

# CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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## FINAL RECORD OF THE ONE THOUSAND ONE HUNDRED AND SEVENTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,  
on Tuesday, 10 June 2008, at 10.10 a.m.

President:

Mr. John DUNCAN

(United Kingdom)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 1107th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

On the list of speakers for today's meeting I have the following delegates wishing to take the floor: Ecuador and France.

I now give the floor to the representative of Ecuador, the Under-Secretary of Multilateral Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Integration.

Mr. IZQUIERDO MIÑO (Ecuador) (spoke in Spanish): It is a pleasure for me to take the floor on behalf of Ecuador at this meeting in the second session of the Conference of Disarmament this year. I will begin my statement by congratulating you, Sir, on the work you have been carrying out as the President of this important multilateral disarmament body.

On this occasion I would like to reiterate the continuing readiness of my country to engage in disarmament negotiations. We stand at all times with a clean record because we believe that we are, and we are fighting to remain, an island of peace, affected sporadically by matters which are unrelated to circumstances in our country. We have a solid commitment to peace, defence of sovereignty, disarmament, efforts to combat international crime and non-interference in the internal affairs of other States. Disarmament and non-proliferation are paths which we must follow decisively. My country has demonstrated this in living up to the obligations it assumed when it signed and ratified the Ottawa Convention. Further to those commitments and Ecuador's decision in that respect, 253,273 anti-personnel mines from our existing arsenals and around some 4,621 anti-personnel mines and 65 anti-tank mines have been destroyed. It is not an easy undertaking, as is well known, and so we require from the international community an extension and greater cooperation if we are to eliminate this devastating weapon from our territory once and for all.

Ecuador has committed itself to rehabilitating its land so that it can be useful and productive and pose no threat to the lives of our civilian population. We make this point because we note with concern that many countries, in other disarmament-related matters, such as weapons of mass destruction, have failed to comply with their obligations in, for instance, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

I would like to express my thanks to the Irish delegation for the full report presented to this forum last week, which makes clear the significant achievement arrived at in Dublin through the adoption of the Convention prohibiting the use, development, production, acquisition, stockpiling, possession and transfer of cluster munitions, a process which my country has supported continuously. We believe that satisfactory results have been obtained.

In this regard, we are also firmly committed to participating actively and firmly in the processes of arms limitation and disarmament, which constitute an ongoing challenge to be confronted by the international community, such as the process relating to the review of the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

(Mr. Izquierdo Miño, Ecuador)

Our record in the field of nuclear disarmament is well known in the negotiations. We continue to believe in the need to strengthen and create nuclear-weapon-free zones as an appropriate mechanism to work towards peace and disarmament. In that vein, I must point out that Ecuador took part from the outset in the drafting and later the strengthening of the Treaty of Tlatelolco, the oldest one in this field, which has proved its efficiency since 1967. Likewise, my country took direct action to achieve, in the United Nations Disarmament Commission in 1999, under its leadership, consensus on approval of the document entitled "Principles and guidelines for the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned".

Obviously the international community must also address and implement without restrictions the international agreements arrived at with so much effort.

My country has paid particular attention to conventional disarmament issues such as that relating to the United Nations plan for the prohibition of unlawful trafficking in small arms and light weapons, this being an area which is directly linked to the public safety which we must all nurture and protect. These are lethal devices which are used daily in our cities. They are also the instruments used by transnational organized crime.

We member States are fully mindful of the fact that the circumstances in which the Conference on Disarmament has found itself in recent years have been difficult. Lack of consensus on such basic issues for international peace and security are a matter of manifest concern. Inability to pursue disarmament agendas and fulfil them undermines the efforts of the international community, which should enjoy priority so as to strengthen the machinery which will make possible the human development of the less wealthy countries.

We believe that draft decision CD/1840 presented for consideration by member States constitutes a valuable procedural endeavour to address substantive items through the appointment of coordinators who will enable work which is dormant to be speeded up.

Pursuing the approach described in the draft decision is a realistic element in order to emerge from the dangerous quagmire in which we find ourselves.

The document embraces the four fundamental issues which need to be discussed. We are aware that the proposal may have its shortcomings, like any consensus process. However, we have reached a stage in which flexibility will be decisive in developing and constructing a programme of work which will enable us to overcome this unacceptable inaction, which might also be regarded as evidence of a deplorable lack of imagination.

Ahead of us we have the challenges, the so-called substantive debates: on nuclear disarmament and prevention of nuclear war, negotiations on a non-discriminatory multilateral treaty prohibiting the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other explosive nuclear devices, prevention of the arms race in outer space, international agreements which assure the non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons; in

(Mr. Izquierdo Miño, Ecuador)

addition, with respect to new kinds of weapons of mass destruction and new systems of such weapons, such as radiological weapons, comprehensive disarmament programme and transparency in disarmament. All of them outstanding issues, dangerously outstanding, for the international community for too long now.

On behalf of Ecuador, a developing country, which has committed all the efforts of its Government and people to overcome its problems, I call on the Conference on Disarmament to display greater responsibility with respect to the commitments undertaken since its establishment in 1979. My country urges it to be capable of demonstrating and maintaining a role that is almost lost, that of serving effectively as the international community's sole multilateral negotiating forum for disarmament.

Ecuador reiterates its firm commitment to the renewal of this important process and its decision to take an active part, together with the countries with which we share similar principles and positions and those which have other interests, with a view to developing a substantive programme of work as speedily as possible, and supporting initiatives which can restore interrupted negotiating processes.

The lack of political will and ignoble avoidance of international commitments to peace, security and development have a fundamental impact on countries which, like Ecuador, are striving with huge sacrifice to conquer social inequality, poverty and the iniquitous imbalances imposed by unjust international trade which favours only the interests of the most powerful.

The Conference on Disarmament is a forum which has in the past produced key instruments which have contributed to the strengthening of international peace and security and peaceful coexistence among States. Disarmament and non-proliferation are paths which we must embark on with greater seriousness and responsibility. We have an obligation to speed up the processes, make the ideals of mankind a reality, devote fewer resources to armaments and work, for instance, to seriously fulfil the Millennium Development Goals. In short, we need a more respectable business card.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of Ecuador for his kind words and for the wide-ranging intervention highlighting the breadth of activity in arms control and disarmament in many areas, in international efforts in conventional and WMD and the Conference on Disarmament's role within that.

I now give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador of France.

Mr. DOBELLE (France) (spoke in French): Mr. President, since this is the first time that I have taken the floor since you assumed the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament, I should like to start by congratulating you on your assumption of this office and for the excellent manner in which you have conducted our work thus far. I also wish to take this opportunity to assure you of my delegation's full support in your task.

(Mr. Dobelle, France)

I wanted to take the floor today to raise a subject which my delegation believes should be more amply discussed at this forum, I am referring to the question of small arms and light weapons. Before I begin my statement on the subject, however, I should like to take this opportunity to make it clear that, with respect to the conduct of proceedings at the Conference, my delegation associates itself fully with the declaration delivered on 15 May last by Slovenia in its capacity as President of the Council of the European Union.

Despite what their name might suggest, small arms, light weapons and their ammunitions cause tremendous damage. As many non-governmental organizations which deal with this issue have pointed out, in terms of the damage caused by their uncontrolled spread, these are true weapons of mass destruction.

The Secretary-General of the United Nations, at the request of the Security Council, recently produced a report evaluating the 12 recommendations contained in his 2002 report on light weapons. This new report by the Secretary-General describes the lasting destabilization of societies; the plundering of their resources and the thousands of victims of the uncontrolled spread of small arms and light weapons throughout the world, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. The presentation of that report led to a particularly rich and interesting debate at a meeting of the Security Council held on 30 April, which I wish to follow up now.

France is deeply committed as a nation to combating illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons, and has been so for a long time. Already back in 2001, France contributed actively to the drafting and subsequent adoption of a United Nations Programme of Action, which will be holding its third biennial meeting of States next July, when France will take over the presidency of the Council of the European Union.

My country has pursued initiatives in different forums. In the framework of the European Union, France played an important role in the elaboration and adoption of the Code of Conduct on Arms Exports and the Strategy to combat illicit accumulation and trafficking of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition. We also presented, in a number of forums - the G-8, the European Union, the OSCE and the Wassenaar Arrangement - an international initiative to which we are particularly attached, on combating illicit trafficking by air transport.

We know from the reports by United Nations groups of experts that trafficking of light weapons by air transport is a frequent occurrence. It is well known that traffickers elude controls by the authorities by falsifying transport documents, flight plans and aircraft registration data and by undertaking high-risk flights.

The French initiative aims, initially, at improving information exchanges among States on their control mechanisms and allowing for better cooperation. At a later stage, it aims at

(Mr. Dobbelle, France)

promoting partnership with air transport firms with a view to identifying the best measures to be taken, bearing in mind the economic situation of this sector. Finally, at a third stage, we intend to create best practice guides.

We would like to encourage States, in the light of the inherent gaps in globalization, to ensure both upstream and downstream control of transfers of small arms and light weapons (including in the transit phase, which is often when these illicit operations occur) in order to narrow boundaries of the grey area which arms traffickers, non-State actors, terrorist movements and organized crime can use to gain access to weapons capable of destabilizing States or entire regions or to carry out acts of terrorism or piracy.

Our initiative is also designed to strengthen the cooperation among States vis-à-vis these illicit actors, making use of the existing regulations specific to each State and facilitating exchanges of information between the relevant State agencies. Our action is part of a prevention and awareness-raising strategy. We hope that, with the “Best Practice Guide”, these States will improve the implementation of the controls required by their national regulations or by international regulations in a more systematic and responsible manner. It is particularly important for transit States to take account of the risks of cargo being diverted or of United Nations embargoes being violated, bearing in mind the criteria set out in the guide.

In our view, the guide is a helpful decision-making tool for States’ national air traffic control authorities, as the latter do not always have the necessary expertise or reflexes to counter this form of trafficking. The guide could be used to develop cooperation with, and assistance for, requesting States.

If we succeed in promoting, in State organizations that deal with air transport - and in ways that reflect the specificities of each State and respect their sovereignty - if, then, we manage to improve awareness of their responsibility for combating arms trafficking, we will have achieved the main purpose of our initiative. The rest will depend on the determination of each State to exchange relevant information that will allow for effective action against arms traffickers’ networks. Air transport is a central link in this kind of trafficking and we hope to break this link.

In the context of the United Nations, my country is committed to a number of initiatives in which we place our highest hopes, as they will make it possible to tackle a number of essential aspects of trafficking. Here, I will refer to four of these areas. First, the origin of small arms and light weapons: traceability and marking of small arms and light weapons is essential to combating trafficking. It is for this reason that France and Switzerland took the initiative on the international instrument adopted in 2005. We would have liked the instrument to have legally binding force. Although international cooperation is still far too weak in this area, we are pleased that the initiative did allow us to take a step forward, because it shows us the way forward for the future. Second, intermediaries: my country is actively involved in the elaboration of an instrument to combat illicit brokering of small arms and light weapons. We know that brokers

(Mr. Dobelle, France)

have become a central, inevitable and harmful party in trafficking. Third, - and this is an indispensable adjunct - I would like to stress how important it is not to forget ammunition. Ammunition is an indispensable adjunct to small arms and light weapons. It is not just weapons, but also their ammunition and porous or clandestine stockpiles which fuel conflict. France is deeply committed to the Group of Experts on stocks of surplus ammunition, which is meeting this year in New York pursuant to our initiative launched jointly with Germany in 2006. After the origin of small arms and light weapons and after the question of intermediaries and ammunition, comes the fourth and final issue: the end-users. We support all initiatives designed to ensure better control of transfers of small arms and light weapons. We are pleased to note, in this connection, the expert work being done on an arms trade treaty. This is a major initiative, which will not only apply to small arms and light weapons but will also contribute to more responsible management of their transfers and to better international cooperation in this area. It is too soon to prejudge the outcome of the current work, as we are only halfway through the four weeks of meetings planned.

What we see at this stage is an increasingly clear idea, above and beyond the very general terms of the mandate provided by General Assembly resolution 61/89 of 6 December 2006, as to what the experts may be able to achieve in the way of useful outcomes. Here - and this is not in order of priority - we are referring to the technical feasibility of such an instrument, the precise definition of categories of material to which the provisions of a future treaty would apply and the nature and modes of implementation of such provisions. This latter point, of course, will remain the most difficult until the process is completed. Nonetheless, we are convinced that it will be possible to reach an understanding on a minimum number of common criteria.

These intensive efforts should not allow us to forget the length of the road yet to be travelled. We have a number of key deadlines before us. I can only encourage the member States to involve themselves fully in the next biennial meeting of States parties to the United Nations Programme of Action and the work of the various groups of experts whose work is under way. We owe it to the victims of today and tomorrow, in particular women and children. This is a heavy responsibility that we bear as guarantors of international peace and security. In speaking on this subject at the Conference, my intention is certainly not to ask the Conference to deal with a subject already taken up elsewhere in different contexts but rather to contribute to this work of stirring our consciences, which we can and must embrace in connection with this crucial question.

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

There are no more speakers on my list. Does any delegation wish to take the floor? It would appear not to be the case.

(The President)

We have heard profound and insightful interventions this morning, one from a distinguished visitor from the capitals and one from our distinguished colleague in Geneva. They have described the international efforts to take up the challenge of combating conventional weapons' proliferation and the continued effort required in the area on weapons of mass destruction, and they have also pointed to the role of this Conference.

For our part, we will continue our bilateral consultations, both in capitals and in Geneva, and we will continue to see what efforts can be achieved in getting this Conference back to work.

That concludes the order of business for today. The next formal plenary of the Conference will be held on Tuesday, 17 June, at 10 a.m. in this chamber.

The meeting stands adjourned.

The meeting rose at 10.40 a.m.