



General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/C.1/42/4
28 September 1987

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

FIRST COMMITTEE
For forty-second session
Agenda item 52

ESTABLISHMENT OF A NUCLEAR-WEAPON-FREE ZONE IN SOUTH ASIA

Letter dated 28 September 1987 from the Permanent
Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations
addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to forward, herewith, the text of a statement made by His Excellency Sahabzada Yaqub-Khan, the Foreign Minister of Pakistan, on 1 September, at the inaugural session at the International Conference on Nuclear Non-Proliferation in South Asia, organized by the Institute of Strategic Studies at Islamabad.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this statement circulated as an official document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 52, dealing with the "Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in South Asia".

(Signed) S. SHAH NAWAZ
Ambassador and Permanent Representative

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**STATEMENT MADE C-1 1 SEPTEMBER 1987 BY H.E. SAHABZADA YAWS-KHAN,
FOREIGN MINISTER OF PAKISTAN, AT THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON
NUCLEAR NON-PROLIFERATION IN SOUTH ASIA, HELD AT ISLAMABAD**

1. I would like to express my appreciation to the Islamabad Institute of Strategic Studies for its timely initiative to convene this Conference. It is devoted to an issue that has an important bearing on the stability, security and progress of the States of South Asia as well as on international peace and security.
2. I have pleasure in warmly welcoming all those who have travelled to Islamabad from near and afar to participate in this Conference. It is my hope that a free and informed exchange of views among the experts who have gathered here will help to evolve answers to a vital question which confronts South Asia: how can this region be saved from a nuclear-arms race? The recommendations of your Conference would no doubt have a salutary influence on the policies of States within and outside the region.
3. Nuclear disarmament is essential to eliminate the threat of global devastation which hangs over mankind. Non-proliferation is an integral part of nuclear disarmament. The advocates of nuclear disarmament cannot spurn a commitment to non-proliferation. Likewise, the five countries which possess nuclear arms can legitimately ask others not to acquire these weapons only if they themselves are genuinely prepared to eliminate their own nuclear arsenals. This applies with special relevance to the two super-Powers which possess over 90 per cent of the world's nuclear armaments. This ethical basis for nuclear non-proliferation is all too often forgotten,
4. Pakistan has consistently advocated the simultaneous pursuit of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. We were among the first to support the concept of a global non-proliferation agreement when it was suggested by Ireland in 1959. Even when the Non-Proliferation Treaty emerged from negotiation in 1968 as an unequal and incomplete document, Pakistan agreed to commend the Treaty. But we stated that the Treaty would "possess little appeal and exert less weight if the near nuclear States do not subscribe to it."
5. Although over 100 non-nuclear States have since acceded to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, the majority of those countries which it was designed to attract have maintained their distance from the Treaty. For these States, the attractions of the Treaty have further diminished over the years as the inequalities of the Treaty's obligations have become accentuated. Yet, the hesitation of these States arises not so much from the Treaty's inequality as from their own specific ambitions or threat perceptions. Some of them see nuclear weapons as a status symbol that will enable them to establish domination over other regional States. Some are fearful of the threat to their security posed by one or more nuclear-weapon States. Others are concerned about the threat to their security arising from the nuclear capabilities or intentions of neighbouring States, or from their overwhelming superiority in conventional weapons.

6. The motivations and concerns of each of these States merit a differentiated response. Those who seek overlordship must be opposed; those who legitimately fear a threat to their security must be reassured. In either case, the political responses required can best be evolved and developed in a regional or bilateral framework.

7. In South Asia, three possible nuclear scenarios can be envisaged: one, a nuclear monopoly; two, a dangerous nuclear confrontation; or three, an agreement to denuclearize the region.

8. Since India's nuclear explosion in May 1974, which transformed the security environment in the region, causing justifiable dismay and anxiety, the proponents of non-proliferation, including both the super-Powers, have shown an obvious proclivity to accept a nuclear monopoly in South Asia. Restrictions and embargoes were imposed on peaceful nuclear co-operation through the London Club "guidelines" and national legislation in supplier States. The impact of these measures was severest on Pakistan, not on Israel or our neighbour India, whose actions had provoked these restrictive policies. Indeed, certain national laws, such as the Symington Amendment in the United States, artfully excluded these countries from their punitive purview. Denied international co-operation, Pakistan was obliged to pursue its peaceful nuclear programme by its own indigenous effort. Our national achievements in the peaceful uses of nuclear technology are cause for justifiable pride in our country.

9. It should have been wholly evident from the outset that the acquisition of nuclear weapons capability by one of the States of South Asia would undermine the non-proliferation regime in the region as a whole. Unless the situation is stabilized by a solemn denunciation of nuclear weapons, concern would continue to mount about a possible nuclear-arms race in this region. Pakistan shares this concern. We do not want the induction of such arms in South Asia. It could set in motion a chain reaction and, ultimately, introduce the pervasive peril of a deliberate or accidental use of nuclear weapons whose consequences for South Asia are too catastrophic to contemplate. As the Chernobyl tragedy testifies, the nuclear cloud knows no frontiers. It drifts with the winds. In this congested sub-continent, the nuclear aggressor may suffer almost as much as the victim of aggression. Millions would die instantly in overcrowded cities; those who live may well envy the dead. For decades, large areas would remain barren and inhospitable for human habitation. National achievements, in industry, agriculture, science, would be reduced to rubble. Death and destruction would stalk our battered and blighted lands.

10. The danger and the dilemma confronting South Asia call for a sage and visionary response, based on the established principle of sovereign equality. If South Asia is to escape proliferation, one and the same yardstick should apply to all. It is untenable to argue that one country may acquire a capability but another may not. The aim of such an approach would be merely to perpetuate a nuclear monopoly in South Asia. The policies of non-proliferation in South Asia cannot be promoted on the basis of double standards. Nor can the objective be achieved by "punishing" Pakistan for refusing to compromise its sovereignty or for rejecting unequal and discriminatory obligations.

11. Pakistan, let me reiterate, is against the spread of nuclear weapons in South Asia. It is prepared to contribute its share, and more, to any endeavour to avert such a danger in the region. We are committed not to develop nuclear weapons. We are prepared to accept any equitable proposals that convert unilateral statements into binding multilateral obligations. We have not exploded a nuclear device. We are signatories to the Partial Test Ban Treaty. We accept its obligations. Indeed we are prepared to go further and conclude a comprehensive test ban treaty in South Asia.

12. Despite the discouraging experience of the past, Pakistan is convinced that a regional agreement on non-proliferation is the only alternative that can respond to the legitimate security concerns of all the States of South Asia and contribute to strengthening global peace and security. We believe that sufficiently close attention has not been given to this option, either by the regional States, or by the great Powers. It should not be disregarded by the proponents of non-proliferation merely because its realization requires a more arduous diplomatic endeavour. The vast majority of countries, including almost all the South Asian States, support the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in South Asia. With patience and pragmatism, the will of the world community can be translated into reality.

13. An important reason for our optimism is that all the regional States in South Asia are already committed not to acquire or to develop nuclear weapons. Bangladesh, Nepal, Maldives and Sri Lanka are parties to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Pakistan has expressed its readiness to accept global, regional or bilateral non-proliferation commitments, together with India. India too has declared that it has no intention to manufacture or to accept nuclear weapons on its territory. As far back as in 1962, India formally informed the Secretary-General of the United Nations that it was "willing to enter into any joint agreement or specific undertaking in this regard in accordance with the resolutions of the United Nations".

14. A way should be found to transform the publicly professed policies of the South Asian States into a legally binding multilateral agreement. This could reassure the regional countries about the sincerity of each other's intentions and help to foster stability and co-operation in South Asia. It could also assure the world that the spectre of nuclear conflict will never arise from this region. In fact, it could blaze the trail for the rest of the world.

15. Last year, the United Nations General Assembly asked the Secretary-General to explore the best possibilities for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in South Asia. In response to the Secretary-General's request for our views, Pakistan has outlined the nature of the regional denuclearization accord we have in mind.

16. Under such an agreement, South Asian countries should undertake: first, to use exclusively for peaceful purposes the nuclear materials and facilities which are under their jurisdiction; and second, to prohibit and prevent acquisition, by any means whatsoever, of any nuclear weapon or nuclear explosive device, or the receipt, storage, installation, deployment or possession of such weapon or device on their territories.

17. It is now well established that there is no technological distinction between a nuclear-weapon test and a "peaceful nuclear explosion". Therefore, the agreement should provide for a complete prohibition on nuclear testing for any purpose.

18. In Order to assure each other and the world, the regional States should establish an equitable and non-discriminatory control system to verify compliance. This could be in the form of either a permanent regional consultative mechanism, including provisions for a challenge verification régime with on-site inspection; or bilateral arrangements among regional states for mutual inspection of nuclear facilities; or acceptance by the regional States of the full scope safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency,

19. Moreover, mutual confidence in compliance could be strengthened through Co-Operation among South Asian States in the peaceful uses of nuclear technology. There is no reason why South Asian countries cannot co-operate in the construction of nuclear reactor 8, the supply of fuel for such reactors or a host of other peaceful applications in medicine, agriculture and industry.

20. The obligation to be assumed by the regional States could be given legally binding effect in one of several ways. A regional treaty, similar to those establishing nuclear-free zones in Latin America and the South Pacific, is perhaps the most attractive option. Alternately, those south Asian States that are outside the Non-Proliferation Treaty could accede to it simultaneously. Or, unilateral declarations made by each of the South Asian States could be recognized and endorsed by the United Nations Security Council in a legally binding resolution.

21. It has been argued at times by Indian spokesmen that the "proximity" of nuclear Powers to South Asia is an important factor inhibiting a regional denuclearisation arrangement. Pakistan feels that, in fact, this is an added reason for a regional agreement which should also provide for matching obligations by the nuclear-weapon States. The nuclear Powers should undertake, in a legally binding manner, not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against the South Asian States. They could also be asked not to deploy nuclear weapons adjacent to the region or to remove them, where such deployments already exist. Likewise, South Asian States would be entitled to call upon the nuclear Powers to provide reciprocal assurances that they will sincerely promote nuclear disarmament.

22. While conveying our views and suggestions to the Secretary-General, We have underlined that Pakistan is flexible as to the precise nature of the non-proliferation arrangements to be established in South Asia. We have urged the Secretary-General to convene consultations among the States concerned, as authorized by the United Nations General Assembly. Pakistan is equally prepared to hold such consultations outside the framework of the United Nations such as in a regional or bilateral context. We certainly do not seek to impose our views on other South Asian States. We would welcome any suggestions from other regional States, or indeed from any quartet, designed to establish an equitable, non-discriminatory and mutually acceptable non-proliferation régime in this region.

23. Pakistan is prepared to adopt a realistic approach, responsive to the legitimate interests of the Governments concerned. If the Indian leadership feels that a non-proliferation accord should form part of a wider bilateral treaty which

embraces non-aggression, we are ready to examine this option, specially since the text of such a treaty is so close to finalization. We also believe that formal adoption of the bilateral agreement between Pakistan and India not to attack each others' nuclear facilities would be helpful in fostering mutual trust and confidence.

24. What we insist on as a sovereign right is equality and non-discrimination. If India maintains that we trust its unilateral declarations of peaceful intent, it should trust our declarations too. If India requires inspection of our facilities, it should be prepared to open its own to similar inspection. The principle of equity and non-discrimination has been jointly upheld by both Pakistan and India in international forums. Its application cannot be excluded in their bilateral relations.

25. South Asia is the most densely populated region of the world. It has immense geo-political significance in international relations. It is beset with pressing economic, social and political problems. Yet, it is a region which possesses tremendous potential for productivity and progress. As the declaration of the first Summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation (SAARC) proclaimed in December 1985:

“Regional co-operation was the only logical response to the common problems they face as developing and non-aligned countries, to the continuing pressure of rising expectations among their people and to cognizance of the interdependent nature of the world they lived in.”

26. A regional agreement on denuclearization, conceived and constructed in the spirit of such co-operation, will allay mutual fears and suspicions, reduce tensions and promote peace and stability in South Asia. All those who have good will for the peoples of the region, including the distinguished participants of this Conference, should contribute to realizing these objectives.

27. I wish you every success in your important deliberations.