
Conference on Disarmament

23 February 2012

English

Final record of the one thousand two hundred and forty-eighth plenary meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Thursday, 23 February 2012, at 3.05 p.m.

President: Mr. Hisham Badr(Egypt)

The President: Your Excellencies, Minister, distinguished Ambassadors, I declare open the 1248th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

I would like to extend a warm welcome to our distinguished guest of today, Her Excellency, Dr. Dipu Moni, Foreign Minister of Bangladesh. Dr. Moni's readiness to address the Conference for the third time since she assumed office is a clear testimony of the importance she attaches to the work of this distinguished body.

Before I have the pleasure to invite Dr. Moni, I would like to say that it's a particular pleasure for me to have you here at the Conference. As you know, my late father was Ambassador to Bangladesh, to Dhaka, and there we have enjoyed some of the best years of our life and he had always cherished his memories, and still remember the house there and the very kind people. So, it is a particular pleasure that the first Minister that I welcome here at the Conference is the Minister of my second country, Bangladesh. So, I give the floor to Dr. Moni.

Ms. Moni (Bangladesh): Mr President I am delighted to address the Conference on Disarmament again. Let me take this opportunity to congratulate Egypt, a good friend of Bangladesh, on its assumption of the presidency of this Conference. I also thank the Secretary-General of the Conference for his efforts in taking forward the work of the world's sole multilateral disarmament negotiating body.

In recent times, we have been witnessing sweeping changes across large parts of the world. People's aspirations for democracy are finding expression. This optimism, however, is tempered by persisting economic difficulties. As the world dreads a slump into recession, social strife is increasing and development gains are undermined. The world is headed towards a climatic disaster unless bold decisions are taken and implemented. In the midst of these upheavals and tectonic shifts, disarmament seems like an island in splendid isolation, tranquil and unaffected. This isolation or tranquillity is not a good sign, I am afraid. Change always comes with uncertainty, and if not managed properly can generate unrest and insecurity that may potentially affect all of us.

When we look around the world, we see that States are engaged in expanding their arsenals with more and more lethal weapons, spending billions of dollars for producing and upgrading weapons of mass destruction and their delivery capacities. In an environment where many societies are passing through turmoil and uncertainty, the underlying insecurity that it generates can actually be exacerbated by weapons proliferation and transfer.

We, therefore, cannot accept that the economic, social or the environmental agenda alone should take centre stage, putting the disarmament agenda on the back-burner. In fact, they are all interdependent. The time to make progress on the disarmament front is therefore more critical than ever. Unfortunately, the Conference on Disarmament, where it all should happen, is yet to end its long winter slumber, and take on substantive work.

Realizing the goals of disarmament means saving millions of lives, freeing valuable resources for addressing pressing development needs, and ensuring timely achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. We, therefore, cannot retreat from our journey towards a nuclear-weapon-free world. This uphill task entails power and security considerations at the highest political level of States. In this regard, Bangladesh, as a responsible member of the international community, is committed to do its part.

Ever since our independence, we have been pursuing the goals of disarmament and non-proliferation. One of the fundamental principles of our State policy is the promotion of international peace and security. We are constitutionally committed to general and complete disarmament. In pursuance to this commitment, Bangladesh, as a peace-loving nation, has consistently been advocating against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. We have been a pioneer in South Asia in adhering to all major multilateral disarmament

treaties, including the Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Chemical Weapons Treaty, the Biological Weapons Treaty, the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Bangladesh's contributions to the maintenance of international peace and security through our participation in United Nations peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts have received widespread appreciation. We are neither a nuclear-weapon State nor an arms producer. We have no intention of acquiring weapons of mass destruction. However, if there were to be a nuclear war in any part of the world, we will be directly or indirectly affected.

We understand that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee for a peaceful and secure world. Until this is achieved, non-nuclear-weapon States have the legitimate right to receive security assurances from nuclear weapon States. Establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones and accession to their protocols could be useful interim steps towards securing negative security assurances. We support these initiatives in principle. We must remember that the use of nuclear weapons against any country is a problem of a global nature rather than regional. Bangladesh, therefore, continues to stress the need for commencing negotiations on a universal, unconditional and legally binding instrument for negative security assurances as a matter of priority.

In pursuing the global disarmament agenda, we see merit in beginning negotiations on a non-discriminatory, internationally and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material (FMCT) for nuclear weapons which will include existing stocks. Like many others, we believe that such negotiations must take place in the Conference on Disarmament, as it would bring all nuclear-capable States on board.

Bangladesh shares the view that outer space is a common heritage of mankind and calls upon the major space-faring nations to avert weaponization of outer space. We believe that the Conference should make progress in this critical area by building on the constructive work done so far.

Bangladesh is a staunch supporter of the multilateral approach to disarmament and non-proliferation. As the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating body, the Conference must continue to uphold its legitimacy and credibility by breaking out of its current stalemate and engage in substantive work. We are a strong believer in its continued relevance. We believe that nuclear disarmament issues should be negotiated by this Conference, as it is the only body with membership of all nuclear-capable States, rather than looking for alternative arrangements.

In order to end the deadlock and revitalize the Conference, we are appreciative of the work done by the Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters for the possible establishment of a group of eminent persons. This is a timely initiative, especially when the Secretary-General of the United Nations has identified this year as the Year of Prevention. The Conference certainly has a role in this matter as it holds a key piece of the prevention puzzle. The Conference must therefore redouble its efforts to iron out the differences and start substantive work without delay. In this context, an understanding at the political level will be key to breaking the deadlock. We remain ready to assist the process in any way possible.

Mr. President, we must recognize the need for making the Conference more receptive to the global voices on disarmament by creating greater space for participation by other relevant stakeholders. We note with interest, the call for moving towards a Global Zero – a phased, verified elimination of all nuclear weapons worldwide.

Bangladesh hopes that the NPT review process will continue to be pursued by the global disarmament community with a balanced approach. We look forward to participating in the preparatory meetings leading up to the 2015 NPT Review Conference. We believe that peaceful use of nuclear energy under comprehensive International Atomic Energy

Agency (IAEA) safeguards can help address key development challenges. In this regard, Bangladesh, with the assistance and strict supervision of IAEA, has been working on civil and peaceful use of nuclear technology, especially in agriculture, energy and health sectors.

Bangladesh has been the first Annex II State in South Asia to join the CTBT. The universalization and entry into force of CTBT at an early date would be important in attaining our goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world. Bangladesh has recently become a part of CTBT verification system by commissioning an auxiliary seismic station in the southern part of the country under the CTBTO international monitoring system (IMS).

The global disarmament agenda must not forget the dangers of small arms and light weapons. While working for the total elimination of all weapons of mass destruction, we must continue our efforts to stop the proliferation of conventional weapons. In this context, Bangladesh has been following with interest the ongoing efforts to conclude an arms trade treaty. As a State party to the Ottawa Convention, Bangladesh calls for putting an end to the inhumane and unauthorized use of anti-personnel landmines.

I would like to end my statement with a thought that goes somewhat beyond the Conference, but is relevant in the context of promoting global peace. When we observe global developments, it is obvious that there is a need for a paradigm shift in international dialogue on peace and development in order to respond to the emerging global challenges of the twenty-first century. With this in mind, our Honourable Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina, had presented a “people’s empowerment and peace-centric development model” in her address to the United Nations General Assembly last September. This multidimensional model emphasizes the need for promoting social equity and justice and unlocking the human potentials of every individual in a world of peace. Bangladesh looks forward to wider engagement by the global community in this endeavour.

The President: Thank you. I would like to thank the Foreign Minister of Bangladesh for her statement and for the kind words to the President. Now allow me to suspend the meeting for a moment while I escort the Minister from the chamber.

The meeting was suspended at 3.55 p.m. and resumed at 4 p.m.

The President: Would any other delegation like to take the floor? It’s good, I don’t see any. So, this concludes our business for today.

The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Tuesday, the 28th of February at 10 a.m., and that’s an important meeting. At that time we will hear addresses from the dignitaries from Kazakhstan, Jordan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Malaysia, Costa Rica, Kyrgyzstan, Japan, the Republic of Korea and Indonesia. So I am sure you are going to be attending here on Tuesday.

The meeting rose at 4.05 p.m.