

Pakistan will not compromise on its stance on FMCT

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ISLAMABAD: “Pakistan will not compromise on its stance on the FMCT [Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty], at least in the near future.” These were the views expressed by Dr. Zafar Nawaz Jaspal during a roundtable organized by the Institute of Regional Studies (IRS) with the title “FMCT: Pakistan’s Stand and Implications”. With the issue of FMCT being discussed during the ongoing session of the United Nations (UN) General Assembly, the roundtable brought forth some key issues concerning Pakistani position on FMCT in a timely manner.

Dr. Jaspal, who was the main speaker of the event, argued that while Pakistan was being accused in the western media as the only obstructionist country in the way of the initiation of negotiations on FMCT, other countries also had concealed reservations about the treaty, but that they were happy to remain under the shadow of Pakistan. Further explaining Pakistan’s principled position on FMCT, Dr. Jaspal argued that Pakistan did not view FMCT—or arms-control for that matter—in isolation of disarmament, which actually was the mandate of the Conference on Disarmament (CD). He asserted that by calling for a ban on production of fissile material while not taking into account the reduction in the existing stockpiles of nuclear weapons, the FMCT was “freezing the existing nuclear asymmetry between India and Pakistan.”

Dr. Jaspal disagreed with the notion that nuclear weapons are only a deterrent and unusable in an actual war situation. He called nuclear weapons an extension of the conventional weapons and, therefore, argued that any arms-control effort aimed at neutralizing nuclear weapons should also take into account the existing conventional military balance as well. “Conventional and nuclear asymmetries are similar in nature,” said Dr. Jaspal. In this context, Dr. Jaspal maintained that FMCT had not taken into account the strategic environment of South Asia, which was characterized by both nuclear and conventional strategic asymmetries between India and Pakistan, and worried that FMCT might only serve to preserve the strategically imbalanced status quo between the two countries.

Dr. Jaspal pointed out that because this renewed enthusiasm about FMCT was a result of the personal initiative of President Obama—highlighted in his famous Prague speech of April 2009—enthusiasm about it could die down once his term would end in November 2012. Amb. Khalid Mahmood was of the opinion that acceptance of being part of the negotiations leading to FMCT would not necessarily bind Pakistan to be part of the treaty as well. Some other participants of the discussion disagreed and said that the agenda of FMCT—calling for verifiable end of the production of fissile materials intended for use in state nuclear weapons—was already set, and as long as it was not changed to include both arms-control and disarmament, Pakistan should not become a part of the negotiation exercise on FMCT. FMCT was criticized as Pakistan-specific and ‘impossible’ for Pakistan to accept by some participants of the discussion.

Most of the strategic experts participating in the roundtable agreed that for Pakistan to accept the negotiation process leading to FMCT, it will have to include all the four issues covered by the Conference

Report: Roundtable on “FMCT: Pakistan’s Stand and its Implications” with Prof. Zafar Nawaz Jaspal, Department of International Relations, Quaid-i-Azam University Islamabad, on September 14, 2011

on Disarmament: Fissile Materials Cut-off Treaty (FMCT), Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space (PAROS), Negative Security Assurances (NSAs), and Nuclear Disarmament.

The participants of the roundtable included: Mr. Ashraf Azim, President Institute of Regional Studies; Brig (Retd) Bashir Ahmed, Senior Fellow Institute of Regional Studies; Amb. Asif Ezdi; Mr. Pierre Mayaudon, Deputy Head of Mission of the European Union delegation to Pakistan; Mr. Stephan Roken, Deputy Head of Mission of the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany; Mr. Moeed Yusuf, South Asia Advisor for the United States Institute of Peace; Amb. Khalid Mahmood; Prof. Nazir Hussain, Department of Defense and Strategic Studies, Quaid-e-Azam University; as well as senior researchers from IRS and other think-tanks.