Senate, has had a close association with multilateral forums. In my view, multilateralism would be key to achieving a world without nuclear weapons. Addressing the UN General Assembly on September 27, 2014, Prime Minister Narendra Modi underlined India’s belief in multilateralism and urged the redoubling of efforts to pursue global disarmament and non-proliferation. India’s working paper submitted to the UN General Assembly in 2006 which recalls India’s important initiatives for nuclear disarmament including the Action Plan of 1988, and which suggests a number of measures for achieving the goal of nuclear disarmament in a time bound manner, remains on the table.

Likewise, India has regularly presented a set of resolutions in the UN General Assembly’s First Committee to reduce nuclear dangers and push nuclear disarmament. These are a resolution on a Convention on the Prohibition of the Use of Nuclear Weapons; on Measures to Reduce Nuclear Dangers arising from accidental or unauthorized use of nuclear weapons; and on Measures to Prevent Terrorists from Acquiring Weapons of Mass Destruction. As part of the Non-Aligned Movement, India has also supported the commencement of negotiations on a Comprehensive Nuclear Weapons Convention in the Conference on Disarmament. Without prejudice to the priority it attaches to nuclear disarmament, India has been consistent in its support for the commencement of negotiation in the Conference on Disarmament of a Fissile Materials Cut-off Treaty (FMCT).

As a responsible nuclear power, India has a policy of credible minimum deterrence based on a No First Use posture and non-use of nuclear weapons against non- nuclear weapon States. India has also reiterated its unilateral and voluntary moratorium on nuclear explosive testing. We have further underlined our commitment to non-proliferation by joining the Missile Technology Control Regime and the Hague Code of Conduct against ballistic missile proliferation. India has participated actively in the four Nuclear Security Summits, which have strengthened international efforts against nuclear and radiological terrorism. The recent instances of use of chemical weapons in Syria underlines the need for continued vigilance against WMD terrorism.

I will conclude by underlining the excellent bilateral relations that India and Kazakhstan enjoy. Prime Minister Modi paid a visit to Astana in July 2015 during which the India-Kazakhstan Strategic Partnership was further consolidated. India and Kazakhstan cooperate closely at multilateral fora, including at the UN General Assembly. In the spirit of our Strategic Partnership, India was the only nuclear weapon State that voted in favour of the Resolution presented by Kazakhstan at the UNGA First Committee in 2015 on “Universal Declaration on the Achievement of a Nuclear Weapons Free World’.  India appreciated the initiative of Kazakhstan to table this resolution, which seeks to build common ground at a time when the international nuclear disarmament agenda has become deeply divisive. I hope that the Universal Declaration will re-energize international efforts for nuclear disarmament and the total elimination of nuclear weapons. I also hope that this meeting would further raise awareness of the pressing priority of nuclear disarmament and stimulate dialogue, including with civil society, on measures leading to the global elimination of nuclear weapons.

I thank you.