

# CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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ENGLISH

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## FINAL RECORD OF THE ONE THOUSAND AND THIRD PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,  
on Thursday, 9 February 2006, at 10.15 a.m.

President: Mr. Zdzisław RAPACKI (Poland)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 1003rd plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

Today the Conference will continue its general debate on any subject related to the Conference on Disarmament. I have the following speakers on my list for today's plenary meeting: the Ambassador of Cuba, Mr. Juan Antonio Fernández Palacios, and the Ambassador of Pakistan, Mr. Masood Khan.

However, before giving the floor to the speakers on my list, I would like to make a very short statement.

I informed you earlier about the results of the bilateral consultations that I conducted with all CD delegations. I noted concerns or uneasiness with regard to the CD's work and future, but there was an overall expectation from this year's Presidents to start discussions and create the conditions for deliberations on substance that would bring us closer to the adoption of the long-awaited programme of work. Therefore, as neither consensus on the establishment of any subsidiary body nor on a programme of work exists, we have to continue efforts to bridge the differences and look for consensus. At the beginning of the session, we adopted the agenda and we agreed that the agenda was broad enough to deal with all issues relevant to the international security environment. Therefore, this agenda is the framework for our activities. The lack of consensus on a programme of work should not prevent us from organizing debates aimed at reaching it.

Since autumn 2005, the then President (Peru) and the six Presidents of the CD in the 2006 session (Poland, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, Senegal and Slovakia) have cooperated closely on seeking possibilities for progress in the work of the CD this year.

The CD Presidents bear special responsibility for shaping this year's deliberations in a way that will foster discussions that might bring us closer to achieving consensus on the programme of work. The swift adoption of the agenda for this year's session has enabled us to conduct fruitful consultations which have led us to agreement among the P6 and understanding among the CD delegations about the possible shape of debate this year.

Taking into account the flexibility expressed by the majority of the delegations in the course of our consultations, the P6 have joined efforts and want to inform the Conference about the timetable of CD Presidents' activities in the 2006 session.

It is our understanding that more focused discussions throughout the year should take place with relation to the relevant agenda items.

Let me now indicate a few basic assumptions that all the P6 share. First, every President throughout the year will conduct general debates in the form of plenary meetings which will allow for a rolling discussion on all agenda items. Second, in addition to general debates, the P6

(The President)

intends to allow for focused structured debates to allow delegations to prepare and to invite experts. Every President will conduct consultations in order to properly structure and prepare those debates (including determining how many meetings will reflect existing substance and the willingness of delegations to take the floor). The substance of the debates will be based on proposals made by member States, including those contained in official CD documents, working papers and other recommendations and proposals by States. Accordingly, rule 30 of the rules of procedure will apply to these debates. Third, every President is also encouraged to reserve time for the possibility to report on findings by the Friends of the Presidents and to allow for discussion in the CD on those findings, if it deems it necessary. Last, but not least, the “timetable” is without prejudice to any future decisions of this Conference on its programme of work or on the establishment of any subsidiary body. Let me underline that the timetable is intended just to create an opportunity for CD members to hold focused and structured debates, and it is up to the delegations how they use it.

Now, please allow me to inform you about details of the P6 intentions for the focused structured debates:

During the presidency of the Republic of Korea

From 27 February to 3 March, agenda items 1 and 2, with the general focus on nuclear disarmament;

During the presidency of Romania

From 15 to 19 May, agenda items 1 and 2, with the general focus on FMCT;

During the presidency of the Russian Federation

From 8 to 15 June, agenda item 3;  
From 19 to 23 June, agenda item 5;

During the presidency of Senegal

From 31 July to 4 August, agenda item 4;  
From 7 to 11 August, agenda item 6;

During the presidency of Slovakia

From 21 to 25 August, agenda item 7;  
From 4 to 15 September, agenda item 8.

The P6 hopes that the announcement of the presidencies’ plans will be a useful tool which will bring positive results for the CD.

Now we come back to our list of speakers for today, and I give the floor to the Ambassador of Cuba, Mr. Juan Antonio Fernández Palacios.

Mr. FERNÁNDEZ PALACIOS (Cuba) (translated from Spanish): I think it was a welcome initiative to shed light on this room, which greatly needs it. However, it turns out that some are receiving this light directly and others indirectly; in any event the decision to have more light here is welcome. I congratulate you, Mr. President, since I am speaking for the first time in this Conference, on your election as President of this prestigious body.

I am complying with one of the many formalities of this Conference in delivering my opening statement to this important forum. I understand this is one of the many rituals regarded as a hallmark of an institution that has been suspended in time for the past eight years.

The Conference on Disarmament is going through one of its most critical phases since its inception. All its member States are called upon to do their utmost to resolve this situation. It is a question of salvaging the necessary political will to enable this Conference to achieve the goals for which it was established: general and complete disarmament so as to promote a genuine and real system of collective security.

The history of mankind often reminds us that large and sophisticated arsenals of weapons do not guarantee absolute power or invincibility. Throughout history all the empires that have existed have disappeared, and the present empire, led by the military and economic Power of our times, will be no exception to this rule. I say this without any intention of offending anyone or bragging with cheap prophecies. It is the conviction that stems from witnessing the way in which this world Power operates and knowing the modern history of mankind.

There was a matchless opportunity to build a better and safer world: the early 1990s, when the United States of America was left as the world's sole military Power after the disappearance of the former Soviet Union and its military bloc. There was no justification for continuing to fuel the contradictions of the so-called "cold war" or continuing to uphold the aggressive structure which nourished it. However, the new reality was encompassed under the dubious dogma of the "end of history", denial of any right to be different and the assertion of near-absolute power which was presented as being invincible. A policy aimed at consolidating peace as a real and effective commitment to the total elimination of nuclear weapons in the first place, and subsequently the gradual elimination of other types of weapons and aggressive technologies, the strengthening of the collective system of security on the basis of respect for international rules and principles and the consolidation of international social and economic cooperation using material, financial and human resources released by disarmament measures, would have created an ideal international security environment which would have prevailed in this Conference on Disarmament today. But the story was different and the opportunity was lost, though not the hopes and ideals of peace for all in a world of justice.

The change in objective conditions was viewed as an illusory opportunity to accentuate imperial power, and once again, the choice was to consolidate power through force. For this purpose military doctrines were revised and treaties that were the quintessence of world stability were revoked.

The super-Power resorted to threats and the use of force in international relations. New weapons were manufactured and new research was commenced to make them more powerful

(Mr. Fernández Palacios, Cuba)

and destructive. The United Nations and its precarious system of collective security were weakened. And what came out of this? More power, perhaps? More prestige and greater morale? Improved international security? No, nothing like that. World instability and lack of security have increased, with the fatal consequences this entails.

Nuclear weapons, with an explosive power of millions of megatons, are more than sufficient to destroy the planet earth. They have not prevented the proliferation of armed conflicts. Nor have they prevented the deplorable terrorist acts of 11 September 2001 or other subsequent events in different parts of the world. Nor are they halting natural and logical efforts to rectify other States' lack of power and security through the development or acquisition of weapons.

World military expenditure amounts to approximately US\$ 1 billion and continues to rise. Much more money is spent on producing to kill than on saving lives. According to United Nations estimates, approximately 10 per cent of current global expenditure on arms would be enough to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. This seems a modest and feasible amount considering what could be achieved by using it. Thousands of lives could be saved every day. Millions of people all over the world could escape poverty. Every boy and girl in the third world could be educated. The terrible AIDS pandemic could be tackled more effectively.

Can this state of affairs be changed? Yes, it can. Has the Conference on Disarmament something to contribute to efforts to bring about change? Yes, the Conference has a significant role to play ahead of it. It is not an easy task, and it will take time. This is not a matter whose solution is confined to the limited capacity of this body either. But we have no option but to continue struggling to attain our goals in favour of peace and the total elimination of weapons. Not even the disappearance of this Conference would change the need to seek solutions to these problems. We could meet tomorrow in a different forum, using a different structure and different rules, but this would not change the reasons why we are here today, in this room, and we will continue to be obliged to discuss the issues that we are discussing today and to try to devise measures to resolve them.

Cuba remains firmly committed to multilateralism and the need to implement it fully in order to achieve effective solutions to achieve peace and security. We view the Conference on Disarmament as a vital link in this multilateral system. However, currently the circumstances are not right to enable this body to adopt a programme of work which takes into account the priorities of all its members. I am sorry to say this, but it is the sad reality. Some world Powers do not demonstrate in practice a real commitment to seeking a form of collective security that would help enable the majority of countries to have confidence in their long-term goals and as a first step join in the pursuit of their priorities.

The recent failures in disarmament and international security lead us to conclude that currently the circumstances are not right for phased solutions. Unless this problem of a lack of trust is resolved and there are real and verifiable guarantees regarding collective security, we will continue to circle around formulas and theoretical efforts to reach a solution so as to forge consensus on the programme of work of the Conference on Disarmament without any result.

(Mr. Fernández Palacios, Cuba)

Collective security today depends on accepting the idea that the threats each region of the world perceives as being most urgent are in fact equally urgent for all. Cuba is convinced that the sole genuine solution to the problem of the proliferation of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass extermination, in all its aspects, is their total and absolute elimination. It therefore considers that the Conference should establish as soon as possible an ad hoc committee to negotiate nuclear disarmament. In addition, we agree that negotiations should begin on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. We also join with those who support the launching of negotiations in the Conference on an international treaty to ban the production of fissile material for the manufacture of nuclear weapons that would address both the objective of non-proliferation and the objective of disarmament. Negotiations on a legally binding international instrument providing negative security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States also enjoy our support as one of the priorities for this Conference.

In conclusion, we hope that this year will be a year of change, or at least a start to the change that we desire. If so, Cuba will continue to support your efforts along these lines.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Ambassador of Cuba, Mr. Juan Antonio Fernández Palacios, for his statement, and I now give the floor to the representative of Pakistan, Ambassador Masood Khan.

Mr. KHAN (Pakistan): Mr. President, since this is the first time I am taking the floor, I would like to congratulate you on the assumption of the presidency of the CD. I compliment you on your drive and dynamism. Your approach has been inclusive and cross-regional, geared towards seeking consensus.

This year's significant achievement is the swift adoption of the agenda by the CD. This, no doubt, is a result of your leadership. You and the five incoming Presidents have worked hard to kick-start the CD, invest it with creativity, and present new and innovative ideas. We hope that these initiatives will succeed. We also hope that the six Friends, appointed by you, will accomplish their assigned tasks. Your choice of Friends could not have been better as they have the highest level of professional competence and commitment. The P6 (six Presidents), the F6 (six Friends), three regional coordinators and China all make an impressive bureau. The remaining membership is part of their extended family. In introducing this new configuration you have used the Presidential prerogative, which stems from the Conference membership.

Now, the most important task before the CD is to come up with an agreed programme of work. Your report of 2 February indicates that there is no consensus yet on the programme of work or the establishment of any ad hoc committee or appointment of any special coordinator. The Conference must therefore devote its maximum time and energy to securing an agreement on a programme of work.

When the President of the CD perceives an absence of consensus on the programme of work or on the designation of special coordinators thereon, as envisaged in paragraph 5 (d) of the decision CD/1036, he should be able to appoint, on his own, "Friends of the President" to help him in trying to narrow the differences among delegates on such matters.

(Mr. Khan, Pakistan)

We welcome your determination that the majority of delegations support the A5 proposal, while some other delegations are not in a position to do so.

Your division of labour allocates the programme of work to the Presidents and agenda and methods of work to the Friends. At the moment, the work of the CD is the programme of work. The agenda is agreed. The methods of work are in place and operative. We therefore suggest that the combined weight of the P6, the F6, three regional coordinators, China and other members be used to persuade the few countries that have reservations on the A5 to come on board. I am sure that the collective ingenuity and creativity of the six Presidents can help us cross this hurdle.

This year's CD session started with a sobering assessment by the United Nations Secretary-General. He points to a series of setbacks in 2005 and finds the global disarmament machinery weakened.

His prescription for dealing with the situation is modest. The impasse in the CD, he says, cannot be broken by procedural means or merely by fine-tuning the existing proposals. We know that so well here in Geneva. The Secretary-General urges capitals to develop a new political consensus on priorities in arms control and disarmament. He rightly emphasizes the need for debates to foster consensus-building processes.

The failure to agree on disarmament and non-proliferation reflects deep divergences amongst United Nations Member States. This is a dangerous trend for peace and security, especially in regions of tension. It was against this backdrop that President Pervez Musharraf, in his address to the United Nations General Assembly on 14 September 2005, said: "We must evolve a new consensus to achieve disarmament and non-proliferation." Such a consensus must be pursued through consultations and agreement among *all* United Nations Member States.

You would agree that in building such a consensus we should start from the United Nations Charter's cardinal principle that security is the right of every State. The declaration of SSOD-1 accepted the principle of equal security for all States. A new security consensus, based on these principles, should address existing and emerging global challenges of regional and international security. This goal can be achieved through the Conference on Disarmament or a special session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission.

The CD agenda itself emanates from the Decalogue. The four core issues - nuclear disarmament, FMT, PAROS and NSAs - constitute a delicate equilibrium. Tinkering with this equilibrium has resulted in an impasse.

Pakistan supports the A5 proposal as it presents a package solution to address the four core issues in a comprehensive and balanced manner.

The task of nuclear disarmament does not exclude non-proliferation. Therefore, credible steps by the nuclear-weapon States within a reasonable time frame are essential to revalidate the "bargain" on disarmament and non-proliferation and restore a genuine balance between them.

(Mr. Khan, Pakistan)

Pakistan supports negotiations on a fissile material treaty (FMT) in accordance with the Shannon mandate and report (CD/1299), and the A5 proposal for a universal, non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable treaty. The agreed basis for negotiating the treaty cannot be called “preconditions”.

Until nuclear disarmament is achieved, non-nuclear-weapon States should have the assurances that nuclear weapons will not be used against them. The security assurances offered by nuclear-weapons States should be translated into a universal, unconditional and legally binding treaty.

We share the majority view that existing international legal instruments are inadequate to prevent the weaponization of outer space. We should consolidate and reinforce this regime and enhance its effectiveness.

The agenda of the CD is fine as it is. There are suggestions for additions. This aspect has to be handled carefully so that we do not either clutter the agenda or create new linkages and thus further complicate our task. The agenda is comprehensive enough to accommodate new ideas if there is agreement on them. As suggested by some CD member States during the session, we may use the criteria of consensus, relevance to the mandate and non-duplication to consider new items.

There is nothing wrong with the methods of work. Consensus is not a problem per se. The commencement of work is. The limited tenure of the presidencies is an area of concern, but this deficit can now be offset by the device of six consecutive presidencies working together.

A firm timetable, as presented by you, for discussing the core issues and other issues will be a useful tool. We must bear in mind that the CD is a negotiating, not a deliberative, forum, though negotiation entails deliberation. Structured debates and discussions to understand the issues and to remove misperceptions should be a prelude to a negotiated outcome in accordance with the CD’s mandate. Exchanges on the core issues should culminate in concrete law-making in all areas.

We should stick to priorities and not get distracted by issues of a secondary or tertiary nature. The stakes are too high. Imperatives of peace and security are too compelling to be sacrificed for endless procedural wranglings. Flexibility will become relevant when there is a will to work - the collective political will to work.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador Khan of Pakistan for his statement and kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Brazil, Mr. Carlos Antonio da Rocha Paranhos.

Mr. da ROCHA PARANHOS (Brazil): Mr. President, at the outset and since this is the first time I take the floor this year, let me congratulate you on presiding over this body. Your recognized experience and diplomatic skills are much needed at this juncture. All efforts in order to try to organize our endeavours in an effective and systematic way are most welcome. In this sense, be assured of having the fullest cooperation of the Brazilian delegation.



(Mr. da Rocha Paranhos, Brazil)

I would like to praise the initiative announced by you at the beginning of your tenure of grouping all the Presidents of this year's session with the aim of coordinating our activities.

We support the idea of having Friends of all the incoming Presidents helping us narrow down differences on substantive issues.

We also are of the view that the proposal of planned structured debates based on all items of the agenda is an innovative attempt to create a more receptive atmosphere that could help us adopt a comprehensive and balanced programme of work.

Brazil is of the opinion that our current agenda is still adequate, inclusive and flexible enough to allow us to deal with issues that are relevant to our respective national concerns and also with the vast array of themes of international peace and security.

In Brazil's view, the current agenda should allow us to arrive at a compromise solution for a programme of work, one that necessarily encompasses the four core issues - nuclear disarmament, a fissile material treaty, the prevention of an arms race in outer space and negative security assurances - and, at the same time, could eventually allow the inclusion of other themes, provided that they are directly related to a forum, like the CD, devoted exclusively to negotiations on disarmament.

In this context, as a demonstration of flexibility, we could participate in informal exchanges of views on issues such as critical infrastructure, including seminars and workshops, although we are not convinced that this specific issue has any direct linkage to this Conference. Regarding MANPADS, we believe that this subject is already dealt with within the purview of the current Programme of Action on small arms and light weapons. At this stage, we consider that dealing with such items in this Conference could lead to a duplication of efforts with that forum.

In our common efforts to explore alternative ways to bring the CD back to substantive and meaningful work - which we understand is the main task of the P6 and their Friends - my delegation understands that proposals regarding additional issues, independently of any assessment of their intrinsic relevance to the *raison d'être* of this Conference, should not be seen as a substitute or a distraction to dealing substantively with the four pillars which are present in different proposals for a programme of work that have been circulated at least since 2000.

In the light of these observations, let me restate our conviction that for Brazil, the pursuit of nuclear disarmament is, and should continue to be, the fundamental objective of this negotiating body.

We were responsible in the year 2000 for the presentation of the Amorim proposal, which is contained in CD/1624, which puts great emphasis on nuclear disarmament. Notwithstanding, and with the objective of trying to achieve consensus, Brazil has shown flexibility with regard to a programme of work, and as a compromise offer we have, since 2004, supported the A5 proposal which puts less strength on nuclear disarmament, if compared with the proposal made by Brazil in 2000. We have also indicated that the "food for thought" paper presented by

(Mr. da Rocha Paranhos, Brazil)

Ambassador Chris Sanders last year, which is an informal derivation from the A5 proposal, could also be an acceptable basis for discussion in order to lead us to the adoption of a programme of work.

I wanted to stress this because we have always tried to show flexibility, but I must say that we see the pursuit of nuclear disarmament as a fundamental tool in addressing the international community's deep concern about proliferation.

With regard to the negotiation by the CD on a fissile material treaty, my delegation is of the view that an "all or nothing" approach risks protracting the beginning of these negotiations. We advocated that a treaty on fissile material be provided with a verification mechanism, but we think the different positions on this specific aspect should not impede the start of negotiations in this body. We also favour discussions on the question of how to increase the adequacy of the regime of preventing weaponization in outer space.

By highlighting again these suggestions and recommendations, Brazil is being coherent to its long-standing posture of privileging multilateral and non-discriminatory agreements on disarmament and security issues.

I wish you all success in your work this year, and be assured of counting on our participation in formal and informal meetings, Mr. President and all incoming Presidents this year.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador da Rocha Paranhos of Brazil for his statement and kind words addressed to the Chair.

This concludes my list of speakers for today. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor? I recognize the Ambassador of China, Mr. Cheng Jingye.

Mr. CHENG (China) (translated from Chinese): Mr. President, this is the first time I am taking the floor in the CD as China's Ambassador on disarmament, so please allow me to take this opportunity to express my congratulations to you on your assumption of the important function of the CD presidency. I look forward in the future to working with all present to promote the CD's work.

The Chinese delegation has listened with attention to the introduction you have just made on behalf of the P6 concerning the timetable of this year's CD. We express our appreciation to you all for the effort you have made for promoting progress in the CD.

Concerning the tentative timetable, our understanding is that the P6 will function as a single unit, and in terms of time allocation and approach will handle every item on this year's CD agenda in a balanced and comprehensive manner. We believe such an approach would undoubtedly help to address the concerns of all parties and promote discussion on all items. It will also help to create favourable conditions for negotiating a balanced and comprehensive programme of work based on consensus.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador Cheng of China for his statement, and I now give the floor to Ambassador Paul Meyer of Canada.

Mr. MEYER (Canada): Mr. President, please permit me to extend my congratulations and that of our delegation on your assumption of the presidency, and I know your really tireless efforts to try to lead this Conference back into fruitful labours. In that regard, I would like to make some initial comments on your statement and the timetable that you shared with us earlier.

First, let me acknowledge that I know there was a great effort put into the elaboration of this timetable, and we definitely feel that the continuity that is presented by the six-Presidential initiative is an enhancement to the way we approach our work here. There is a benefit in being able to outline a timetable throughout the year and one which will be sustained by collective efforts of the President.

We had expectations that this year would mark a new and qualitatively different year for the Conference on Disarmament, one that provided a coherent, sustained, structured discussion and a far better use of the time allocated to this body. And in this regard, while appreciating this sketch, I would like to pose a few questions, if I may, for clarification, because in some areas, frankly, it seems to fall far short of that objective, and it may be that I am not fully appreciating what is intended here in your paragraph 2 reference to focused structured debates that will be conducted under the auspices of the timetable, because on the surface, it is an agenda-item-based general debate, one, frankly, that we have had many times already in this Conference, and I was under the impression that we were going to build on what we have already done, and not simply repeat it. I also had the strong impression that we would be making far greater use of the time available to this Conference, and here once more, I seek some clarification, because it would appear on the surface that major issues like FMCT or the complex field of nuclear disarmament are being allocated one week for discussion. One week out of our entire year for these items? Does this represent the intensified labours that I think delegations in this Conference expected to be undertaken in 2006? I mean, what will the Presidents do with the remaining three weeks of their presidencies, if we are only going to have a week spent on this area? And how do we get beyond the general debate into the substance? We have had enough, frankly, declarations here. We need now to get into the substance underneath these items, and that requires specific topics identified ahead of time, so that delegations in consultation with their capitals can prepare themselves adequately. Again, maybe this is still to be elaborated, but on the basis of the timetable circulated this morning, I don't see that being there. I also note that under the Polish presidency, I see no further activity during the year. We have two full weeks, I think, left. I would hope that we could have entered into some of this substance already under the initial presidency.

So, if you are in a position to elaborate at all on this, I would appreciate it, because I fear that on our first reading, it doesn't really seem to meet what I thought was the common expectation that we would be getting into a much more intensified and structured consideration of substance this year.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador Meyer of Canada for his statement. Would any other delegation like to take the floor at this stage? That does not seem to be the case. I should like to answer briefly Ambassador Meyer's questions.

First of all, I will refer to the decisions adopted by the Conference in document CD/1036, which says that weeks 5 to 21 need to be dedicated to statements on all items and supervision of work in the subsidiary bodies. We have no subsidiary bodies, but we need to stick to this requirement.

Speaking of the substance of the debates, we understand that all debates will be based on the proposals made by member States, including those contained in official CD documents, working papers and other recommendations proposed by States. Substance and the willingness of delegations to participate and contribute to debates will determine the length and diversity of the debates, as the final results will indicate priorities. We understand that we have now opened the way, and it is not only up to the incoming President but to all delegations as well to contribute to the substance and content of our deliberations.

During the course of this year's session, the incoming Presidents will give you more details on their plans and expectations, and it will be at the beginning of preparations for structured debate dedicated to all issues. We cannot exclude either certain situations - if there is a consensus within the Conference, that we dedicate more time to some items of the agenda. We may come back to the discussions if we are close to conclusions.

The last observation is that if I tell you I am very sorry that our presidency ends in one week, you would not believe me, but we end the Polish presidency next week. So we do not have two weeks, but rather one week only.

Does any delegation wish to take the floor at this stage? I recognize the Ambassador of Japan.

Mr. MINE (Japan): Mr. President, our delegation emphasized a few days ago that we think that the FMCT is the priority, and we just referred to the item and to other items. What our Canadian colleague raised is quite related to how this matter is going to be dealt with. I hope that I am clear from your own explanation, but as I understand from the timetable that you have explained, we would look at such issues as FMCT and others, for instance nuclear disarmament, as the first topic, that is, the time allocated for the presidency of the Republic of Korea. Agenda items 1 and 2 should certainly deal with the FMCT. Therefore, we understand that we would be able to focus on that matter with others, and that would also be the case during the presidency of Romania. I hope this understanding is correct.

The PRESIDENT: I thank you, Ambassador Mine of Japan, for your statement, and I agree with your last sentence.

Does any other delegation wish to take the floor at this stage? I recognize the Ambassador of France.

Mr. RIVASSEAU (France) (translated from French): I wished to associate myself with the questions and viewpoints expressed by Canada and Japan.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador Rivasseau of France for his declaration. Would any other delegation like to take the floor? I recognize the representative of the United States.

Mr. CYNKIN (United States of America): Mr. President, I hadn't intended to take the floor, but since I have, let me first express appreciation from my delegation to you and the other P6 Presidents for the hard work and effort you have obviously put in, and we look forward to working with you on these.

I would just add, in the spirit of the general discussion, that I am sure the rule that we all abide by here still obtains in any event, which is that any delegation may raise any issue at any plenary at any time and that that principle would not be overridden.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the delegate of the United States, Mr. Tom Cynkin, for his statement. Does any delegation wish to take the floor? That does not seem to be the case.

That concludes our business for today. I would like to inform you that the next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Thursday, 16 February 2006, at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 11 a.m.