

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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ENGLISH

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

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Monday, 10 August 2009, at 10.15 a.m.

President: Ms. Caroline MILLAR (Australia)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 1150th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

I do not have any speakers on my list. Are there any delegations that would like to take the floor at this time? I see none.

We all know why we are here. We had hoped to come and take a decision to adopt the implementation of our programme of work which we all adopted on 29 May 2009. You have received copies of draft decision CD/1870/Rev.1 on the appointment of Working Group Chairs and Special Coordinators and on a balanced timetable of activities for the remainder of the Conference session for 2009. You have also received copies of a draft short Presidential statement to reflect some other issues raised by delegations, and, as I announced on Friday in this chamber, in a spirit of compromise, I agreed to remove the fourth paragraph from this statement to assist consensus.

The documents that you have have been the result of intense and prolonged consultations. I thought we actually had agreement on them, and in fact I repeatedly asked colleagues if they had any further concerns to advise me of them. Until this morning that has not been the case.

You will recall that on Friday I put the draft decision to this Conference for adoption, and the delegation of Pakistan advised that it had no instructions. I have been advised by the Pakistan Ambassador this morning, Ambassador Akram, that he has received instructions, and the instructions are to reopen the text that I thought we had agreed.

I of course will, as President, consult on those suggestions from the Ambassador of Pakistan. I confess I am slightly at a loss because some of them seem to raise issues that I thought we had addressed with a very wide range of delegations, and I am a little concerned that the delicate compromises we had may be put in jeopardy. But nonetheless I will do my utmost as President to consult and to see if we can find a document that all can accept.

Having said that, I would really appeal to you all - if we are interested in moving forward and do not want to look like the same old Conference on Disarmament that actually can never do anything but process - to see if you can really accept the documents as they stand. But if not, I fear that we may not be able to proceed. I hope and pray that that is not the case.

I see little point at this stage in convening a formal plenary meeting tomorrow unless my consultations are very quick, and we are able to proceed. If we go much beyond that, frankly we are going to have to reopen the timetable and look at it all again. I think perhaps if we could manage to get an agreement in the next couple of days, it might be possible, with some minor tweaking to the timetable, to insert a couple of extra meetings in blank spaces to keep to it pretty much as it is. If it goes beyond that, I do not think that will be possible.

So that is the state of affairs as of this morning. Are there any delegations who would like to take the floor at this time? I see the Ambassador of Sweden.

Mr. HELLGREN (Sweden): It was my hope and expectation that my first intervention in the Conference on Disarmament during the Swedish presidency of the European Union would be to mark the beginning of the implementation of the programme of work that we unanimously adopted on 29 May.

It is therefore with deep regret today that I take the floor on behalf of the European Union to express our profound disappointment over the latest developments, or rather lack of developments, in the Conference on Disarmament.

The programme of work in CD/1864 was an important breakthrough after more than a decade of stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament. World leaders welcomed the results of our efforts, based on the assumption that the Conference on Disarmament would begin implementing the agreed programme of work without any further delay. The Conference on Disarmament was returning to serious work and negotiations based on promoting and protecting national security interests. The period of procedural manoeuvres to prevent progress on substance was over. So we all thought.

But since 29 May, the Conference on Disarmament has again been bogged down in endless consultations over mainly practical and procedural issues related to the implementation of the agreed programme of work. Despite the enormous efforts by the P-6, and not least by you, Madam President, and your immediate predecessor, Ambassador Moritán, the implementation of the 2009 programme of work has not yet begun. None of the office holders have been confirmed, and no meetings of the subsidiary bodies have been held. We find this hard to understand and even harder to explain to our political leaders.

We now have less than six weeks left to show the world that the Conference on Disarmament is able to at least start implementing the 2009 programme of work. Let me assure you that the European Union and its member States are ready. We have been ready for a long time. Today we are disappointed, but we remain committed to the Conference on Disarmament and the programme of work we all agreed just a few months ago. We expect a similar commitment from all member States.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Ambassador of Sweden for his statement on behalf of the EU. I see the Ambassador of Japan.

Mr. SUDA (Japan): Madam President, I would like to express my deepest appreciation for your intensive efforts over the weekend and in the past weeks. Yesterday my delegation observed anniversaries in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, where the President of the United Nations General Assembly visited Nagasaki and appealed for strengthened efforts to eliminate nuclear weapons.

We raise our earnest wishes and expectations for progress in international cooperation on nuclear disarmament. I have to report back to my capital and the people of Japan the present - I should say "unusual" - situation of the Conference on Disarmament. Maybe not unusual to the Conference on Disarmament, but it is very unusual to the rest of the world.

(Mr. Suda, Japan)

The Conference on Disarmament works on consensus, but what we have been witnessing for weeks is the unusual situation that the Conference on Disarmament is unable to implement the decision made by its own consensus. We adopted CD/1864 by consensus in May. It means that our consensus is to implement the programme of work before the end of the session, but it is put in danger by a fear of continuing interventions. If the interventions contain a good reason for discussions, we can and we have to solve the deadlock quickly through consultations. But it seems to me not the case with us so far.

We should now realize that this unusual situation is endangering the Conference's principle of consensus itself. While we respect the principle of consensus very much, we are unable so far to implement the decision we have made by consensus. This does not seem to me the way the Conference on Disarmament expects the principle of consensus to work, but rather acts against the real meaning of that principle. If this situation continues for another couple of weeks, it is as if we are confessing to the world outside the Conference on Disarmament that we cannot function by our service despite many important issues on the table. We have opened by consensus a bottle of champagne to drink, but we cannot pour the drink into glasses and are just waiting as the flavour evaporates into the air, making the champagne undrinkable. We bought by consensus a melon to eat, but we cannot slice it onto plates, and are just watching the fruit losing its ripeness and getting rotten in a few weeks.

I would like to say that the Conference on Disarmament is in a serious contradiction, particularly at a time the world is expecting, for many good reasons, long-awaited progress in the Conference on Disarmament, particularly at the time when the United Nations General Assembly will start its deliberations within 2 months, and the NPT Review Conference will take place within 10 months. The time is now ripe, so the Conference on Disarmament has to demonstrate its wisdom to solve the unusual situation by our strengthened cooperation and mutual confidence.

Madam President, the Japanese delegation highly appreciates your desperate endeavour and we are ready to cooperate with you in your further endeavours. We remain very much prepared to work with you and other delegations in order to put an end to this unusual situation of our Conference.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Ambassador of Japan for his statement. Are there any other delegations that would like to take the floor? I give the floor to the Ambassador of Pakistan.

Mr. AKRAM (Pakistan): Madam President, I have taken the floor in response to the comments that you have made just now. I think it would be fair for all of us for me to clarify that throughout this process I have always conveyed that the final approval of the position that my delegation will take will be given by my Ministry.

We are all professionals here, and I have 31 years of experience in the Foreign Service of Pakistan. I know that the decisions that I take are the ones that are conveyed by my Ministry to take. I may have my own views, but I do not have a personal agenda. I am also not here because

(Mr. Akram, Pakistan)

I have contributed to some Presidential election. I am here because I am a professional - hence the position that I communicated faithfully to my Government on the basis of the discussions I have had with you and with other delegations present in this hall.

It is unfortunate that we are the only delegation that has a point of view which many feel is obstructing progress. That is not how we look at it, because every one of us, on the basis of consensus, has to work in the interest of our own national security interests. And that is the basis on which I am empowered to convey the views of my Government, which I have done to you, Madam President.

I hope that having done so, we can proceed as fast as we can. It is not our intention to hold up the progress that we can make in the Conference on Disarmament before the end of this year.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Ambassador of Pakistan for his statement, and I now give the floor to the Ambassador of the United Kingdom.

Mr. DUNCAN (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland): The United Kingdom would like to fully endorse what was said just a few minutes ago by the representative of the presidency of the European Union, but also the very apposite comments, particularly the historic references, made by the esteemed Ambassador of Japan.

As our Pakistani colleague has just reminded us, we are all professionals. I was somewhat alarmed during the session to hear again the comments about good atmosphere. This is not a club. It is a forum which is quite unique, which is a forum where a number of the key players of the nuclear issue are brought together. There are many differences amongst us on issues of substance. It is not an easy debate, but it is one where we have after 12 years of stalemate managed to get a policy decision.

So with respect to what our Pakistani colleague has just said, this is not a case of obstructing progress on a policy issue. It is obstructing progress on a practical issue, and I rather share the concerns expressed by my Japanese colleague on this issue.

The issues of a policy nature are extremely important. As the Japanese Ambassador has pointed out, world leaders have supported the launch of FMCT negotiations, but there are other issues - NSAs, outer space - and as I have said, some of these are difficult and sensitive. The policy decision was a long time in coming, and it is greatly to our disappointment that we find ourselves unable to implement the practical modalities.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Ambassador of the United Kingdom for his statement. Are there any other delegations that would like to take the floor at this stage? I see Brazil.

Mr. MACEDO SOARES (Brazil): Madam President, it is more of a question of clarification that I seek. I understood from the representative of Pakistan that he conveyed to you the difficulties his country has concerning the proposal that is on the table. At the same time, I understood from you that you are going to proceed with your consultations. So I understand that it is important, I suppose, for all delegations to have an idea, and I suppose from you, through

(Mr. Macedo Soares, Brazil)

your bilateral or group consultations, about what difficulties remain to be solved, so that we can make up our minds and say if we understand or not the difficulties, if we can go along or if we can propose other ways of solving the matter. But so far I do not know exactly what the matters are.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Ambassador of Brazil for his statement, and I will address his concerns in just a moment. Are there any other delegations that would like to take the floor however at this point? I see none.

With the indulgence of the Ambassador of Pakistan, perhaps I can just say that the concerns relate primarily to the language of the chapeau, and not to the appointment of the office holders, if that was part of your question; and also he has suggested deleting from the timetable the weeks allocated to our consideration of the report.

On that latter point, there has been some discussion of that in my consultations, but my understanding is that according to the rules of procedure, the programme of work is adopted in accordance with the agenda, and the agenda provides for consideration of the report, so it would be entirely proper for a document that deals with the implementation of the programme of work to include the time allocated for the report. I hope that might address the concerns of a few delegations who had also raised that issue with us.

So you are right. I do intend some consultations on this in the coming days. I think I would just rather leave it at that for the moment.

Are there any other delegations that would like to take the floor? I see none.

We fully appreciate - and I appreciate - the comments made by the Ambassador of Pakistan that he, as all of us, acts on instructions. That is understood. This is a political body that deals with important questions that touch immediately on the national security concerns of many States. We had hoped that States had weighed this up very, very carefully in taking what was essentially a political decision on 29 May. It is not entirely clear to me at this point that that is the case.

Before adjourning the meeting I have a few announcements to make. Firstly, as some of you may have noticed, in order to help delegations in preparing for the meetings of the Working Groups when - and I hope I am saying "when" not "if" - they decide to proceed - we decide they can proceed - the secretariat has expanded the web page entitled "Documents of the Conference", and added the core documents related to each issue to be addressed by these Working Groups. Secondly, I would like to convene a brief P-6 meeting at the end of this meeting, and I ask my colleagues in the P-6 if they could remain. And thirdly, on 12 August, we will have the pleasure to welcome the Foreign Minister of China, Mr. Yang Jiechi, who will address the Conference.

This then concludes our business for today. As mentioned, the next plenary meeting of the Conference is scheduled for Wednesday, 12 August, at 10 a.m. in this chamber.

The meeting rose at 10.35 a.m.