
Conference on Disarmament

13 September 2017

Original: English

Letter dated 8 September 2017 from the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Belarus Mr. Yury Ambrazevich to the Secretary General of the Conference on Disarmament

In my capacity of the friend of Chair of the Conference on Disarmament Working Group of the “way ahead” and as the co-facilitator of the Working Group meetings on Agenda items 5, 6 and 7 I have the honour to transmit report, summing up the discussions on these Agenda items, contained in my letter of August 16, 2017, to H.E. Ambassador Htin Lynn of Myanmar, Chair of the Conference on Disarmament Working Group on the “way ahead”. A copy of the letter and annexes hereto is enclosed.

Following the decision of the Conference of August 29, 2017, to adopt the Report of the Working Group on the “way ahead” I will highly appreciate, if the enclosed letter will be annexed to the Report as an official document of the Conference.

Let me also avail myself of this opportunity to express deep gratitude and appreciation to the Secretariat of the Conference for excellent preparatory work and assistance during the meetings on Agenda items 5, 6 and 7.

I have requested the Secretariat to circulate the present note with the two letters as an official document of the Conference.

Enclosure: as stated.

(Signed) Yury Ambrazevich
Permanent Representative of
the Republic of Belarus

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Annex I

Geneva, 16 August 2017

Excellency,

In my capacity as friend of the Chair of the Conference on Disarmament Working Group on the “way ahead” and as the co-facilitator of the Working Group meetings on Agenda items 5, 6 and 7 I have the honour to report you on results and main findings of meetings.

The Working Group held three meetings on August 11, 14 and 15, 2017, aimed to survey submitted initiatives under Agenda items 5, 6 and 7, to exchange views on their topicality and relevance, to identify initiatives, possible for further negotiations within the Conference, and to discuss possible recommendations and steps forward, which the Working Group may recommend to the Conference. To foster discussions in my letter of August 14 I’ve also circulated three questions to the Working Group. My letters to the Conference of June 15 and August 14, 2017, are attached for your convenience.

During the meeting on August 11, 2017, the Working Group enjoyed a comprehensive overview of initiatives, submitted to the Conference from 1979 to 2016, prepared by the Secretariat.

Invited guest speaker Ambassador Sergey Batsanov of the Pugwash Conferences on August 15, 2017, provided his thoughts on history and prospective of the consideration of issues, related to agenda items 5, 6 and 7 by the Conference.

The discussions outlined the following issues of major concern for the delegations:

- 1) ICTs use in the security context, threat of cyberwarfare and cyberterrorism;
- 2) Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS) and weaponization of artificial intelligence;
- 3) Threat to own and use WMDs by terrorists and other non-state actors, including the proposal of the Russian Federation to elaborate main elements of the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Chemical and Biological Terrorism (ICCBT) within the Conference.

Notwithstanding priority of 4 “core agenda items” for many delegations, the strong demand to address these issues within the margins of the CD was expressed.

However the discussions revealed very different approaches of Member States on how to address these issues, as well as on possibilities to discuss these issues within the CD and on the possible role of the Conference.

One group of countries, summing up their contributions, doubted, that the CD is an appropriate forum to discuss these matters, referring to another platforms (like GGE in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security, CCW, UN SCR 1540, BWC and OPCW), expressing the view, that negotiations on cyber security cannot be supported within the CD, and challenging the added value of ICTs, LAWS or ICCBT consideration by the Conference.

Other group of countries favored elaboration of legally binding measures to prevent the use of the cyber weapons, to destroy its potential and to reduce risks; in-depth discussion on LAWS and elaboration of main elements of the ICCBT; and approved Conference as an appropriate forum to do this.

In my personal opinion, the Conference should be more ambitious in discussing these issues, as well as other new threats and challenges to the international security environment and strategic stability, without prejudice to negotiations on 4 “core agenda items”.

Close interlinkage between science and technology developments and possibility for their hostile use; possibility of achieving destructive effect, compared to the use of nuclear weapons; emerging role of non-state actors (primarily terrorist groups); evolving of military doctrines and shift towards enhancement of the role of conventional weapons make me confident, that the agenda items 5, 6 and 7 are relevant to the mandate of the Conference.

Let me echo some of the thoughts from the floor, that at the utmost the Conference should have an effective review mechanism to address emerging threats and challenges, identify certain problems and legal gaps, elaborate measures of response.

The Conference should use all appropriate instruments to address threats of development and use of new types of weapons of mass destruction, cyberwarfare, LAWS, possibilities for terrorists and other non-state actors to own and use WMDs and other emerging challenges.

However, I am aware, that to achieve the utmost we need to bring closer positions of different groups of countries, taking into account the mandate of the Conference and results of discussions on other fora.

As first steps to identify common ground for a programme of work with a negotiating mandate the Conference should:

- retain items 5, 6 and 7 in the agenda of the Conference;
- continue the in-depth discussions (formal or informal) on agenda items 5, 6 and 7;
- give more attention to the identification of certain problems, legal gaps and elaboration of appropriate measures of response;
- encourage Member States to broaden the use of informal mechanisms, including informal consultations, informal meetings outside the CD on CD matters or informal working groups, to address the issues under a.i. 5, 6 and 7 and contribute to the consensus building within the CD.

I hope, that this set of measures can be supported by the Conference to elaborate balanced and comprehensive programme of work and escape from the 21-year long deadlock.

Allow me also to thank you, Ambassador, for your trust and confidence.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Enclosure: as stated.

(Signed) Yury Ambrazevich
Permanent Representative of
the Republic of Belarus

Annex II

Geneva, 15 June 2017

Excellency,

In my capacity as friend of the Chair of the Conference on Disarmament Working Group on the “way ahead” and as the co-facilitator of the Working Group meetings on Agenda items 5, 6 and 7 I have the honour to address you on the following matter.

The Conference decision CD/2090 mandated the Working Group to:

- take stock of the progress on all agenda items of the Conference as contained in CD/2085,
- identify issues for substantive work under the agenda, taking into account the efforts and priorities of the international community,
- identify common ground for a programme of work with a negotiating mandate,
- consider steps for the way ahead.

Following this mandate and in order to streamline our work I have the honour to propose the following working pattern for the consideration of Agenda items 5, 6 and 7:

11 August a.m. – Survey and stock-taking of submitted initiatives under Agenda items 5, 6 and 7, exchange of views on their topicality and relevance.

14 August p.m. – Identification of initiatives, possible for further negotiations within the Conference, survey of possible topics to be explored under Agenda items 5, 6 and 7.

15 August p.m. – Discussion on possible recommendations and steps forward, which the Working Group may recommend to the Conference.

I am confident that the proposed working pattern for the consideration of Agenda items 5, 6 and 7 will help the Working Group to have productive, focused and in-depth discussions, leading to practical steps on the way from the deadlock in the Conference on Disarmament.

I hope for your active and constructive participation in the forthcoming consideration of Agenda items 5, 6 and 7.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

(Signed) Yury Ambrazevich
Permanent Representative of
the Republic of Belarus

Annex III

Geneva, 14 August 2017

Excellency,

In my capacity as friend of the Chair of the Conference on Disarmament Working Group on the “way ahead” and as the co-facilitator of the Working Group meetings on Agenda items 5, 6 and 7 I have the honour to address you on the following matter.

On August 11 the Working Group held a meeting, aimed to survey of submitted initiatives under Agenda items 5, 6 and 7, and exchange of views on their topicality and relevance.

The delegations received a comprehensive overview of initiatives, submitted to the Conference from 1979 to 2016, prepared by the Secretariat.

The afterwards discussion outlined the following.

On agenda item 5.

One delegation proposed to consider issues, related to the ICT use in the security context, under this agenda item in order to elaborate legally binding instrument, preventing the use of the cyber weapons, destroying its potential and reducing risks.

Another delegation outlined primary necessity to focus on responsible state behavior in cyber sphere before discussing any legal instrument.

One delegation raised the issue of discussing legally binding instrument on prohibition of development and production of new types of the weapons of mass destruction and systems of such weapons. This delegation offered the Conference to consider the possibility of creating an informal ad hoc working group to discuss possible object, purpose and scope of such international treaty.

Regarding the issue of radiological weapons one delegation informed about readiness to support either elaboration of comprehensive treaty to ban radiological weapons or drafting of a sectoral agreement, e.g. on non-weaponization of the radiological sources.

On agenda item 6.

Several delegations favored elaboration of the main elements of the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Chemical and Biological Terrorism (ICCBT) by the CD. It was noted that such proposal doesn't affect any national substantial security interest.

One delegation doubted the need to draft such legal instrument within the CD and called upon strengthening the work to counter chemical and biological terrorism on other platforms, including UN SC 1540, BWC and OPCW.

On agenda item 7.

One delegation stressed the need for the Conference to address issues of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS). It was admitted, that development and use of LAWS must be banned.

Other delegation expressed the view that the CD should continue to work on this agenda item with a focus on identifying legal gaps and responding to new challenges and threats to the global system of international security.

Irrespective of agenda items one delegation also raised question on the understanding of the negotiation mandate by the Conference and expressed the view, that the Conference should not limit itself to a rigid framework, referring the negotiating mandate only as the final stage of the negotiation process.

In my letter of June 15, 2017, I expressed intention to dedicate meeting of the Working Group on August 14, 2017, to identify initiatives, possible for further negotiations within the Conference, to survey possible topics to be explored under Agenda items 5, 6 and 7 and on August 15, 2017, – to discuss possible recommendations and steps forward, which the Working Group may recommend to the Conference.

To foster the discussions I would like to propose the following questions to be considered by the Conference during upcoming meetings.

- 1) Are Member States willing to establish an ad hoc working group or any other mechanism to discuss and elaborate possible legal measures, aimed to lower the risk of proliferation of radiological weapons, either based on joint US-USSR proposal or other proposals, e.g. on non-weaponization of radioactive sources?
- 2) What measures can the Conference take to address threats of development and use of new types of weapons of mass destruction, cyberwarfare, LAWS, possibilities for terrorists and other non-state actors to own and use WMDs and other emerging challenges? May the Conference wish to establish a review mechanism to identify legal gaps and elaborate measures of response?
- 3) May the Conference wish to broaden the use of informal mechanisms, including informal consultations, informal meetings outside the CD on CD matters or informal working groups, to address the issues under a.i. 5, 6 and 7 and bring consensus to the Conference?

I am confident that proposed questions may lead to practical steps in order to fulfil the mandate, given by CD/2090 to the Working Group.

I hope for your active and constructive participation in the forthcoming meetings on August 14 and 15, 2017.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

(Signed) Yury Ambrazevich
Permanent Representative of
the Republic of Belarus
