

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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FINAL RECORD OF THE NINE HUNDRED AND NINETY-SECOND PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 18 August 2005, at 10.15 a.m.

President: Mr. Masood KHAN (Pakistan)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 992nd plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

Let me begin by expressing, on behalf of all the delegations of the Conference on Disarmament, our profound shock and sadness over the assassination of Sri Lanka's deeply respected statesman dedicated to peace and national unity, Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar. His demise will be felt most acutely in South Asia, where he had always advocated stronger bilateral ties and robust regional cooperation. We deplore resolutely this criminal and senseless terrorist act and hope that the perpetrators will be found and brought to justice. On behalf of the Conference on Disarmament, I offer our deepest condolences and sympathy to the family of the deceased and to the Government and people of Sri Lanka.

Before giving the floor to the speakers, I would like to extend a warm welcome to the Nagasaki Peace Messengers and the citizens of Nagasaki accompanying them who are here with us today to follow our plenary meeting. As in the previous years, students from Nagasaki have come to visit the Geneva branch of the Department for Disarmament Affairs, bringing with them petitions calling for the abolition of nuclear weapons. These petitions are addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations by thousands of students from Nagasaki and Hiroshima. It is encouraging that the young generation of Japan has for years demonstrated a keen interest in arms control and disarmament and in the work of the Conference on Disarmament. We welcome you all and appreciate your interest in this forum.

Today we are going to bid farewell to our distinguished colleague Ambassador Markku Reimaa, who will soon complete his duties as the Permanent Representative of Finland to the Conference on Disarmament. Ever since Ambassador Reimaa joined the Conference on Disarmament in March 1997, he has articulated and upheld the principled positions of his Government with distinctive ability, competence and authority. He has enriched our deliberations with a profound knowledge of both procedural and substantive issues before the Conference. Over the years, because of his vast institutional memory, he has become a mentor for several diplomats dealing with disarmament matters. His strong commitment to overcoming the impasse in the Conference was demonstrated during the first ever presidency of the Conference on Disarmament by Finland in 2002, which he had the honour to assume. As the President of the Conference Ambassador Reimaa demonstrated persistence in the search for comprehensive solutions to outstanding issues and in fostering consensus which culminated in the submission of his original proposals on the establishment of subsidiary bodies of the Conference. With his vast knowledge of the Conference, he has always been an active and passionate supporter of all the proposals aimed at bringing the Conference back to negotiations. His insightful and innovative suggestions in this regard have been appreciated by all. His diplomatic skills and extensive experience earned him well-deserved posts in other disarmament conferences. At the Fifth Review Conference of the States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention, Ambassador Reimaa was elected Chairman of the Committee of the Whole. He has also been elected Coordinator on Mines Other Than Anti-Personnel Mines in the Group of Governmental Experts of the States Parties to the Certain Conventional Weapons Convention.

(The President)

Ambassador Reimaa has performed these functions with his characteristic enthusiasm, dedication and diplomatic skill. Indeed, we will miss him very much, as a good colleague, as the distinguished Finnish diplomat, as a thorough gentleman, with exquisite qualities of head and heart, with a pleasant demeanour, with a disarming sense of humour, and above all, as the longest-serving Ambassador to the Conference on Disarmament.

I believe that Mrs. Varpu Reimaa has made an exception to the rule and decided to observe this session of the Conference on Disarmament to find out what we do here after all. On behalf of the Conference on Disarmament, and on my behalf, I wish Ambassador Markku Reimaa and Mrs. Reimaa success and happiness in the future.

I would also take this opportunity to say goodbye and bid farewell to Ms. Ann Pollack of the Canadian Mission, who has completed four years of her tenure of duty here in the CD, and now she is returning to Ottawa. Thank you so much for your thoughts and your contribution and we wish you well and we wish you success in your future assignment and career.

I have one speaker on my list today. I would now like to give the floor to Ambassador Naéla Gabr of Egypt.

Ms. GABR (Egypt) (translated from Arabic): I should like to associate myself with the President's comments concerning the death of the late Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sri Lanka. We condemn all acts of terror carried out by reckless groups. I should also like to welcome the new generation, the students from Nagasaki, who are taking an interest in what we do here. As you know, Egypt always encourages civil society to take an interest in our activities. I should also like to join you, Mr. President, in thanking His Excellency the Ambassador of Finland for his sincere and untiring efforts to serve our Conference. I should also like to thank our colleague Ann Pollack of Canada for her cooperation.

Allow me, Mr. President, to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. I should also like to reaffirm my delegation's willingness to support all your efforts to vitalize the Conference's work.

As we begin the third part of this annual session, our discussions have clearly shown that PAROS is one of the most important topics mentioned by delegations during the plenaries. We should like, here, to welcome the renewed interest which the Conference is taking in this vital subject, especially as Egypt and Sri Lanka take it in turn every year to presenting a draft resolution to the First Committee of the General Assembly on preventing an arms race in outer space. We hope that this year's draft resolution will be adopted by consensus, as in previous years. Egypt's commitment to preventing an arms race in outer space stems from its belief that outer space belongs to all mankind and should therefore only be used for peaceful purposes in the interests of all humanity.

Egypt, like most other countries, is convinced of the need for a comprehensive and binding legal instrument to address the obvious shortcomings of the legal system with regard to outer space and, in particular, the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The final

(Ms. Gabr, Egypt)

document issued by SSOD-1 confirmed that additional measures and negotiations were needed to prevent an arms race in outer space. In that connection, General Assembly resolution 59/65 stipulates that the Conference on Disarmament, as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, has the primary role in the negotiation of a multilateral agreement, or agreements, as appropriate, on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. The Conference on Disarmament dealt exhaustively with all the issues relating to the prevention of an arms race in outer space through the Ad Hoc Committee which held regular meetings from 1985 to 1994. The conclusions issued by the Ad Hoc Committee in 1985, under the chairmanship of Egypt, remain highly relevant today, since they stressed the importance and urgency of preventing an arms race in outer space. We hope that the Committee will be revived as soon as possible.

We welcome the efforts by the Russian Federation and China to establish an international legal instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space and of the threat or use of force against objects in outer space. These efforts are important means of addressing the problem of the militarization of outer space and will make a valuable contribution to the work that the ad hoc committee will do if it is reinstated. We believe that any future legal instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space should prohibit the militarization of outer space and include rules on cooperation and assistance which guarantee that outer space is used to benefit all States, regardless of their stage of economic or scientific development. This would be consistent with the sentiments expressed in the preamble to the 1967 Treaty on Outer Space and is particularly important, given the growing gap between countries that have the capacity to use outer space and those that do not.

The world is seeing very rapid technological and scientific advances with regard to the commercial and scientific uses of outer space. As a result, our civilization is becoming increasingly dependent on outer space in a growing number of areas, from communications to agriculture. These developments highlight the responsibility which the international community bears towards present and future generations for continuing to use outer space for cooperation and peaceful purposes and not for military confrontation, since the repercussions of an arms race in outer space would be catastrophic.

Egypt believes that international and regional peace and security cannot be guaranteed by military hegemony or advanced weapons systems, but rather must be based on security cooperation between all States. Here, we should like to reiterate our support for the initiation of negotiations at this Conference on the establishment of a comprehensive system prohibiting the use of outer space for military purposes, as part of a programme of work that should be adopted by consensus.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you so much, Ambassador Naéla Gabr, for your important statement and for the kind remarks addressed to the President.

This concludes my list of speakers. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor at this stage? Finland, Ambassador Reimaa.

Mr. REIMAA (Finland). Thank you, Mr. President, for the very kind words addressed to my wife and myself. We are very privileged to be with you here today. And my congratulations to you, taking over the important job, and I congratulate you on the very pleasant and effective way you are guiding our work here in the Council Chamber.

Let me start by recalling the very useful initiative the President of the CD, Ambassador Sanders, and Mr. Ordzhonikidze made early this year. They invited Ministers of the CD member States to participate and to come to Geneva and address this Conference. My Minister, Mr. Tuomioja, was one of those many who were able to respond to that initiative.

For that reason, I am not going to repeat the key elements which were elaborated in my Minister's statement here on 15 March. But it is important to note that that statement was made when the preparations for the 2005 NPT Review Conference were still under way. Since then much has taken place. We know the outcome of the Review Conference. The questions we should be dealing with here in the CD have been touched in many ways by various international developments. Regional concerns are still visibly on the agenda. Very important events have been recorded in bilateral relations between CD member States. To me, all that shows that we are not short of arguments in favour of our important dialogue. The problem seems to be how to prioritize those items.

Let me just make some very personal observations before I leave this beautiful city of Geneva and this historic chamber. I have the feeling that more than 70 years are always with us when we come here, and this should also be an important message to our decision makers back home. Let me state that I have nearly made a full circle in this conference room. I have been privileged to observe the podium and our colleagues from different angles, from the left and right of the floor, as well as from the delegates' podium behind us. I have seen Presidents speaking and many Ministers addressing the issues before us.

However, even during my very long - and I must emphasize that it was not planned that way - stay here at the CD here in Geneva, I have not seen a resolution to the question of the programme of work. As you, Mr. President, referred to, I was privileged to serve as the first Finnish President of the CD more than three years ago, and it was, I felt, even your responsibility to make all the efforts on the question of the programme of work as we tried to do from March to May 2002. The proposal - and let me just remind you, the number is CD/1670 of 23 May 2002 - is one concrete example of those efforts. That proposal is concise but comprehensive, also covering the schedule of activities, which we consider to be a very important element when we decide to initiate substantive work.

Today I am frustrated to some extent, but not too much. Why? I am not supposing that the CD should have an automatic role, or automatic mechanism, in solving disarmament problems of our times. The problems are not in Geneva. They are political. They cover conceptual approaches, short-term and medium-term priorities, and long-standing goals and principles. Progress in disarmament should be facilitated by measures to strengthen the security of States and to improve the international situation in general. Universality of agreement could help increase confidence among States.

(Mr. Reimaa, Finland)

The international situation has changed a lot during the past eight years. When the FMCT Ad Hoc Group started its work in August 1998, it was in the situation of the aftermath of the India and Pakistan nuclear tests. The CD was in a way going to implement Security Council resolution 1172 of 6 June 1998, but importantly, jointly with India and Pakistan.

Today we have to note that the inability of the CD to continue working on the FMCT in the following years has been one of the most concrete disappointments, despite the fact that the NPT 2000 Review Conference encouraged us also to initiate the discussions on nuclear disarmament in general.

When we had the CD presidency, we tested the readiness of our colleagues to start substantive work in the CD three years ago, and it was in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks in the United States. We also had a fresh United Nations General Assembly resolution, 56/24 T, on terrorism and weapons of mass destruction. Today I have a personal feeling that we are back to asking for answers to the same questions of principle.

We are certainly going to analyse with great interest the most recent announcements coming from Washington and New Delhi. They might also have an impact on those issues we are normally expected to tackle here in Geneva. Certainly the questions related to the NPT regime and CTBT are most relevant. I take note with interest of the references made to the role of the CD, and in particular to the desirability of achieving a treaty on FMCT.

As has been stated many times on behalf of the EU and in the name of the EU, Finland is also ready to engage in discussions on other substantive matters which other delegations consider to be important.

And Mr. President, if you will allow me, my only procedural observation would be the following. Please don't give my successor, Ambassador Kahiluoto, who is joining you on 1 September, the impression that you continue to wait for something which would be better before you are able to engage in real work. And please don't give the impression that you need guarantees on what the final outcome of negotiations should be before you engage.

For those reasons, I would suggest that the First Committee meeting starting in October in New York will also have a crucial role in safeguarding and paving the way for CD work next year.

Mr. President, as you have already referred to the CCW process, it is perhaps appropriate for me to mention the efforts we have continued just recently in Geneva on the CCW and on mines other than anti-personnel mines among the governmental experts. We have made visible progress and we are hopeful that decisive work can be done in the November session at the level of governmental experts and among the States parties.

Let me finish by thanking all of you for a most rewarding professional time and social friendships my wife and I have encountered here in Geneva, in New York, and in the context of many visits to capitals.

(Mr. Reimaa, Finland)

And if I can just indicate what kind of colleagues we have had the privilege to see here seven or eight years ago, I mention Ambassadors Joëlle Bourgois, Hisami Kurokochi, Fayza Abounaga and Arundhati Ghose, without forgetting Ambassadors Stephen Ledogar, Michael Weston, Celso Amorim and Mohamed-Salah Dembri. And certainly, as you see, we have not received any new members between France and Finland, nor between Ethiopia and Finland, so we have always been privileged to have that kind of eminent colleagues to advise us all the time.

I can confirm that it has been a fascinating combination of challenges, meetings private and official, and negotiating problems great and small. But as we say in Finland: No problem is too big to be worth trying to solve peacefully and in cooperation with others. And the one word in Finnish in this context is *sisu*.

I do hope that the great expertise available in Geneva and the frank and forward-looking approach of the CD community would encourage you to engage very soon in substantive dialogue on the key issues. If you are not ready to talk, what is the signal you are giving to us?

The PRESIDENT: Thank you, Ambassador Reimaa, for the kind remarks you have addressed to the President of the CD. Thank you so much for making this valedictory statement substantive. While leaving this forum, you have concluded your tenure of duty on a note of optimism. You forbid mourning. You banished pessimism. You have encouraged dialogue. And you are asking us to look ahead. I am sure that all members of the Conference on Disarmament have taken note of your message.

I now give the floor to Ambassador Serala Fernando of Sri Lanka.

Ms. FERNANDO (Sri Lanka): Mr. President, I asked for the floor to thank you, Ambassador Naéla Gabr and my colleagues here in the CD for your expressions of shock and sadness at the assassination of Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar. Your expressions of sympathy are of great strength to us as we come to grips with this despicable terrorist act which has imposed a great strain on the peace process in Sri Lanka. I will of course convey your message of condolences and sympathy to the family of the late Foreign Minister Kadirgamar and to the authorities in Colombo.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you, Ambassador Fernando. Japan, you have the floor.

Mr. OGAWA (Japan): Mr. President, as this is the first time for the Japanese delegation to take the floor under your presidency, allow me to congratulate you on your assumption of this important post and assure you of the Japanese delegation's support and cooperation as you undertake your tasks as President.

I would also like to extend a warm welcome to the Nagasaki Peace Messengers who are attending today's session of the Conference on Disarmament. High-school students from the city of Nagasaki have been coming to Geneva to attend this Conference since 1998, but this year

(Mr. Ogawa, Japan)

is of particular significance as it marks the 60th anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima on 6 August and Nagasaki three days later. Therefore, this year's messengers are composed not only of three students from Nagasaki, but also one from Hiroshima and one from Yokohama.

Last year, along with Ambassador Mine, I had the opportunity to visit a striking exhibition in Jussy, a Swiss village east of Geneva, on the life and work of Dr. Marcel Junod, a delegate of the International Committee of the Red Cross and the first foreign doctor to help atomic bomb victims in Hiroshima. During the exhibition, I was particularly struck by the display of a model of Geneva showing the extent of the damage which would have been caused if an atomic bomb of the Hiroshima type had been dropped here. The bomb would have wiped out this entire city and its population. The high-school students with us today also had the opportunity to visit Jussy yesterday to see computer images of last year's exhibition and to pray at the tomb of Dr. Junod.

The Nagasaki Peace Messengers have a very important role to sensitize the world to the horror of nuclear weapons and to promote nuclear disarmament and advocate a culture of peace.

I sincerely hope that the international community listens carefully to the message of these high-school students in order that the devastation caused by nuclear weapons will never be repeated.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you so much for your statement. Thank you so much for your words of felicitation addressed to the President of the CD and your assurance of cooperation. I now give the floor to France.

Mr. RIVASSEAU (France) (translated from French): Mr. President, you spoke better than I could have done about the departure of Ambassador Reimaa, Ambassador Gabr, Ms. Pollack, as well as the condolences you conveyed to the representative of Sri Lanka. But I would briefly like to recall a memory of 1997, when Ambassador Reimaa took his seat here for the first time and I had the privilege of sitting not beside him but behind him.

We are losing a great friend with the departure of Ambassador Reimaa. We are also losing expertise, and there are two points I would like to mention briefly in that regard. During Ambassador Reimaa's term of office in March 2002, as has been mentioned, he made proposals for a work programme. It seems that those proposals were not just among the most ingenious and the most outstanding, but possibly among those which came closest to securing consensus here. And I think we would do well to revisit them, particularly as, when we review the Conference's activity over the past year, we see that, among the proposals put forward by the various Presidents, it is the ones which were closest to the proposals contained in the document issued during Finland's term in the Chair which seemed to have some chance of success. And in this month, which is a solemn month, as the Japanese delegation pointed out, when a tragic anniversary is commemorated as the presence of these students reminds us, we have a particular duty to press ahead in the constructive spirit, the confident spirit, the spirit of mutual respect which has always been typical of Ambassador Reimaa.

(Mr. Rivasseau, France)

On a second point, I would like to reiterate that following the closure of a negotiating session on a new protocol to the Geneva Conventions on mines other than anti-personnel mines, following that session, which turned out to be positive, even though it fell short of our expectations, we are still confidently expecting Ambassador Reimaa to append his name to a protocol on mines other than anti-personnel mines.

On behalf of the French delegation, Sir, allow me to wish Ambassador Reimaa a happy return to Finland and to his family. *Näkemin, Markku.*

The PRESIDENT: Thank you so much, Ambassador Rivasseau. Ambassador Reimaa is leaving Geneva with his family, but he is leaving behind his extended family of admirers. I will request him to reconnect with us before, during and after November 2005.

Canada, you have the floor.

Ms. POLLACK (Canada): Thank you very much for your kind words, Mr. President. It is certainly with regret that I leave this chamber and this Conference after four years of no activity, although I must say that no activity here, thank goodness, does not mean no activity in other disarmament fronts. It remains my personal hope, and the hope of my Government, that the CD will soon be able to agree on a comprehensive programme of work, and I leave you with that hope. Thank you and *au revoir*.

The PRESIDENT: I'll interpret that as an optimistic note.

I think this concludes our list of speakers, and this concludes our business today. The next plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament will be held on Thursday, 25 August 2005, at 10 a.m. in this conference room.

The meeting rose at 10.55 a.m.