

# CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/1796

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**LETTER DATED 6 SEPTEMBER 2006 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE  
OF ITALY TO THE CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT ADDRESSED TO THE  
SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE CONFERENCE TRANSMITTING A DOCUMENT ON  
THE EVOLUTION OF THE AGENDA OF THE CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT**

I have the pleasure of sending, herewith attached, a document on the evolution of the Agenda of the Conference on Disarmament.

I would appreciate it if this paper could be issued as an official document of the CD.

(Signed:)

Carlo Trezza  
Ambassador  
Permanent Representative of Italy  
to the Conference on Disarmament

## **THE AGENDA OF THE CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT**

### **I. The “Decalogue”**

1. The origins of the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament go back to the deliberations of the Special Session of the UN General Assembly (SSOD I), in 1978. The subjects to be dealt by the “Committee on Disarmament” were identified for the first time by the final document of the SSOD I, which indicated (in the “programme of action” for the goal of general and complete disarmament) the following priorities in “disarmament negotiations”: “nuclear weapons, other weapons of mass destruction, including chemical weapons; conventional weapons, including any which may be deemed to be excessively injurious or to have indiscriminate effects; and reduction of armed forces”.

2. At its initial session in 1979, the Committee on Disarmament agreed to deal with the cessation of the arms race and disarmament and other relevant measures in the following areas:

- (i) Nuclear weapons in all its aspects;
- (ii) Chemical weapons;
- (iii) Other weapons of mass destruction;
- (iv) Conventional weapons;
- (v) Reduction of military budgets;
- (vi) Reduction of armed forces;
- (vii) Disarmament and development;
- (viii) Disarmament and international security;
- (ix) Collateral measures; confidence-building measures; effective verification methods in relation to appropriate disarmament measures, acceptable to all parties concerned;
- (x) Comprehensive programme of disarmament leading to general and complete disarmament under effective international control.

3. This list of items is often referred to as the “Decalogue”.

### **II. The Agenda**

4. Since April 1979, the Committee on Disarmament - which changed its name into Conference on Disarmament in 1984, on the basis of a recommendation of the UNGA by Resolution 37/99 K of 13 December 1982 - has been adopting its annual agenda on the basis of the “Decalogue”. The first agenda of the Committee on Disarmament consisted of the following six items:

- “1. Nuclear test Ban;
- 2. Cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament;

3. Effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons;
  4. Chemical weapons;
  5. New types of weapons of mass destruction and new systems of such weapons; radiological weapons;
  6. Consideration and adoption of the annual report and any other report as appropriate to the General Assembly of the United Nations.”
5. In the subsequent years, new items were added to the agenda, as follows:
- (a) in 1980: "Comprehensive programme of disarmament", as agenda item 6; (CD/62 and Add. 1);
  - (b) in 1982: "Prevention of an arms race in outer space", as agenda item 7; (CD/242)
  - (c) in 1983: a new issue, namely, "prevention of nuclear war, including all related matters" was added to agenda item 2, which subsequently read "Cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament; prevention of nuclear war, including all related matters"; (CD/356 and Add. 1);
  - (d) in 1984, "Prevention of nuclear war, including all related matters" became a separate agenda item 3; (CD/433)
  - (e) in 1992: "Transparency in armaments", as agenda item 9; (CD/1119 and Add. 1);
6. With the signing of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction, in 1992, the item "Chemical Weapons" was terminated. Similarly, after the conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty in 1996, the item "Nuclear Test Ban" was also terminated.
7. In 1997, the Conference adopted the following agenda (CD/ 1446):
- “1. Cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament;
  2. Prevention of nuclear war, including all related matters;
  3. Prevention of an arms race in outer space;
  4. Effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons;
  5. New types of weapons of mass destruction and new system of such weapons; radiological weapons;
  6. Comprehensive programme of disarmament;
  7. Transparency in armaments;
  8. Consideration and adoption of the annual report and any other report, as appropriate, to the General Assembly of the United Nations.”

8. Since 1997, the agenda has remained unchanged but its adoption has been accompanied by Presidential statements. In 2006 a statement by the President reads as follows: “In connection with the adoption of the agenda, I, as the President of the Conference, should like to state that it is my understanding that if there is a consensus in the Conference to deal with any issues, they could be dealt within this agenda. The Conference will also take into consideration rules 27 and 30 of the rules of procedure of the Conference, as well as paragraph 22 and other relevant paragraphs of the 2005 report of the Conference on Disarmament to the General Assembly, contained in document CD/1761”.

### **III. Rules of Procedure**

9 According to the Rules of Procedure:

Rule 27: “At the beginning of each annual session, the Conference shall adopt its agenda for the year. In doing so, the Conference shall take into account the recommendations made to it by the General Assembly, the proposals presented by member States of the Conference and the decisions of the Conference”.

10. Rule 30: “The subject of statements made in plenary meetings will normally correspond to the topic then under discussion in accordance with the agreed programme of work. However, it is the right of any member State of the Conference to raise any subject relevant to the work of the Conference at a plenary meeting and to have full opportunity of presenting its views on any subject which it may consider to merit attention”.

11. Rule 31: “While the work of the Conference is in progress, member States may request the inclusion of an urgent item in the agenda. The Conference decides whether and when this item should be considered”.

### **IV. CD Agenda and the UN General Assembly recommendations**

12. SSOD I, in this final document indicated that the then “Committee on Disarmament” would adopt its agenda taking into account the recommendations made to it by the General Assembly and the proposals presented by the Members of the Committee.

13. This concept is repeated with some adjustments in Rule 27 of the ROP which refers to the adoption of the agenda . “In doing so the Conference shall take into account the recommendations made to it by the General Assembly, the proposals presented by Member States of the Conference and the decisions of the Conference”.

14. The Conference receives at the beginning of its sessions a letter from the Secretary General of the UN transmitting the resolutions and decisions on disarmament and international security

matters adopted by the General Assembly in its previous session, including those making specific reference to the Conference on Disarmament (in 2006 –CD/1762).

## **V. Review of the Agenda**

15. The issue of the Review of the Agenda is mentioned in the “Chapeau” of the Agenda itself (CD/1764). “... deciding to resume its consultations on the review of the Agenda...” and is mentioned in the yearly report: “The importance of the review of the agenda of the Conference was addressed by delegations in plenary meeting. Their views on the issue are duly reflected in the plenary records”. (CD/1761 para. 16).

## **VI. Declarations on the Agenda by the President of the CD**

16. On 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2006, the President of the CD made the following statement: “Preserving the agenda is crucially important, taking into account the lack of programme of work. The CD may deal with any issues and they could be dealt with within its agenda. At the same time, each CD President is obliged to continue to keep in mind the question of the review of the agenda (see: chapeau of the agenda adopted on 24 January). We are of the view that the Friends of Presidents could assist P6 in discharging that responsibility, and conduct informal consultations in this regard. It is also worth mentioning here that, according to the rules of procedure, a programme of work should be adopted on the basis of the CD agenda. Therefore, there is a clear link between the issue of agenda and programme of work. Thus, the FoPs, subsequently and naturally, will also assist the P6 in our search for consensus on a programme of work.”

## **VII. Findings of previous Special Coordinators on the review of the agenda**

17. The issue of the review of the agenda dates back to 1992. Several Special Coordinators have been appointed in the past to deal with this issue. They circulated questionnaires and conducted consultations. Their main findings resulted in a sort of division between those members which do not believe that the agenda should be changed and those for whom the agenda should be revised. They reported that some Delegations they consulted with had indicated that a new Special Session of the General Assembly would be necessary to update the agenda. Other Delegations believed that it would be difficult to agree on a different agenda. Furthermore, some Special Coordinators have come to the conclusion that the agenda is a mere procedural matter: the priority should have been given to a program of work. It was also suggested by some to merge items 1 (Cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament) and 2 (Prevention of nuclear war, including all related matters) under a general topic entitled “Nuclear Disarmament”. For some Delegations, item 5 (New types of weapons of mass destruction and new systems of such weapons; radiological weapons) could have been suppressed because this kind of weapons would no longer represent a real threat. Counter-arguments were also presented indicating that item 1 and 2 must remain divided as they are,

because they regard different aspects of nuclear disarmament, and item 5 would be still relevant especially because of increasing terrorist threat.

### **VIII. Statements**

18. In addition to the declarations by Presidents, several delegations during 2006 made substantial references, including at Ministerial level, to the question of the Agenda which this year was adopted by consensus at the Conference's very first meeting. In most cases satisfaction was indicated, for the speed within which the agenda was adopted this year, that Agenda is inclusive and does not limit the CD work, is appropriate for dealing with current disarmament and security issues, comprehensive and flexible enough to accommodate all issues of concern.

19. One delegation however also recalled that previous reservations concerning the agenda remained relevant. It was also said that too many members remain committed to an outmoded and unrealistic agenda that dates back to the cold war. It was also stated that the CD should continue to address the issue of radiological weapons.

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