

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/PV.1074
26 June 2007

ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE ONE THOUSAND AND SEVENTY-FOURTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 26 June 2007, at 10.15 a.m.

President:

Mr. Jürg STREULI

(Switzerland)

The PRESIDENT (spoke in French): I call to order the 1074th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. I would first like to make a statement as Switzerland takes the Chair of the Conference on Disarmament.

As Switzerland takes the Chair of the Conference on Disarmament, I wish first of all to pay tribute to those who came before us and to thank my colleagues in the group of six Presidents for the 2007 session for the creativity and endurance they displayed. I should also like to express my thanks to my predecessor, the Ambassador of Sweden, Ms. Elisabet Borsiin Bonnier. During the time allocated to her by the P-6 process, the innovative solutions which were presented brought us closer to a possible consensus, with a view to resuming the important work of the Conference on Disarmament at last. Allow me also to thank my other predecessors for their fruitful initiatives: the Ambassador of South Africa, Ms. Glaudine Mtshali, the Ambassador of Spain, Mr. Juan Antonio March Pujol, and his colleague, Ambassador Bugallo Ottone, as well as the Ambassador of Sri Lanka, Ms. Sarala Fernando. Without our joint efforts and without the work of the six Presidents during the 2006 session, we would never have been able to go so far in the process that has been initiated. On behalf of the Conference and on behalf of the six Presidents, I have pleasure in welcoming Ambassador Dayan Jayatilleka who now heads the delegation of Sri Lanka; I am looking forward to working with you, Sir, under the platform of the six Presidents, and we all wish you a pleasant stay crowned with success as the Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka to the United Nations Office at Geneva. Last but not least, I would like to express my great esteem for all the coordinators who have worked under the orders of the six Presidents and who are the cornerstone of our endeavour.

Let me also pay tribute to our Conference: this is the second time since 1998 that Switzerland is in the Chair of the Conference on Disarmament. It is the first time that the host country is chairing the Conference as a Member of the United Nations. The fact that Switzerland became a member of the Conference on Disarmament and chaired it even before joining the United Nations underlines two things: firstly, the semi-autonomous nature of our Conference, and secondly, the political will of my Government to play a growing and evermore active role in the field of international security policy, more particularly in the field of arms control and disarmament. Nearly 10 years ago, Mr. Jakob Kellenberger, our former Secretary of State and now President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, said, when he personally addressed the Conference on Disarmament, in 1998, during Switzerland's term in the Chair: "The Swiss presidency is of course a result of alphabetical order but this mandate is also a symbol, that of Switzerland's international commitment in the field of security policy. The will to take on its share of responsibility through more active participation in efforts to promote a global security policy based on regional and global cooperation for the purpose of reducing the risks of armed conflict and human suffering is the hallmark of my country's security policy, particularly since the end of the cold war." Dear colleagues, nothing has changed. My Government continues to attach the same importance to the Conference on Disarmament, which we regard as the sole permanent and multilateral negotiating forum on arms control and disarmament.

Since Switzerland's last term in the Chair, the Conference has never been able to agree on a format for beginning negotiations on any of the new international instruments relating to arms control and disarmament, though this was supposed to be its primary task. However, since 2005

(The President)

the work of the Conference has developed progressively: I refer to the refocused and structured debates on the “four core issues” which were initiated during the term of the Ambassador of Norway, Wegger Strømmen, just two years ago; then the emergence of the platform of the six Presidents under the memorable leadership of the Ambassador of Poland, Zdzisław Rapacki, who was to introduce a timetable which allowed a focused debate on each of the items on the agenda; then the architecture of the six Presidents in an organizational framework which will have enabled us to have two rounds of structured and targeted debates on all the items on the agenda, in the first part of the annual session for 2007. Most importantly of all, creative approaches and consultations held at different levels led to a highly tangible outcome: we now have three documents: document CD/2007/L.1, which was submitted as much as three months ago and which is the culmination of the work done during the first part of this year’s session; document CD/2007/CRP.5, drafted during open-ended Presidential consultations during the second part of this session; the draft decision by the Conference, establishing the relationship between documents L.1 and CRP.5. These three documents have emerged as the outcome of a process which was initiated roughly two years ago and which, as far as I know, is still continuing. I share the assessment of my predecessor: taken together, the three documents constitute a realistic basis for a programme of work. Moreover, the way forward as set out in the three documents leaves the door open for delegations, which will be able to continue to pursue their national interests and their priorities during the phase which will follow the adoption of the draft decision.

At the plenary meeting last Thursday, 21 June 2007, it was evident that not all delegations are yet in a position to go along with the consensus on beginning substantive work on the basis of the three documents taken together. It is quite clear that some capitals do need more time to study these documents, consideration of which is therefore deferred. My colleagues in the group of six Presidents and I believe that time should be given to those who will have important decisions to make in the coming weeks. It is also clear that we are not at the beginning but rather at the end of the 2007 session. This is why a decision early in the third part of the 2007 session seems to be a realistic goal for the Conference, given the concerns that have been raised by some and the time that will be needed to address them. During the intersessional period, that is to say in July, I shall remain in touch with the delegations which have expressed their concerns, in order to receive news from their capitals and to explore the available scope for finding common ground for all of us on the basis of document CD/2007/L.1 and the two other documents. My goal is the adoption of the draft decision as early as possible during the third part of our session.

We are currently in a situation where the rational motives of the various members could be transformed into a collective irrational attitude in this forum. It is the duty of this Conference, it is the duty of all of us who are represented here, to overcome this delicate situation as quickly as possible in order to reconfirm the legitimacy of this body.

Before giving the floor to the speakers on my list for today’s plenary meeting, I would like, on behalf of the Conference on Disarmament and on my own behalf, to bid farewell to our distinguished colleague Ambassador Pablo Macedo, whose term as the representative of Mexico in the Conference on Disarmament is about to come to an end.

(The President)

Since his arrival at the Conference on Disarmament, Ambassador Macedo has always articulated and upheld the position of his country with distinctive authority. He has also contributed considerably to our deliberations with his first-hand knowledge of procedural and substantive issues before the Conference. In particular, while chairing the Conference in 2004, he played a crucial role in relaunching substantive work. Building upon the efforts of his predecessors to intensify the Conference's work, he began a series of informal plenary meetings aimed at securing agreement on the programme of work.

On behalf of the Conference on Disarmament and on my own behalf, I should like to convey to Ambassador Macedo our best wishes for success and happiness.

I will now give the floor to the speakers on my list. The first speaker is the representative of Argentina, Ambassador Alberto Dumont, who will make a statement on behalf of Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru and Venezuela.

Mr. DUMONT (Argentina) (spoke in Spanish): It is an honour for me to be here at this meeting and read out a joint statement on behalf of Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru and Venezuela. Allow me, Mr. President, on behalf of these Latin American members of the Conference on Disarmament, to congratulate you on the first day of your term, to express our support for your efforts and to extend our congratulations to the authorities of this Conference, in particular Mr. Ordzhonikidze, Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva and Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, and Mr. Tim Caughley, Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference.

Current threats in the field of international security require an immediate response from all the States in the international community. Over the last few years we have seen a number of challenges in the field of disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation which point to the need to work together to fully implement and strengthen the current regime.

We are convinced that the United Nations remains the proper framework to provide an effective response to these challenges to international peace and security. This task can be undertaken only through the revitalization of existing disarmament machinery, in particular this Conference on Disarmament.

With this aim in mind, we wish to highlight once again the need to secure the prompt initiation of substantive negotiations in the only truly multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament which the international community possesses.

As we said in our statement on 28 June 2005, we reassert our flexibility with a view to the adoption of a programme of work that reflects the interests of all member States. In this regard, we express our full support for the proposal by the six Presidents of this Conference which was distributed as document CD/2007/L.1, and its complementary Presidential statement.

We consider that this document, prepared on the basis of extensive transparent consultations, reflects the fruitful debates that took place during the first session. Although each

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delegation would like to have its national position on each of the items reflected, the document addresses the discussion of the agenda items deemed to have priority and translates the compromise among the different positions adopted by the members of the Conference on Disarmament into a programme of work.

With regard to the treatment given to each of the items, we repeat our appeal for flexibility. The six Presidents' proposal offers an opportunity to begin substantive negotiations with a view to concluding a non-discriminatory international instrument banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other explosive devices, and at the same time facilitates ongoing discussions in order to make substantive headway on nuclear disarmament, PAROS and negative security assurances.

For the countries that have subscribed to this statement, nuclear disarmament is a priority. The existence of nuclear arsenals as part of the military doctrines of the countries which possess this kind of weapon discourages efforts that might be made in other areas of international security.

A positive signal for the non-nuclear-weapon States would be the prompt initiation of negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other explosive devices, as this would demonstrate willingness to take practical steps towards general and complete nuclear disarmament. To this end, it would be necessary for the scope of this instrument to include some way to address the issue of fissile material stocks and provisions on verification of compliance.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, we give priority to the prompt initiation of negotiations on such an instrument, and we hope that during those negotiations, efforts to adequately address the concerns of all the members of the Conference on Disarmament will be guaranteed.

Allow us also to touch briefly on the debates that have taken place recently on procedural matters. We consider that the obstacles we are facing can easily be overcome if the required political will exists. Rule 23 of the rules of procedure of the Conference offers the possibility for the Conference to create such subsidiary bodies as are deemed appropriate in order to serve as vehicles and tools for accomplishing its tasks effectively.

In several forums related to disarmament and non-proliferation we have seen how procedural issues have been used as a means of preventing progress on substantive issues. We trust that this Conference will not fall victim to this experience, but that rather it will be able to offer a practical response in order to make progress in strengthening this important multilateral dimension.

Mr. President, we much appreciate your efforts towards adopting a programme of work that will allow us to overcome more than a decade of stagnation.

The States of Latin America and the Caribbean are pioneers in the adoption of instruments on disarmament and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and we appreciate the

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benefits of such instruments for the consolidation of international peace and security. The resolve to strengthen them and the establishment of new regimes continue to be a priority for our region.

We are convinced that all the members of the Conference share this basic premise, and we therefore appeal for that conviction to be translated into practical results in the shape of the adoption of a programme of work as soon as possible.

We hope to see renewed interest on the part of all member States in the continued search for the strengthening of multilateralism as an effective tool to tackle the challenges facing international peace and security in order to create a safer world for our citizens.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in French): I thank the representative of Argentina for his important statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Mexico, Ambassador Pablo Macedo.

Mr. MACEDO (Mexico) (spoke in Spanish): Mr. President, first of all, I am most sincerely grateful for your very kind references to me and to my work in the Conference. Allow me now to congratulate you on taking the Chair of the Conference on Disarmament, a post from which so much is expected by so many. I would also like to express my appreciation of your predecessors, and in particular the Ambassador of Sweden, my friend Elisabet Borsiin Bonnier, with whom I have lived through the worst and the best times in our Conference. Of course, my delegation associates itself with the statement made by the distinguished Ambassador of Argentina a few moments ago.

When at the beginning of 2002 I arrived in Geneva for the second time in my career, the Conference on Disarmament seemed to be in a situation of stagnation with no way out: after a number of years of frustrating idleness, it was difficult to imagine that it could get down to work again.

In the five and a half years that have elapsed since then, we have moved from that deadlock to a phase of great bustling. Thanks to the efforts of successive Presidents, we have initiated dialogue and examined a number of proposals directed at securing agreement on a programme of work, which is a desire we all claim to share.

We have bustled; we have broken that worrying immobility; the dialogue initiated in 2004 has allowed us to do away with misunderstandings. Yes, all this is true and positive, but we should not confuse bustling with activity. It is a fact that despite the proliferation of meetings, our Conference has not been able to fulfil its main function, which is to negotiate. We should not deceive ourselves.

Until a short time ago, I thought that I would leave Geneva without the situation having altered. However, the combined efforts of the recent Presidents, beginning with the intensive consultations undertaken with such dedication by the Ambassador of South Africa, which continued under the talented drive of the representatives of Spain, Sri Lanka and Sweden,

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culminated in the proposals submitted to us some months ago. I must confess that at that moment, for the first time in a long time, I felt that we would manage to adopt a programme of work and that we would get down to our substantive work at last.

I do not want to undervalue previous initiatives such as the five Ambassadors' proposal in 2003, but it must be recognized that the concerted efforts of the Presidents - an innovation introduced just a year ago - have borne fruit and enabled us to bring our positions closer together.

I thought then that we would break out of our deadlock, and that when I left next Sunday I would leave behind a revitalized Conference. That was not to be. Legitimate concerns remain on the part of some delegations as to the substance and the form of the proposal. I am encouraged that we are all prepared to demonstrate political will, but a further step is necessary. I repeat here my appeal for flexibility: let us get the machinery going; issues of substance will be settled as they arise. That would be my parting message.

I will miss you all: it is rarely possible to gather together so much talent and so much experience as there is in this room. I would like to thank you for your friendship, and most particularly for your cooperation and the support you gave me when I occupied the Chair in 2004.

I would also like to express my appreciation to the secretariat - always efficient and ready to help - as well as the interpreters, invisible and indispensable. I will miss what is and always has been the "best club in Geneva". I hope to come back soon and work with you in negotiating multilateral disarmament agreements.

From my new position in Mexico City, I will closely follow your work or your bustling.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in French): I thank the distinguished representative of Mexico for his statement and once again offer him my best wishes for the future. I hope that in August you will regret having left a few weeks early.

There are no other speakers on my list for today. Would any other delegation like to take the floor at this stage?

It seems not.

The next plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament will be held on Thursday, 28 June 2007 at 10 a.m. in this conference room.

In keeping with the organizational framework of this Conference for the 2007 session, it is the Chair's intention to present to the Conference the President's report on the second part of the 2007 session at the next plenary session. This report will reflect the work done during the Presidential terms in the second part, as my predecessors did for the first part (document CD/1820).

The meeting rose at 11 a.m.