

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE ONE THOUSAND ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Monday, 26 May 2008, at 10.35 a.m.

President: Ms. Fiona PATERSON (United Kingdom)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 1105th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. Before I go into formal business, I would just like to explain that this plenary was exceptionally called for a Monday to allow Ambassador John Duncan to undertake both his P-6 responsibilities within the Conference on Disarmament here in Geneva and also to undertake national responsibilities at a parallel meeting going on in Dublin. Unfortunately, that Dublin meeting ran into extra time at the weekend and he was unable to fly back yesterday as foreseen. He sends his apologies to everybody and has entrusted me and the rest of our delegation to carry out the business for him this week.

I would like to start today's meeting with a statement trying to set out where the United Kingdom presidency sees its role, carrying on very much from what has been set down over a period of almost two and a half years.

Having assumed the presidency of the CD, I would like first of all on behalf of the United Kingdom delegation to thank wholeheartedly our Ukrainian colleague, Ambassador Yevhen Bersheda, for the valuable work he and his delegation have done over the four weeks of their presidency. This period, at the beginning of the second session, has witnessed a strengthening of the consensus on the need to get back to work and, specifically, on the desire to see CD/1840 adopted as our programme of work.

The United Kingdom is a strong advocate of multilateral disarmament and supports efforts to sustain and strengthen international security through such endeavours. The Conference on Disarmament, a key part of this multilateral architecture, has a long and distinguished history. We are all well aware, however, that the past decade has seen a degree of stagnation and malaise.

The United Kingdom Secretary of State for Defence called in his February address to this Conference for us to "redouble our efforts" on moving forward the debate and seeking solutions. With the successful establishment of the P-6 presidency platform, and the emerging consensus around recent draft declarations, we are at last seeing light at the end of this decade-long tunnel. Now is the time to demonstrate our desire to create a safer and more ordered world by restarting our work.

In the course of the 2008 plenary sessions we have witnessed a succession of senior figures reminding us of our obligations and voicing clear signals of support for the Conference. United Nations Secretary-General Mr. Ban Ki-moon opened the Conference in January by noting that when, in 2007, the Conference was on the verge of reaching a decision on a programme of work, he called for a spirit of compromise, which did not materialize. He renewed this call for 2008, and so let us not disappoint this year.

We have seen further strong statements calling for us to begin our substantive work, including from the Tunisian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Abdelwaheb Abdallah; the United States National Nuclear Security Administrator, Mr. Thomas D'Agostino; the Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Sergey Lavrov; and the Chinese Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Yang Jiechi.

(The President)

Draft declaration CD/1840, tabled on 13 March, represents the culmination of over two years of discussion, work and refinement, during which all delegations have had the opportunity to air their views. We now have a declaration, a proposed programme of work, which commands almost complete consensus at this Conference. As we all know, that would not only allow us to begin negotiating a fissile material cut-off treaty but also to commence substantive discussions on three other agenda items: nuclear disarmament and the prevention of nuclear war, issues related to prevention of an arms race in outer space, and appropriate arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.

Let us recognize that beginning negotiations without preconditions on an FMCT, as many have called upon us to do, would give us the opportunity to further identify those areas which present difficulties to delegations. The very process of negotiations, the starting of which would in no way prejudice the outcome, is the very platform for designing an outcome acceptable to all of us in this room.

We will all, my own country not least, have difficulties with aspects of that negotiation, and there is no point in pretending that it will be easy. But let us not lose sight of the bigger picture. A series of powerful interventions over this last year or so have reminded us of the pivotal importance to global security of progress on multilateral disarmament. Globally, nuclear arsenals have significantly decreased, and are set to continue doing so - witness France's announcement in March and the commitment by the United States and Russia to work for a legally binding successor to START. We, the United Kingdom, have repeatedly underlined our commitment to work for a world free from nuclear weapons. The vital next step down that road is a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other explosive devices. No State claims to object. The right way to resolve our differences over the details is through negotiating. The world clearly is bewildered by our failure even to begin doing so.

My P-6 colleagues - for we are a team, we are a platform, and we do discuss everybody's difficulties - are representatives of all the regional groups here. We strongly hope that the call by outside political figures for action can be heeded.

My delegation and I look forward to productive cooperation with all of you during the United Kingdom presidency. It is our intention to hold P-6 consultations and presidential consultations with regional groups on Monday mornings, CD plenary sessions in future on Tuesday mornings and then to pursue intensive consultations in close cooperation with our P-6 colleagues during the remainder of the week, that is, we will keep our P-6 colleagues informed of what we are up to and our consultations will be held bilaterally, away from the spotlight of the plenary sessions, for the purpose of identifying and addressing any remaining areas of difficulty. To this end we remain especially open to suggestions any delegation may have on CD/1840, which they, after consultations with others, consider will bring us even closer to consensus. It is our sincere aim to seek to end frustration and to start meaningful work, and also to run by the byword of the P-6, which was started by our Tunisian colleagues: "It's transparency. It's cooperation. It's listening, and moving forward." This is such an important year for all of us in this room.

(The President)

So, when we look at what has been achieved by the Conference on Disarmament in the past, the NPT and the CTBT, to name but two of the accomplishments by our previous forebears, we see the magnitude of what we would be capable of producing were we able to begin substantive work. We should not lose the opportunity we have this year to make the Conference on Disarmament once again the bastion of multilateral arms control that it used to be. It is firmly within our grasp. We should not let it pass us by.

I would now like to turn to the list of speakers for today's meeting. I have the following delegation wishing to take the floor. I have Ambassador Moaiyeri on behalf of the Islamic Republic of Iran and I have Ambassador Rapacki on behalf of Poland.

Ambassador Moaiyeri, you have the floor.

Mr. MOAIYERI (Islamic Republic of Iran): Madam President, at the outset, allow me to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. I am confident that owing to your diplomatic skills and vast experience the Conference will achieve successful outcomes. I assure you of the full cooperation of my delegation. I would also like to take this opportunity to applaud the good work done by your predecessors, Ambassador Samir Labidi of Tunisia, Ambassador Ahmet Üzümcü of Turkey and Ambassador Yevhen Bersheda of Ukraine during their presidencies of the Conference.

The Conference on Disarmament, as the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, has a crucial role in promoting multilateralism. This important role of the CD should always be preserved, and multilateralism and multilaterally agreed solutions should remain as the core principle of any negotiations which might be pursued in the CD.

As I have expressed in this forum on different occasions, nuclear disarmament remains the highest priority of my delegation in the Conference on Disarmament. The lack of progress in nuclear disarmament is a serious challenge to the international community. The maintenance of strategic and tactical nuclear forces and their continued modernization, as well as new military doctrines setting out the rationale for their possible use, particularly against non-nuclear-weapon States, represent the greatest threat to mankind. The Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) does not provide the right for nuclear-weapon States to keep their nuclear arsenals indefinitely. They have obligations under article VI of the NPT, which have yet to be fulfilled. We are concerned over the recent efforts by some nuclear-weapon States to reinterpret article VI of the NPT in order to make the obligations therein conditional. We will never accept those reinterpretations, and call on nuclear-weapon States to fulfil their obligations under article VI of the NPT without delay and without conditions.

Nuclear weapons are as illegal as chemical and biological weapons, and the illegality of nuclear weapons should be recognized through a legally binding nuclear weapons convention. Two categories of weapons of mass destruction have already been prohibited under the relevant legally binding conventions, namely, the Biological Weapons Convention and the Chemical Weapons Convention. Now is the time to completely ban and eliminate all nuclear weapons. We reiterate our call for the establishment, as the highest priority and as soon as possible, of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament in the Conference on Disarmament. Such negotiations

(Mr. Moaiyeri, Islamic Republic of Iran)

must lead to the legal prohibition, once and for all, of the possession, development, stockpiling and use of nuclear weapons by any country and provide for the destruction of such inhuman weapons.

We continue to believe 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, the non-nuclear-weapon States should be granted effective negative security assurances through a legally binding instrument. There is a need to establish an ad hoc committee in the CD to deal with the issue as well.

My delegation appreciates you and the other Presidents of the Conference for the efforts you are making to prepare a programme of work for the CD in a manner to have all the concerns on board. We believe that through respecting the priorities recognized earlier by the CD, taking the views of all members on board, abiding by the rules of procedure, and dedication, we will be able to provide the CD with a balanced and comprehensive programme of work that can be mutually acceptable. Although I have explained to you about the priorities of my delegation in the CD, for the sake of practicality and in order to address the concerns of all, my delegation is ready to work on the four core issues identified earlier by the CD on an equal basis. A balanced and comprehensive programme of work needs to be equally responsive to those priorities. We should not give weight to one priority at the cost of the others.

With regard to an FMCT, our position is clear. I have expressed many times that we are in favour of an FMCT which is comprehensive, verifiable and which covers existing stocks. In other words, we want the negotiation process on a possible FMCT to be within the framework of the Shannon mandate. Some colleagues in the CD suggest accepting the programme now, as it is, and then in the course of negotiations raising our positions and priorities. With due respect to others' views, it is our conviction that we need to be clear in our objectives. Lack of clarity is the most dangerous virus in any collective activity. If we do not resolve the issues now, there will not be any guarantee that in the course of negotiations we will be able to resolve them. We earlier agreed on the Shannon mandate. It is also reaffirmed in the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference. Let us be bound by our present agreements and understandings rather than moving with uncertainty.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Iran for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Poland, Ambassador Rapacki.

Mr. RAPACKI (Poland): Madam President, since I am taking the floor for the first time during your presidency, while recognizing that it is your inaugural session I would like to express my sincere congratulations on your assumption of this important, but demanding and uneasy post. I welcome your inaugural statement and I would like to assure you that the Polish delegation will support you in your endeavours. My congratulations also go to your predecessor, Ambassador Yevhen Bersheda of the Ukraine, as well as to the other members of the P-6, namely, the Ambassadors of Tunisia and Turkey, for their diplomatic skills and efforts, which contributed to the substantial and promising discussions held during the first session of the CD in 2008.

(Mr. Rapacki, Poland)

Poland is in full alignment with the statement delivered on 15 May by the Permanent Representative of Slovenia on behalf of the European Union. At the same time, please allow me to briefly state the Polish position and vision for the CD, given the situation it is currently facing.

Since Poland and the other Presidents of the 2006 CD session took strides to invigorate the work of the Conference by setting up the P-6 platform for close cooperation, we have realized that the CD does not exist in a political or international vacuum. As the distinguished Ambassador of Germany rightly pointed out in his statement of 20 May, the CD, as the single multilateral forum for disarmament negotiations, is at the disposal of the international community. Unfortunately, after nearly a decade of splendid hibernation, I believe the international community will present us a check with payment due very shortly.

The positive outcome of the second NPT Preparatory Committee and the extensive discussions conducted during its course demonstrate that there is room for manoeuvre in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation and, ultimately, the stalemate in the United Nations system in this regard can be overcome.

Therefore, Poland welcomes and unequivocally supports the draft decision by the Presidents of the 2008 session contained in CD/1840 and presented on 13 March 2008, as it stands. We firmly believe that this proposal constitutes an extremely well-drafted compromise. Furthermore, it does not prejudice any future outcome of negotiations and allows delegations to formulate and table any proposals during the course of the negotiations.

In conclusion, we call upon all States parties to the CD to show the utmost flexibility in bringing the CD back to substantial work. I am sure this decision will have a tremendous impact, not only on the United Nations disarmament machinery but, also, on the entire, global security environment. It will move forward both bilateral and multilateral negotiations concerning the disarmament process and bring us closer to a safer world. After all, this is the common objective for all of us.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Poland for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair.

There are no more speakers on my list for today. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor at this stage? That does not seem to be the case.

This will conclude our business for today. The next formal meeting of the Conference will be held on Tuesday, 3 June at 10 a.m. in this Chamber.

The meeting stands adjourned.

The meeting rose at 11 a.m.