

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE NINE HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-FIFTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 16 June 2005, at 10.15 a.m.

President: Mr. Wegger STRØMMEN (Norway)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 985th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. At the outset I should like to make some opening remarks as Norway assumes the presidency of the Conference.

Distinguished colleagues, we live at a time when terrorists have demonstrated that they are willing to use any method and any opportunity to kill innocent civilians anywhere in the world, at a time when terrorists are seeking access to nuclear material and weapons of mass destruction, at a time when non-State actors are trading in nuclear material and other components that may threaten peace and stability, at a time when, for the first time ever, we witness defection from the Non-Proliferation Treaty, at a time when doubt has been cast about compliance with the NPT provisions by States parties, at a time when the process of nuclear disarmament is too slow and not sufficiently transparent. Taking the dangerous global security situation into account, one should assume that the appropriate international response would be to enhance joint efforts to address the problems. But is that the case?

No. We are faced with an extraordinary paradox: the gap between real threats and the active pursuit of solutions has widened. Obviously, some progress has been made, like the Proliferation Security Initiative and the Moscow Treaty. But in the multilateral arena we have become paralysed. Last month the NPT Review Conference ended with a final report in which we agreed who had been present, but with not a single substantive recommendation. This has not happened since 1990, but I dare say that we need joint international action even more in 2005 than 15 years ago.

And what about the Conference on Disarmament? As you know, we may soon celebrate a decade without agreement on a programme of work for the Conference.

People outside this chamber must wonder. Do members of the CD not find nuclear disarmament, prohibition of the production of fissile material for nuclear-weapon purposes and all the other issues on our agenda important enough to pursue?

It may not be so hard to explain that different governments have different security priorities. But it is harder to explain that we keep these priorities hostage to each other, to the extent that we end up in a total deadlock and at an impasse.

We keep telling each other that the CD must solve its problems. But this has become an obscure approach. The CD has no problem to solve. What is the CD? The CD is a conference room, a secretariat and a number of government envoys. The CD is a potential tool. No more. No less.

We must stop believing that the impasse in the CD can be resolved by clever procedural drafting exercises among ourselves.

The passivity in this chamber is nothing but a reflection of insufficient political willingness in a number of capitals to negotiate treaty law, as we are mandated to do, in the disarmament field. I am convinced that if new or additional political willingness is mobilized in these capitals in favour of arms control negotiations, they will let us, the delegates here in Geneva, know.

(The President)

As your President I will be at your disposal at any time. Please let me know if you have news from your capitals. I will spare no effort and stand ready to conduct any kind of consultations you may wish to have on a possible programme of work. But I hope they can be based on even the slightest modification of existing instructions and positions on the outstanding issues with which we are all familiar.

Meanwhile, I intend to convene four formal plenary meetings in addition to this one. They will take place on Thursday 23 June, Tuesday 28 June, Thursday 30 June and Thursday 7 July. As is customary, delegations are invited at every meeting, including today's meeting, to make statements about issues relevant to security and disarmament, including so-called "new issues". If delegations wish to make statements on the four subjects from the CD agenda identified in the "food for thought" paper, without prejudice to any order of priority among them or their priority in relation to other issues, and bearing in mind that all of the CD agenda items are of utmost importance, I encourage those delegations to do so in the following order: matters related to nuclear disarmament at the meeting on 23 June; fissile material cut-off on 28 June; outer space on 30 June; and security assurances on 7 July. If delegations find it more appropriate to make statements following the order of the adopted agenda of the CD, they are of course most welcome to do so in the order they prefer.

I thank you all.

I have no speakers on the official list for today. Does any delegation wish to take the floor? I recognize the representative of France, Ambassador Rivasseau.

Mr. RIVASSEAU (France) (translated from French): Mr. President, allow me to congratulate you very warmly as you take the Chair. This is occurring at a particularly important time as we return from New York after the Review Conference whose outcome you have described. It is particularly important today for you to relaunch the efforts of this Conference to secure agreement on a programme of work, and we congratulate you on the way in which you are doing so.

You have informed us that you intend to organize consultations on the programme of work in a plenary session of the Conference on Disarmament. To that end, you have invited us to give our views, starting today with the new issues that the Conference should deal with in order to meet today's challenges. Subsequently, on 23 June, we will turn to nuclear disarmament, then during the next three meetings, the issue of a treaty to ban fissile material, outer space and negative security assurances. Like the members of the European Union, I believe, at least those here in this forum, the French delegation supports your initiative. In that context, the delegation wishes to submit to the Conference the following considerations on new issues, starting by noting the relevant points in the common position and the approved statements by the European Union within the NPT framework. These points might guide our work here in the Conference on Disarmament, a forum which negotiated and acted as midwife to the NPT, so closely is our Conference linked to the non-proliferation regime.

(Mr. Rivasseau, France)

In New York the European Union deplored the deadlock that the CD currently finds itself in. It expressed its conviction that, given the new threats to peace and security, this deadlock should be broken as soon as possible. The European Union intends to work actively to find a consensus on a programme of work in the Conference, and in this regard we are pleased that new ideas have been put forward over the last few years. The European Union has expressed its appreciation of these efforts, which are designed to promote consensus on a programme of work. The European Union has noted the importance that we attach to disarmament in general and the European Union contributed, I believe, to securing agreement on a programme of work in New York, in particular by proposing the establishment of a subsidiary body to deal in particular with the issue of withdrawal from the NPT treaty. The European Union pointed out the possible implications of such withdrawals for international peace and security and calls for the adoption of measures to discourage withdrawals from the above-mentioned treaty.

I have enumerated those elements that my delegation considers relevant to our review process. In New York we managed to agree on a programme of work, but - and this is obviously very disappointing - we did not have enough time to secure a substantive agreement on this basis. At the very least the mechanisms for the review process for the Non-Proliferation Treaty did work. Here too we must spare no effort to ensure that the Conference on Disarmament reaches agreement on a programme of work. That is not enough to ensure a substantive result, but it is a necessary precondition. In this context, I think it is useful to point out that for over two years, along with an important number of countries, more than half of the Conference in fact, we have been raising the concept of new issues or new additional issues. During a series of informal plenaries last year, we were able to move these ideas forward gradually and to note the value of making room for new issues as part of an agreement on a programme of work. At the end of the 2004 session of the Conference on Disarmament this point was recorded in our annual report and then at the General Assembly of the United Nations. During our informal discussions last year, an outline of the thoughts of the most interested delegations was submitted to the Conference on Disarmament. Last year, together with Switzerland, France examined how useful it would be for the Conference on Disarmament to look at the question of sensitive or critical civilian infrastructure. We had occasion to continue our exchanges in informal meetings at the beginning of this year, and we are continuing to think about this.

We believe that this thinking has to be actively continued with the aim of helping to facilitate the adoption of a programme of work that would meet the requirements and priorities of all parties, and it is in this constructive spirit that my delegation intends to respond to your invitation concerning our next four plenary meetings on the four other issues that you referred to, and hopes to be able to speak on each of these.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of France for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I recognize the representative of Japan, Ambassador Mine.

Mr. MINE (Japan): Mr. President, at the outset I would like to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency. I assure you of the full support and cooperation of my delegation in our current efforts to bring this stalemate to an end. We support your initiative organizing discussions in the CD according to the main issues. I believe that this would be an effective

(Mr. Mine, Japan)

utilization of our time while we continue our efforts towards our goal of reaching agreement on a programme of work. We should not lose sight of this important goal. We should not stand still. I should like to call upon all member countries to exercise the utmost flexibility in creating consensus on the programme of work.

At the beginning of this year, the Netherlands presidency initiated a very useful exercise based on its "food for thought" paper. This exercise was followed up by New Zealand and Nigeria. We greatly appreciated this initiative and hope that it will serve as a good basis for coming to an agreement on the CD's work. We must not forget our responsibility to the international community and our own countries to get the CD's substantial work under way for collective security and disarmament.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Japan for his statement and for the kind words that he addressed to the Chair. I give the floor to the representative of the United States, Mr. Cynkin.

Mr. CYNKIN (United States of America): Congratulations on your assumption, Mr. President.

The CD, as you know, agreed on an agenda that allows any delegation to raise any number of different issues, including new issues, whenever delegations see fit, and I concur with the Ambassador of France that this is a very important aspect of our work. This aspect of the agenda, to wit, its flexibility in that regard, is very important, particularly, if I may note, that many of the items on the agenda itself are basically relics from the cold war. This flexibility is, I think, welcome in what you have outlined in terms of the ability of delegations to raise issues on whatever day. We certainly hope that if a delegation decides to support either one of the proposals that are free-standing that the United States has placed on the table or to make one of its own or to discuss another important issue, such as critical infrastructure, we hope it will feel free to do so, regardless of the focus of the day and in order to preserve the flexibility of delegations.

One question I have for you in this regard, just for the sake of clarity, is: you have outlined certain dates and certain topics - could you explain which agenda items we are to take it that these issues fall under on these days?

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of the United States for his statement and for his kind words to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Switzerland, Ambassador Streuli.

Mr. STREULI (Switzerland) (translated from French): Mr. President, first of all I would like to congratulate you on your appointment as President of this Conference. I do so as coordinator of the Western group and also on my own behalf and on behalf of the delegation of Switzerland, and I assure you of my cooperation during your term of office.

(Mr. Streuli, Switzerland)

I listened with keen interest to your opening statement, and the Swiss delegation agrees with everything you have said. This is a statement imbued with much realism and wisdom. The French delegation mentioned the question of critical infrastructure. I can confirm that Switzerland is continuing to work with our French neighbours in this respect.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Switzerland for his statement and for his kind words addressed to the Chair. Any other delegation wishing to take the floor? I recognize Ireland, Ambassador Whelan.

Ms. WHELAN (Ireland): Congratulations or commiserations, Mr. President, whichever is most appropriate.

I am taking the floor for the first time during this year, and I am doing so because you have indicated that you will be formally engaged in a process of consultations on the programme of work. I would therefore just like to put on the record Ireland's position on the programme of work for the CD. It is our position that we would support any initiative that is likely to command a very broad basis within this room, and for that reason, we could support the Amorim proposals, the A-5 proposals, the "food for thought" proposals, and we would indeed support any proposal that is likely to exceed the level of support, or at least have the same level of support as those proposals had.

May I also strongly support your idea of deepening the discussion here and having a formal discussion on issues we have already addressed in a more informal discussion last year, and also your indication that any delegation is free to address any item on the agenda, an agenda which we did adopt by consensus this year?

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Ireland for her statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. Any other delegations? I give the floor to Italy.

Mr. TREZZA (Italy): Mr. President, since it is the first time that I am taking the floor under your presidency, let me congratulate you and express all my support and best wishes for your endeavours.

We have taken note of your initial statement today, and we wish to assure that we shall participate in the four sessions that you have indicated for the weeks ahead. We also accept the suggested items. We agreed with the Ambassador of France that we did not receive substantial indications for our work ahead from the NPT Review Conference in New York, and this is one more reason to go more in depth on some issues here in the Conference on Disarmament. We accept the flexibility of your suggestions, and we hope that through these substantial discussions that we will have during the coming weeks we will get closer to a programme of work for this Conference.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Italy for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I recognize the representative of Mexico, Ambassador De Alba.

Mr. DE ALBA (Mexico) (translated from Spanish): Mr. President, allow me first of all to join those delegations which have extended congratulations to you on taking the Chair of the Conference. It seems to us indeed that you are occupying this post at a critical time for the Conference and for disarmament issues. Recent experience in New York was highly frustrating, and there is a need for greater political will, as you said, and for far more flexibility on the part of each of the delegations present here so that we can move forward. In this context, the delegation of Mexico fully supports your programme, your intention to focus the meetings on specific issues. We view this proposal as being totally consistent with the efforts that Mexico made or accomplished during its own term of office, and of course we intend to participate actively, not just in a more orderly and more productive discussion, but first and foremost in the identification of measures or actions that would enable this Conference to fulfil its mandate, which is, and I emphasize this, a negotiating mandate, not just a discussion mandate. We need to move forward in the negotiations with or without a programme of work. I hope we can do so with a programme of work, but I believe that, after so many years of deadlock, all options must be open so that we can move forward towards the objective set for the Conference by the General Assembly and other bodies in which each of us has made commitments. I repeat, we will be taking an active part and we call for specific proposals to be tabled so that we can move ahead on each and every one of the issues on our agenda.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Mexico for his statement and for the kind words to the Chair. I recognize the representative of Brazil, Ambassador Rocha Paranhos.

Mr. ROCHA PARANHOS (Brazil): Mr. President, like others, I would like to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the CD today. I think that your statement was a very important one, especially when you remind us that the passivity in this chamber is nothing but a reflection of insufficient political willingness in a number of capitals to negotiate treaty law.

As the Irish Ambassador has just indicated, Brazil is very flexible with regard to a programme of work. We have been responsible in the past for the presentation of the Amorim proposal. We have firmly supported the A-5 proposal. We have indicated that the "food for thought" paper presented by Ambassador Sanders would be a good basis for discussion in order to lead us to the adoption of a programme of work. But I would invite you, Mr. President, to exercise your presidency in a manner that would lead to really try to narrow down differences to adopt a programme of work, because we have had informal discussions on a number of issues. Some informal ideas were presented. But I would recall that there are a few formal proposals with regard to the adoption of a programme of work. We have to have reactions from this chamber about how to proceed. There are formal proposals. There are ideas on the key issues of the mandate of the CD, and I think it is important that we concentrate our focus on that, without prejudice to having, as the French Ambassador was saying, discussions on new issues, etc. But we must be, let us say, focused with regard to the adoption of the programme of work.

(Mr. Rocha Paranhos, Brazil)

I would also like to say - and this is just a comment with regard to an indication that our agenda was in a sense a relic from the cold war - that in Brazil's view, I think what is a relic that we have to face is the question of nuclear weapons and the utilization of nuclear weapons as, let us say, part of certain strategic policies. I think we have to deal with the question of nuclear disarmament and deal with nuclear armaments as relics from a past which we should overcome.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Brazil for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of the Netherlands, Ambassador Sanders.

Mr. SANDERS (Netherlands): Mr. President, of course, first of all, my congratulations on your assumption of this high and important office, and we wish you every bit of success in your endeavours. You can count on the full support of our delegation.

I am slightly puzzled by this small debate that is now taking place. We have listened to your approach. We think it is fully up to you, and it is your prerogative, to schedule a number of meetings and try to focus on certain items, so I do not even need to support that. It is something you are doing, and we think it is very useful that you do such a thing.

As to the specific question of my United States colleague, under which agenda items the four items that you have mentioned are placed, I recommend him to read my "food for thought" paper, because there the items are clearly allocated to the agenda items. It is 1 and 1 and 3 and something, I believe. So that is perfectly clear, I believe.

On the freedom of any delegation to raise other issues whenever they wish to do so, there can be no misunderstanding in this room. If any delegation wishes to raise the issue of critical infrastructure today, in this session, they can do so, and no delegation will say they cannot do so. So, I do not really understand the background of this debate. The freedom to raise any issue is always there for any delegation. The fact that for practical purposes, and for making our work more efficient, you want to focus during certain sessions on certain issues, it is only helpful, but that does not, of course, exclude any delegation from making any other statement. That is the way we have always worked, so, once again, I think we should simply continue on the basis of your suggested approach, and if anybody else wants to add anything, that delegation should do so. I still do not really fully grasp why this debate is even necessary.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of the Netherlands for his statement and for his kind words to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Algeria, Ambassador Jazairy.

Mr. JAZAIRY (Algeria): Mr. President, I should like to extend to you my congratulations as you take up these functions, and I should like to congratulate the Ambassador of Nigeria for the wonderful efforts that he made in order to get our Conference to move in the right direction.

(Mr. Jazairy, Algeria)

I would just like to take the floor to say that we support the proposal that you have made to organize a discussion on different themes that have been mentioned for the forthcoming meetings of the Conference, with the understanding, of course, that the purpose of this discussion and of raising any other issue which may be raised in the course of these would be to try to move towards an agreement on the programme of work. In this regard we think that the A-5 proposal remains relevant as well, of course, as the other proposals which have been made thereafter, including the “food for thought” paper presented by the distinguished Ambassador of the Netherlands when he exercised with such competence the presidency of this meeting.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Algeria for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair.

Before I give the floor to Mr. Cynkin, could I just try to clarify your question on the cross-reference from the agenda? And again, as you will read from my statement this morning, there is of course the absolute freedom for every delegation to raise whatever issue they think is relevant. But I would as a preliminary think that agenda items 1, 2 and 6 would fall under FMCT and nuclear disarmament; 3 and 4, under outer space; and 4, under security assurances. But I repeat that this was an encouragement from the floor, and any delegation who sees these things differently is of course more than welcome to address them in whatever order they feel like.

Mr. Cynkin, you have the floor.

Mr. CYNKIN (United States of America): I apologize for taking the floor again. I just wanted to have the question answered. Thank you very much for doing so. I just wanted to make clear that despite an intervention from the floor from a well-meaning colleague, it is much more helpful to have clarification on the point from the Chair as to his own proposed procedure.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of the United States for his statement. Any other delegation at this point that wishes to take the floor? That does not seem to be the case. This concludes our business for today. The next plenary meeting will be held in these chambers on Thursday, 23 June 2005, at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 10.50 a.m.