

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 31 July 2003, at 10.15 a.m.

President: Mr. Carlo TREZZA (Italy)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 933rd plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

I wish first of all to convey the Conference's warmest wishes and regards to Ambassador Siphon George Nene of South Africa, who left Geneva at the end of June.

I have the following speakers on my list for today's plenary meeting: China, Ambassador Hu Xiaodi; the Russian Federation, Ambassador Skotnikov; Japan, Ambassador Inoguchi; Serbia and Montenegro, Ms. Dusanka Divjak-Tomic; and Italy, Ambassador Carlo Trezza.

Before giving the floor to the first speaker I would like to make a statement as the new Italian President of the Conference on Disarmament.

It is a great honour for me to preside over the Conference on Disarmament at the outset of my tenure in Geneva.

In the three weeks that I have spent thus far in the city I have tried to consult with as many heads of delegation as possible, as well as with the group coordinators. I also had the opportunity to meet the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, Mr. Ordzhonikidze; the Deputy Secretary-General, Mr. Román-Morey, and his staff. I wish to thank them all for the time devoted to me, and especially for their valuable advice. I am also grateful to my predecessor, Ambassador Maiolini, who presided over the first week of the Italian presidency of the Conference.

I shall try to summarize, to the best of my ability, some conclusions I have drawn from those consultations. These conclusions could be useful, I hope, as a possible basis for carrying forward our work. I do not claim that I speak on behalf of every member of the Conference. What I am presenting to you, however, is not a national position.

During the consultations that I held no one questioned the continued threat represented by the possibilities of the dissemination of weapons of mass destruction or by conventional weapons. Moreover, no one expressed doubts as to the necessity to counter those threats with disarmament, arms-control, non-proliferation and, in some cases, with counter-proliferation measures. In my opinion, the borderline between these four aspects of the problem is not always clear, and it is sometimes difficult to draw precise distinctions among them.

The Conference on Disarmament is seen by a very large majority of member States as a fundamental disarmament negotiating forum and Geneva, as the centre of excellence for studying, debating and promoting the main disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation issues. It is true that the Conference has not been engaged in substantial negotiations since 1999. We cannot, however, ignore the impressive negotiating record of agreements and treaties successfully negotiated and concluded here, such as the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Biological Weapons Convention and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

(The President)

This positive record makes us proud to be seated in this room and must encourage us to pursue new goals and new negotiating results.

The fact that the Conference on Disarmament is a negotiating forum does not mean that we have to negotiate “non-stop”. It is worthwhile, I believe, to dedicate some time to reflection, and to keep this unique capital of knowledge, experience, wisdom and negotiating skills alive so that this machinery is always well oiled and ready to function when the time for negotiation comes. I believe that this reflects, with some nuances, the views of many of those whom I have consulted thus far. There is a certain amount of legitimate frustration resulting from a lack of progress which is, however, largely offset by the significant achievements and evolution in other areas in which most of us have been involved, such as conventional weapons, and nuclear and biological non-proliferation. The Conference as such and the representatives accredited to it are not responsible for the present stalemate, which is to be attributed rather to existing international circumstances.

Still, I believe that our countries are committed to multilateral means of achieving disarmament goals. This approach was approved by the United Nations General Assembly in November 2001, by its resolution 56/24 T. This is also the position espoused by the European Union, whose presidency I have the honour to represent. At the meeting of the European Council in Thessaloniki on 20 June of this year it was declared: “Our approach will be guided by our commitment to uphold and implement the multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation treaties and agreements; our support for the multilateral institutions charged respectively with the verification and upholding of compliance with these treaties.”

In this context, I wish to take this opportunity to express my admiration for the way in which our colleague from Japan, Ambassador Inoguchi, presided over the meeting on small arms and light weapons and succeeded in keeping that process within the United Nations multilateral framework at the first biennial meeting, held in New York a few weeks ago. We cannot ignore the fact that other processes are taking place in other frameworks: I refer, for instance, to international exercises, such as the Ottawa Convention on antipersonnel landmines and the International Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation concluded in The Hague. They exist and they command a growing amount of international support; they have become genuine tools of disarmament and confidence-building in addition to their humanitarian implications.

More experienced and more seasoned presidents of this Conference have preceded me at this table and attempted to find a solution to the problem of the Conference’s programme of work.

I do not intend to propose new formulas or new tricks. Valuable work has been done here throughout the years and more will be needed to overcome the impasse facing us in what I would define as the “hard core” of the Conference on Disarmament business. I wish first of all to refer to the initiative of the five ambassadors.

(The President)

I do not need to take up your time describing this proposal. All of you have studied it better than I have and have spent a lot of time either in drafting or in analysing it. I have had the pleasure of discussing it with the two of its authors who are still in Geneva, namely, Ambassador Dembri of Algeria and Ambassador Lint of Belgium. As recently indicated, a large number of countries have supported the proposal and a significant number of countries have not expressed objections. During my consultations I detected broad support for the document, which is seen by many as the most advanced and up-to-date proposal for a programme of work. A significant number of items of the 1978 decalogue are included in this proposal, which suggests, among other things, the establishment of four ad hoc committees to initiate an effective programme of work. Among the suggestions which were made to me during my consultations, one envisaged starting with one or more of the items of the five ambassadors' document; and not necessarily with the most controversial ones. The five ambassadors' document was not meant, as I understand it, to be a single "take-it-or-leave-it" package. The possibility remains open for us to pick some of the ripest fruits from this tree. Let me observe that, during my consultations, I registered very wide support for the commencement of fissile-material cut-off treaty negotiations. Other priorities, too, command wide, although not unanimous, support. Several colleagues mentioned to me the priority which they attached to the nuclear issue in its various aspects. The statement made on this issue by Ambassador Broucher of the United Kingdom on 12 June seems to me an updated and constructive contribution to this debate.

The question of the prevention of an arms race in outer space (PAROS) was also raised. Let me recall in this context that, during the plenary meeting on 26 June 2003, Ambassador Lint proposed, on behalf of the five ambassadors, to make a few adjustments to paragraph 4 of their proposal, which concerns the question of PAROS. I have drawn the attention of colleagues to this point and I believe that the proposal is still being examined in some capitals. The suggestion is, as you know, to revise this paragraph, taking into account the latest amendment put forward by China.

Many of you have expressed your attachment to the traditional core business of the original Conference on Disarmament agenda because those items are still valid and most of the issues have not yet been resolved. It is not possible therefore to shelve them without addressing them. Accordingly, I am now ready to consider proposals from delegations on these issues to be discussed during our next sessions. At the same time, I cannot ignore the point of view of those who believe that the time has come to update our agenda in the light of the new realities and latest developments. My predecessor, Ambassador Maiolini, made ample reference to this issue during this first address as President of the Conference, which was also his farewell address. Following his remarks and out of respect for those colleagues who have drawn my attention to this issue, let me say that I find some merit in addressing new themes. This approach is, to my mind, not in contradiction but complementary to the institutional approach expressed by the five ambassadors.

I do not claim to be breaking new ground, since I understand that opening discussion to new themes goes back to an original suggestion made by Ambassador Sood of India during his presidency. I would be ready to consider possible suggestions by delegations that we revisit this territory in the light of the latest developments. Since these are in fact new themes, it would

(The President)

probably be advisable to address them on an informal basis. This could give us the opportunity to deal with these issues in a brainstorming mode, while attempting to elicit themes and ideas susceptible of being considered by the Conference; we must however always keep in mind our negotiating mandate.

At the plenary meeting of the Conference on 26 June, my predecessor mentioned the following items: a greater exposure by the Conference to the aspirations of civil society and non-governmental organizations; the possibility of having the major disarmament and non-proliferation institutions brief the Conference on Disarmament; the issue of radiological weapons; the issue of an international instrument to be adopted once the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects reaches its final stage.

I believe that these could all be legitimately discussed. Let me add that, to my mind, it could be particularly interesting to study how some of these new themes could affect the issues which are on the Conference's agenda and how in fact they could propitiate negotiations. For instance, the question of radiological weapons is closely connected to another issue which is of growing importance, namely, the relationship between terrorism and weapons of mass destruction, which was the subject of a consensus General Assembly resolution in 2002. Ambassador Sanders of the Netherlands already raised the issue some weeks ago. Indeed, in addition to chemical and biological material, radiological material could more easily be used by terrorist organizations to threaten and inflict unacceptable damage on our societies. The problem of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction should be addressed now, not because it is making the headlines but because it is a real threat. We have seen what terrorist groups are capable of doing with civilian aircraft; we can imagine what irreparable damage they could cause, were they in possession of weapons of mass destruction. We cannot wait until radiological material falls into such hands, thus becoming a weapon, to react. I am well aware of the valuable work done a decade ago at this Conference, as well as of the impetus which Germany gave last year to the discussion of this danger. The French delegation recently reported to the Conference on the conclusions of the G-8 summit held in Evian. An ad hoc declaration and an action plan on radiological material were issued on that occasion. As you know, the May edition of the UNIDIR Disarmament Forum is fully devoted to the issue of nuclear terrorism.

Another subject which I believe could legitimately be addressed under the "new themes" heading is the major effort made by a growing number of countries to assist other States in eliminating weapons of mass destruction. I refer to what currently comes under the name of "cooperative threat reduction programmes", targeted at supporting disarmament, control and security of sensitive materials, facilities and expertise. It is an effort which is worth being presented and discussed at this Conference. As you are aware, unprecedented financial resources are being allocated, especially within the G-8 framework, to the elimination of stocks of weapons of mass destruction.

Many of you pointed out that the obstacles which the Conference is presently incapable of overcoming should in fact be discussed in capitals; I could not agree more. This does not mean, however, that we should abdicate our duties. I agree with those who believe that we must now work hard to avert yet another blank year. Our capitals and our diplomatic networks should

(The President)

probably be more involved in what is at stake at this Conference: our issues should be considered at a higher political level. Great appreciation is due to those of us who have succeeded in bringing our government officials to address the Conference. Our complicated themes and language - full of hermetic acronyms - should be made more understandable and more palatable to public opinion, parliaments and the press. Despite the highly technical and intellectual level of knowledge which is required in this forum, we should not become a club of "iniziati" living in an ivory tower. We should also try, as far as possible, to maintain - and even strengthen - the level of our accreditation to the Conference.

In conclusion and as a result of my consultations, let me say that I am impressed by the high professional and intellectual level of the members of this Conference. It is therefore a privilege for me to have been appointed here. I shall try my best, in consultation with all, and in particular with the group coordinators and past and future presidencies, to reduce the gap between the different positions and to revitalize the Conference. This goal is attainable although it requires a great deal of work on our part and on the part of our capitals. But responsibility for the main effort, I believe, rests with us.

I now give the floor to the representative of China, Ambassador Hu Xiaodi.

Mr. HU (China) (translated from Chinese): Mr. President, the Chinese delegation warmly welcomes you to Geneva and has great pleasure in seeing you preside over the work of the Conference on Disarmament. Prior to the commencement of this session, you have already seized the opportunity to consult with the different sides in order to help the Conference resume its substantive work. We highly appreciate these efforts. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank your predecessors, Ambassador Whelan and Ambassador Levy, for their contributions.

Today I wish to take up the issue of the prevention of an arms race in outer space. First of all, I would like briefly to review the history of the Chinese delegation's efforts in promoting the issue of prevention of an arms race in outer space and the weaponization of outer space in the Conference on Disarmament.

In 1985, China tabled its first working paper on PAROS, entitled "China's basic positions on the prevention of an arms race in outer space", as contained in document CD/579. In 2000, we submitted to the Conference on Disarmament another working paper, entitled "China's position on and suggestions for ways to address the issue of prevention of an arms race in outer space at the Conference on Disarmament", contained in document CD/1606. These two documents comprehensively set out China's principal positions on the issue of PAROS. In June 2001, we put forward a working paper contained in document CD/1645, entitled "Possible elements of the future international legal instrument on the prevention of the weaponization of outer space". Building upon these texts, in June 2002, China and the Russian Federation, together with the delegations of Viet Nam, Indonesia, Belarus, Zimbabwe and the Syrian Arab Republic, jointly submitted a working paper entitled "Possible elements for a future international legal agreement on the prevention of the deployment of weapons in outer space, the threat or use of force against outer space objects", contained in document CD/1679, which further improved and complemented working paper CD/1645.

(Mr. Hu, China)

Over the last year and more, the delegations of China and the Russian Federation have held a number of informal briefings, discussions and bilateral consultations on working paper CD/1679. During that process, a number of other delegations have made constructive comments or proposed amendments. We have compiled these in an informal paper which we shall now distribute to all delegations.

These amendments and comments relate mainly to such elements of working paper CD/1679 as “definitions”, “basic obligations”, “verification”, “confidence-building measures”, “dispute settlement”, “executive organization”, “entry into force”, “international cooperation”, and others.

Where the definitions are concerned, it was proposed that such specific terms as “space object”, “weapon”, “peaceful purpose” and “trajectory” should be defined. With regard to basic obligations, it was suggested that this rubric should be further expanded or refined to cover such issues as the testing, production, deployment, transfer and use of outer space weapons; the temporary operational disruption and displacement of, or interference with, space objects; and the international trade in space weapons technology, hardware and software. As for the confidence-building measures, it was suggested that relevant provisions of the Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation should be incorporated in working paper CD/1679, as a means of winning the support of its signatory States. The compilation also includes suggestions about advance notification of spacecraft and ballistic missile launches. I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to all those colleagues who made contributions to working paper CD/1679.

Certain unfavourable developments do not bode well for the issue of PAROS: these include, on the one hand, the demise of the ABM Treaty and the further erosion of the restrictions placed by the international legal regime on the development and deployment of outer space weapons. In point of fact, there are no legal restrictions whatsoever on the introduction into outer space of weapons other than nuclear, biological and chemical weapons. On the other hand, the technology of space weapons is continually advancing. At the same time, recent wars and armed conflicts on the surface of the earth have demonstrated the enormous military and strategic potential of outer space. The aim of controlling and occupying outer space is no longer a mere blueprint, it is now actually being put into effect through the codification of the relevant theory and policy, the strengthening of the relevant military departments and the stepping up of research into and the development of space weapons systems. The risk of the weaponization of outer space is steadily mounting.

Outer space is the common heritage of all humankind. The assets of outer space should serve to promote, rather than hamper, the peace, welfare and development of all peoples. It is both the right and the obligation of all countries to ensure the peaceful use of outer space and to prevent an arms race in outer space, including its weaponization. This common aspiration of the international community is also attested by the adoption, year after year, of the relevant General Assembly resolutions on PAROS. If we are to prevent an arms race in outer space and its weaponization, we cannot wait until outer space weapons have been put in place and started causing damage, we cannot wait until one country takes the lead in introducing weapons into outer space, with other countries following suit, we simply cannot wait for the proliferation of

(Mr. Hu, China)

space weapons before we take any measures to prevent them. The key is to take preventive action, otherwise the right of all countries to the peaceful uses of outer space and the very security of the assets of outer space will be placed in jeopardy. The ideal option would be, without further delay, to conclude an international legal agreement to prevent the deployment of weapons in outer space. This Conference on Disarmament has both the capacity and the obligation to take on this responsibility.

The Chinese delegation has already had many occasions to set forth its position on the negotiation of an international legal instrument on the prevention of the deployment of weapons in outer space and the threat or use of force against outer space objects. We continue to maintain that the Conference on Disarmament should start substantive work geared towards negotiating relevant international legal instruments on PAROS and other important issues.

It is our sincere hope that this new compilation, together with the other position papers, documents and statements on outer space issues, will help enhance overall understanding of these matters and be conducive to the further development of working paper CD/1679. Let us join efforts in seeking realistic solutions which will enable the Conference on Disarmament to restart its work at an early date.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of China for his statement, for the kind words addressed to the Chair and for his review of the history of the Chinese delegation's efforts in promoting the issue of preventing an arms race in outer space in the Conference on Disarmament. I look forward to reading the document which he has announced for distribution.

I now have the pleasure of giving the floor to the representative of the Russian Federation, Ambassador Leonid Skotnikov.

Mr. SKOTNIKOV (Russian Federation) (translated from Russian): Mr. President, you have only recently arrived in Geneva as the permanent representative of your country to the Conference on Disarmament, so I would like to begin by extending our welcome to you. I would also like to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and to express the hope that, with your skilful assistance, new impetus will be given to the search for compromise decisions which would enable the Conference to launch its substantive work.

We are also grateful to your predecessor in this position for his efforts.

In June 2002, the delegations of Russia and China, together with a group of co-sponsors, tabled a working paper of the Conference on Disarmament entitled "Possible elements for a future international legal agreement on the prevention of the deployment of weapons in outer space, the threat or use of force against outer space objects" (CD/1679). We are very pleased with the response that this paper has received. The majority of delegations took an active part in discussions, both at the meetings organized by the co-sponsors, including the latest open-ended seminar held this February, which was extremely well attended, and also in the very useful bilateral contacts. A number of delegations expressed their views on this issue at the plenary

(Mr. Skotnikov, Russian Federation)

meetings of the Conference on Disarmament. As a result, the Russian-Chinese working paper was further enriched with interesting ideas and specific proposals, which the co-authors have endeavoured to compile in the informal document which is being submitted to the Conference this morning.

The fact that the Russian-Chinese initiative on preventing the deployment of weapons in outer space has become the subject of such eager discussion is an indication, in our view, first, that the problems which it addresses are extremely topical and, second, that the overwhelming majority of the Conference's member States are ready and willing to begin substantive work in the Conference on this issue.

I should like to thank all those who participated in the discussions on the Russian-Chinese working paper. These talks will undoubtedly continue, while substantive work in the Conference on Disarmament can only begin after the impasse on its programme of work has been surmounted. In this context we would like once again to welcome the evolving initiative of the five ambassadors, former presidents of the Conference on Disarmament, and we would also like to note that Ambassador Lint's proposal on the wording of a mandate for an ad hoc committee on PAROS, which he put forward on behalf of the group of five ambassadors on 26 June, is in our view a step in the right direction. We hope that further contacts on this initiative will result in compromise decisions and the relaunching of substantive work in the Conference.

The Russian Federation's commitment to the prohibition of the deployment of weapons in outer space is demonstrated by a number of well-known initiatives which it has put forward in the United Nations. In particular, at the fifty-sixth session of the United Nations General Assembly, Russia proposed that a moratorium on the deployment of weapons in outer space should be introduced, pending a relevant agreement. We are ready to take on such an obligation immediately, if the leading space Powers join this moratorium. In October 2000 the Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Igor Ivanov, announced that our country was ready to embark on a new measure to promote openness and to build confidence in the domain of outer space activities, by giving advance notification of planned spacecraft launches and of their purpose and main parameters. After the necessary preparatory work, the Russian Federation has unilaterally started work on the implementation of this initiative. Information on forthcoming spacecraft launches provided by the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation and the Russian Aerospace Agency is now posted ahead of such launches on the official Internet site of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and is accessible to all.

We call on other countries which have their own spacecraft-launching facilities to join us and to do everything necessary to build confidence in the domain of outer-space activities. This could be our joint contribution to ensuring that outer-space resources are used for peaceful purposes, including in the common interests of maintaining international peace and security.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of the Russian Federation for his statement, for the kind words addressed to the Chair and for his presentation of the Russian-Chinese initiative on the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

I now give the floor to the representative of Japan, Ambassador Kuniko Inoguchi.

Ms. INOGUCHI (Japan): Mr. President, at the outset, allow me to extend my warmest welcome to you, Ambassador Carlo Trezza, as you assume the presidency of this august disarmament body immediately following your assignment as disarmament ambassador in Geneva. I look forward to working with you most closely in pursuit of our common objective, to advance the disarmament agenda, and would like to express the full support of my delegation for any efforts that you are able to make to bring about positive impetus in this institution, which should not be allowed to stagnate any longer. I would also like to thank your predecessor, Ambassador Mario Maiolini, for his excellent work as President.

I have asked for the floor today to inform the Conference on the outcome of the United Nations First Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, in my capacity as chair of the Meeting.

The First Biennial Meeting of States, held in New York from 7 to 11 July 2003, constituted an integral part of the follow-up to the 2001 Conference, at which Member States recommended to the General Assembly, among other things, that it should convene a conference no later than 2006 to review progress made in the implementation of the Programme of Action, and convene a meeting of States on a biennial basis to consider the national, regional and global implementation of the Programme of Action.

The First Biennial Meeting included 10 plenary sessions to consider the national, regional and global implementation of the Programme of Action, two of which were devoted to thematic discussions within the framework of implementation, international cooperation and assistance. Representatives from a total of 99 Member States and one observer State made statements on their national implementation of the Programme of Action and several regional and international organizations, including United Nations agencies, made statements concerning the global and regional implementation of the Programme. In addition, the participation of the non-governmental organization community, both in the conference room and through the many side events, reinforced the links between States and civil society.

The meeting provided an excellent opportunity to assess both progress that has been made and obstacles that have confronted us in implementing the Programme of Action over the last two years since its adoption, helping to enhance our collective sense of ownership and responsibility for the process that we initiated in July 2001. It also offered States the opportunity to gather the necessary momentum to generate both the political will and the professional competence to combat the problem. I believe it has also helped to strengthen the partnerships for action, established through a variety of international assistance and cooperation initiatives.

(Ms. Inoguchi, Japan)

The primary focus of the meeting was on implementation of the Programme of Action on a national level, and States reported on the various initiatives they had taken under the Programme since the 2001 Conference. The task was facilitated by the voluntary submission of national reports in response to General Assembly resolution 56/24 V by approximately 80 Member States, more than four times the number received the previous year. I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to all States for the momentous effort they have made in this regard, illustrating the growing importance that States are attaching to this issue. These reports were not only an invaluable resource for information exchange in the lead-up to the First Biennial Meeting, but they will also serve as an important reference for both donor and affected countries in their work to ameliorate the future implementation of the Programme of Action. As the representative of UNIDIR observed, “reporting and implementation are two sides of the same coin”. Let us hope that, in the years to come, States will sustain this positive trend in the field of information exchange.

The meeting went beyond its primary objective; it became a forum for strengthening existing partnerships and building new ones among States, international and regional organizations and civil society bodies in the common struggle against the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

The critical role of cooperation and assistance was a strong cross-cutting element during the five-day meeting, and there were repeated calls for more assistance in all areas, especially to developing countries. I was particularly impressed by the strong participation from affected countries, and it was encouraging to see the immediate response of several donor countries to their requests with spontaneous offers to enter into partnership. I strongly encourage States to take advantage of such forthcoming initiatives.

The growing necessity for a regional approach was also highlighted, with the need for enhanced information exchange and collaboration in the areas of import and export control, brokering, marking and tracing, and capacity-building, among others. The establishment of norms and standards to fight terrorism and organized crime was deemed essential, given the increasing globalization and cross-boundary nature of the trade in small arms and light weapons. It is extremely encouraging to see that various regional initiatives have begun to take shape in Asia and the Pacific islands, north, central and south America, Europe and Africa, providing a clear picture of the depth and extent of the commitment of the entire international community to working together in a multilateral framework to combat, prevent and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

The meeting also provided a forum through which momentum could be gathered to generate the necessary political will to combat the problem. The high priority attached to this issue was clearly demonstrated in the lead-up to the meeting, with reference to it at the recent G-8 summit in Evian, in the foreign minister’s declaration at the ASEAN Regional Forum, as well as through letters and message of support and encouragement received from President Alpha Oumar Konare of the African Union, the former President of the Republic of Mali, the Secretary of State of the United States of America, Mr. Colin Powell, and the Minister

(Ms. Inoguchi, Japan)

for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Mr. Igor Ivanov, I was also pleased to see States accord the issue a high priority by sending high-ranking officials as representatives to the meeting.

In all segments of the meeting, a wealth of ideas was shared in a variety of issues, which I tried to capture at my factual summary. Thanks to the cooperation of all States, this summary has been annexed to the report which was unanimously adopted at the meeting. This summary will be available in the near future on the web site of the Department for Disarmament Affairs.

The meeting clearly demonstrated multilateralism matters and that we can make it work. The success of the meeting reaffirmed the importance of multilateral cooperation and proved to the international community that multilateralism in small arms disarmament is indeed functioning. No State working alone can prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, but no State is alone in this struggle, and I believe that this meeting marked an important milestone in strengthening the concerted efforts of the international community towards reducing the number of victims in the field.

It is my fervent wish that all States make full use of this opportunity to reinforce their commitment to the Programme of Action and, building on the results of this meeting, take specific steps to strengthen national, regional and global efforts to eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects in the lead-up to the second biennial meeting in 2005 and the 2006 Conference. We must not lose this momentum. Let us work together to chart a course to provide a better, safer, more peaceful and less tragic world for the generations to come.

Before closing, Japan would like to welcome the political declaration on prevention of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery, issued as an annex to the Chair's statement of the Fifth ASEM Foreign Minister's Meeting, held in Bali, Indonesia, on 23 and 24 July 2003. It is extremely encouraging to see such emphasis placed on disarmament by Asian and European leaders at this high-level forum. As stressed in the declaration, Japan believes that the full implementation of relevant international instruments - the NPT, the CTBT, the IAEA safeguards, the CWC the BWC and the Hague Code of Conduct against the Proliferation of Ballistic Missiles - and wider adherence to them are essential to the promotion of disarmament and arms control, contributing to international peace and security. In addition, Japan looks forward to renewed vigour generated by this gathering momentum in the disarmament field, including in the work of this Conference.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of Japan in her capacity as Chair of the United Nations First Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, for her statement informing the Conference of the outcome of that meeting.

I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Serbia and Montenegro, Ms. Dusanka Divjak-Tomic.

Ms. DIVJAK-TOMIC (Serbia and Montenegro). Mr. President, at the outset I would like to express particular pleasure at seeing you, Mr. Trezza, Ambassador of Italy, the representative of a country very friendly to my country and the current President of the European Union, as our Chair. Taking the floor for the first time as a representative of Serbia and Montenegro, an observer State to the Conference on Disarmament, I would first like to express my appreciation for having been given this opportunity to address you today. The main reason for this is the information that I, upon the instructions of my Government, have the honour as well as the person pleasure to transmit to you.

On 20 June of this year, the Parliament of Serbia and Montenegro adopted an act ratifying the Mine-Ban Treaty, better known as the Ottawa Convention. The ratification instruments will be deposited with the Secretary-General of the United Nations as soon as the necessary procedures proscribed by domestic legislation have been accomplished. We hope that this will occur before the Fifth Meeting of the States parties this September in Bangkok.

By adopting this act Serbia and Montenegro has taken a final step on the way to full integration into the international family of member States of this important international instrument in the field of disarmament. This represents further transparent proof of the firm commitment of my country to full respect for the international standards in the field of disarmament, as well as to active participation in their implementation. Even more, by doing this, we have confirmed not only our unambiguous commitment to existing international humanitarian legal instruments but also our full support for their universality.

I take this opportunity to reiterate once again what I have already stated on several occasions at meetings of the States parties to the Ottawa Convention. Though not yet a party to the Ottawa Convention and thus under no obligation in this regard, Serbia and Montenegro, i.e. the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, has followed its noble humanitarian aims and respected de facto throughout the period preceding formal accession to it. Thus, since 1992 my country has not produced or transferred any anti-personnel landmines and demining of border areas with neighbouring countries has almost been finalized. In accordance with the agreement with NATO, the complete technical documentation of the minefields in Kosovo and Metohija was handed over to the international security force in Kosovo (KFOR) and the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), as the responsible international authorities in the province, and special training courses in demining as well as in mine-victim assistance are being given. In spite of expressed readiness to have a part of our anti-personnel mine stockpile destroyed even before accession to the Convention, this project could not be realized as we wished owing to lack of financial resources, and remains to be incorporated into the stockpile destruction process. Preparations for stockpile destruction, as one of the main obligations stemming from the Convention, are already under way. To that end, we have established good cooperation with some key members of the Convention, Canada in particular. Finally, counting on substantial international assistance and support, it is our hope that by joining the impressive club of the States parties to the Convention, Serbia and Montenegro will be able to fulfil all its obligations within the given time frame.

In closing, I wish to stress our expectation that, as we are all pursuing the same noble aims, support from the Conference on Disarmament to my country will not be lacking.

(Ms. Divjak-Tomic, Serbia and Montenegro)

I hope that the present segment of the Conference's 2003 session ends with results leading to further substantial work of the Conference on Disarmament, in accordance with its mandate.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Serbia and Montenegro for her statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I thank her also for informing the Conference about her country's ratification of the Ottawa Convention.

I would now like to take the floor in my capacity as representative of the presidency of the European Union.

It is my honour to inform the Conference on Disarmament of the declaration on the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction adopted by the European Union heads of State and Government at the meeting of the European Council held in Thessaloniki on 20 June 2003.

I believe that many of the issues dealt with in this statement, which focuses on weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery, are of interest to this forum.

In the declaration, the European Union affirms: "The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and means of delivery such as ballistic missiles is a growing threat to international peace and security. A number of States have sought or are seeking to develop such weapons. The risk that terrorists will acquire chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear materials adds a new dimension to this threat."

In addition to the declaration which I am presenting, the European Union has already adopted a document on basic principles for a European Union strategy against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and an action plan for the implementation of the basic principles for a European Union strategy against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. These documents are public and are available on the web site of the Council of the European Union (<http://ue.eu.int>). The European Union is also committed to the further elaboration, before the end of the year, of a coherent European Union strategy to address the threat of proliferation and to the continued development and implementation of the European Union action plan as a matter of priority. As I mentioned in my opening remarks today, the European approach is guided by its commitment to uphold and implement the multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation treaties and agreements and to support the multilateral institutions entrusted with verification and upholding of compliance with these treaties.

The European Union is also committed to strong national and internationally coordinated export controls and to cooperation with the United States and other partners who share our objectives.

The instruments identified by the European Council for the purpose of dealing with weapons of mass destruction and missile proliferation include multilateral treaties and verification mechanisms; national and internationally coordinated export controls; cooperative

threat-reduction programmes; political and economic levers; interdiction of illegal procurement activities; and, as a last resort, coercive measures taken in accordance with the United Nations Charter.

In further implementing its action plan, the European Union will focus in particular on promoting universal adherence to the key disarmament and non-proliferation treaties, agreements and arrangements; enhancing its political, financial and technical support for agencies in charge of verification; fostering the role of the United Nations Security Council, and enhancing its expertise in meeting the challenge of proliferation; strengthening export control policies and practices within the European Union and beyond, in coordination with partners; strengthening the identification, control and interception of illegal shipments, with the adoption of national criminal sanctions against those who contribute to illicit procurement efforts; enhancing the security of proliferation-sensitive materials, equipment and expertise in the European Union against unauthorized access and risks of diversion; reinforcing the European Union's cooperative threat reduction programme with third countries, targeted at support for disarmament, control and security of sensitive materials, facilities and expertise; and, finally finding ways to deploy the Union's political, diplomatic and economic influence to the greatest effect in support of our non-proliferation objectives.

Does any delegation wish to take the floor at this stage? I give the floor to the distinguished representative of Algeria.

Mr. DEMBRI (Algeria) (translated from French): Mr. President, in company with the colleagues who have spoken before me, I too would like to congratulate you on acceding to the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and I would like to reassure you that my delegation stands ready to help you in the task that awaits you.

My delegation commends you on the vision which informed your introductory statement. It was a masterly statement and it bears witness to your thorough familiarity with the discussions that are taking place here in the Conference on Disarmament. We have no doubt whatsoever that, with your experience, with your knowledge of the field, we will be able under your leadership to make real progress towards the accomplishment of a work programme. By which I also wish to affirm that we fully share all the views that you have expressed in your statement and we subscribe fully to your stated intention, namely, to ensure that the presidency plays a very active role in working towards the essential compromises. You may rest assured that we will stand by you on this.

As you yourself have said the risk of another blank year - another lost year - is already before us and this obliges us to work together with even greater determination. We must pool our efforts to achieve - if possible before the end of this year - a work programme that responds to the hopes and wishes of all. It is in the tradition of the Conference on Disarmament to come up with a wide range of options, to float the most flexible, the most creative ideas; this has been the practice in the past, over all these years that have passed, and I consider particularly unfair that certain political circles and the media are giving increasing credence to the idea that the

(Mr. Dembri, Algeria)

Conference on Disarmament is doing no work. This, as you have said yourself, Mr. President, is a gross disservice to this distinguished convocation of ambassadors and diplomats, who are showing such extreme creativity and great wisdom.

Indeed what we have come to call the best club in Geneva - the Conference on Disarmament - has not in our view, become a golden sinecure for diplomats who have run out of ideas. Quite the contrary - and this is why I would like to share with you some food for thought.

This is prompted first of all by our keen sensitivity as a non-aligned country. We consider more that ever, and especially after the ideas expressed at the Kuala Lumpur summit, that we should move now to a much more active phase and one which, in any event, will help revitalize our collective commitment in the area of disarmament. The momentous changes that the current world situation has brought with it compel us to this conclusion, as too do the concerns which this causes us. Our concerns are associated with the realization that the thrust of technological advance must be more towards improving the welfare of humankind than towards the further build-up of weapons. That knowledge should serve for the social and cultural advancement of people and not for military domination. We believe that the use of space must be for the benefit of all humankind and it already causes us great apprehension to see the mixing up - or the confusion - of things civilian and things military in space research and in the use of outer space.

All this demonstrates that the Conference on Disarmament, which is only too aware of these challenges, must act very quickly and reach agreement or produce a work programme that will respond to all these aspirations. You yourself have recalled the key element of the rules of procedure of this Conference, namely, that it is the sole such multilateral negotiating forum; this is how things are and this is how they must remain.

We are all gathered together here not to voice differing national interests and views but, on the contrary, to promote a common will, as we have been requested by the international community, a common will to accomplish disarmament. Our work here has been placed under the authority of an eminent political personality whose words are quoted on the outside of this building and, whenever we enter these halls, we should all lift our heads and be reminded of those words: "Humanity must disarm or perish". These same words must guide us in our work and, clearly, when we talk about humanity, this means that there is no possibility of derogation and that our negotiations here must be sincere and in good faith.

Yesterday, under your auspices, Mr. President, we observed growing support for the five ambassador's initiative and at least three groups have now emerged which give it their full support. It is clear that there is still some room for compromise, because the authors of this initiative designed it to fit within the series of earlier proposals but they also stressed that it was open to change. Accordingly, there is still room for compromise and it is here that the President comes in: we are strongly counting on you to reconcile the different views and to lead us very quickly to a work programme.

Important commitments have been expressed today in this room. I am extremely pleased to note that our colleague Ambassador Skotnikov of the Russian Federation has made a

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significant step in that direction, joined, more recently by the ambassador of China and the ambassador of the United Kingdom as well. Among the five permanent members of the Security Council, the P-5, these are very important players and all this shows that there are some prospects today of us being able to come up with a work programme in the very near future. I believe that, where there are still legitimate reasons to develop this initiative further, these must be taken into account: this is your role, Mr President, to be performed with our assistance. In any event, we hope that, in the weeks to come, it will be possible for us to put an end, once and for all, to this succession of lost years. I hope that this will not be the seventh one in the series - and here I find myself thinking of a film whose title has particular resonance for us: "Seven Years of Bad Luck" and hope, instead that you will now blaze a trail towards years of good luck for us all.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador Dembri, the Permanent Representative of Algeria, for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I also want to thank him for the trust that he places in the presidency and for the constructive contribution that he has made to the evolution of the work of the Conference.

If there are no other speakers, that concludes our business for today. The next plenary meeting will be held on Thursday, 7 August 2003, at 10 a.m. in this conference room.

The meeting rose at 11.25 a.m.