

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE ONE THOUSAND AND SIXTY-SECOND PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Friday, 23 March 2007, at 5.05 p.m.

President: Ms. Sarala FERNANDO (Sri Lanka)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 1062nd plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

At the informal plenary today, I made a statement which briefly summarized the work done during the first part of the session on the basis of the input received from all the coordinators and information gathered by the 2007 Presidents through their own participation at the plenary and informal meetings, as well as resulting from bilateral consultations with all delegations and meetings with Groups and coordinators of the Groups. The statement also contained an assessment of all these activities during the first part of the 2007 session of the CD and finally, a draft decision that the P-6 proposed following intensive consultations with the entire membership of the Conference. This Presidential draft decision, contained in document CD/2007/L.1, is now being distributed.

I will now introduce the Presidential draft decision:

“The Conference on Disarmament decides, without prejudice to future work and negotiations on its agenda items,

“1. To appoint Ambassador Strømmen as Coordinator to preside over substantive discussions on nuclear disarmament and the prevention of nuclear war.

“The Coordinator shall present a report to the Conference on Disarmament on the progress of the work before the conclusion of the second part of the current session.

“2. To appoint Ambassador Trezza as Coordinator to preside over negotiations, without any preconditions, on a non-discriminatory and multilateral treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

“The Coordinator shall present a report to the Conference on Disarmament on the progress of the work before the conclusion of the second part of the current session.

“3. To appoint Ambassador Meyer as Coordinator to preside over substantive discussions dealing with issues related to prevention of an arms race in outer space.

“The Coordinator shall present a report to the Conference on Disarmament on the progress of the work before the conclusion of the second part of the current session.

“4. To appoint Ambassador Paranhos as Coordinator to preside over substantive discussions dealing with appropriate international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.

“The Coordinator shall present a report to the Conference on Disarmament on the progress of the work before the conclusion of the second part of the current session.”

(The President)

It is our intention that this draft decision will be followed by a complementary Presidential statement, which I will read now, as follows:

“Following the above decision by the Conference on the appointment of four Coordinators for specific issues, there is also an understanding in the Conference that coordinators for the agenda items previously appointed by the 2007 Presidents of the Conference will continue their work, as appropriate and under the authority of the 2007 Presidents of the Conference, during the second part of the current session.”

I will now open the floor to delegations who wish to address the Conference. I have the following speakers on my list for today’s plenary meeting: Ambassador Christina Rocca, the Ambassador of Egypt and the Ambassador of Australia.

I now give the floor to the Ambassador of the United States of America.

Ms. ROCCA (United States of America): As we are in formal session, I would like to put on the record the position of the United States on CRP.4 and the P-6 proposal for continuing work in the CD in 2007.

Madam President, before commenting on the substance of the P-6 proposal, I want to express to you and your P-6 colleagues the profound appreciation of my delegation for your efforts. Because of your dedication, determination and creativity the CD now has the opportunity to break out of the morass that has stymied our work for a decade. I know that this has been a difficult process for the P-6, but you have worked in a methodical way: you have consulted each and every delegation individually as well as in regional groups; you have taken note of all the interventions throughout two rounds of informal meetings on each agenda item. As you said, Madam President, when you met with the Western Group, this proposal reflects what the Presidents heard during those consultations and during the informal plenaries. As you said, this is our proposal.

We take your wise words to heart and recognize that the proposal requires compromise from all of us. It represents what, in the considered judgement of the six Presidents, could garner consensus and allow this body to return to its primary task: negotiating international instruments. The United States well realizes that the Presidential document has been carefully crafted with each word and idea weighed and balanced. It is no secret that the United States would have preferred a clear-cut decision to start negotiations on an FMCT based on the mandate we tabled (CD/1776), without reference to any other issue. We have spoken against linkages for years and we are not convinced that all linkages have yet been broken as a result of this plan - it bears a very close resemblance to the A-5 proposal, something that the United States opposes.

Despite those concerns, the United States has decided it will not stand in the way of consensus on the P-6 proposal, as you have presented it to us today. For 10 years CD members have used procedural arguments as a proxy for differences over substance, and as a result, the CD has come to the brink of irrelevance. We understand that proposing amendments to the P-6 proposal, for ostensibly procedural reasons, would have the effect of preventing substantive work in the CD.

(Ms. Rocca, United States)

After all the wasted years of fighting over a procedural mechanism, you and your fellow Presidents have presented us with a way forward. This proposal perfectly fits the definition of compromise in that there is something in it for everyone not to like. In this regard, if the CD cannot agree to this compromise, we do not believe it will ever be able to break out of its stalemate.

Madam President, we owe you and your fellow Presidents a debt of gratitude for presenting the CD this chance to save itself.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Ambassador of the United States, and I give the floor to the next speaker on my list, Ambassador Shoukry of Egypt.

Mr. SHOUKRY (Egypt): We commend the efforts undertaken by the Presidents of the Conference working towards the objective of revitalizing the work of the CD. My delegation takes note of the presentation of the proposal of the Presidents today and will of course give it very careful consideration, both here in the context of deliberations in the CD or at the capital. It is our hope that sufficient time will be accorded to all delegations to carefully study and review this proposal. My delegation, for its part, will exert every effort to address this proposal with an open mind and with every flexibility.

It is also our understanding that this proposal is one that needs further deliberation within the Conference and is not presented or provided on the basis of “take it or leave it”. It is an ongoing endeavour, which we hope will be successful and during which we will certainly contribute to the ongoing deliberations.

The PRESIDENT: I thank you, and I now give the floor to the next speaker, the Ambassador of Australia.

Ms. MILLAR (Australia): I would like to thank all the P-6 Presidents for the draft decision in L.1.

This proposal has been arrived at through a thorough, thoughtful and equitable process of consultation, and let me congratulate you for it. It was built on the consultations undertaken before the CD session by South Africa and on the work of the P-6 in 2006.

This proposal may be a compromise, but it offers us all a great deal. It offers us a great deal on substance, and it also offers the Conference a constructive way forward to move the CD out of the long-standing stalemate which it has been in for all too long.

Importantly, it provides for the start of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty. As this proposal is consistent with long-standing Australian policy objectives for the work of the Conference on Disarmament, I can confirm that Australia supports the decision in L.1 and is happy to proceed on that basis in the Conference.

The PRESIDENT: I now give the floor to the next speaker on my list, the Ambassador of the United Kingdom.

Mr. DUNCAN (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland): Madam President, first let me begin by offering heartfelt congratulations on your appointment at this momentous time for the Conference on Disarmament. You may count on our full support.

The United Kingdom has made clear on a number of occasions, both at ministerial level and in my own interventions, that we attach considerable importance to getting the Conference on Disarmament back to work. We therefore very much support the efforts of the P-6 presidencies, both this year and last, to find a way to break through the impasse which has prevented this Conference from fulfilling our ambitions for it for nearly a decade. Your work has been exemplary and in the highest traditions of professional diplomacy in harnessing our collective will.

The Conference on Disarmament was established in the middle of the twentieth century as a forum which would allow what was termed at the time “militarily significant States” to engage in a dialogue with other members of the international community on issues of arms control and disarmament. That solemn undertaking has guided the United Kingdom’s reflections on the way discussion has progressed over the past 18 months.

The decision L.1 tabled before us deals with an issue of singular importance, the agreement to begin negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty, and the United Kingdom made clear on a number of occasions that we see this as a top priority.

However, other members have raised other issues and explained the importance that they attach to substantive discussion. It is part of the bargain which underpins the Conference on Disarmament that we as one of the founding “militarily significant nations” should reaffirm our undertaking given some 50 years ago to take part in discussion on subjects which are not our first priority and which indeed we may find uncomfortable.

For us to focus overly on questions of detail would suggest that we have not had time to discuss and indeed test the mechanisms which are proposed by decision L.1. As others have commented, such an approach could be read as an attempt to dissemble or hide issues of substance behind issues of procedure.

Nor would it be wise to attempt to use a decision to prejudge a negotiation. I am sure that this lesson is one that the CD membership collectively has well understood.

The world has changed significantly since the Conference was established. “Militarily significant nations” no longer means perhaps what it once did. However, perhaps our founding fathers were indeed wise in their choice of words. The fundamental principle they articulated still applies: prestige/power, or as some have termed it, orgueil national, goes hand in hand with responsibility.

(Mr. Duncan, United Kingdom)

It is because of the United Kingdom's commitment to the Conference on Disarmament, and our determination both to live up to the undertaking that my country made in joining this organization and to contribute to efforts to get the Conference back to work, that I am able to say today in this formal session that we can support the draft decision which has been tabled by the P-6 presidencies.

I am sure that others and other delegates will reflect carefully on the matter, and I am confident that we are on the brink of a momentous decision for the CD, which will have implications going far wider than this forum itself. But, as others have commented, the window of opportunity is a narrow one. The time for decision is indeed upon us.

The PRESIDENT: I thank you, and I now give the floor to the next speaker, Ambassador Prasad of India.

Mr. PRASAD (India): Madam President, since we are now meeting in the formal plenary, my delegation would once again wish to congratulate you heartily on your assumption of the presidency. At this critical juncture in the recent history of the Conference, we would also like to thank in particular Ambassador Mtshali of South Africa and Ambassador March of Spain for the exemplary manner in which they conducted themselves during their respective presidencies. A warm word of welcome also to our new and highly erudite colleague from Nigeria, who will add to the collective wisdom of our body.

We welcome the unveiling of CRP.4 on the CD's programme of work, which contains the collective wisdom of the six Presidents for 2007. I shall promptly transmit this proposal to my Government for careful consideration, advice and instructions.

In its general approach, the proposal before us takes on board all the core issues before the Conference, and in that respect inherits the spirit of the other proposals on the table that enjoyed quite a broad measure of support within the Conference. This inclusion of four core issues in the CD's future programme of work shows a collective willingness to take into account the concerns and priorities of all the constituents of the Conference. We note, however, that in terms of the specific mandates, the treatment of the four issues is markedly different.

In this context, we would like to reiterate our consistent position in the context of an FMCT of the importance that we attach to negotiation of a universal, non-discriminatory and verifiable treaty. There should therefore be sufficient understanding on fundamental parameters before formal negotiations are launched.

Another change in the P-6 proposal is the manner in which the four issues are to be substantially dealt with by the Conference. Our work would be considerably facilitated if the procedure of working through Coordinators appointed by the Conference - and here, Madam President, I am quoting from your assessment that you kindly shared with us during the informal session - "is given a more structured form".

(Mr. Prasad, India)

This can be done quite easily by carefully spelling out the working methods and reporting mechanisms, which must conform to the rules of procedure of the Conference. We are seeking greater transparency on this issue only to ensure that it will advance the next phase of work of the Conference.

India has a multilateral vocation and is ready to participate in the substantive work of the Conference should it decide on appropriate parameters and methods to do so by consensus.

The PRESIDENT: I thank you and give the floor to the next speaker on my list, the representative of the Russian Federation.

Mr. VASILIEV (Russian Federation) (spoke in Russian): Madam President, we would like to congratulate you on the beginning of your term of office. You can count on the support and cooperation of the delegation of the Russian Federation at this critically important point in the work of the Conference on Disarmament. We wish you success.

We also welcome the arrival of the distinguished new Ambassador of Nigeria.

We would like to thank all six Presidents for their proposal on the organization of the work of the Conference on Disarmament in 2007, contained in document CD/2007/L.1. We cannot say that we are fully satisfied with your proposal. Nevertheless, in the interests of compromise we will not object to a possible consensus on this decision of the Conference.

The PRESIDENT: I thank you, and I now give the floor to the next speaker on my list, the Ambassador of Brazil.

Mr. da ROCHA PARANHOS (Brazil): Madam President, since this is the first time I am taking the floor under your presidency, allow me to congratulate you on assuming the presidency of the CD, and also to extend congratulations to your predecessors, Ambassador Claudine Mtshali of South Africa and Ambassador Juan Antonio March of Spain, for the effective and professional way in which they have conducted the work until now.

As you know, Brazil has always given its full support to the process of structured and informal debates conducted by the six Presidents of this 2007 session of the CD, and we welcome with satisfaction the development of this process. We think that the informal consultations have indicated that countries are fully engaged in trying to move the CD into its work and into negotiations. In Brazil's perspective the full engagement of all delegations during this process of informal meetings has shown how much we are determined to put this august body back in terms of negotiations.

I would like to stress here - and put on record - that Brazil fully supports the draft decision proposed in document L.1, and we would encourage all members to reflect on the important moment we are living, in terms of the crossroads where we are and how much we need a decision to start our work.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you, and I give the floor to the next speaker on my list, the representative of Colombia.

Mr. AVILA (Colombia) (spoke in Spanish): Madam President, first of all I would like to congratulate you on your appointment to your post and to tell you that you can count on the full support of the Colombian delegation in finalizing the work and the objectives which have been proposed. We would also like to express appreciation for all the efforts of the P-6 last year, and of course all the efforts and the considerable work of all the Presidents for 2007, as well as that of all the coordinators which they have contributed to the valuable progress made to date.

We are also grateful for the submission of document L.1, which we have on the table as a possible solution to the stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament which has had such an impact on this important forum. As Colombia has said previously, we maintain our flexibility and we fully believe that we can make progress in negotiations on a treaty on fissile material while pursuing substantive work on the other issues, as reflected in the draft decision in front of us.

Bearing in mind the importance of this document, we are referring it to our capital for specific comments. However, we feel that this proposal offers us a valuable opportunity to display our capacity to press ahead, overcome the difficulties and finally see light at the end of the tunnel.

The PRESIDENT: I thank you and give the floor to the next speaker on my list, the representative of Peru.

Mr. BELEVAN (Peru) (spoke in Spanish): Madam President, since my delegation is taking the floor for the first time in a plenary meeting under your leadership, allow me to congratulate you on taking the Chair of the Conference on Disarmament. Through you, allow me also to express appreciation for the work of the six Presidents for 2007, in particular your predecessors, the distinguished Permanent Representatives of South Africa and Spain.

In line with what has been said on earlier occasions, in particular the statements by this delegation on 6 February and 6 March this year, my delegation reiterates its full backing for the platform of the six Presidents for 2007.

The proposal distributed on this occasion, this afternoon, document CD/2007/L.1, is absolutely identical to the one which was announced and shared with delegations in the course of the consultations that were held with the regional groups. In that respect, and as we stated at that time, that is to say, last Wednesday during the consultations carried out by the P-6 with the group to which we belong, and bearing in mind our absolute flexibility to accept any proposal which will make it possible to return to the path of negotiations, my delegation can as of now, at this time, express our support for the proposal circulated by the six Presidents for the current year, the P-6 proposal.

(Mr. Beleván, Peru)

My delegation considers that this is a realistic proposal, as far as possible, and that the time has come for us to shoulder our responsibilities. In that regard, we hope that we can take a decision as soon as possible, with a view to commencing the real business of the Conference on Disarmament, that is, negotiating on disarmament. Procedural considerations can be resolved subsequently. What is required now is political will.

The PRESIDENT: I thank you and I give the floor to the next speaker on my list, the Ambassador of Italy.

Mr. TREZZA (Italy): Madam President, since this is the first time for me to take the floor under your presidency, I would like to congratulate you and the P-6 for their very appreciated endeavours.

Italy warmly welcomes the tabling of document CD/2007/L.1 of 23 March 2007 and urges all delegations to show the utmost flexibility and display constructiveness in our deliberations on this document. We can also anticipate that we can accept the language of the Presidential draft decision as it stands, since it represents, in our view, the best possible compromise to bring the CD back to its institutional mandate. This is the main goal we are pursuing at this stage.

The PRESIDENT: I thank you and I now give the floor to the next speaker, the Chargé d'affaires of Pakistan.

Ms. JANJUA (Pakistan): Madam President, since we are in the formal setting of the plenary, I would take this opportunity to congratulate you on taking over the presidency at this important juncture in the history of the CD. My delegation would also like to thank the distinguished Ambassadors of Spain and South Africa for the work they have done in the CD since the beginning of this year. I would also take this opportunity to welcome the distinguished Ambassador of Nigeria to the CD and look forward to working with him in Geneva.

We thank the P-6 of 2007 and 2006 for the effort and energy they have invested in the work done in the formal and informal settings in 2006 and 2007. We welcome the opportunity to seek a programme of work that needs to be adopted by consensus. We have raised some questions in P-6 consultations with the G-21. One of the questions we raised referred to the fact that each of the four core issues has a specific content, history and background. Earlier proposals on possible programmes of work made conscious attempts to maintain a balance between the core issues. This balance needs to be retained, and we hope that we will have an opportunity to look at that in the context of L.1 that is before us. We would also appreciate responses to other questions that we have raised that have a direct bearing on substance.

The Presidential draft decision, as contained in CD/2007/L.1, reflects ingenuity and demands a great deal of flexibility on the part of all. This will be communicated to the capital for instructions.

(Ms. Janjua, Pakistan)

We would like to stress at this point that the national security of all member States should be taken fully into account in any work we undertake in the CD. The programme of work should also reflect the priorities of all member States and the national security interests of all member States of the CD.

The PRESIDENT: I thank you and I now give the floor to the next speaker, the Ambassador of the Netherlands.

Mr. LANDMAN (Netherlands): When I had the privilege of addressing the CD for the first time, I made the observation that more light was needed in this historic hall to enlighten this august body. I very early on insisted on the imperative of new ways and new thinking. I have never myself alluded to previous projects or compromise formulas, however meritorious they might have been. I did not even mention the lengthy and extraordinary efforts of my compatriot and predecessor.

These new ways began under the Polish presidency in January 2006, and they have brought us to where we are. Indeed, this is an historic moment you are presiding over. The balanced and extremely delicate package you have just presented is, we feel, an end of the road. No respectable international body can stand 10 years of deliberations without visible results. The time for decision is now or never.

We commend the extraordinary efforts and approve of the result, taking also into account the exceptionally conscientious way it was brought about and the balanced composition of the 19 countries that stand behind it.

Allow me one supplementary remark. My very appreciated and valued colleague from India voiced some procedural concerns, and I would like to make an observation on the basis of my own not inconsiderable negotiating practice. If it is a framework or if there is a coordinator in negotiations, when one agrees on something - a paragraph or a sentence - such a sentence or paragraph can be set aside by consensus, but then there is a second essential rule that nothing is agreed until the moment that everything is agreed. This is one of the basic rules of international negotiations, of international diplomacy, and should really provide sufficient assurances when one has fear of surprises of arbitrariness.

The PRESIDENT: I thank you and I give the floor to the next speaker, the Ambassador of Chile.

Mr. MARTABIT (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): Madam President, we would like to congratulate you and thank you for the skilful and intelligent way in which you are presiding over our work in order to rescue this forum from a period of lethargy which has lasted for more than a decade now, and of course we offer you our full support. Also through you I would like to congratulate your predecessors in the Chair.

(Mr. Martabit, Chile)

We cannot afford the luxury of continuing to waste significant resources without responding as we should to the international community. This organ must get going and we must start negotiating. Consequently my country firmly and categorically supports the balanced, intelligent, realistic and mature proposal offered to us by the platform of the six Presidents of the Conference on Disarmament for this year, introduced formally by you in document L.1 this afternoon. We offered the same support immediately when it was presented to us, also by you, together with the other Presidents, last Wednesday in the Group of 21.

The proposal is based on the many statements by members delivered in both formal and informal meetings and in the countless bilateral consultations which the P-6 held with all the members of this Conference. It also enjoys important backing in the form of the efforts made by the P-6 for last year and the six Friends of the Presidents. We must not waste the opportunity which has been moulded with so much effort. The Conference needs as soon as possible to appoint the proposed Ambassador-Coordination and determine their mandates. The recognized experience and diplomatic skill of our distinguished colleagues as proposed today enables us to entertain the hope of a positive outcome.

The PRESIDENT: I thank you and I give the floor to the next speaker, the representative of Cuba.

Mr. PINO ALVAREZ (Cuba) (spoke in Spanish): Madam President, since my delegation is taking the floor for the first time during your term of office, we would like to congratulate you on taking the Chair of our Conference, assure you of our full cooperation and tell you we are sure that with your talent and diplomatic experience you will be able to steer the work of the Conference at a crucial stage in its history. We would also like to congratulate the Ambassadors of South Africa and Spain for the efficient way in which they guided our work during their terms of office. We would also like to congratulate the six Presidents of the Conference on Disarmament for the year 2007 for the enormous efforts which they have been making to arrive at a consensus allowing this distinguished body to return to its essential mandate, that is, negotiating on disarmament-related matters.

We have received the proposal contained in document L.1. We shall be sending it to Havana for detailed consideration. Needless to say, knowing my country's position, there are elements which we would have liked to see reflected differently, but we can assure you that we will be analysing these proposals with an open mind and in a constructive spirit.

The PRESIDENT: I thank you and I now give the floor to the next speaker, the representative of Algeria.

Mr. KHELIF (Algeria) (spoke in French): Madam President, as I am taking the floor for the first time in a formal meeting, I would like to congratulate you on taking the Chair of the Conference on Disarmament, and I also thank your predecessors, the Ambassador of South Africa and the Ambassador of Spain. We are grateful to these Presidents for having given

(Mr. Khelif, Algeria)

or tried to bring a new breath of air to the Conference on Disarmament to enable it to overcome the stalemate which has prevailed for 10 years now. The Algerian delegation has taken note of your proposal. It will be transmitted to our capital immediately after this meeting, and I am convinced that our Government will certainly consider it with all the attention it deserves.

With regard to our comments on your proposal, Madam, I have nothing to add, I may even repeat myself, but as this is an official meeting perhaps I should repeat what I said in the informal meeting. Your proposal clearly reflects the four main issues and constitutes a follow-up to the five Ambassadors' proposal, which itself is a synthesis of previous proposals. This is a positive point that we would like to stress. However, we do have a few comments on the form and the substance.

With regard to the form, the rules of procedure stipulate in rule 28 that the programme of work shall be adopted on an annual basis, while your paper provides for open-ended mandates and does not indicate that the coordinators are designated for the current session. Now, since we are at the stage of negotiating a decision, it seems to me that this decision should be as precise as possible. So a paragraph should be there to indicate that the coordinator or the ad hoc committee, depending on the decision made, is appointed for the current session.

With regard to substance, it seems to me that the wording on the item on nuclear disarmament and the item on negative security guarantees is a bit weak and should be strengthened. In this regard, concerning negative security assurances, decision 2 of the 1995 Review Conference contains language or wording which was accepted by consensus; perhaps it might be better to come closer to that language, which has already been accepted by everyone. With regard to nuclear disarmament, we have proposals on this subject and all the issues which we are ready to discuss with you later, Madam Chairman. The Algerian delegation remains flexible, open-minded and ready to move forward on substantive work.

The PRESIDENT: I thank you. Given the lateness of the hour, may I encourage delegations to be as brief as they can? I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Germany, who will be followed by Argentina, New Zealand, Nigeria, Turkey and Ireland.

Mr. BRASACK (Germany): Madam President, since this is the first time I take the floor in this formal meeting of the CD under your leadership, I would like to congratulate you on your assumption of the post of President of the Conference on Disarmament, and at the same time also to extend my greetings to our new colleague from Nigeria, and I pledge our cooperation to him.

I would like to assure you of Germany's full support in your effort and the P-6 efforts to guide the work of this Conference, especially at this crucial moment. The momentum developed as the result of this initiative taken jointly by the six Presidents of the CD last year has clearly been taken up and brought to an even higher level. I would go so far as to say that a new spirit is prevailing in the CD. This has fostered our hope that finally the deadlock in the work of the CD can be overcome and significant work be resumed. We therefore welcome the P-6 proposal, and Germany can already flag now that it is in support of this proposal as it was tabled today.

(Mr. Brasack, Germany)

As the Russian delegation said, it is an honest, balanced, fair and comprehensive, mature proposal, but it is a compromise, as other delegations also mentioned rightly. Germany does not see any viable alternative. Therefore, we believe like the United Kingdom said in the statement that we are on the brink of a momentous decision and that the window of opportunity is certainly a narrow one. I subscribe to that view. Therefore, Germany would like to urge all delegations to show the necessary flexibility and to display constructiveness to achieve and quickly adopt the necessary decision.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you, and I now give the floor to the next speaker on my list, the representative of Argentina.

Mr. VALLE FONROUGE (Argentina) (spoke in Spanish): Madam President, allow me first to congratulate you on behalf of our delegation on taking the Chair. You may count on this delegation's support in your efforts to achieve the consensus which is so much desired and which will enable us to start substantive work. Our appreciation also goes for the work accomplished by the six Presidents for 2006 and 2007, as well as the Friends of the Presidents.

Very briefly, in response to your request, I would just like to say that we have no objection whatsoever to the text as it stands in joining a consensus which will enable us to commence substantive activities on the basis of this proposal. It is that objective which encourages us to reiterate our appeal for flexibility on the part of delegations, as we did on an earlier occasion in the statement delivered jointly by the Latin American members of this Conference, some of them in 2005.

The PRESIDENT: I thank you and I give the floor to the next speaker on my list, the representative of Nigeria.

Mr. AWANEN (Nigeria): The Nigerian delegation would like to join previous speakers to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the CD, and also to express our appreciation for the great efforts you and your P-6 colleagues are making to move this forum forward. The Nigerian delegation welcomes the proposal you and your colleagues have carefully crafted and that is now before us. The Nigerian delegation will study this proposal carefully and with a sense of responsibility with a view to looking for opportunities to make the CD work for all of us.

Let me just say now that I note the kind words of welcome from the delegations of India, the Russian Federation, Pakistan and Germany to my Ambassador, who had to leave this hall to be able to catch a flight out of Geneva this evening. I will convey to him your congratulations and warm welcome.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you, and I give the floor to the Ambassador of Turkey.

Mr. ÜZÜMCÜ (Turkey): Let me begin by congratulating you, Madam, on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. We are grateful to you and to the other members of the P-6 for your tireless efforts. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the P-6 of last year, as well as the coordinators, for bringing us to this critical point in time.

The Presidential draft decision which you tabled at the beginning of this meeting will be conveyed to our capital for evaluation. As a preliminary analysis, we believe that it represents a faithful assessment of where the CD stands at the moment. It appears to be the best possible compromise and a real opportunity to break the deadlock which has characterized this august body for nearly a decade. I am personally encouraged by the generally positive atmosphere which prevails today. We hope that we will be able to succeed this time.

The PRESIDENT: I thank you and I give the floor to the next speaker, the Ambassador of Ireland.

Mr. KAVANAUGH (Ireland): Madam President, I extend in formal session my congratulations to you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference at this critical time, and of course, assure you of this delegation's full support.

Let me reiterate in this formal session what Ireland has already said at greater length in prior informal consultations of the Conference.

We commend the manner in which the six Presidents of the Conference have gone about their work. We recognize that the proposal which they have presented now formally represents their collective best assessment of a compromise solution most likely to secure general support in getting the Conference back to substantial work. The six Presidents have promoted harmony, equity and consensus. Their approach and their proposal and honourable compromise deserves our support. We agree that procedural questioning should no longer be a mask for substantive reservations. The moment requires more and better than that. Regrettably, the opportunity which the six Presidents have given the Conference, if missed, may not arise soon again.

In conclusion, Ireland supports the proposal of the six 2007 Presidents of the Conference. We very much hope that the proposal will find consensus here, and we look forward to continuing our work under your leadership at a qualitatively new level during the second part of the annual session.

The PRESIDENT: I thank you and give the floor to the Ambassador of Japan.

Mr. TARUI (Japan): Madam President, as I am taking the floor for the first time under your presidency in the plenary session, I would like to congratulate you on the assumption of this high office in the CD. I would like to assure you of the full support of our delegation.

My delegation would like to express its appreciation and commend the P-6's valuable efforts and the contributions to take the CD back to work after the long period of impasse. The P-6 proposal is well balanced and reflects the concerns of member States properly and realistically.

(Mr. Tarui, Japan)

I would like to stress again the importance of the P-6 proposal that could respond to the long-standing expectations of the international community, and I hope the member States in the CD will be flexible enough to support this proposal.

The PRESIDENT: I thank you and I now give the floor to the Ambassador of China.

Mr. CHENG (China) (spoke in Chinese): I have already put forward the view of the Chinese delegation on this matter in the statement which I made at the informal session. Since, however, we all wish to put our statements on record, I will have to repeat what I said before. First of all, I would like to congratulate you on taking the Chair of the Conference on Disarmament and to assure you that the Chinese delegation will continue to give you every support in your work. At the same time, I would also like to thank you and the five other Presidents of the Conference on Disarmament this year for the efforts you have all made to promote the work of the Conference.

The Chinese delegation has taken note of document CD/2007/L.1. We will report back to our capital on the document as quickly as possible and I am confident that our authorities will study it with great care. We believe that this proposal touches on a crucial question, namely, how the Conference is to proceed to the next stage in its work, and it is therefore both necessary and reasonable to give all parties sufficient time to reflect on it and to study it. At the same time, I would like to point out that I support the remarks made a few moments ago by my Egyptian colleague and agree that this is not a “take it or leave it” proposal: all members are entitled to express their views and propose amendments if they deem it necessary.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you, and I now give the floor to the representative of Mexico, as the last speaker.

Ms. GARCIA (Mexico) (spoke in Spanish): Madam President, I would like to begin by congratulating you on taking the Chair. Mexico wishes to associate itself with the expressions of thanks delivered by the delegations which spoke earlier for the hard work accomplished by the Presidents of the Conference on Disarmament for 2007 and 2006. My delegation would particularly like to express thanks to the P-6 for providing us with an opportunity through this proposal to enable the Conference on Disarmament to begin substantive work. Accordingly my delegation would like to express support for the proposal to be found in document CD/2007/L.1.

The PRESIDENT: I thank you and I wish to inform you that I will take up these matters again next week.

This concludes our plenary meeting. The next plenary meeting will be held on Tuesday, 27 March 2007, at 10 a.m.

This plenary meeting is adjourned.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.