

## Disarmament as Humanitarian Action

### **Commemorative Conference on 10 years of Entry into force of Mine Ban Treaty & Understanding Arms Trade Treaty and Other Disarmament Treaties**

Held on: 18th March 2009, Committee Room No.1, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

On 18th March 2009, Control Arms Foundation of India, in collaboration with Centre for International Politics, Organisation & Disarmament (CIPOD), Jawaharlal Nehru University organized a 'Commemorative Conference on 10 years of Entry into force of Mine Ban Treaty & understanding the ongoing United Nations process for an Arms Trade Treaty & other Disarmament Treaties'.

The conference was held at the time when the historic disarmament Mine Ban Treaty completes its ten years of entry into force, on 1 March 2009. Ten years after the entry into force of the treaty 40 million mines have been destroyed by the state parties and 149 state parties now no longer holds stockpiled antipersonnel mines. However, India is among a small group of country which has not signed the treaty and has the fifth largest stockpile in the world. India is also not a signatory to the Convention on Cluster munitions and had abstained from voting in favour of UN GA Resolution 61/89 for an Arms Trade Treaty.

#### **List of Resource Persons:**

1. Prof. Yogesh Tyagi, Dean, School of International Studies, JNU.
2. Prof. Rajesh Rajagopalan, Professor, School of International Studies, JNU.
3. Lt. General (retd.), Dr. BS Malik, President, Control Arms Foundation of India; Executive Council Member, IDSA.
4. Ms. Medha Bisht, Research Assistant, Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies.
5. Ms. Binalakshmi Nepam, Secretary- General, Control Arms Foundation of India.
6. Mr. Srinivas Burra, Legal Advisor, ICRC
7. Major General (retd.) Nilendra Kumar, Former Judge Advocate of Indian Army.
8. Prof. Anuradha Chenoy, Professor, School of International Studies, JNU.
9. Wing Cdr. Praful Bakshi, Defence and Strategic Analyst.
10. Mr. Bharat Dogra, Journalist & Social Activist.
11. Professor Amitabh Matto, Member, Prime Minister's Knowledge Council
12. Ambassador Satnam Jit Singh, Diplomatic Advisor to ICBL.
13. Ms. Reena Mutum, Coordinator, Manipur Women Gun Survivor Network.

#### **Inaugural Session: Introduction of the Conference**

The commemorative conference began with a welcome address by Ms Binalakshmi Nepam, Secretary-General, Control Arms Foundation of India. She introduced Dr. BS Malik, Prof. Rajesh Rajagopalan and Prof. Yogesh Tyagi.

The inaugural session was chaired by Professor Yogesh Tyagi, Dean, School of International Studies, JNU. He welcomed all the participants on behalf of SIS, JNU and said the topic of the conference indicates "ambition, accomplishment, plans of action". He said "when we talk of disarmament, we are talking of a dream and so is the agenda of achieving it. If this is accomplished the human mind will create more. Nobody could believe before 9/11 that a known weapon could be used as unprecedented weapon." He pointed out that "disarmament is not the goal, the goal is what is behind armaments". Recognizing the role of civil societies in disarmament process he stated that MBT is an unprecedented success, never before civil societies did something more remarkable than Mine Ban Treaty.

Lt. General (retd.), Dr. BS Malik, President, Control Arms Foundation of India, highlighted the difference between defence and security. He stated "9/11 has shown us another direction that defence and security are two different things." He emphasized that military solutions to counter new threats should not become humanitarian problem. He concluded by quoting an example of how the efforts of the group of concerned

citizens made the issue of small arms appear in the agenda of BIMSTEC, and said that the time has come for all of us to think legitimately in the right direction.

A short documentary film “Make it Happen” by Werner Anderson was screened after Dr. Malik’s presentation. The film was a photographic portrait of the human suffering caused by the cluster munitions.

### **Session II: Disarmament Treaties- The Emerging Role of Civil Society**

Ms. Medha Bisht, Research Assistant, Institute of Defence Studies & Analysis, New Delhi, revisited the making of the Mine Ban Treaty which shaped the contours of Diplomatic Practice. She highlighted the emerging role of civil societies especially ICBL and ICRC, and how their efforts made Mine Ban Treaty a reality.

Ms. Binalakshmi Nepram, Secretary-General, Control Arms Foundation of India, started her presentation by stating the fact that “everyday thousands of people around the world are tortured, injured, or displaced by force armed with deadly weapons. Every minute of every day some one is killed by armed violence.” She pointed out trends in the global military spending and how developed countries are exporting arms to the developing countries and fuelling conflicts. She concluded by sharing the inspiring story of Jody Williams who was the main force behind Mine Ban Treaty.

Mr. Srinivas Burra, Legal Advisor, ICRC, explained humanitarian law with respect to disarmament. He stated “Since World War II nature of conflicts have changed from international armed conflict to internal armed conflicts based on certain mandates.” He highlighted the various provisions of Geneva Conventions and the two optional protocols of 1977 which prohibit the use of certain kinds of weapons and provides for review of State’s weaponry. He pointed out that the “engagement of civil societies in law making is trend setting”.

### **Session III: The Need for India to take a lead in the Disarmament as Humanitarian Action**

Major General (retd.) Nilendra Kumar, former Judge Advocate of Indian Army, gave his presentation on the ten years of journey of the Mine Ban Treaty. He pointed out that “non use of anti-personnel mines is now the international norm. However, India still has extensive minefields along its Western borders besides having stockpiles of millions of landmines.” He also pointed out that “a number of senior officers who had been mine victims have risen to the top positions in the Army. Examples can be given of Lt. Gen YN Sharma, PS Joshi and Vijay Oberoi. It is a matter of regret that despite this, the military top brass has not really accepted that landmine do not offer any significant military advantage.”

Prof. Anuradha Chenoy, Professor, School of International Studies, JNU, took hard political position on landmines and emphasized that “there is a need to broaden the concept of national security to include human security.” She stated that “banning anti-personnel mines is no doubt a humanitarian and political question. Efforts should be made to resolve border issues by joint agreements”.

Wing Cdr. Praful Bakshi, Defence and Strategic Analyst, explained the arms control negotiations and why India should take a lead in disarmament processes. He pointed out that “those nations that sell arms to trade and exploit other countries are developed countries”. He stated that 88% of the arms are manufactured by the permanent five members of the UN Security Council. He pointed out that India can play a vital role in disarmament if it does not depend on foreign imports and consider joint security.

Screening of Film on landmine made by SARD and ICRC titled “Mind your steps”.

Mr. Bharat Dogra, Journalist & Social Activist, spoke on making disarmament a movement in India. He stated that “there is a need to strike a balance between spending on arms and spending on social development.” He also pointed out that if India can improve its relationship with its neighbors efforts in direction of disarmament will be at pace.

#### **Session IV: Concluding Session**

Prof. Amitabh Mattoo, Member, Prime Minister's Knowledge Council, stated that “civil societies are playing a vital role in disarmament process. Mine Ban Treaty was negotiated in entirety in 12 months.” He pointed out that there is a need to inform citizens and cited the example of successful workshop on arms trade treaty conducted in Jammu University. He also stated that there are many more challenges for the future- Violence, trauma, worst kinds of violence from states and non state actors.

Ambassador Satnam Jit Singh, Diplomatic Advisor to ICBL, gave a valedictory address on disarmament as humanitarian action. He said “what is achieved in the short span of 5 years surprised even many campaign leaders.” He stated “Mine Ban Treaty has proved to be much more than ‘beautiful words on paper’. It has translated pious promises into concrete action, making substantial difference on the ground and giving real hope for the future when mines will no longer contaminate countries around the world, when there are no new victims and when the very thought of landmine is but an issue of historic note.”

Ms Reena Mutum, Coordinator, Manipur Women Gun Survivors Network, delivered a vote of thanks to all the speakers, Prof. Swaran Singh, CIPOD, JNU and to all the volunteers.

#### **Conclusion:**

The conference proved very useful and productive as it attracted most of the young students and researchers from the School of International Studies, JNU to conduct research, analyses and adopt rational thinking towards achieving disarmament.

The conference ended with the understanding that academicians, research institutes, civil societies and government must work together in solidarity to engage the government in disarmament processes. The conference gave renewed strength and conviction to the participants and gave them confidence that their voices are getting more audible and articulate.

The major success of the meeting was it gave the participants opportunity to come together to inspire strategies in future. All participants were united in their belief that if they work together in solidarity then they can make a difference.