

# CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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## FINAL RECORD OF THE NINE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-FIFTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,  
on Thursday, 27 March 2003, at 10.15 a.m.

President:                      Mr. Richard FALLON                      (Ireland)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 925th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. I have the following speakers on today's list: Switzerland, Romania, the United Kingdom, Slovenia and Lithuania.

I now give the floor to the representative of Switzerland, Ambassador Christian Faessler.

Mr. FAESSLER (Switzerland) (translated from French): Mr. President, I should like to start by congratulating you on your assumption of your functions and to assure you of the full support of the Swiss delegation.

Under the mandate which it gave its ad hoc committee, on 23 March 1995, the Conference on Disarmament should start negotiations, at the earliest possible opportunity, of a treaty on the prohibition of the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other explosive devices. The immediate launching of negotiations on an FMCT - which, as you all know, is one of Switzerland's main priorities - has also been the subject of various resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly and of the final documents of the review conferences of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty of 1995 and 2000.

In Switzerland's view, an FMCT is a vital element in progress towards nuclear disarmament and in multilateral efforts to promote disarmament in general. Indeed, how could we seriously envisage launching negotiations on nuclear disarmament while continuing to produce nuclear fissile materials for military purposes and without an effective verification system in this area?

Switzerland, as a member of the Conference on Disarmament, will play an active part in any future negotiations of such a treaty. At that time, it plans to uphold the following positions, which flow directly from its traditional nuclear disarmament and arms control policy.

First, Switzerland supports the immediate resumption of negotiations of a treaty based on the mandate of 23 March 1995.

Second, Switzerland is in favour, as soon as such negotiations commence, of the immediate and voluntary cessation of the production of fissile materials for the manufacture of arms and other nuclear explosive devices. It appeals to all States which possess fissile material production facilities to desist immediately from all activities in this area.

Third, Switzerland is deeply concerned by the possibility of fissile materials being diverted by non-State actors and by terrorist groups. It is therefore imperative, in the interests of international security, for negotiations to resume at the earliest possible opportunity. Switzerland believes, in addition, that the elimination of existing fissile material stockpiles should also, in due course, be the subject of negotiations and of a separate agreement.

Finally, Switzerland approves of the idea of an effective and non-discriminatory international FMCT verification system.

(Mr. Faessler, Switzerland)

A treaty banning the production of fissile materials - which primarily means plutonium and uranium - for the manufacture of nuclear weapons and other explosive devices for military purposes would be essentially targeted at the five nuclear Powers under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and at other States which possess nuclear weapons, whether officially or otherwise. We might note, in passing, that all these States are members of the Conference on Disarmament.

In Switzerland's view, negotiations on such a treaty should meet three political imperatives: first, they should be additional to the non-proliferation measures in States possessing installations capable of producing fissile materials for military purposes. This applies principally to uranium enrichment and fissile material reprocessing installations. Second, they should strengthen existing instruments in the field of arms control and nuclear non-proliferation, such as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and bilateral agreements in this area. Third and finally, they should mark an important stage in progress towards the attainment of complete and verifiable nuclear disarmament.

The Conference on Disarmament, as we all agree, should come up at the earliest possible juncture with a programme of work calling for the immediate launching of negotiations on an FMCT. Nothing prevents us, however, from embarking even now, in the Conference's plenary meetings, on the discussion of certain aspects of such negotiations, as several delegations have already done. The seminars and lectures organized in recent years in Geneva in the margins of the Conference have already provided a useful opportunity for us to pool our ideas regarding future negotiations. My country is particularly grateful to the Netherlands, Germany, Japan, Australia, Canada, Austria and UNIDIR for their endeavours in this regard. Thanks to those endeavours, we already have a better idea of what is at stake and of possible solutions.

In the first place, we can see that the Conference's negotiating mandate most definitely extends to considering the banning of the production of fissile materials, but it does not cover the reduction either of existing military stockpiles or of fissile materials left over from the arms race of the cold war. As I have already observed, my country believes that the reduction of existing stockpiles should be addressed in a separate agreement. There is nothing, however, to prevent States possessing such stockpiles from embarking immediately on their elimination and from doing so in an irreversible manner.

Second, the negotiating mandate does not specify whether the ban called for under a future treaty should also apply to the production of fissile materials other than those currently used in nuclear weapons. In my country's view, references to these materials should not be excluded from the negotiations, given their potential use in nuclear weapons.

Third, one of the main focuses of the negotiations will be the question of verification. The negotiations of the Chemicals Weapons Convention and of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, as well as the recent strengthening of the IAEA safeguards system,

(Mr. Faessler, Switzerland)

have all demonstrated the importance of a verification system which includes both so-called routine inspections (for declared installations) and challenge inspections (for declared and undeclared installations and activities). Only such a range of measures, which should also be cost-effective, would be capable of guaranteeing full respect for a future treaty.

Fourth, to reduce the risk of the illicit diversion of fissile materials, we believe that a future treaty should include a range of measures - or best practices - designed to ensure the security and protection of enrichment and reprocessing installations.

Fifth, attention will have to be given to the question of the role of the Vienna International Atomic Energy Agency in the negotiations and in the application of a future treaty, areas in which the Agency could be a source of indispensable know-how. For reasons both political and technical, however, we should not exclude a verification system from the future treaty which, while drawing on the resources of IAEA, would still be institutionally autonomous, including in respect of its decision-making bodies.

Sixth and last, the modality for the entry into force of an FMCT should, in my country's opinion, ensure its implementation in all countries possessing uranium enrichment and fissile material reprocessing facilities. A partial commitment by such countries would not meet the objectives of the treaty.

Switzerland believes that the international community and, in particular, the Conference on Disarmament, should play a more active role at the multilateral level in promoting disarmament and the control of nuclear weapons. The conclusion of an FMCT would mark a significant and tangible step forward towards the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Switzerland for his statement and I now call on the distinguished representative of Romania, Mr. Radu Liviu Horumba.

Mr. HORUMBA (Romania): Mr. President, as this is the first time that I am taking the floor under your tenure, allow me first to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and to express the assurances of the full support and cooperation of my delegation in discharging the important responsibilities of your office.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express congratulations to your predecessors for their constant efforts aimed at moving forward the activity of the Conference of Disarmament.

I have asked for the floor today to provide information on the results of the regional seminar on the implementation of the OSCE Small Arms Document and the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, held in Bucharest from 24 to 26 February 2003, organized by the Government of Romania and co-sponsored by the Governments of Canada and Italy. I would like to take this opportunity to express the appreciation of the Romanian authorities for the contributions of the Governments of Canada and Italy to the success of this important event.

(Mr. Horumba, Romania)

One of the main objectives of the regional seminar in Bucharest was to provide a substantial regional contribution to the forthcoming biennial meeting on the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action, focusing on the relevant fields of marking and tracing and of import, export and transit controls of small arms and light weapons. The seminar was attended by representatives from OSCE participating States, technical practitioners and interested non-governmental organizations, who considered policies and current undertakings in the fields of marking and tracing and controls of transfers of small arms and light weapons, as provided for in the OSCE Small Arms Document and the Programme of Action. The proceedings contributed to updating knowledge on: sharing information on the implementation of the Programme of Action and the OSCE Document regarding marking and tracing and controls of import, transit and export; identifying best practices in marking and tracing and import, transit and export controls; identifying areas that would benefit from having international standards established; and also providing a framework for regional and international cooperation.

Before elaborating on the work of the seminar and its main conclusions and recommendations, I would like to emphasize the great political interest manifested in this event, which opened with a keynote address by Mr. Mircea Geoana, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Romania, followed by a statement by Ambassador Kuniko Inoguchi, Permanent Representative of Japan to the Conference on Disarmament and chair-designate of the first biennial meeting. The quality of the proceedings was enhanced not only by the broad expertise provided by all the participants, but also by the high level of representation.

On the first day, the regional seminar examined the link between transnational organized crime and illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons. The discussions focused on the aspects and provisions related to marking and tracing and import and export controls contained in existing international instruments, such as the United Nations Programme of Action, the OSCE Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons and the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition. One of the main conclusions was that, in an interrelated manner, these other instruments help supplement the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, and its Firearms Protocol. Several participants advocated the development of a legally binding instrument on the tracing and marking of small arms and light weapons, while there was a general understanding of the need for political willingness to implement these international instruments, both in the domestic and the foreign policy of States. It was stressed that the multiplication of agreements addressing the issue of small arms and light weapons calls for a convergent approach, which could be achieved through the harmonization of standards and criteria.

Discussions on the second day focused on different aspects of export controls, including the regulation of brokering activities. The numerous parallel initiatives in this complex field were reviewed and specific examples drawn from countries' own experience demonstrated the many challenges associated with the development and implementation of effective export controls. The need to combat illicit brokering activities and further regulate legal brokering was also emphasized. Participants welcomed the announcement made by Norway of the forthcoming international conference on brokering in small arms and light weapons, to be held in Oslo next month, organized together with the Netherlands.

(Mr. Horumba, Romania)

The third day of the seminar was devoted to the exploration of ways of approaching the issue of marking and tracing together with that of export controls on small arms and light weapons. The general conclusions of the debate seem to indicate that a more effective means of curbing the many concerns resulting from the proliferation of small arms and light weapons would be by tackling the two issues in a combined and interrelated approach, rather than separately. International cooperation in tracing was identified as a crucial element in ensuring that export controls were not bypassed and transfers of small arms and light weapons were not diverted to illicit ends.

Before concluding I would like to highlight some of the most relevant recommendations put forward by the participants at the regional seminar, particularly those with a more political character, such as: the call to OSCE participating States to sign and ratify the United Nations Firearms Protocol; the call to States to involve their parliamentarians in supporting international and regional efforts to curb the proliferation of small arms and light weapons; the call to OSCE participating States to provide timely reports for the first biennial meeting; exploring the feasibility of agreeing on a common format for national reporting on small arms and light weapons to both OSCE and the United Nations; establishing national points of contacts in OSCE participating States dedicated to the issues of tracing and the administration of export controls; enhancing cooperation between the United Nations and OSCE in the field of tracing the illicit flows of small arms and light weapons; building and developing a regulatory system for brokering in small arms and light weapons, based upon the recommendations of the 2003 Lancaster House conference on strengthening export controls of small arms and light weapons.

As I have mentioned, these are only a few, more relevant examples of the recommendations put forward by the participants in the Bucharest regional seminar. There are many more that are presented in detail in the final report of the seminar, prepared by the co-chairs of the meeting.

I would like to take this opportunity, also on behalf of the delegations of Canada and Italy, to request the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament to circulate the final report of the regional seminar on the implementation of the OSCE Small Arms Document and the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons, as an official document of the Conference on Disarmament.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of Romania and I now call on the representative of the United Kingdom, Ambassador David Broucher, to make his statement.

Mr. BROUCHER (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland): Mr. President, it is a great pleasure to see Ireland, the United Kingdom's next-door neighbour, in the chair, and we have great confidence in you and pledge our full cooperation.

Recent statements by the United States of America, Japan and the Netherlands have reiterated their support for the early negotiation of a treaty to ban the production of fissile material for weapons and other explosive devices - a fissile material cut-off treaty or FMCT. We have just had an excellent seminar on these issues organized by the Netherlands Mission, and a

(Mr. Broucher, United Kingdom)

seminar organized by Japan will take place tomorrow. We have also had a useful paper submitted by South Africa last May (CD/1671). In view of these contributions, I judge it opportune to reiterate the views of the United Kingdom on an FMCT.

The United Kingdom believes that an FMCT would be a valuable contribution to international security. It would introduce a worldwide, legally binding and verifiable ban on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices. This would represent a considerable advance on the present situation, in which only some States have declared voluntary moratoriums on such production, and these are mostly unverified. In addition, an FMCT would make other measures to address stocks of fissile material more meaningful, because the benefit of such measures will always be questionable so long as there is no ban on future production. An FMCT would also be an essential basis for further moves towards global nuclear disarmament, which will never be achieved without first having verification arrangements on fissile material production facilities.

The commitment to negotiate an FMCT in the Conference on Disarmament is enshrined in numerous United Nations resolutions and in the 13 steps set out in the Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference. It has been endorsed at one time or another by the delegations in this room. A mandate exists for the negotiations - the so-called "Shannon mandate" - and the negotiations did once start briefly in 1998. Since then, there has been no progress. Let me repeat that the United Kingdom remains ready and eager to begin negotiations on an FMCT in the Conference on Disarmament immediately and without preconditions, and we call upon all other members of the Conference to join us.

Among other reasons because of the complexity of the subject, we believe that the negotiations should properly be conducted in the Conference on Disarmament. All the key players need to be formally involved if an eventual FMCT is to achieve its purposes, and that includes the non-nuclear weapon States, because we shall need to talk about safeguards and IAEA. It has sometimes been suggested that, to get around the current deadlock in the Conference's work programme, we should negotiate in informal plenaries. The United Kingdom does not think that this would work, because we shall need the involvement of experts. We are not ready to create a false equivalence with the other issues by agreeing to revert to a mere discussion of an FMCT. The time for that has passed. Nor do we think we should spend yet more time trying to obtain negotiating mandates for other subjects before we can go forward with an FMCT. We have a mandate for FMCT negotiations. Let us use it.

As is well known, certain delegations believe that FMCT negotiations would be incomplete if they did not tackle existing stocks. They think that stopping future production without cutting stocks would simply perpetuate the status quo. But work is now being taken forward on stocks. And our view is that if we try to include stocks in an FMCT, this will complicate an otherwise simple issue. Let me explain further.

The United Kingdom believes the most effective FMCT would cover the five nuclear-weapon States and those outside the NPT. Within those States, the stocks vary greatly. While the short-hand of "existing weapons-usable fissile material" (excluding material

(Mr. Broucher, United Kingdom)

in weapons and material stockpiled for weapons use) is often used, this covers a significant variation between States, for example, in the size and nature - in terms of their chemical form, purity and isotopic composition - of their stockpiles.

In addition, as the South African paper noted, the amount of information publicly available about holdings differs, as do the estimated amounts of stocks in existence. There is also a difference in the proportion of stocks that each country has outside any form of safeguards or verification, and the extent to which these stocks are the subjects of disposition plans.

Trying to reach an agreement on stocks under an FMCT that would be acceptable to all States would therefore be extremely difficult.

But we are not saying that we should ignore stocks. What we are saying is that there are other approaches for dealing with them that are likely to be more productive than through an FMCT. We note the proposal in the South African paper that material declared excess to military requirements could be transferred irreversibly to peaceful purposes. We can already see examples of this, for example, in Russia and the United States, surplus highly-enriched uranium is being blended down to low-enriched uranium and the Russia-United States plutonium agreement will, with the help of other States including the United Kingdom, dispose of a total of 68 tons of plutonium. With respect to civil stocks, the countries subscribing to the Guidelines for the Management of Plutonium publish annual figures about their holdings of unirradiated plutonium. The United Kingdom and France also annually publish figures for their civil holdings of highly-enriched uranium in a similar format to that for plutonium. All United Kingdom and French civil materials are covered by Euratom safeguards and the United Kingdom's safeguards agreement with IAEA enables the Agency to inspect all such stocks and materials if it so chooses.

In summary, I am saying that we should not complicate an already complex issue. Our focus should be on a straightforward ban on future production. We are more likely to be able to mop the floor effectively if we first shut off the water tap, which, for the benefit of American speakers, I had better describe as a faucet. To argue the opposite, that we should not turn off the tap until we are ready to start mopping the floor, makes no sense.

I should like now to respond to Ambassador Inoguchi's call for a moratorium on fissile material production for weapons purposes. The United Kingdom declared such a moratorium in 1995 and has produced no fissile material for nuclear weapons since then. There are no plans to change this. Our production facilities are subject to safeguards. I call upon all those that have not already done so to join us in declaring a moratorium. Ideally, this should be open-ended and unconditional, to make the best contribution to an improved international security environment.

The United Kingdom is ready to agree today to set up an ad hoc committee to negotiate an FMCT. We do not believe that other issues designated for a Conference on Disarmament work programme are similarly advanced to the point of negotiation, but we are ready to support any reasonable formula, such as the Amorim proposal, for agreeing on the work programme that can command consensus. We commend the efforts of the five ambassadors and encourage them to continue. We also urge fellow members of the Conference on Disarmament not to let the best



(Mr. Broucher, United Kingdom)

be the enemy of the good. Before the tide can go out, it first has to turn. An FMCT banning future production would fix the high-tide mark of nuclear weapons-usable fissile material and set the stage for further reductions in future.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the United Kingdom for its statement, and I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Slovenia, Ambassador Aljaž Gosnar.

Mr. GOSNAR (Slovenia): Mr. President, since this is the first time that I am taking the floor in this august forum, allow me at the outset, on behalf of the Slovenian delegation, to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament, and wish you every success in your task. I would also like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to Mr. Ordzhonikidze, Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and to the members of the secretariat.

It is my honour to inform you at this plenary session about two important events which were recently held in Slovenia. The first is the United Nations-OSCE Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects in South Eastern Europe, which was held from 10 to 12 March in Slovenia. The second is the destruction of the last anti-personnel landmines stockpiles of the Slovene army in accordance with the obligations deriving from the Ottawa Convention.

Before starting, I would like to congratulate the Government of Romania on the conduct of various successful seminars which they have held and to emphasize the complementary nature of the efforts in the region relating to small arms and light weapons.

The conference in Slovenia was co-organized by the United Nations Department for Disarmament Affairs, the OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre and the Government of the Republic of Slovenia. The conference brought together over 100 participants from more than 40 countries, mainly from south-eastern Europe.

The event was held at the regional level, taking stock of achievements in implementing the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects in the run-up to the July 2003 biennial meeting in New York. The conference was designed to foster the implementation of international standards on the illicit trade in south-east Europe.

Many distinguished guests were present at the conference and they highlighted the importance of the United Nations Programme of Action as a road map for efforts to address the scourge of small arms and light weapons. At the same time, they underscored the potential of regional initiatives and activities, such as the OSCE Document, to contribute to the implementation of the Programme of Action. They acknowledged the progress already made in combating the illicit trade in south-eastern Europe, but also identified a need for regional action and cooperation, especially at the political level.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Slovenia, Mr. Dimitrij Rupel, urged the participants to think innovatively, to outline new proposals and to find appropriate responses to address the

(Mr. Gosnar, Slovenia)

demand side of the illicit trade. The United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Dhanapala, underlined the importance which the United Nations, and in particular its Department for Disarmament Affairs, attaches to cooperation with OSCE. Mr. Jan Kubiš, Secretary-General of OSCE, encouraged States to see the United Nations and OSCE as a resource for action. He emphasized that OSCE promotes the full and timely implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action, largely through the implementation of its own document on Small Arms and Light Weapons. The two agreements should be seen as mutually complementary and reinforcing. The Ambassador of Japan, Ms. Kuniko Inoguchi, the Chair-designate of the July biennial meeting, encouraged Governments to submit their national reports on time and to prioritize the issue of small arms and light weapons in the field of disarmament. She welcomed the participation of a wide range of States in this conference and presented the key elements and modalities of the forthcoming meeting, while highlighting a number of key issues which could be conveyed to the July biennial meeting. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Ambassador Inoguchi for her important contribution to the conference.

The participants addressed several key topics concerning the issue of small arms and light weapons, prominent among which were the following: stocktaking; export control procedures; weapons collection and public awareness; stockpile security and management; border management and policing; international cooperation and assistance; weapons collection and destruction; disarmament, demobilization and reintegration; and general aspects and way forward.

It was the shared conclusion of all participants that the problems posed by the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons are multidimensional and interlinked, and require a comprehensive approach. Although all parties concerned recognized that the primary responsibility for the implementation of the Programme of Action rests with States, they also recognized the need to help one another and to work together in order to combat the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

The conference also provided an opportunity for the host country, Slovenia, to present its initiative of establishing a regional contact point for small arms and light weapons, which could serve as an effective arrangement complementing the existing mechanisms for cooperation within the region and could contribute to enhanced implementation of international standards with a view to achieving tangible results. It would be a flexible arrangement, directly matching needs and assistance, and would function as an active observer able to react to new challenges.

The second topic that I would especially like to underline is the destruction of the last anti-personnel landmines of the Slovene army in accordance with the obligations deriving from the Ottawa Convention. The event took place two days ago on 25 March in a Slovene army training area, where the last 200 anti-personnel landmines were destroyed. With that solemn and final act, the Republic of Slovenia has fully implemented its obligations concerning the destruction of anti-personnel mines, as stipulated by the Ottawa Convention. In accordance with the provisions of the Convention, Slovenia will retain 3,000 pieces for its own demining technology research and the training of troops in mine detection and mine clearance.

(Mr. Gosnar, Slovenia)

The Republic of Slovenia signed the Ottawa Convention on 3 December 1997 and ratified it on 27 October 1998. The act ratifying the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction entered into force on 1 April 1999. Soon after, the process of the destruction of anti-personnel landmines started and all anti-personnel landmines were brought from different sites to a single storage site. In total, there were 171,898 mines of different types. I should also note that the overall cost of the destruction process was \$338,000, including investments in technology, construction works and the training of personnel. Destruction itself cost around \$2 per mine.

While on the subject of anti-personnel mines, I would also like to mention the Slovenia-based International Trust Fund for Demining, which after five years of operation has developed into an exceptionally successful and internationally acknowledged institution. The International Trust Fund is a humanitarian, non-profit organization devoted to the eradication of landmines in the region of south-east Europe and in the world. The International Trust Fund's vision is to ensure that the entire region of south-east Europe is free from the impact of mines and unexploded ordnance by 2010. Since 1998, the International Trust Fund has cleared more than 33.4 million square metres of mine-contaminated areas in the region of south-east Europe, in the course of which it has discovered more than 16,500 mines and 15,600 pieces of unexploded ordnance and remnants of war. Since 1998, more than 700 mine victims have been rehabilitated in the rehabilitation institute of the Republic of Slovenia.

With the full implementation of the Ottawa Convention and the successful work of the International Trust Fund, Slovenia clearly confirms its commitment in the field of humanitarian demining and the disarmament process in general.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Slovenia for his statement, and I now call on the distinguished representative of Lithuania, Mr. Erikas Petrikas, to make his statement.

Mr. PETRIKAS (Lithuania): Mr. President, since Lithuania, an observer country to the Conference on Disarmament, is taking the floor for the first time, allow me to extend my country's congratulations on Ireland's assumption of the presidency of the Conference. We wish you every success, and let me assure you, Mr. President, that you can count on our delegation's full support and cooperation. Our appreciation also goes to Mr. Ordzhonikidze and to the members of the secretariat.

I will be brief. I would like to inform the distinguished delegates that, on 25 March 2003, the Lithuanian Parliament ratified the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. Lithuania will now proceed with the final formalities necessary to become a full party to the Convention.

I would like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to the Coordinating Committee for its effective implementation of the Ottawa Convention. We also wish to commend the work of the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining and, especially, the Implementation Support Unit for its valuable support. Ever since the entry into

(Mr. Petrikas, Lithuania)

force of the Ottawa Treaty in 1999, we have also enjoyed encouraging backing from the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS), the Verification, Research, Training and Information Centre (VERTIC), and other organizations, as well as from States parties to the Convention.

A great deal of credit also goes to the standing committees during the intersessional work programme, co-chairs and co-rapporteurs, and, personally, to the President of the Fourth Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention, Ambassador Jean Lint of Belgium.

I would like to recall that on 2 July 2002, the Lithuanian Government for the first time submitted an initial transparency measure report under article 7 of the Ottawa Treaty on a voluntary basis. We are very pleased that other countries, not yet parties to the Convention, are following this example, and we fully endorse such steps.

In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm Lithuania's readiness to join the efforts aimed at securing the successful implementation and strengthening of the Ottawa Convention - a tool of crucial importance in eradicating anti-personnel mines and bringing the human suffering caused by these weapons to an end.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Lithuania for his statement. I have one additional speaker on the list, and I therefore call on the distinguished representative of the Syrian Arab Republic, Ambassador Toufik Salloum.

Mr. SARRA (Syrian Arab Republic) (translated from Arabic): First, I should like to apologize for the Ambassador not being able to attend because of a pressing matter.

Mr. President, allow me to join the previous speakers in congratulating your country on its assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. I assure you that you can count on our full support and cooperation in the discharge of your tasks, especially at this critical stage in the Conference's work and important juncture for international security. We must all send a powerful message affirming the need to address international security issues, including, in particular, disarmament issues, within the framework of international law and Security Council resolutions.

The world is witnessing a war of aggression being perpetrated against Iraq. Anyone can see that this war is unjustified and is not being waged in a just cause. If its purpose is to disarm Iraq of weapons of mass destruction, then what about Israel, which has a stockpile of those weapons, including nuclear weapons, which not even some major countries possess? Everyone is aware of the threat this poses to Israel's neighbours. Why is Israel the only country in the Middle East to refuse to accept international monitoring and inspections of weapons of mass destruction, if it does not have any?

Syria voted in favour of Security Council resolution 1441 (2002) because it was convinced of the need to support international resolutions in order to find a peaceful solution to the Iraqi crisis. Thanks to cooperation from Iraq, the inspections did produce tangible results and

(Mr. Sarra, Syrian Arab Republic)

the inspectors said that they needed just a few more months to complete their work. However, certain parties acted as if the war was a foregone conclusion and a popular demand throughout the world, whereas, in fact, the reverse is true.

My delegation would like to express its grave concern and regret at the efforts being made in certain quarters to call into question the role of the United Nations in general and of the Security Council in particular, simply because the Council and the Organization would not yield to the attempts made by certain parties to impose their will and views on the international system. By seeking to blame the Security Council or, more accurately, certain members of the Council, for failing to adopt a resolution authorizing war against Iraq, those parties are deliberately ignoring the facts. The overwhelming majority of the members of the Council and of people throughout the world were opposed to a resolution that would have sanctioned the use of force. How can the United States argue that it is difficult to resolve this problem, as well as that of Palestine with all its attendant tragedy, within the framework of the United Nations, while at the same time blaming the Security Council for failing to adopt the resolution? Is the Security Council there to wage war or maintain peace? Whoever said that peacemaking was easy in times of international crisis?

Security Council resolution 1441 (2002) was adopted by consensus as a fundamental reference point for the resolution of the Iraqi problem. The records of the meetings at which it was adopted show that there was no intention that it should be used to bypass international law and to strike Iraq. Syria believes that the fact that paragraph 4 of the resolution, calling for problems relating to the provisions of the resolution to be referred back to the Council, has been disregarded, and the sudden call for the inspectors to be withdrawn from Iraq shows beyond any shadow of a doubt that the true purpose of the war is not to disarm Iraq, but to occupy the country and seize its oil reserves.

The warmongers said that Iraqi forces were weak, demoralized and badly equipped and that the war would be over in just a few days. At the same time, they justified the war by saying that Iraq was a menace. Syria utterly condemns and rejects this war of aggression against Iraq, just as it condemned the 1990 occupation of Kuwait. There is no legal or moral justification for this destructive war, which is being conducted without reference to the Security Council and international law and in flagrant violation of the Charter of the United Nations. Its aims have less to do with international law than with the law of the jungle.

The declared purpose of the war was to oust an individual or a group of individuals from power. It has since become clear that not even that outcome would have been sufficient to forestall the war. How can such a reason justify the deaths of tens of thousands of innocent Iraqis? Are we really living in the twenty-first century? How can the United States and the United Kingdom ignore what is happening in the occupied Palestinian territories where the Palestinian people are being subjected to a perpetual cycle of killing and slaughter and where their homes are being destroyed, trees are being uprooted and agricultural land is being laid waste? How can those two countries ignore the longest occupation of the twentieth century? How can they ignore the photograph of Rachel Corey, the American peace activist crushed to death by an Israeli bulldozer?

(Mr. Sarra, Syrian Arab Republic)

Mr. President, it is only right that we should applaud the spirit of responsibility shown by those States which supported a peaceful solution to this problem. Their position faithfully reflects the views of the overwhelming majority of the members of the international family and the feelings of the millions throughout the world who demonstrated against the war and in favour of peace.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic for his statement, and I now call on the distinguished representative of Japan, Ambassador Kuniko Inoguchi, to make her statement.

Ms. INOBUCHI (Japan): Mr. President, I just wish to make a very short announcement following on to the introductory part of the statement of the Ambassador of the United Kingdom, who kindly mentioned the verification workshop which will be held tomorrow from 10 a.m. in this room. The workshop is co-organized with Australia and also with UNIDIR.

The PRESIDENT: I now call on the distinguished representative of the United States, Mr. Sherwood McGinnis.

Mr. MCGINNIS (United States of America): Mr. President, since this is the first time that I will be taking the floor under the Irish presidency, I would like to extend my congratulations to Ireland and express our full support for your presidency in the coming weeks.

Regrettably, the last intervention by our Syrian colleague was one in which a fair number of half-truths and untruths were contained. I think that we have to look at the situation. Regrettably, the international community needed to act. After 12 years of lack of cooperation, 12 years of diplomacy, dozens of United Nations resolutions, the sending of hundreds of weapons inspectors and four and a half months after the passage of resolution 1441, Iraq has failed to disarm.

I think that we all have to be aware that the only reason that 1441 was passed, the only reason that Iraq allowed inspectors to come back into its territory, was the threat of use of force. It was also seen that the cooperation that our Syrian colleague mentioned - thanks to Iraq's cooperation the inspectors were back - was very grudgingly and very circumspectly given.

There are important issues here. The United States, for the last 12 years, has worked within the United Nations. We have put forth a number of resolutions. These resolutions have called repeatedly for Iraq to comply with its obligations under previous resolutions. The action that was taken was based on previous resolutions 678, 687 and 1441.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of the United States. I now call on the distinguished representative of the Netherlands, Ambassador Chris Sanders.

Mr. SANDERS (Netherlands): Mr. President, I congratulate you on the assumption of the presidency, and I express our full confidence in your skills to help us forward at this difficult time.

(Mr. Sanders, Netherlands)

I have asked for the floor just to remind delegates of what has already been faxed to them, namely, about the next meeting in the context of our continuing exercise on FMCT, as also highlighted by the British Ambassador this morning. This meeting will take place on Friday of next week, 4 April, at 10 a.m. As speakers we have Ambassador Pablo Macedo of Mexico and Mr. Morton Maerli of the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs. I look forward to seeing all of you at that meeting, which will deal with the issue of existing stocks.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Representative of the Netherlands for that notification. I now call on the distinguished representative of Iraq.

Mr. AL-BASRI (Iraq) (translated from Arabic): Mr. President, allow me to start by congratulating you on your election as President of the Conference on Disarmament. We are fully convinced that, thanks to your efforts, the work of the Conference will prove successful. I should also like to confirm that my delegation is willing to cooperate fully with you in your work.

We are astonished by what the United States representative has just said about Iraq having failed to cooperate with the inspectors. A resolution providing for the return of the inspectors to Iraq was adopted. Iraq responded positively thereto, offering the inspectors its full cooperation and every possible facility to guarantee the success of their work. Indeed, Iraq was praised by both Dr. Hans Blix, the Executive Chairman of UNMOVIC, and Dr. El-Baradei, the Director-General of IAEA, who both confirmed, on numerous occasions, that Iraq had been cooperating with UNMOVIC and IAEA. Even if many of the requests made by UNMOVIC were difficult to grant, Iraq cooperated because it was determined to fulfil its international obligations and comply with the terms of the relevant international resolutions. In particular, it gave permission for U2 aircraft to overfly its territory and it destroyed Al Samoud missiles which had been shown, in all but one test, to be within the permitted range. It nevertheless yielded to the request by UNMOVIC to destroy all the missiles in question. Iraq's cooperation with the inspectors never wavered. Indeed, in the light of the positive results achieved and of the cooperation proffered by the Iraqi Government. Dr. Blix and Dr. El-Baradei simply asked for more time to finish their work.

We are amazed to hear the United States representative talk about the implementation of international resolutions when, just one week ago, his country unleashed a war of tyranny and aggression that flouts even the most elementary humanitarian principles, let alone legal norms. In spite of strong international opposition to the war and popular protests throughout the world, and in spite of the condemnation and rejection of the aggressive policy of the United States administration, the United States has ignored the anti-war sentiment expressed in many parts of the world, including during the huge public demonstrations that took place in its own backyard.

Mr. President, the war launched by the United States is not a clean war by any standards. You will all have seen the tragic sufferings which it has inflicted on the Iraqi people, by targeting private homes and other civil installations such as electricity generating stations and water networks. Before the war, the United States Government said it would not target the Iraqi people and that the selected targets were exclusively military in nature. It said that it had the means and technology to be able to pinpoint those targets with absolute accuracy. I could show you a

(Mr. Al-Basri, Iraq)

photograph of one of the military targets selected by the United States. It is of a child whose head has been blown apart by an American “smart bomb”, the kind of bomb that was supposed to be used against military targets, but has in fact killed hundreds of civilians and injured thousands more. So, how can the United States representative come here and talk about international law? Which international law is he referring to, when a child who has not even reached the age of 10 can be killed like this?

I welcome the statement made by my colleague, the representative of Syria, who expressed his revulsion at this war and praised the Iraqi people for the resistance they have shown. At first, the Americans thought that as soon as their fleets arrived in Iraq, they would be greeted with flowers and the people would cooperate with them against the leadership, the country and the people. As the whole world can see, however, Iraq and its people have put up a tremendous resistance to the attack and have taught the world an important lesson about defending one’s territory.

Today, more than at any time in the past, the United Nations must intervene immediately to put a stop to this act of aggression, which has no international legitimacy and constitutes a flagrant violation of the Charter of the United Nations. By perpetrating this evil act of aggression and interfering in the internal affairs of a sovereign State that is one of the founding Members of the United Nations, the United States has committed the cruellest kind of murder against a peace-loving people. In this way, it has imposed the principle of brute force on the conduct of international relations. This seems to augur a new era in which the law of the jungle will prevail, undermining the international peace and security which the United States says it wishes to preserve.

We believe that the real aims of this invasion are clear to everyone. The United States is not motivated by a desire to eliminate weapons of mass destruction. As I have just said, Dr. Blix and Dr. El-Baradei stated that they had found no trace of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. Yet, the United States went ahead with its aggression against Iraq, for a clear and obvious purpose. Its aim is to overthrow the national Government and to seize control of Iraq’s natural resources. Its aims are obvious to everyone: this is the first step towards domination of the region. The aggression against Iraq is not directed at Iraq alone, but at all Arab countries. The United States administration wants to control the region and its resources and then redraw the world map, as United States officials have admitted, with a view to imposing United States hegemony on the world.

What Iraq went through last week was much worse than anything it suffered in 1991. This shows the determination of the United States to destroy the Iraqi people and occupy their land. How can the United States administration say it is not targeting the Iraqi people and use the cheap pretext of their liberation to justify illegal intervention in the internal affairs of a sovereign State? Who or what gave it the right to make such claims? We can see now that they are in fact destroying the Iraqi people and killing Iraqi children, women and older persons

We should also like to point out that many international organizations expressed their firm opposition to this aggression against Iraq. We refer, in particular, to the summits of the



(Mr. Al-Basri, Iraq)

Movement of Non-Aligned Countries in Kuala Lumpur, of the League of Arab States in Sharm al-Sheikh, and of the Organization of the Islamic Conference in Doha, all the resolutions of which categorically condemned the aggression against Iraq, called for a peaceful resolution of the crisis, and pointed out that Iraq had cooperated with the process referred to as disarmament of weapons of mass destruction.

We believe that the world today must act wisely and rationally and must uphold international law. If it allows States to impose their policies through the use of threats and force or even by launching wars, as has happened in the case of Iraq, then the same thing may happen to other countries in the future. This would only create chaos and instability and undermine global security. We therefore call once more on the United Nations to intervene immediately to put an end to the suffering which the United States and the United Kingdom are inflicting on the Iraqi people.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Iraq for his statement, and I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. SARRA (Syrian Arab Republic) (translated from Arabic): Mr. President, I apologize for taking the floor once again. I would like to express my thanks to the representative of the United States of America. English is not my mother tongue, but I did study it in Damascus. I then studied in the United Kingdom and worked in the United States. I should just like to say that I do not agree with what the United States representative has just said. Perhaps my English is not as good as his, but there are many people in this room who would agree with me that what he has just said does not square with the truth.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic, and I now give the floor to the representative of the United Kingdom.

Mr. BROUCHER (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland): Mr. President, without wishing to prolong this debate, I just wanted to say that the actions that the United Kingdom is taking along with the United States were very carefully considered and only taken with the greatest reluctance because we concluded that there was no alternative, but we are quite clear that our actions are fully in accordance with international law and with existing United Nations Security Council resolutions. The present situation could certainly have been averted if Iraq had complied with repeated resolutions of the United Nations Security Council requiring it to dismantle its weapons of mass destruction. It was clear that Iraq was prevaricating, and we are talking here about a regime which has used chemical weapons to attack its neighbours and its own people, and therefore the conclusion became inescapable that action was necessary to bring about compliance with the United Nations Security Council requirements that Iraq be brought to dismantle its weapons of mass destruction.

But I think that the best message that the Conference on Disarmament can send to the future of the world is to get on with dealing with its own agenda, and my intervention today was framed in that context to show how indeed this Conference could do that. I suggest that that is what we need to do.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished delegate of the United Kingdom. A number of speakers have asked for the floor again. As President I fully respect their right to speak and their right to reply, but I would just ask for some forbearance in the light of my belief that some moderate language now would offer a far greater hope of some success in disarmament and other critical areas in the future, while fully appreciating the level of feeling which events may evoke on all sides.

In this spirit, I give the floor to the distinguished representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. SARRA (Syrian Arab Republic) (translated from Arabic): Mr. President, I will bow to your wishes and refrain from taking the floor.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic for his forbearance, and I give the floor to the distinguished representative of Iraq.

Mr. AL-BASRI (Iraq) (translated from Arabic): Mr. President, thank you for giving me the floor once again. I would just like to comment briefly on what the representative of the United Kingdom has just said about compliance with United Nations resolutions and his assertion that what has happened to Iraq is the result of Iraq's failure to comply with those same resolutions. I am reminded of a situation not at all unlike that which obtains in Iraq. Let me ask the representative of the United Kingdom a question about compliance with United Nations resolutions. Whatever happened to the resolutions which the Security Council adopted on behalf of the Palestinians and what about the violations of Palestinian rights? Why have those resolutions not been enforced with the same vigour as those adopted against Iraq? Many of the resolutions aimed at securing justice for the Palestinian people and halting violations of their rights have been met with a deafening silence. Indeed, the United States recently imposed its veto on a resolution condemning Israel for the killing of United Nations personnel in the occupied territories. So, what are these double standards you are referring to, Sir. You are always calling on Iraq to comply with Security Council resolutions, but what do you do in return? You ignore other resolutions. Let that be on your conscience!

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Iraq.

That concludes the list of speakers for today's meeting. If there are no other speakers who wish to address the meeting - this does not seem to be the case - I shall therefore move on.

I would just like to make some remarks in closing this part of the 2003 session. As United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan highlighted in his message to our opening of this session, this year marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the first special session on disarmament of the United Nations General Assembly. It also marks the twenty-fifth annual session of this Conference. It is also of note, at this last meeting before we break until mid-May, that this is our 925th plenary meeting.

(The President)

From our vantage point in the presidency of the Conference, it is difficult not to notice that, at our current rate of sitting for 24 weeks of the year, with one plenary per week, a three-year period will pass between this and our 1000th plenary. It is worth asking ourselves at this time if indeed we will have agreed and substantively engaged in a programme of work by the time we get to our 1000th plenary, or for that matter, our 950th.

Will we have met the challenge set before us by Secretary-General Annan that this forum adapt itself and develop a capacity to address emerging challenges, as well as renew our efforts to execute our mandate effectively?

I am encouraged by many of the statements made today, which covered a broad array of core business for the Conference, including FMCT, small arms and light weapons, the Ottawa Convention and landmine destruction. I am also encouraged by those who have expressed their support for the President in their opening remarks and I thank them for that gesture.

When she opened Ireland's current term as President, Ambassador Whelan invited responses on the five ambassadors' proposal, on new ideas and on some progress toward civil society participation in our deliberations. I would ask delegations to consider these aspects proactively during the recess, so that we can have a meaningful plenary resumption.

I also take this opportunity to wish delegates success at the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2005 NPT Review Conference and at the forthcoming seminars on FMCT, the explosive remnants of war and, I am sure, other issues.

The next plenary meeting of this Conference and the first one during the second part of the session will be held on Thursday, 15 May, at 10 a.m. in this conference room.

That concludes our business for today.

The meeting rose at 11.30 a.m.