

Welcome Remarks

by

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Director General, ICWA

at special Address session of

**National Outreach Conference on
“Global Nuclear Disarmament”**

at

Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi

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Hon'ble M. Hamid Ansari, Vice President of India, Shri Mani Shankar Aiyar, MP, Shri Gopalkrishna Gandhi, Foreign Secretary Ranjan Mathai, distinguished guests, dear students, ladies and gentlemen.

I extend a very warm welcome to our respected Vice President. We are deeply grateful to him for sparing the time to be with us in order to deliver a Special Address as the Chief Guest at this conference. This is one of the most significant outreach activities ICWA has undertaken in recent years. The Vice President, who is also the President of ICWA, has provided us invaluable guidance and support for this project.

For several hours now, we have been reflecting on the question of nuclear disarmament. We have had an illuminating morning. As Shri S.M. Krishna, External Affairs Minister, could not come due to indisposition, I had the honour to read his inaugural address. Shri Gopalkrishna Gandhi, an eminent thinker, delivered the keynote address. This was followed by a lively debate and a fascinating interactive session involving students present here. They represent nearly forty educational institutions in the National Capital Region. Thus, this event marks an important milestone in our quest to inform and sensitize public opinion in favour of a nuclear weapons-free, and non-violent world.

We are also grateful to Shri Mani Shankar Aiyar, Chairman and other members of the Prime Minister's Informal Group on Global Nuclear Disarmament, for inspiring this event. They have been making strenuous efforts to promote the cause of universal, non-discriminatory and verifiable nuclear disarmament. The core message

of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's Action Plan on this subject will, we hope, be carried forward by many, especially the youth assembled here today.

India's articulation and pursuit of the proposals contained in the Action Plan, presented by Shri Rajiv Gandhi to the UN in June 1988, continues to be relevant. It is evident that this campaign requires enhanced focus and wider participation, for the benefit and survival of the human race. It is a cause of transcendental importance. We cannot afford to devote more resources to a race no one can win. Nuclear weapons, if ever used, will mean the extinction of our planet, as Shri Rajiv Gandhi had cautioned us. We are also acutely conscious of the dangers posed by irresponsible states and non-state actors.

We cannot but recall what Mahatma Gandhi told Asian leaders and delegates who assembled in this capital for the historic Asian Relations Conference. Addressing them on 2 April 1947, he said '.....atom bombs mean utter destruction, not merely of the West, but of the whole world. It is up to you to tell the world of its wickedness and sin...'

Once again, I gratefully acknowledge all those who have contributed to this special event. I convey our special thanks, on behalf of ICWA, to all our partners. We are particularly appreciative of the Vice President's gracious presence amidst us. I now have the honour to request him to deliver the Special Address, but just before that Foreign Secretary Ranjan Mathai is requested to make a few remarks.
