

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE ONE THOUSAND AND FIFTEENTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 30 March 2006, at 10.10 a.m.

President: Mr. Doru Romulus COSTEA (Romania)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 1015th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

I should like first to welcome, on behalf of the Conference on Disarmament and on my own behalf, His Excellency Dr. Manuchehr Mottaki, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, who will address the Conference this morning.

I am sure that we all will listen with great attention to his declaration. I am pleased to invite the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, His Excellency Dr. Manuchehr Mottaki, to take the floor.

Mr. MOTTAKI (Islamic Republic of Iran): Mr. President, I begin with a sincere hail to holy prophets as true messengers of peace to the whole world. I would like to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and wish you success in guiding the admittedly difficult task before this august body. I would also like to extend my appreciation to the six presidents of the Conference who, with the support of all member States, managed to arrive at a common platform to help to steer the Conference on Disarmament, as the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, back on the track of relevance and importance which it once, not too long ago, enjoyed.

While assuring you of our support and cooperation, I would also like to stress the importance of keeping sight and bearing in mind that the ultimate goal of common efforts should be getting to a comprehensive and balanced programme of work.

A quick look back at the past achievements of this Conference is the best witness of what this body is capable of doing. In the 1990s the great hopes and expectations stimulated by the end of the cold war and the fall of the Soviet Union were able to lead to great results. The Chemical Weapons Convention, an important achievement for the international community, was negotiated and finalized in this very framework.

The trend in other disarmament forums was as promising. The States parties to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention agreed in 1994 to strengthen the implementation of the Convention through a protocol to be attached to it. The negotiations on the protocol were carried out here in Geneva and the expertise accumulated in the Conference and the experience of negotiating a CWC enormously contributed to their negotiation here.

In the NPT framework too, very major steps were taken back then. The unilateral statements of the nuclear-weapon States, albeit very minimal in their scope, were registered in early April 1995 and the adoption of United Nations Security Council resolution 984 five days later created a positive atmosphere before the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference. The Conference then adopted a package of decisions and a resolution on the Middle East which made the indefinite extension of the Treaty possible.

(Mr. Mottaki, Islamic Republic of Iran)

The 1996 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons created new momentum on the issue of the nuclear disarmament, and the 2000 NPT Review Conference built the utmost upon the momentum. It devised 13 practical steps for systematic and progressive efforts to implement article VI of the Treaty.

But that seemed to be the end of a glorious decade on disarmament. A decade of negotiations on the protocol strengthening the BTWC was doomed because one single State party could neither go along with the latest rolling text, nor could it propose anything to make it acceptable. The ABM Treaty, which for decades was recalled as the cornerstone of the strategic balance, was abrogated. Contrary to all legal, political and moral obligations, new nuclear weapons were built and new doctrines were devised to lower the threshold of resorting to such inhumane weapons.

This process went so far that in 2005 we all faced an unwelcome but not surprising defeat in the NPT Review Conference. The United Nations Summit report contained no reference to disarmament issues.

This Conference has not been immune from the prevalence of this plague either. It is now about a decade since this Conference last engaged in its real business, which is negotiating disarmament instruments. The lack of progress in spite of numerous initiatives is just further proof of the fact that there is a deliberate tendency in certain capitals not to let this Conference work. Such an impasse cannot be surmounted by crafting new proposals. Nor is it a question of procedure. It is but a question of political will, and we all hope that it will not be too far away when this Conference is able to achieve consensus on its programme of work.

I am sure that the fire you keep going under the ashes will glow again and this hall will once again witness lively and energetic negotiations as a reflection of the return of real multilateralism to the world order. I wish to assure you of the support of all peace-loving nations in your endeavours to keep this flame alive.

On the substance of the work of the Conference on Disarmament I would like to say that we also believe that the current agenda of the Conference is inclusive and flexible enough to allow the Conference to deal with a variety of issues before the international community.

Iran, together with other members of the G21 and many other members of this Conference, considers nuclear disarmament as the foremost priority to be addressed. We have followed the reports of some nuclear-weapon States about the results of their bilateral agreements and reductions already carried out and those to be accomplished in the future. We find such information of great interest, not because of the great number of reductions, but because of the power of destruction which still exists and whose capacity goes far beyond eradicating all human civilizations around the world. On the other hand, so long as the principles of transparency, irreversibility and verifiability do not prevail, the bilateral initiatives are welcome but still far beyond the expectations of the international community.

(Mr. Mottaki, Islamic Republic of Iran)

We support the call of the G21 for the establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament to start negotiations on a phased programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons within a specified framework of time, including a nuclear weapons convention.

New nuclear postures and doctrines which are based on the development of new types of nuclear weapons, which lower the threshold of resorting to such weapons to the level of conventional confrontation scenarios and which name non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the NPT as the targets of such weapons, are in contravention of the unilateral declarations issued just before the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference, which decided on the indefinite extension of the NPT. Selective approaches towards the validity of the outcome of the 1995 Review and Extension Conference would certainly damage the credibility of the Non-Proliferation Treaty mechanism as a whole.

We together with other NAM countries believe that it is the legitimate right of States that have given up the nuclear-weapon option to receive security assurances and call for the negotiation of a universal, unconditional and legally binding instrument on security assurances. I would also like to reiterate our conviction that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee that there will be no use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. Pending the total elimination of nuclear weapons, non-nuclear-weapon States should be effectively assured by the nuclear-weapon States that there will be no use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, and efforts to conclude a universal, unconditional and legally binding instrument on security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States should be pursued as a matter of priority.

We at the same time do understand the importance other members of the Conference attach to other issues as a matter of priority. We also attach high importance to the question of prevention of an arms race in outer space. We reiterate that outer space is the common heritage of mankind and must be used, explored and utilized exclusively for peaceful purposes and for the benefit of interest of mankind in a spirit of cooperation. We are also concerned over the negative implications of development and deployment of anti-ballistic-missile defence systems and the pursuit of advanced military technology capable of being deployed in outer space, which has contributed to the further erosion of an international climate conducive to the promotion of disarmament and strengthening of international security. We share the view that the prevention of an arms race in outer space has assumed greater urgency because of legitimate concerns that existing legal instruments are inadequate to deter an arms race in outer space.

The question of a treaty on fissile material is of importance to us too. We, like many others, consider such a treaty as a viable step towards nuclear disarmament. However, we have serious doubts on how a treaty on fissile material could serve the nuclear disarmament cause without covering the vast stocks which could easily be used for the development of new and new types of nuclear weapons. The question of verifiability is also of crucial importance. A treaty on fissile material should be verifiable in order to be capable of creating confidence. By the term "verifiable" we mean that the treaty needs to have sufficiently elaborated provisions on its verification mechanism. We believe that the best way to proceed is to remain faithful to already agreed language and specifically the Shannon report and the mandate contained therein.

(Mr. Mottaki, Islamic Republic of Iran)

Each and every one of these four core issues has proved to be of priority to a great number of member States. Any programme of work will only enjoy the consensus of the Conference when it adequately addresses all these four issues. We consider naming this approach as containing “linkages” as misleading, an approach which ignores the concerns of other members of the Conference. The four-core-issue approach as reflected in numerous initiatives by members of different regional groupings is the only realistic approach which can best help the Conference get out of its current impasse.

Multilateralism stands as the only viable option before us to tackle the most threatening dangers to our common security. And in fact the continued relevance of this Conference is still the manifestation of this lofty goal within the whole international community. I am sorry to say that the trend in some circles to resort to unilateral action in resolving international security issues is more than ever a trend which prescribes the employment of soldiers, terror and violence as responses to insecurity. I strongly caution that if these policies are not contained, our world at the beginning of the new millennium could be again faced with its biggest challenge, which has the potential to deeply endanger global peace and security.

Unilateralists in the same context are particularly threatening the foundations of the non-proliferation regime and the NPT itself. This regime has devised a very clear path in resolving the issues regarding the implementation of the safeguards agreements within the IAEA framework. The Agency was established to, inter alia, monitor the nuclear activities of the member States and has sufficient tools in its hands to handle the job. But the same unilateralist States, while possessing and developing at the same time the most destructive and inhumane weapons, are too intolerant to allow the Agency to function smoothly. They at the same time, well beyond the legal obligations of the NPT, argue for depriving the developing nations of the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. They try of course to justify their illegal and discriminatory approach under the guise of non-proliferation concerns - concerns that we all share.

Such a unilateralist policy is creating an inappropriate precedent in discussing the nuclear issue of Iran within IAEA. With your indulgence I would like to elaborate some of its aspects. Unfortunately, first of all, biased, exaggerated and unjustified propaganda is being disseminated about the peaceful nuclear programme of the Islamic Republic of Iran, which has misled the international community. While 27 years of illegal sanctions over the implementation of Iran's right to the peaceful use of nuclear energy are being neglected, Iran's right to research on and the use of peaceful nuclear technology is being challenged and undermined. Iran's rights under the NPT, like those of any other State party to the NPT, emanate from the Treaty, and the likes or dislikes of any State may not affect these rights.

Over 1,700 man-days of the most robust and intrusive inspections by IAEA have not proved anything contrary to our initial statement that Iran's nuclear programme is peaceful and has never turned towards prohibited activities. The fact that during all these years of research there has been no diversion of nuclear material towards prohibited activities is in itself proof of Iran's peaceful intentions.

(Mr. Mottaki, Islamic Republic of Iran)

In the course of the past three years, the Islamic Republic of Iran, through the voluntary implementation of the Additional Protocol and its suspension of all enrichment-related activities, took steps far beyond its contractual obligations in order to help build confidence. Any additional legal obligation therefore has to be negotiated by the member States and adopted as new additional safeguards measures.

Iran observed a voluntary suspension of uranium enrichment and related activities for three years while reiterating that “permanent cessation” of a peaceful nuclear programme, which is totally legitimate and permissible under the NPT and carried out under the comprehensive safeguards of IAEA, abrogates its inalienable right under the Treaty and therefore does not constitute a realistic prescription. As a member of the NPT, the Islamic Republic of Iran is still bound by its safeguards agreement with IAEA and continues to carry out its peaceful nuclear programme under the close scrutiny of the Agency.

It should be recalled that the application of over three years of the Agency’s robust inspections system and extraordinary cooperation by my country with the Agency is of the utmost importance, which IAEA has not experienced during its entire history. At the same time we negotiated with European countries for removing the ambiguity around Iran’s peaceful nuclear programme. But three years of negotiations have just added to our mistrust. We witnessed a policy based on the prolongation of the negotiations with no prospect of final agreement. In the same vein we felt that certain countries do not feel committed to attaining the objectives of the NPT and the IAEA safeguards agreements, but they tend to use these legal and institutional instruments as tools for advancing their own foreign policies.

Several formulations have therefore been presented in this context, and above all, the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, at the sixtieth session of the General Assembly, initiated a suggestion entailing the involvement of foreign companies in the Iranian fuel cycle programme.

The fuel cycle programmes have been the subject of deliberations and discussions at the governmental and non-governmental levels. The issue is of paramount importance particularly to countries that have developed nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, and this energy continues to have an important share in their energy mix basket. It is evident that these countries cannot be expected to renounce their legitimate option to develop fuel cycle policies just because of the existence of non-proliferation concerns. In this context, reaching a common understanding on the arrangement to develop fuel cycle policies would be considered an important step towards strengthening the non-proliferation regime.

In our view, one option to resolve the issue could be the establishment of regional consortia on fuel cycle development with the participation of regional countries which have already developed fuel cycle programmes at the national level and intend to develop further their programme for civilian purposes. Such consortia would be jointly operated by the regional States and the costs and benefits would be shared by the participants. Of course, countries outside the region may also participate in such regional arrangements based on modalities agreed

(Mr. Mottaki, Islamic Republic of Iran)

between the parties. The facility would also be jointly owned by the sharing countries, and the work could be divided based on the expertise of the participants. These regional consortia would be placed under IAEA safeguards, which would be yet another contribution to strengthening the IAEA safeguards and increasing the scope of international cooperation in the nuclear field.

A hasty decision to involve the Security Council in Iran's case, while the technical activities of the Agency are still required, is yet another indication of political manoeuvring by some Western countries. It is thus clear that this approach would not serve anybody's purpose in resolving the issue and would only undermine the authority of IAEA and the international organs which are to maintain peace and security.

I shall announce in no uncertain terms that reporting Iran's file to the Security Council is, in our view, an abuse of the international mechanism, misguided, legally unwarranted and clearly unacceptable to the Islamic Republic of Iran. This can only be a disservice to law-based conduct of international relations and a concerted attempt to escalate the situation for the short-sighted political agenda of certain powerful States.

We are grateful for the deliberations of the last week aimed at retaining this file in IAEA, where it logically belongs, to resolve any remaining question. We believe the outcome of this deliberation, which requests the Director General to report to the Board of Governors and in parallel to the Security Council, is nothing short of injustice, double standards and power politics.

This outcome would make it that much harder for us to actively pursue further initiatives and cooperation.

On behalf of the Islamic Republic of Iran I announce that access to peaceful nuclear technology is the indisputable right of Iran and other NPT States parties. At this point I must stress that the adoption of political means to deny nations their inalienable rights will undoubtedly be futile, will undermine international instruments and will create a crisis.

The PRESIDENT: I should like to thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran for the important speech he has given and also for the kind words he addressed to the Chair.

I will now suspend the plenary meeting for a few minutes in order to escort the Minister for Foreign Affairs from the Council Chamber.

The meeting was suspended at 10.40 a.m. and resumed at 10.45 a.m.

The PRESIDENT: The 1015th plenary meeting is resumed.

Today we are going to bid farewell to our distinguished colleague Ambassador John Freeman, who is completing his duties as the representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the Conference on Disarmament.

(The President)

Ambassador Freeman joined us in September 2004 and during his tenure, he represented his Government with remarkable authority and diplomatic skills, not only in the Conference, but also at other disarmament forums.

Following his election, he chaired the Biological Weapons Convention Meeting of Experts and Meeting of States Parties in 2005. Ambassador Freeman brought energy and creativity to this politically charged and technically challenging area, and performed a valuable service by ensuring that professional scientific associations and societies were actively involved in the work on the 2005 topic, "Codes of conduct for scientists".

Ambassador Freeman succeeded in guiding the Meeting of States Parties to a consensus outcome, stressing the value of scientific codes, and in doing so helped provide a sound and detailed basis for the Sixth Review Conference to be held later this year.

On behalf of the Conference on Disarmament and on my own behalf, I sincerely wish Ambassador Freeman much success in his new assignments and a lot of happiness in the future.

I also have the following speakers on my list for today's plenary meeting: Ambassador Masood Khan of Pakistan, Ambassador Wolfgang Petritsch of Austria, on behalf of the EU, and Ambassador Carlo Trezza of Italy, for the time being.

I give the floor to Ambassador Masood Khan of Pakistan.

Mr. KHAN (Pakistan): Mr. President, I congratulate you on the assumption of the presidency of the CD, as you bring a forthright and practical approach to the forum. We look forward to working under your leadership.

We thank your immediate predecessor, Ambassador Park In-kook of the Republic of Korea, for his diligence and dedication as well as his able presidency. In this session, each succeeding President is making a contribution to the realization of the common vision of all six Presidents.

We thank you for inviting the Iranian Foreign Minister, His Excellency Dr. Monouchehr Mottaki, to address this forum. We listened to his statement with great attention and interest and welcome his exhortation to the CD to agree upon a programme of work.

Dr. Kim Howells, the United Kingdom Minister of State, addressing this forum last week, said that whilst there were real grounds for concern about the disarray in the United Nations disarmament machinery these should "spur us into action, not cause us to sink into pessimism". We think this is good advice, especially to move the CD towards an agreed programme of work. After eight years we do not have a programme of work. Dr. Howells remarked that this is not good politics by any definition. How apt.

(Mr. Khan, Pakistan)

We also agree with Dr. Howells that the CD should get down to its “real work, the work for which it was instituted: the negotiation of valuable multilateral disarmament instruments”.

Mr. President, it has not been a question of why, but how. How can we do it? How can we revive the CD? Because we know why so well.

This year the six Presidents have initiated an interactive thematic debate. And the P6 have designated the F6 to look at the agenda and the methods of work. The interactive dialogue is especially useful because it helps build confidence and enhances our understanding of the issues involved. Such engagement is also necessary for preparing the ground for negotiations. While we hold such a dialogue, it is necessary that we take another stab at the programme of work, directly, because our real work is negotiations. Increasingly, it is difficult to explain the anomaly that a reasonable programme of work, such as the A5, which enjoys the support of the majority of States, does not enable us to commence negotiations.

The premise that a package approach is hampering the process is not tenable because such an approach attempts to address the core concerns of all. The alternative would be to accept a unilateralist remit suggested by a few. This would not help us move forward, even if we started acting under that illusion. Linkages are the staple of multilateral diplomacy. Sometimes they are internal; and sometimes external. We should know how to handle them.

We all know that the so-called structural issues - consensus, rules of procedure, decision-making, and regional groups - are amenable to solutions. The underlying political problems seem to be intractable at the moment. For instance, we do not find any proven advantage in bypassing or sidelining regional groups. This year, we have a looser structure of consultation in the form of the P6 and the F6. The pertinent question here is whether we will fully use their abilities. You would, of course, counsel patience, and we understand that.

What we really need is a dialogue on the underlying differences and competing interests of member States. We need to strike the right balance between arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament.

From our point of view, the issues that need more discussion to bring divergent positions close are: the pace of nuclear disarmament; missile defence; vertical proliferation, particularly the miniaturization or further sophistication of nuclear weapons; and the weaponization of outer space and potential or planned military dominance through such weapons.

We are glad that starting today, we will attend a two-day seminar on “Building the architecture for sustainable space security” being hosted by UNIDIR.

In the context of a fissile material treaty, issues relating to definition, scope, verification and existing stocks are to be discussed and addressed upfront. We have to tackle the question of whether the treaty would deal with disarmament or non-proliferation.

(Mr. Khan, Pakistan)

Our approach to an FMT is based, at a minimum, on three elements. First, it should be tied to the twin objectives of non-proliferation and disarmament (prevention of the vertical and horizontal spread of nuclear weapons technology will ensure non-proliferation, while cuts in existing stocks will ensure disarmament). Second, a treaty should have an effective verification mechanism. Third, it should be non-discriminatory.

A few States wish to restrict the proposed ban on fissile materials only to future production. The vast majority of the CD's membership would like the FMT to address the issue of stockpiles and, through their progressive and balanced reduction, to promote the goal of nuclear disarmament.

In order to maintain strategic deterrence in South Asia, we shall need to look into existing fissile materials. One can only presume that, over time, fissile material stocks would be transformed into nuclear weapons. An FMT, which freezes or accentuates asymmetries, will accelerate, not arrest, proliferation.

The principles of the non-discriminatory character of the treaty, as well as international and effective verification, are not preconditions. Such a characterization would be a misnomer. These are agreed bases which should not be diluted. But even if some States have revisited the subject, other items on the table cannot be removed from the CD agenda at will.

Ambassador Yoshiki Mine presented his initial thoughts on an FMT on 9 March. Such papers are helpful as they attempt to deconstruct this complex issue beyond general statements. And I would say such efforts are "earnest money deposits" for a good cause.

We have said that, at a deeper level, the global security architecture is in a state of flux. There are clear differences of perspective, approach and modalities among member States. In order to bridge these differences we have called for the need to evolve a new security consensus to achieve disarmament and non-proliferation in order to address the existing and emerging global challenges. This must be promoted through consultations and agreement among all United Nations Member States.

You propose to hold some informal meetings on FMT. We are ready to participate in any setting - formal or informal. It is, however, not correct to assume that delegations will be able to say in an informal setting what they will not say in formal meetings. In the CD, States are represented and the personal predilections, if any, of a diplomat will not override State policies. It will still be the CD chamber as its backdrop. We cannot have a proxy debate here. It has to be the real thing. Hence the desirability of having formal meetings. Informal meetings and seminars are organized by UNIDIR, the Geneva Forum, the GCSP, and they are very good at it. We attend them with immense enthusiasm.

It is not correct to argue that some issues are not ripe for negotiation. One would say there has been activity on PAROS and disarmament, in one form or the other. On NSAs, we do not have to start from scratch. Unilateral declarations made by the nuclear-weapons States can

(Mr. Khan, Pakistan)

be expanded. The negotiations undertaken in the Conference on Disarmament and its ad hoc committee dealing with NSAs can help reach an agreement. Proposals, including drafts of an international convention, have been submitted under the relevant item in the CD. Therefore, in this context, we fully support the call of Ambassador José Artur Denot Medeiros of Brazil made on 16 March in this chamber that legally binding assurances should be given to non-nuclear States.

Once negotiations start in good faith on all the four core issues, it is apparent that they will have a different pace for progress or lack thereof. At that point one could ask if one particular issue was ripe for conclusion or not. Treaty-making is a complex and demanding process, and we all know that. What one needs to appreciate is that the impasse in the CD has not only hindered movement on a fissile material treaty but it has also held back action on other subjects of equal importance.

Multilateralism requires States to have a long-term view and to transcend their national positions. It is not a simple aggregation of national interests, because no such aggregation is possible given the varied interests of States. Multilateralism, if anything, is the sum of “enlightened self-interest”. It ensures collective security and therefore entails cooperation and agreement on systems for monitoring and verification, and compliance. We appreciate that recently some significant pronouncements have been made about multilateralism.

Compilations of the focused debates need to be done more carefully. To make them useful and credible, they should be based on some objective criterion and methodology. Otherwise, full records are good enough. They should try to capture the recurrent themes and strands and quote them in their proper context. We trust the Presidents will take precautions in not tilting the balance of a compilation in favour of a preferred subject or item, although that may be tempting at times. We have to look at the whole, not the parts, and the President represents all, not parts.

I would conclude by quoting the former Secretary-General of the CD, Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, who said in November 2001, of course, in a lighter vein: “... in Geneva, we have at our disposal a good, modern car, ready to be used; we have excellent, skilful drivers, but the road ahead is blocked by the lack of political will”.

In the CD, it is not a Da Vinci Code that we are trying to decipher; it is the writing on the wall, which we cannot read through a collective lens, because we have not developed one so far.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Pakistan for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to Ambassador Wolfgang Petritsch of Austria, who will speak on behalf of the European Union.

Mr. PETRITSCH (Austria): Mr. President, I have the honour to take the floor on behalf of the European Union and the acceding countries Bulgaria and Romania. Since this is the first time I speak during your presidency, I wish to congratulate you on your assumption of the post

(Mr. Petritsch, Austria)

of President of the Conference on Disarmament. Let me also express our gratitude to your predecessors in 2006 for their tireless work during their tenure. I can assure you, as well as the incoming CD Presidents, of our full support in your efforts to guide and lead this august body.

The ongoing stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament remains a matter of serious concern. The existing and new threats to peace and security require that this standstill be overcome. This is essential. The EU is strongly committed to reaching consensus on a programme of work in the CD and welcomes the fact that new ideas and proposals have been put forward over the last few years. We appreciate these efforts aimed at promoting consensus for a programme of work and support the efforts to that end of the six Presidents of the CD this year, which constitute a welcome step towards bringing the CD back to substantive work. The EU welcomes the discussion that took place during the structured debate focused on nuclear disarmament and looks forward to continued active discussion on the other topics. We also wish to highlight the important role that could be played by the Friends of the Presidents in assisting the six Presidents on specific topics and activities by making use of the fullest extent of their capacities. In addition, the EU would like to recall its attachment to the follow-up of the enlargement process of the CD - and in particular to those members of the EU which are not yet members of the CD, as well as candidate countries which have submitted a request for admission into the Conference.

The EU attaches clear priority to the negotiation, in the Conference on Disarmament, of a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices as a means to strengthen nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. We call again for the immediate commencement of negotiations as well as the early conclusion of a non-discriminatory, universally applicable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, without preconditions, and bearing in mind the Special Coordinator's report and the mandate for an ad hoc committee contained therein. Pending the entry into force of an FMCT, the EU calls on all States to declare and uphold a moratorium on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices and welcomes the action of those four States which have decreed such moratoria.

The EU looks forward to the upcoming structured debate focused on FMCT and hopes that delegations will respond positively to the appeal of the Presidents of the CD to participate actively in the discussion, including through the presence of experts and the submission of working papers. The EU would also favour the participation of IAEA in providing information on the FMCT issue in accordance with rule 41 of the rules of procedure.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Austria for his statement and for the kind words to the Chair, as well as for the encouragement addressed to the Presidents and to the Conference as a whole. I now give the floor to the representative of Italy, Ambassador Carlo Trezza.

Mr. TREZZA (Italy): Mr. President, this is the first time that I am taking the floor under your presidency and I would therefore like to congratulate you and express my full support in your endeavours. I would also like to pay tribute to your predecessors in 2006, Ambassador Rapacki of Poland and Ambassador Park of the Republic of Korea.

Italy fully subscribes to the statement made today by the EU presidency on an FMCT and recalls that the EU's support to an FMCT is part both of an EU strategy and of a legally binding common position. These commitments are corroborated by more recent high-level declarations at the national level: Ambassador Rivasseau of France brought to the attention of the CD the reference to FMCT made in a recent French Presidential statement. We also appreciated the presence last week of the Minister of State of the United Kingdom, Dr. Kim Howells, who made broad reference to FMCT in his statement to this body. The promotion of an FMCT is at this stage the object of Italy's special attention in its bilateral and multilateral contacts.

We also noted with interest the reference to cooperation between India and the United States for the conclusion of a multilateral fissile material cut-off treaty in their bilateral statement of 18 July of last year.

Several delegations have already mentioned the FMCT during the general debates and the focused discussion on nuclear disarmament. This is legitimate and appropriate not only on the basis of rule 30 of our rules of procedure, but also because an FMCT is indeed an integral part of the nuclear disarmament and arms control process as well as of the non-proliferation process (no additional weapon-grade fissile material, no additional countries producing it). It is no coincidence that the FMCT figures as a prominent item of the progressive efforts to implement article VI of the NPT, as indicated by the 2000 NPT Review Conference. In fact, we are already behind schedule with regard to the year 2000 indications, which established a five-year delay for the entry into force of such a treaty.

For some - especially after 1998 - an FMCT negotiation comes too late. We are not of this opinion. A legally binding commitment would still significantly enhance international peace and security. An FMCT is part of the acquis of nuclear disarmament to which at least all NPT contracting parties have subscribed. It is feasible, and we believe it is consensual. You reminded us today of our departing colleague, Ambassador Freeman of the United Kingdom. I would like to recall the statement that he made in this chamber on 23 February: "We have again been struck by the fact that no delegation disagrees on the need to start negotiations on an FMCT." In our reading this means that there is a consensus on the principle of an FMCT negotiation. We are aware that some delegations have other priorities. We are ready to deal with them. Nuclear disarmament, PAROS, negative security assurances and the so-called "new issues" are legitimate items for a programme of work. However, as yet they do not command full consensus. We should try to avoid that the "good" becomes a victim of the "better"; it would be a paradox if an FMCT, which is part and parcel of the nuclear disarmament process, were to fall victim to that very process. How can we be serious about nuclear weapons disarmament if we do not start by "cutting off" the flow of the material necessary to produce those weapons, and we do not agree that this material should never be produced again?

(Mr. Trezza, Italy)

We welcome the fact that most of the nuclear-weapons States have already established a moratorium on the production of fissile material for weapons. Some of them have taken a further step forward by dismantling their production facilities; others are believed at least not to produce such material any more. Pending the entry into force of an FMCT we call on all States, including non-NPT States, to declare and uphold a moratorium on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. A confirmation of non-production of such material even by NPT non-nuclear-weapons States could be helpful in creating a momentum conducive to a wider commitment.

But moratoria and unilateral declarations, as well as simple de facto abstentions on production, are no substitute for a legally binding instrument.

The issue of the possession of the full nuclear fuel cycle is one of the key problems the international community has to face today. Proposals are coming from many quarters to establish a new discipline which would require further restraints, especially from non-nuclear-weapons States. A new discipline on fissile material for civil purposes would benefit from an agreement on weapon-grade fissile material through an FMCT. We are talking in this case of the most dangerous kind of nuclear fissile material: the kind destined for nuclear explosions. This is probably the material which terrorist groups are most eager to obtain. We believe that the international community would be much safer if such production were stopped, if a new nuclear arms race was made impossible, if production facilities for this material were to be decommissioned. An FMCT could be conducive to possible understandings on the discipline of the nuclear fuel cycle.

We are looking forward to a more focused discussion on an FMCT in the coming weeks and months. We hope that delegations will respond positively to the indications of the Presidents to actively participate in the discussions, including through the presence of experts. We also favour the participation of IAEA to provide information on the FMCT issue in accordance with rule 41 of the rules of procedure.

We appreciate the comprehensive and substantial statement made by the Ambassador of Japan with its concrete references to some of the main questions of substance and of procedure. We share the view expressed by the distinguished delegate of Brazil, that very strict, detailed and prescriptive approaches at the outset risk delaying the beginning of negotiations. A similar concept was expressed by the Ambassador of Egypt. We welcome the fact that the Ambassador of France has informed us of the significant step of his country's dismantling of its fissile material installations for weapons-grade plutonium and HEU.

We share the comment by the Ambassador of Algeria that an FMCT should take charge both of disarmament and non-proliferation subjects, and note the interesting remarks on fissile material transparency presented by the Irish Ambassador. The incremental approach advocated by the Ambassador of Chile for an FMCT negotiation is of interest and deserves further attention. Other delegations also mentioned the FMCT, and we listened carefully to the

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references to such a treaty contained in the NGO statement delivered on the occasion of International Women's Day. The attention already given to an FMCT is in our view a signal of great expectation vis-à-vis such a negotiation and augurs well for a more in-depth approach in the coming sessions.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Italy for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair and to the other Presidents, and I also hope that his remarks concerning future expectations are met.

This concludes my list of speakers for today. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor at this time? I give the floor to the representative of Japan, Ambassador Yoshiaki Mine.

Mr. MINE (Japan): Mr. President, I have a short announcement, but I think that since this is the first time I have asked for the floor under your presidency, I should like to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency. I am sure that under your able guidance we can make new contributions to our work.

In order to make effective use of the six-week intersessional period before the focus on the FMCT begins in mid-May, Japan intends to arrange an informal open-ended meeting on the FMCT before the Easter vacation. The aim of this informal open-ended meeting is to once again look at the value of an FMCT as the next urgent step towards nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

We do not intend to reach any conclusions or to go into detail or technical discussions in this meeting, but to review the history of how the FMCT has emerged as the next nuclear disarmament step and exchange views on the importance and significance of an FMCT to nuclear disarmament.

All CD members will shortly receive an invitation letter, and I hope that you will all actively participate in the meeting.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Japan for his statement, also for his kind words addressed to the Chair, and allow me to commend this initiative and also join his wishes and expectations that the member States in this Conference will participate in that event.

Does any other delegation wish to take the floor at the moment? Apparently, that is not the case.

Allow me to present some remarks.

I am addressing you with a very strange feeling, that one may have when acting as a "President for one day". It is a week since I delivered my opening statement, and here we are today at the point where I am supposed to already speak about a closure - of the first part of the 2006 CD session. When checking history, I discovered that such a situation might not be the

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worst one. An inscription on a statue in Plattsburg, Missouri, reads that David Rice Atchison (1807-1886) was “President of the United States for one day”. He could be considered a hero of efficiency in government, since he had no staff, no advisers, no speech writers, not even a Vice-President. Not only that, but he also completed his entire Presidential agenda in just one day!

However, the relief of completion of the mandate is not here, since after the intersessional period we will still hold important meetings under the Romanian CD presidency and, moreover, this is just a component of the exercise jointly developed by the six Presidents of the current session. That is why I am tempted to wrap up our proceedings by saying that, in its several attempts to return to substantive work, the Conference has taken a new path this year.

The “identity crisis” we are experiencing is not unusual for multilateral bodies, including those dealing with disarmament. Let me recall that when speaking in the early 1920s about the necessity for the League of Nations to achieve some results, Lord Robert Cecil said that if the League did not undertake something worthwhile for disarmament, its whole reputation would be endangered and it would risk losing the confidence of the nations of the world. Almost 80 years later, we hear similar messages addressed to the Conference on Disarmament, not only by the CD delegations, but also by high-ranking officials coming from the capitals. To mention only our last two plenary meetings, we heard His Excellency Dr. Kim Howells, Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in London, urging us to connect to the realities of the outside world. This very morning, His Excellency Dr. Manouchehr Mottaki, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, also referred to the need for the CD to overcome the deadlock.

I think it is not an overstatement to say that the first part of the 2006 CD session has brought a little bit of openness and mutual confidence to our endeavours to find a consensual solution. At the same time, as the outgoing President, Ambassador Park of the Republic of Korea, mentioned in his closing statement, we may detect “the increased level of readiness to engage and contribute” to bridging the divergences that prevent us from conducting substantive work. I strongly hope that this positive trend will continue for the rest of the session and that it will not be affected by what some might call “spring fatigue”, or even worse, “CD fatigue”.

In preparing for the resumption of the second part of the current CD session, I would like to highlight one crucial element for our activity: the instructions we act upon from our capitals. We all are well aware of their importance, yet we must not ignore that one of the rationales of our presence here is precisely to provide first-hand inputs and constructive, realistic suggestions for such decision-making processes.

(continued in French)

In view of the fact that the intersessional period is not too busy, but instead resembles a holiday period, I would like to conclude my statement in that spirit by referring to a special event linked to our Conference, to wit the 2006 CD tennis cup. I take this opportunity to commend the

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winner, Mr. Romain Esmenjaud of the delegation of France, as well as the other participants, for whom the words of Pierre de Coubertin are more valid than ever: “The important thing in life is not to triumph but to compete. It is not to have vanquished but to have fought well”. At the same time, I trust that for the other members of the CD, this quotation will remain valid and to the point.

Allow me to announce that the next plenary meeting will take place on 16 May in this room at 10 a.m.

This week we also have three days for the structured debate. We shall stay here. For those of you who are leaving for New York, on my own behalf, I wish you a safe journey, and for those who are remaining here, we will stay in touch.

The meeting rose at 11.25 a.m.