

Obama and Nuclear Disarmament: A New Push?

New Delhi, 8 May 2009: “President Barack Obama’s historic speech on eliminating nuclear weapons in Prague on 5 April 2009 and similar efforts by the non-proliferation groups in the US and other countries such as Japan is aimed at smoothening the way to the NPT RevCon in 2010. There is fear that if the NPT crumbles in 2010 then challenges like Iran and North Korea will prove more difficult to resolve. Obama’s speech, therefore, was declaratory at the disarmament level and specific on non-proliferation,” said former Permanent Representative of India to the UN Conference on Disarmament, Amb. Arundhati Ghose, at a panel discussion on Obama and Nuclear Disarmament, organised by the Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, on Friday.

The discussion was organised under the Nuclear Security Project of the IPCS and included eminent experts such as Amb. Arundhati Ghose, Adm. Raja Menon, Prof. PR Chari and Dr. G. Balachandran. The central theme of the panel discussion was to discuss President Obama’s Prague speech and address India’s interests regarding crucial issues such as the CTBT and the FMCT. Pointing out the decisive nature of the speech in Prague, Adm. Raja Menon said, “something seminal is happening in the nuclear life of the world and as has happened before, there are two aspects when the country (India) approaches this; one is the country must do certain things and second, the negotiators of this country must say certain things. However, in the history of seminal events, we have always done nothing. We have another chance now, so what are we going to do to prepare for the event? What does the country propose doing about the fact that this is a milestone in nuclear history?”

Professor PR Chari observed that India should either set an example by signing the CTBT and stopping efforts to acquire a Missile Defence System or it would be left with little option than to match rhetoric with rhetoric. Dr. G. Balachandran pointed out that there is a good chance that the CTBT will be ratified by the US this time and if it does, there will be considerable pressure on India to sign the treaty.

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For a detailed seminar report please see www.ipcs.org

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