

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE NINE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-THIRD PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 13 March 2003, at 10.20 a.m.

President: Mr. Djismun KASRI (Indonesia)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 923rd plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

Distinguished colleagues, yesterday we learned with shock and sadness of the assassination of the Serbian Prime Minister, Mr. Zoran Djindjić, the leading Serbian politician who contributed enormously to the process of the democratization of his country. On behalf of the Conference on Disarmament, I would like to extend our sincerest condolences to the Prime Minister's family and to the Government and people of Serbia, as well as the Permanent Representative of Serbia and Montenegro and his staff.

I have one speaker on my list for today's plenary meeting, which is Kenya. I therefore now give the floor to the representative of Kenya, Ambassador Amina Mohamed.

Ms. MOHAMED (Kenya): Mr. President, as I am speaking for the first time under your presidency, I would like at the outset to express my delegation's confidence in your leadership and to wish you all the best in this taxing assignment. My delegation wishes to join you in expressing our condolences to the people and the Government of Serbia and Montenegro.

Mr. President, I would like to address very briefly two issues. First, I am pleased to announce that the Government of Kenya has offered to host in 2004 the First Review Conference of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. As we all know, article 12 of the Convention stipulates that a review conference be held five years after the entry into force of the Convention. This means, therefore, that such a conference is due in 2004.

Kenya's decision to provide a venue for the Conference is partly born out of the country's commitment and determination to contribute to the realization of the noble objectives of the Convention and partly due to the recognition of the fact that its own region, Africa, remains the most heavily mined and mine-affected region. It is in all a gesture of solidarity with our mine-affected region.

Kenya signed the Convention soon after it was opened for signature, on 5 December 1997, and ratified it on 23 January 2001. Kenya has since then closely observed and implemented the various provisions of the treaty. It has, among other things, submitted its transparency reports, pursuant to article 7, on time. It has actively participated in all the annual meetings of States parties to the Convention, as well as in the intersessional meetings.

With regard to the intersessional meetings, Kenya is a member of the Coordinating Committee. In 2002, it was co-rapporteur of the Standing Committee on Mine Clearance, Mine-Risk Education and Mine-Action Technologies. In 2003, it has become, and it still is, co-chair of the same Committee.

(Ms. Mohamed, Kenya)

Kenya has adequate facilities and abundant experience in hosting large international conferences. The Government and the people of Kenya are thus determined to make the First Review Conference a major success and look forward to the support of States parties. We therefore request and look forward to receiving the support of States parties in hosting this important Conference.

Second, I would like to make some remarks on the work programme of the Conference on Disarmament. Like many other delegations, we have expressed our concern at the enduring stalemate and the lack of progress in the work of this Conference.

We acknowledge that finding consensus on the work programme is a difficult and increasingly complex task. We therefore appreciate the efforts made by various presidents and delegations to overcome this obstacle. It is regrettable indeed that so far none of these initiatives has met the satisfaction of all delegations.

In this regard, I would like to address the latest proposal on the table, that is, the five ambassadors' initiative. My delegation has carefully studied the proposal by Ambassadors Dembri, Lint, Reyes, Salander and Vega. In our consideration it merits support. The proposal is comprehensive and addresses all items on the Conference's agenda. It also attempts to strike a balance between them. Second, it involves delegations from different groupings within the Conference on Disarmament. In this way it is an example of the kind of inter-group dialogue which we should have in this forum. Third, the initiative has demonstrated a measure of flexibility by inviting comments and ideas from all delegations. This could further enrich the proposal.

We therefore join other delegations in expressing our support for the five ambassadors' initiative. It is our hope that the Conference will be able to build a consensus around it.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador Amina Mohamed for her statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. Does any delegation wish to take the floor at this stage? I see that the representative of Serbia and Montenegro wishes to take the floor.

Ms. DIVJAK-TOMIĆ (Serbia and Montenegro): Mr. President, I am privileged to take the floor for the first time after more than a decade of absence of my country from this august body.

On this sad occasion for my Government and for the people of my country, I wish to express gratitude to all the members of the Conference and to you, Mr. President, personally, for expressing condolences to my Government and to the people of Serbia and Montenegro on the great loss of Prime Minister Djindjić that we suffered yesterday. Thank you very much to all of you.

The PRESIDENT I thank the representative of Serbia and Montenegro for her statement. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor at this stage? That does not seem to be the case.

(The President)

Distinguished colleagues, since the term of the presidency of Indonesia is coming to an end, I would like to make some concluding remarks.

As you recall, at the beginning of my term of office, I expressed my intention to continue the efforts of my predecessor. Ambassador Sood of India, and to take his findings as a starting point for my own consultations with the members of the Conference.

Undoubtedly, the most challenging task facing every president is that of fostering an agreement on a programme of work through various consultations and searching for a delicate, and frequently elusive, balance between the constantly evolving security priorities of the members of the Conference. This task is even more demanding if it is to be carried out in a period characterized by a rapidly changing political environment.

Although many proposals and ideas on a programme of work or on its outstanding elements have been put forward, the agreement that could end the long-lasting deadlock still eludes us. It is regrettable that, in the process of fine-tuning the most promising proposals, the Conference cannot move beyond a certain point at which they become petrified into “a basis for further intensified consultations”.

Since this is the last plenary meeting during my presidency, I am duty bound to report that my efforts have not resulted in any significant harmonization of views on the outstanding issues before the Conference. There are, however, some positive trends that should be nurtured further. It is, for example, encouraging that more and more delegations are expressing their support for the latest proposal on the programme of work, which was submitted by the five former presidents of the Conference and issued as document CD/1693. It is also worthy of note that a number of them have already expressed their readiness to accept the proposed programme of work in its present form. On the other hand, I am very grateful that my appeals for making better use of plenary meetings have found a prompt resonance among the member States and have led to a noticeable intensification of our plenary meetings. I hope that this trend continues and that the substantive debates foster an agreement on the programme of work. I am also convinced that continuation of a business-like exchange of views on issues on the Conference's agenda will lay a solid ground for future negotiations.

During my consultations I have heard many concerns over the new threats to international security, which have warranted the attention of the Conference. It seems that the Conference's ability to respond to the challenges posed by these threats could be seen as another test of its viability. Accordingly, further efforts aimed at the resumption of substantive work should also give appropriate attention to ways and means of addressing new threats.

In conclusion, I would like to encourage every one of you, distinguished delegates, to continue our joint efforts with good will and flexibility so that we can find a compromise as soon as possible and get back to business. We should also ensure that the negotiating capacity of the Conference is maintained so that it can embark on substantive work as soon as the agreement on the programme of work is reached.

(The President)

I would like to take this opportunity to ensure the incoming president, Ambassador Mary Whelan of Ireland, of my full cooperation during her term of office and I wish her good luck and success in her endeavours. I would also like to thank my predecessor, Ambassador Rakesh Sood of India, for his efforts during his tenure as president of the Conference, as well as to thank you all for your valuable assistance and support during my presidency.

Allow me also to extend my words of appreciation to the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, Mr. Sergei Ordzhonikidze, the Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, Mr. Enrique Román-Morey, for his valuable guidance, Mr. Jerzy Zaleski, Senior Political Adviser, as well as to other members of the secretariat for their assistance during my presidency.

Last but not least, I would like to express my thanks to the interpreters and conference room officers who have facilitated our meetings.

This concludes our business for today.

The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Thursday, 20 March 2003, at 10 a.m. in this conference room.

The meeting rose at 10.35 a.m.