

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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FINAL RECORD OF THE ONE THOUSAND AND SIXTY-FIRST PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 20 March 2007, at 10.15 a.m.

President: Ms. Sarala FERNANDO (Sri Lanka)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 1061st plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

I would like at the outset to extend a warm welcome to Ambassador Martin Uhomoibhi, Permanent Representative of Nigeria, who has recently assumed responsibilities as the representative of his Government to the Conference on Disarmament. I would like to assure him of our full cooperation and support in his new assignments.

To proceed with the business for today, I have the following speakers on my list: Ambassador Paul Meyer, Canada, on FMCT; Ambassador Yevhen Bersheda, Ukraine, on the ATT; Ambassador Jürg Streuli of Switzerland, on items 5, 6 and 7; and Ambassador Martin Uhomoibhi, Nigeria, a general statement.

However, before giving them the floor, I would like to make my opening statement as the presidency of Sri Lanka begins today.

I have the honour to convey to the Conference the following message of good wishes addressed to the Conference by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sri Lanka, the Honourable Rohitha Bogollagama.

“I have great pleasure in addressing this special message on the occasion of Sri Lanka’s assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. As a small yet always engaged Member State of the United Nations, Sri Lanka’s assumption of the presidency of this Conference is yet another manifestation of its commitment to and belief in multilateral diplomacy as the indispensable means to address major global challenges and to enhance the prospects of a stable, just and peaceful world. The Conference on Disarmament, as the sole multilateral negotiating body on disarmament matters, has a proud history of codification and remains relevant to our constant endeavour to free the world from all weapons of mass destruction.

“I take this opportunity to urge all members of the Conference to work with renewed commitment and a sense of urgency, while also demonstrating maximum flexibility, to strengthen the hand of the six Presidents of the Conference in 2007 in their endeavour to overcome the present impasse and in order to realize once again the full potential of the Conference on Disarmament in meeting the challenges of the international security and strategic environment. One should not forget for a moment that the international community is eagerly waiting for the Conference on Disarmament to get down to its substantive work, and I wish you all the very best in your endeavours towards achieving that goal.”

Sri Lanka assumes its fourth presidency of the Conference on Disarmament at a time of both critical challenge and opportunity for this august body. Having remained at an impasse over the last several years, unable to agree on a programme of work, many appear disheartened over the prospects of the CD, reasoning that it is a reflection of a broader global malaise affecting the entire multilateral disarmament machinery.

(The President)

While progress has been made on important reductions in the nuclear arms stockpiles following the end of the cold war, we cannot forget that tens of thousands of nuclear weapons still remain in arsenals around the world. We need to redouble our efforts to create the conditions for the realization of our shared objective of a nuclear-weapon-free world. All of us have a collective responsibility and engagement in the historic cause of disarmament and non-proliferation initiated by the very first resolution adopted by the United Nations General Assembly of 24 January 1946, calling for the elimination of all atomic weapons and “all other major weapons adaptable to mass destruction”.

It is against this background that under the leadership of Ambassador Rapacki of Poland in 2006 and Ambassador Mtshali of South Africa in 2007, an initiative was born to build a common platform for the year which has brought a ray of hope to the CD that it would enable member States to narrow their differences and reach common understandings.

At the same time we need to keep in mind that the CD, although the master of its own proceedings, is nevertheless responsible to the international community as a whole, which is the eventual beneficiary of our deliberations. It is the international community which will receive the final products that come out of this body in the form of international instruments and contribute thereby to global peace and security. We need to ask ourselves whether we have discharged our responsibilities diligently.

As a representative of a non-aligned country which is neither a nuclear-weapon State nor has any ambition to become one, our delegation made its advent into the Committee on Disarmament in 1979, one of eight new members admitted following the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, which brought a wave of democratization into this body, which previously had been restricted to militarily significant States. Since that time the Government’s instructions to the Sri Lanka delegation have always remained to constructively participate in and contribute positively and actively to the consensus-building process in this unique “multilateral disarmament negotiation body”.

Sri Lanka’s presidency will also cover week 10 of the P-6 platform, during which an evaluation will be made on the basis of which will be determined the planning of activities for the second half of this year, including the level of intensity of work for the various coordinators. I would like to remind all delegations that Sri Lanka, in conducting this exercise, will be acting together with the other 2007 Presidents, wielding the collective responsibility which is the cornerstone of the P-6 platform, in an open, transparent manner. On behalf of the P-6, I extend our sincere appreciation to the coordinators for exercising their responsibilities with competence and dedication.

In conclusion I would like to express my felicitations and sincere thanks to my distinguished predecessors, Ambassador Glaudine Mtshali of South Africa and Ambassador Juan Antonio March of Spain, for their strong and confident leadership, which has contributed greatly to both the new momentum and the positive atmosphere in the CD.

(The President)

I would also like to provide some information to the CD on the schedule for this week. The P-6 intends to conduct consultations with regional groups on Wednesday, 21 March, starting with the G-21 at 10 a.m., followed by the Western Group and the Eastern European Group at 11 a.m. and 12 noon, respectively, and also China.

On Friday, 23 March, at 3 p.m., I will hold an informal meeting of the CD to brief on the P-6 report to the Conference and the P-6 proposal and the proposed timetable for the second part of the session. This meeting will be followed by a formal plenary at 5 p.m. on the same day.

In week 10, there will be a formal plenary on Tuesday, 27 March, for purposes of evaluation and decision-making by the Conference. You will see, therefore, that we are a little ahead of the organizational framework proposed at the beginning of this year.

I would now like to give the floor to the representatives of the countries on my list of speakers for today, beginning with Canada, Ambassador Paul Meyer.

Mr. MEYER (Canada): Madam President, let me take this opportunity to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the CD. At this critical juncture in the Conference, please be assured that you have my delegation's full support in your work.

It is my pleasure today to introduce a new working paper prepared by Canada on the connection between verification and scope in an FMCT. This paper builds on some of the points that my delegation raised during the informal meetings on agenda item 2 earlier this month. The paper is now being distributed in the room, and I would request that it be issued as an official document of the Conference.

The paper starts from the premise that an effective verification mechanism is an important element of any non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament agreement. An FMCT verification regime should involve measures to ensure confidence that all States parties are complying with their treaty-based commitment not to produce fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

But the paper also recognizes that the characteristics of an appropriate verification mechanism depend to a large degree on the scope of the agreement. It also bears in mind that the verification system should, at least initially, build upon existing verification tools used by IAEA, in which States already have a high degree of confidence. Specifically, an FMCT should provide for the current IAEA-based NPT safeguards regime to be used as a basis for demonstrating compliance of NPT non-nuclear-weapon States (NNWS).

To do this, the paper assumes an FMCT that covers materials represented by the IAEA term "unirradiated direct-use material". This captures the materials most likely to be used to manufacture nuclear explosive devices, and I refer colleagues to the IAEA glossary for a precise definition of that term.

(Mr. Meyer, Canada)

Utilizing this definition also ensures consistency with existing IAEA verification provisions. In fact, for NPT NNWS, a comprehensive safeguards agreement plus an additional protocol to that agreement would be sufficient to demonstrate compliance by those States with an FMCT. Accordingly, NPT NNWS that do not currently have comprehensive safeguards and an additional protocol in force would have to adopt these standards to be in full compliance with the requirements of an FMCT.

For NPT NWS and non-NPT States the verification focus would be on declared fissile material and on facilities for the enrichment, reprocessing, and storage of such materials. In principle, the goal of the verification arrangements would be the same as for NPT NNWS, that is, no diversion of declared fissile material, nor undeclared production of such material.

While the application of relevant IAEA safeguards measures in such States would be preferred, alternative verification measures could be considered, drawing upon the rich experience gained in other nuclear non-proliferation arms control and disarmament treaties and initiatives, for example, the INF treaty, the SALT and START treaties, and the Trilateral Initiative.

These verification measures could be pursued multilaterally, bilaterally or through national technical means, although any verification conclusions drawn from such activities would need to be shared with all FMCT States parties.

The paper looks at two other challenges for verification, namely existing stocks of fissile material, and production of fissile material for non-explosive purposes.

The paper assumes that an FMCT would only cover future production, and thus stockpiles of fissile material existing at entry into force would not be covered by the treaty per se. In light of the potential diversion risk, however, these stocks should be addressed in some manner. We suggest that NWS and non-NPT States should complement a production cut-off by declaring existing fissile material inventories to the broadest extent possible, and accepting the application of appropriately tailored verification provisions. These States should also ensure that fissile material declared surplus to military needs is made subject to international control, as indeed some have already done.

The paper also assumes that an FMCT would not prohibit production for military, non-explosive purposes, such as for naval nuclear propulsion, nor would it prohibit production for specified civilian uses, such as the production of radioisotopes. This is certainly a challenge for a verification mechanism, but not in our view an insurmountable one. Such a scenario is already addressed under the existing safeguards system of IAEA, and I refer colleagues to certain paragraphs of INFCIRC/153 on the comprehensive safeguards agreements in that regard. A mechanism similar to that found in existing comprehensive safeguards agreements could be incorporated into the verification system of an FMCT, in order to allow States to make arrangements with the verifying agency to permit the production of fissile material for non-explosive purposes, while ensuring that the intent of the production is compatible with the purposes of the treaty.

(Mr. Meyer, Canada)

In summary, by using existing IAEA definitions, extending or adapting elements of the existing IAEA comprehensive safeguards regime to NWS and non-NPT States, and by exploring supplemental measures for existing stockpiles and declared excess fissile material, it should be possible to develop a technically, financially, legally and politically effective package of verification measures. To this end, we would urge creativity, flexibility and open-mindedness on the part of all States in considering the issue of a verification regime for an FMCT.

These measures, in our opinion, brought together would ensure a high degree of confidence among States parties that an FMCT will meet its overall objectives.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Ambassador of Canada for introducing the Canadian working paper on FMCT, and we have noted his request that it be issued as an official document of the Conference. I also thank him for the kind words addressed to the Chair.

I now give the floor to Ambassador Yevhen Bersheda of Ukraine.

Mr. BERSHEDA (Ukraine): Madam President, please allow me to join the previous speakers in extending to you my sincere congratulations upon your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. I would like to assure you that the Government of Ukraine is ready to provide its full support and cooperation for achieving our common goals.

One of the acute problems often referred to is the need to combat illicit arms. Ukraine commends the increased attention of the Security Council to these problems and is ready to fully cooperate in this field. We are seriously concerned about violations of the Council-imposed sanctions against the illegal arms trade. Such incidents indicate that international regulations in those areas have been seriously breached.

Ukraine has always strictly followed the policy of selling arms and military equipment to legitimate Governments or to companies authorized by such Governments. At the same time, global practice now indicates that no matter how strong export control measures a sovereign State can establish, it cannot give a total guarantee against subsequent violations by third parties. Therefore, Ukraine supports the project of an arms trade treaty (ATT), which aims to elaborate effective measures which would prevent the reselling of arms from the "end-users" to third parties and close gaps in relevant international instruments. In this regard I would like to emphasize that at the sixty-first United Nations General Assembly Ukraine gave its support to resolution 61/89, entitled "Towards an arms trade treaty: establishing common international standards for the import, export and transfer of conventional arms".

Ukraine thoroughly considers applications for transfers of weapons and dual-use goods, especially in the case of such transfers to embargoed destinations or to countries and regions which trigger the concern of the international community. The policy of Ukraine in the sphere of international arms transfers is consistent and responsible and is based on the relevant decisions of the United Nations Security Council and the OSCE, as well as on the international regime of control of exports of munitions and dual-use goods, the Wassenaar Arrangement.

(Mr. Bersheda, Ukraine)

Acknowledging the danger of uncontrolled trafficking and accumulation of conventional arms, Ukraine is strongly committed to the resolutions of the United Nations Security Council and the General Assembly to introduce limitations on the international trafficking of arms.

Consequently, Ukraine is guided by its policy for an effective and reliable regime of export control in the sphere of arms trade. We are ready to support refusing the supply of military equipment to non-State actors. According to Ukrainian legislation, the export of such equipment, including small arms and light weapons, lies exclusively within the domain of the State or as authorized by the State entities of the importing country. Ukraine is ready to take measures to strengthen its national legislation in the sphere of arms control by elaborating and adopting relevant acts that would correspond to the comprehensive international norms and standards of the ATT.

In this connection we are concerned by the presence of serious drawbacks in certain international export control regimes that allow third countries to violate the arms trade regulations. As there is currently no comprehensive international binding instrument available to provide protection from arms transfers to terrorist groups, Ukraine believes that the Conference on Disarmament should move without further delay to commence negotiations on an ATT.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you, Ambassador, for your statement on an ATT as well as for the congratulations and good wishes addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the next speaker on my list, Ambassador Jürg Streuli of Switzerland.

Mr. STREULI (Switzerland) (spoke in French): Today we are celebrating the international day of the French language, and so I will speak in French. Madam President, allow me to begin by congratulating you on your appointment as President of the Conference on Disarmament and to wish you much success in addressing the challenges awaiting us, challenges which are particularly important at the moment, this week and next week.

It will soon be 10 years since the Ottawa Convention was adopted, and this anniversary reminds us that despite the great progress already made in combating the scourge of anti-personnel mines, major challenges await us and we must persevere in our efforts.

I should like to remind you that this Convention, the Ottawa Convention, was not negotiated either in this room or in the context of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. That should give us food for thought concerning the role of the Conference on Disarmament, but currently the Conference has a unique opportunity to be worthy once again of the title of the only disarmament negotiating forum in the United Nations system. Let us grasp this opportunity for the CD to resume negotiations.

Turning back to the Ottawa Convention, I welcome the accession of Indonesia, bringing the number of States parties to this treaty to 152. For Switzerland, the universalization of the Convention remains a paramount objective. The fact that almost half the world's population cannot benefit from the protection provided by this international instrument, and the even more unfortunate fact that some non-parties have used anti-personnel mines in the past year, can only strengthen our determination given the urgent need to reach this goal.

(Mr. Streuli, Switzerland)

The use of anti-personnel mines by armed non-State actors, often on the territory of States parties to the Convention, is just as unacceptable and constitutes a challenge we cannot ignore if we want the prohibition of these weapons to lead to a marked improvement in the situation of the affected population groups and help to ensure that there are no more victims.

Switzerland maintains its financial commitment to mine action and, by including the promotion of human security and its humanitarian assistance in its policy of peace, also encourages affected States to make more use of their local resources and skills and to incorporate mine action in their national development priorities. This year Switzerland is going to develop a new strategy aimed at ensuring an adequate flow of funding to meet the challenges awaiting us between now and the year 2009 and beyond.

Switzerland is aware of the negative impact of anti-personnel mines on development, and supports and participates in the international dialogue initiated by Canada on the integration of mine action in development. It also believes that the problem of anti-personnel mines should not be seen only from the humanitarian viewpoint and that mine action can also contribute to a policy of peace.

Assistance to victims and survivors is of fundamental importance for the future and continues to be a priority for Switzerland, as survivors of anti-personnel mines are going to be in need for the rest of their lives. It is necessary to work in a long-term perspective in this area because victim assistance does not end with their rehabilitation, but requires constant support with a view to their socio-economic rehabilitation.

It was with this need and this huge challenge in mind that in 2006, Switzerland co-chaired with Afghanistan the Standing Committee on Victim Assistance and Socio-economic Rehabilitation. The Sudan and Austria are continuing these efforts in order to reach the objectives that have been laid down so as to promote access to high-quality medical care, improve the social and economic rehabilitation of survivors and assist the worst-affected countries to implement national plans to meet their needs.

I would also like to take this opportunity to mention and commend the work done by the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, which, with its Implementation Support Unit, is making a fundamental contribution to the development and implementation of the Convention.

I would like now to move on to the fight against the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, and point out that Switzerland is convinced that the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects is a major achievement. This is the only United Nations instrument which contains a comprehensive catalogue of measures aimed at curbing the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, as well as being the only one which is accepted by all United Nations Member States. By fully implementing this programme of action, we can contribute to increasing transparency in armaments. Switzerland supports the global follow-up process and welcomes the holding of a biennial meeting in 2008. We also believe that the informal meeting to be held in

(Mr. Streuli, Switzerland)

Geneva in August this year provides an appropriate forum for drawing up recommendations on monitoring of transfers. The exchange of experience among the various stakeholders - States, non-governmental organizations and regional organizations - should help to encourage the emergence of practical proposals and provide input for the biennial meeting in 2008, and I would like to take this opportunity to express appreciation to Canada for taking the initiative of organizing the meeting this year.

My country is also committed to ensuring that greater account is taken of the negative effects of armed violence on development. The Programme of Action does not elaborate on this subject, but observations have been made on this subject since 2001. In particular it is important for the consensus expressed during the Millennium Summit last year on the links between security, peace, human rights and development to be reflected in these common efforts at the international level. That is why Switzerland and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) took the initiative to convene a ministerial summit on armed violence and development last year in Geneva. After that summit, a Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development was adopted by the 42 States attending. Since that time the declaration has been supported by many other States, demonstrating the importance of this issue for a large number of countries. Switzerland is following up this initiative and has undertaken with a group of States to draw up a plan of action for the fulfilment of the commitments made, in particular a quantifiable reduction in the global scourge of armed violence by 2015. Regional meetings planned in the various parts of the world over the coming months should make it possible to give a regional dimension to the commitments made in the Geneva Declaration.

I would also like to emphasize that Switzerland is in favour of better controls over conventional arms transfers and therefore fully supports the General Assembly resolution entitled "Towards an arms trade treaty". In order to combat the illegal proliferation of arms effectively worldwide, the adoption of criteria is vital not just at the national level but also at the international level. Switzerland is currently preparing a reply to the Secretary-General's request to States to express their views on the subject. It calls on all Member States of the United Nations to do likewise.

Switzerland is also concerned over the issue of the proliferation of portable air defence systems (MANPADS). Hence it has supported a series of initiatives aimed at addressing this threat, whether through the United Nations, OSCE or export control regimes. In this regard Switzerland cannot but welcome the measures adopted with a view to curbing this problem, such as those aimed at banning the transfer of such weapons to non-State actors, or ensuring better stockpile security. However, because of the serious threat posed by these weapons, Switzerland believes that the possibility of drawing up additional measures to prevent their proliferation should be looked into.

Switzerland welcomes the considerable progress that has been made at the international level in discussions on the problem of submunitions. My country believes that the serious long-term humanitarian consequences suffered by civilian populations as a result of the use of cluster munitions are unacceptable. As early as 2001 my country was the first to draw the attention of the international community to the humanitarian consequences of the use of cluster

(Mr. Streuli, Switzerland)

munitions, proposing, within the framework of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, an initiative for international regulation addressing certain aspects of the humanitarian problems caused by the use of submunitions. For the first time the third review conference of the States parties to the CCW held in Geneva in November last year recorded unanimous acknowledgement of the suffering caused to civilian populations in affected areas by unexploded submunitions. However, not all States were agreed on the urgency of the situation, and hence on the need to negotiate new international rules setting out the general principles of international humanitarian law.

Switzerland welcomes establishment of the new discussion forum on cluster munitions involving 50 States which was launched on the initiative of Norway during the international conference on cluster munitions held in Oslo a few weeks ago. The participating States, encouraged by the United Nations, ICRC and civil society, declared their political ambition to conclude by 2008 an international treaty prohibiting the use, production, transfer and stockpiling of cluster munitions, which represent an unacceptable humanitarian threat. Switzerland supported this declaration and emphasized its determination to play an active role to ensure that this new treaty puts an end to the serious humanitarian problems caused by cluster munitions. My country also believes that in order to be effective, a new international treaty on cluster munitions must as far as possible aim at universal recognition.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you, Ambassador, for your statement on items 5, 6 and 7. I thank you also for your words of congratulations and the assurances of support addressed to me as well as to my team. I now give the floor to the next speaker on my list, Ambassador Martin I. Uhomobhi of Nigeria.

Mr. UHOMOIBHI (Nigeria): Madam President, since this is my first formal appearance at a plenary session since my resumption of duties only last week, allow me to offer my congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of the CD. I am certain that under your leadership, the CD is under a very competent hand. I wish to assure you of my delegation's full cooperation in our collective endeavour. May I also seize the opportunity to applaud the good work done by your predecessors, all of whom have worked tirelessly to increase the level and intensity of engagement of members of this forum? Meanwhile, I thank you most sincerely for your warm words of welcome that you have kindly extended to me in your statement.

On 14 March 2007, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Professor Joy Ogwu, was a guest in this very chamber. I thank all of you for the warm welcome extended to her during her visit. That visit by my Foreign Minister was intended to underscore the importance Nigeria attaches to the CD as the appropriate forum to address a range of multifaceted security challenges confronting the world body.

Since the development and use of nuclear weapons, States have continued to express concerns and fears over the threat posed to their security by these weapons, and have vigorously called for their total elimination. Over the years, we have witnessed some positive, though slow, progress towards nuclear disarmament. On the positive side, the Chemical Weapons and Biological Weapons Conventions are now being implemented, even though the world could do with more effective measures to strengthen these legal regimes, including their universalization.

(Mr. Uhomoibhi, Nigeria)

However, on the flip side, the CTBT, which would have put a stop to the quantitative and qualitative research and development of nuclear weapons, is yet to come into force. In view of its importance in securing our collective security, we call on those countries that are yet to ratify the instrument to do so without further delay.

As long as nuclear weapons exist, they constitute a threat to both those who have them and the many others who do not have them. The only effective and credible guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons is, therefore, their total elimination. Reality is that non-proliferation will remain a mirage unless there is a total commitment to nuclear disarmament.

This is why Nigeria fully accepts that the first logical and sensible step in addressing nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation is the early start of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT). The negotiation of an FMCT that addresses the issues of existing stocks and future production is not only necessary for confidence-building, but also for erecting the building blocks to drive our collective efforts to achieve nuclear disarmament.

However, while we must all work assiduously to see the total elimination of nuclear arsenals and their means of delivery, this Conference does not have to wait to do what is possible now. My delegation believes that the international community has a duty to begin now to create effective measures to assure the security of non-nuclear-weapon States. Non-nuclear-weapon States, particularly States parties to the NPT, deserve encouragement in the form of legally binding negative security assurances. Having renounced the nuclear option voluntarily and, also, faithfully implementing their obligations under the NPT, these States have a right to ask for and to receive internationally negotiated and legally binding negative security assurances. This is not a call for charity, nor is it a plea for mercy. It is an unequivocal expression of a legitimate demand for what is only logical, fair and appropriate.

The unilateral declarations made by the nuclear-weapon States and Security Council resolutions 255 of 19 June 1968 and 984 of 4 November 1995 on security assurances have not fulfilled the expectations and requirements of the non-nuclear-weapon States. My delegation believes that providing unconditional, uniform, comprehensive, effective and legally binding negative security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the NPT is both urgent and absolutely necessary. This is important in view of the continuing existence of nuclear weapons, as well as the emergence of new military doctrines that tend not to repudiate the use of nuclear weapons.

We all know that small arms and light weapons foster a culture of violence by destabilizing regions, prolonging conflicts and hampering development in the long term. The countries in the West African region have fully taken this challenge in their stride by adopting a landmark convention on small arms and light weapons in June 2006. This Convention places a ban on arms transfers into, from or through the entire region. It was in furtherance of the principles of this Convention that the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, in an address to the General Assembly on 2 September 2006, called for a comprehensive and legally binding global arms trade treaty. We are pleased with the adoption of General Assembly

(Mr. Uhomoibhi, Nigeria)

resolution 61/89 of 6 December 2006 on the establishment of that treaty. My delegation invites the CD to recognize the grave danger posed by SALW, and to drive the ongoing United Nations process to negotiate a global arms trade treaty.

The PRESIDENT: I thank you, Ambassador, for your statement and also for the kind words addressed to the Chair and to my predecessors.

This concludes my list of speakers for today. Does any delegation wish to take the floor at this stage? If not, I would like to proceed to an announcement.

As you are aware, the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is celebrating its tenth anniversary. On this occasion, its provisional Technical Secretariat has invited you, the delegations of the Conference on Disarmament, to the exhibition on verifying the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. I would like to remind you that this exhibition will be opened soon after this plenary session in the foyer of the Council chamber by Mr. Sergei Ordzhonikidze, Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva, and Mr. Tibor Tóth, Executive Secretary of the CTBTO, and the opening will be followed by a reception in the adjacent Czech and Slovak salon.

This concludes our plenary meeting for today. The next formal plenary meeting will be held on Friday, 23 March, at 5 p.m., which will be preceded by an informal plenary at 3 p.m. in this conference room.

This meeting is adjourned.

The meeting rose at 11 a.m.