

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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ENGLISH

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

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Friday, 30 March 2007, at 10.15 a.m.

President: Ms. Sarala FERNANDO (Sri Lanka)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 1065th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

At the informal and formal plenaries held during the Sri Lankan presidency so far it has become apparent that there was very broad support from delegations across the regions for the Presidential draft decision contained in document CD/2007/L.1. At the same time, there were a few delegations who sought further clarifications, mainly in relation to methods of work and procedures. Through the Presidential statements of 27 March and 29 March, the 2007 Presidents of the Conference, the P-6, addressed, in the spirit of transparency, points of clarification sought by delegations. Furthermore, since these Presidential statements were made in the formal plenaries, they are on record.

At yesterday's formal plenary, it was also concluded that a few delegations needed more time to receive instructions from capitals on the Presidential draft decision, CD/2007/L.1. May I ask at this stage if there are any new developments in this regard which delegations would wish to report to the Conference? If not, I will continue with my statement.

Providing more time as requested by delegations would indeed have the positive effect of encouraging a greater sense of ownership of the Presidential draft decision and the process involved. At the same time, it must be recognized that many delegations have already made enormous efforts towards getting positive instructions on the basis of compromise and flexibility towards our common goal of getting the CD back to work. These efforts should be reciprocated.

It would also be clear to all of us that for practical reasons, a decision will have to be taken on document CD/2007/L.1 sooner rather than later, in order to enable the P-6 to propose a schedule of activities for the second part of the session. The sooner this is done, it would facilitate all capitals with regard to arranging for their representation at the forthcoming meetings and the participation of experts. Therefore, in the intersessional period, the P-6 will remain in regular contact with those member States that have requested more time in order to ascertain their readiness to move forward towards a decision on document CD/2007/L.1. Furthermore, the P-6 proposes to convene a special session of the CD for the sole purpose of providing a timely opportunity to proceed towards its action on the Presidential draft decision before the commencement of the second part of the 2007 session in May. In order to consult with the member States on this proposal, I will now suspend this formal plenary and resume in an informal meeting. Thereafter, we will resume the formal plenary. This meeting is suspended for five minutes.

The meeting was suspended at 10.20 a.m. and resumed at 12.45 p.m.

The PRESIDENT: The plenary meeting is resumed.

I have to inform delegations of the outcome of the informal meeting. It is my understanding that the Conference agrees to my proposal to convene as soon as possible a special session in accordance with the rules of procedure during the month of April 2007.

I give the floor to the representative of Algeria.

Mr. KHELIF (Algeria) (spoke in Arabic): Madam President, allow me to tell you an Algerian joke. There once was a sick man who was in pain. So he went to the doctor and said, “Doctor, everything I touch hurts me. Even if I touch my hair, it hurts me”. The doctor thought that the man’s case was very strange, and so he gave him an examination but found nothing untoward. However, the patient insisted and the doctor had to give the man a general scan. It was then that he discovered that the patient was in pain because of a broken finger, and that the pain was caused by his finger. It was not a generalized pain. I think that this is the situation at this Conference. There is a problem and we are just turning around it.

(spoke in French)

Algeria has no objection to the holding of a special session of the Conference on Disarmament on a date to be agreed upon by all member States, providing that the purpose of this session will be to resolve the problem, that is, to adopt a decision enabling the Conference on Disarmament to restart its work. This should not jeopardize the six Presidents’ initiative. If there was a risk that this meeting might lead to this latter outcome, it would be better not to have a special session.

I would like to ask for a clarification, Madam President, concerning your proposal. Under this proposal, the Conference would decide to hold a special session as soon as possible in accordance with the rules of procedure, before the end of April. At least that is my interpretation of your proposal. It seems that some delegations would like to consider the possibility of holding such a session, but without making a firm commitment. In other words, they agree in principle but the President has to consult delegations as to the advisability of holding such a session. In the latter case, it would be preferable to indicate precisely that the idea would be to convene as soon as possible a special session in accordance with article 8. I do not know if this proposal could solve the problem, but our goal - our concern - is that this session should enable the Conference to take a decision on its programme of work and enable us to restart the work of the Conference on Disarmament instead of blocking it once again.

The PRESIDENT: I thank you and give the floor to the next speaker on my list. I believe Ecuador has asked to make a general statement. If that is so, could we postpone this and now take the delegations who wish to speak to this particular point? I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Egypt.

Mr. SHOUKRY (Egypt): Madam President, after having had the opportunity to reflect on the text - and I thank you for having provided this opportunity to us - my interpretation is that the Conference seems to be agreeing to your declared intention of convening a special session. I think that is the general consensus that emerged in terms that there was no one who opposed the principle that you should proceed on that proposal. Thereby, I believe it would be much more precise for the text to read “... as soon as possible a special session in accordance with rule 8 of the rules of procedure” because as it reads currently, it might indicate that it is the rules of procedure that would govern the proceedings of the special session, and that is not the case as far as my delegation is concerned. It is the case in terms of the rules of procedure applying, but it is not the case in terms of the consideration of this specific proposal.

The PRESIDENT: I thank you. The Ambassador of India had asked for the floor before Iran, so I give the Ambassador of India the floor.

Mr. PRASAD (India): Madam President, I thank you for your efforts. I thank you for engaging with delegations. And I thank you for the simplified text that is before us, greatly ameliorated by the suggestion from the Algerian delegation and supported by Egypt. If there is consensus on this, my delegation will go along with it.

We would like the presidency to bear in mind that sufficient notice should be provided for the special session during the intersessional period if it is held in conjunction with other significant disarmament-related United Nations meetings to enable delegations to be present for it.

Our delegation has one more concern in this regard, an aspect that we may be losing sight of in deciding on a special session - that the convening of such a session presupposes the Conference reaching consensus on the letter and substance of the Presidential draft decision, which you rightly clarified yesterday constitutes for all practical purposes the CD's programme of work. In this context we encourage the presidency to continue consultations, especially in the light of the questions and clarifications that have been sought by a number of delegations, so that the Conference is able to arrive at a consensus, taking into account the priorities and concerns of all delegations.

India will continue to participate constructively in the ongoing efforts to reach a consensus on the CD's programme of work, and the special session that we convene must have this as its foremost objective.

The PRESIDENT: I thank you and I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Iran.

Mr. SAJJADPOUR (Islamic Republic of Iran): Madam President, I thank you for your efforts. I also underline the necessity to refer to the rules of procedure, article 8, and I think that the second point is there is an emerging consensus, but the emerging consensus, I think, is of two sides: one is that there is a need for consultation based on the rules of procedure, and second, we still do not have consensus on the Presidential text. I think these are the valid points that should be taken into account at this juncture.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you, Ambassador. We will make every endeavour to reach that compromise and the consensus. The Ambassador of China has asked for the floor.

Mr. CHENG (China) (spoke in Chinese): Madam President, as I have just said in the informal meeting, we have no objection to the proposal that you have put forward. I would like to stress here, however, that this should not be taken to mean that the special session will definitely have to take a formal decision on the Presidential draft decision.

The PRESIDENT: I thank you, Ambassador. If there is no objection, then, to the inclusion of the words "in accordance with article 8 of the rules of procedure", may I take it that this is agreed? The delegation of Pakistan has the floor.

Mr. KHOKHER (Pakistan): We welcome this proposal and we have already expressed our viewpoint and sought clarification as to what “during the month of April” means, and with this inclusion of rule 8 of the rules of procedure, it makes it more clear that during this month the President will continue consultations with the delegations, and if there is consensus, then we can hold this special session.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you. Are there any other views? If not, then we have agreed to the inclusion of “article 8” before “the rules of procedure”, and then I say that the Presidential draft decision, CD/2007/L.1, remains on the table, and before I give the floor to Ecuador, I would also like to finish another point of business that we have, but I think at this stage I will give the floor to Ecuador, who has been very patient.

Mr. SANTOS (Ecuador) (spoke in Spanish): Madam President, firstly and to be brief, we would like to express appreciation for all the efforts of the co-Presidents and yourself, and we therefore support the President’s draft decision of 23 March 2007 on the appointment of four coordinators on nuclear disarmament and prevention of a nuclear war, the draft treaty on the prohibition of fissile material, prevention of arms in outer space, and negative security assurances.

The PRESIDENT: I thank you. As we are coming very close to the time when we will no longer have interpretation facilities, I will move quite fast.

It may be recalled that in January 2007 the Ambassador of South Africa, in her capacity of President of the CD, announced that following informal consultations with the CD membership, the incumbent President would present a report to the CD plenary. This report, which I presented at the informal plenary on 23 March, is now available and contained in document CD/1820, which is available at the side of the room.

I now give the floor to the representative of Syria.

Mr. ALI (Syrian Arab Republic) (spoke in Arabic): Madam President, allow me at the outset to express our great appreciation for all the efforts that you have been making to guide the deliberations of the Conference.

The position of my country on the question of disarmament is no secret to anyone. That position stems from our belief in the important role that the Conference on Disarmament plays in dealing with these issues, in particular the issue of nuclear disarmament. Therefore, it can be no secret either that there is quite a distance between our national position and the content of the Presidential draft decision contained in document CD/2007/L.1. In spite of this distance, because of its belief in the responsibility that it bears as one of the Presidents of the Conference for 2007, my delegation will content itself with recording the following reservation to the report that will be issued in document CD/1820 and to the Presidential draft decision contained in CD/2007/L.1.

Beginning of the reservation: “The delegation of the Syrian Arab Republic has participated actively and constructively in the work of the group of the Presidents of the Conference on Disarmament for 2007. The delegation of Syria has demonstrated a great deal of flexibility.

(Mr. Ali, Syrian Arab Republic)

Nevertheless, from the viewpoint of our delegation, the conclusions and recommendations set out in the Presidential report contained in document CD/1820, including the draft resolution which was circulated as an official document, under the symbol CD/2007/L.1, could be strengthened to better reflect the views expressed by the delegations of the member States of the Conference on Disarmament.” End of the reservation.

My delegation will continue to follow the same constructive and positive approach and work in full transparency as part of the group of Presidents and with the members in order to enable the Conference to perform its tasks and to achieve the objectives for which it was established.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you. We will inform you of a possible date for the special session. In any case, the next plenary of the regular session will be held on Tuesday, 15 May 2007, at 10 a.m.

Before we close this plenary meeting, the Ambassador of Spain has asked for the floor.

Mr. BUGALLO (Spain): This is a remark with relation to the intervention of the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic. I would like to state that Spain, in its national capacity, also has, just as I suppose any of the other 64 delegations present in the CD, its own ideal proposal or proposals. What is important is to stress - and I want to do it - the constructive contributions Syria has made to the work of the P-6 all throughout our process of consultations and the support we all as the P-6 give to that work.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you, Ambassador. Well said.

I wish you all a happy intersessional break.

This plenary meeting is adjourned.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.