

# CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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## FINAL RECORD OF THE ONE THOUSAND AND EIGHTY-THIRD PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,  
on Wednesday, 23 January 2008, at 10.05 a.m.

President: Mr. Samir LABIDI (Tunisia)

The PRESIDENT (spoke in French): I declare open the 1083rd plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament and the first part of the 2008 session of the Conference.

At this inaugural meeting of the 2008 session of the Conference on Disarmament, I would like to extend a warm welcome to our distinguished guests, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations, and His Excellency Mr. Abdelwaheb Abdallah, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tunisia. The presence of Their Excellencies among us today is strong testimony to the importance our distinguished guests attach to the Conference on Disarmament, as well as their commitment to arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. This presence is unprecedented at the opening of a Conference session, to which they give a special lustre. Their Excellencies, who in this way enhance the opening ceremony of the 2008 session, undoubtedly give a new dimension to our efforts aimed at achieving substantive results this year.

As I assure them of our full determination, in this regard, I would like to thank Their Excellencies for kindly making themselves available.

Allow me to invite His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations, to address the Conference.

Mr. BAN (Secretary-General of the United Nations): I welcome this opportunity to address the opening of the Conference on Disarmament's 2008 session. I am here to spotlight the priorities of disarmament and non-proliferation - and to underscore my conviction that this institution can advance both goals.

Today, I am going to speak about what is at stake for this body. The Conference on Disarmament has accomplished a great deal - but its successes are distant memories.

Disarmament and non-proliferation are closely associated with the very mission of the United Nations. They are widely recognized as indispensable to achieving the maintenance of international peace and security, a core principle in the United Nations Charter.

The international community values the Conference on Disarmament as the world's single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum - but we need progress.

We need progress because concerted disarmament will forestall arms races. And forestalling arms races calms tensions. By reducing tensions, we free up resources that would have been diverted to armaments. These resources can then be used to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

But failing to advance disarmament breaks this chain. A disarmament stalemate can also jeopardize other key Charter goals. And so, the United Nations must lead efforts to improve the global security climate. That is why your meetings at this 2008 session are so important.

(Mr. Ban, Secretary-General  
of the United Nations)

Even with widespread agreement on the gravity of threats to international peace and security, you still have not been able to find common cause to address them.

I am deeply troubled by this impasse over priorities.

Last year, this Conference was poised to resume its role as the world's pre-eminent disarmament negotiating body. The six Presidents for 2007 crafted a proposal for negotiations to begin on a treaty to ban the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices - and to focus on other core issues: nuclear disarmament, negative security assurances, and preventing an arms race in outer space.

When you were at the verge of reaching a decision on this draft Presidential decision last June, I called on you to move forward in a spirit of compromise to seize that historic opportunity.

You did not.

I am here now to personally renew this call. I continue to believe that the adoption of this balanced and carefully crafted Presidential decision would not deprive any member State of the ability to assert its national position in the subsequent phases of the Conference's work. In setting priorities, you are under no constraints as to how to conduct your substantive work, other than to proceed on the basis of consensus.

You have great potential to move forward this year. The level of engagement in the Conference on Disarmament since 2006 has been promising. The General Assembly has noted your positive momentum. I urge you to build on this progress.

This body has not lost its relevance - but it is in danger of losing its way. To get back on the path to success, the Conference must rekindle the ambition and sense of common purpose that produced its past accomplishments, including the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

These milestone pacts show the great potential of the Conference on Disarmament. To harness this now, we need political vision. I call on foreign ministers and other political leaders to come to the Conference on Disarmament and encourage a return to productive work. Top-level political leadership and cooperation can forge a fresh consensus on future projects.

The fate of the draft Presidential decision will depend greatly on forward-thinking leadership and political support.

In this process, you continue to have my full support for the start of negotiations on a fissile material treaty. These talks would advance nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation objectives - and they are needed now.

(Mr. Ban, Secretary-General  
of the United Nations)

In making this call, I am not at all discounting the importance of preventing an arms race in outer space, or negative security assurances, or nuclear disarmament per se. Just the opposite; these are all perennial and very important issues before the Conference. You must decide how to organize your treatment of these issues without holding any of them hostage to the others.

Distinguished members of the Conference, you have the experience and the wisdom to respond to the hopes and demands of people worldwide who seek progress in disarmament. I assure you that you have my full support and that I will continue to follow your efforts closely, together with the people of the world.

Please accept my very best wishes for the success of your 2008 session. Let us make this a breakthrough year.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in French): I thank His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, for his important address and I would now like to invite His Excellency Mr. Abdelwaheb Abdallah, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Tunisia, to address the Conference.

Mr. ABDALLAH (Tunisia) (spoke in Arabic): Allow me at the outset to express my pleasure at taking part in the opening of the 2008 session of the Conference on Disarmament and to assure you that Tunisia is highly appreciative of the honour that it has been given in presiding over the Conference.

Allow me on this occasion to pay a special tribute to Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations, for his participation in this important session and for his commitment and determination to revitalize the work of the Conference on Disarmament.

I would also like to express sincere gratitude and appreciation to the Presidents of the Conference for 2007 for their ceaseless efforts to further the work of the Conference.

This presidency offers us an opportunity to reiterate our country's attachment to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and its continued commitment to contributing to efforts to strengthen international peace and security.

Tunisia also reiterates its determination to participate in the efforts of the international community to revive the multilateral process, particularly in the framework of the Conference on Disarmament. It is determined to do everything possible to ensure the success of the Conference, based on constructive dialogue and consensus. The Conference, which constitutes the sole multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament, must proceed on the basis of consensus establishing a programme of work which is both balanced and objective.

The excellent ties of friendship and fruitful cooperation that Tunisia enjoys with all the member States of the Conference will facilitate and strengthen the dialogue, which is a

(Mr. Abdallah, Tunisia)

fundamental tool for dealing with the Conference agenda and calendar of activities, and which could create opportunities to guarantee the success of our work in the interests of security and stability in the world.

We are fully aware of the challenges and we understand the difficulties that for many years have hampered progress in the consultations between the parties on the issues before the Conference. We are convinced that our Conference, which has succeeded in establishing important international treaties on disarmament, is capable of scoring further achievements.

While we note with satisfaction the progress made during the last two years, particularly in the consultations on the preparation of the calendar of activities, we reiterate our determination to work with all parties, in coordination with the group of Presidents for this year, to devise consensual formulas to deal with the issues before the Conference.

Today, I cannot but express the satisfaction of the Tunisian delegation at the encouraging signs of good will evident during the preparatory consultations held in New York and Geneva. Today, we are utterly determined to redouble our efforts with all members of the Conference in order to reach the consensus which we seek.

As asserted by His Excellency President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, President of the Republic of Tunisia, Tunisia's approach to international relations is based on the notion that security, peace and development are closely intertwined. Based on this approach, our country has always drawn attention to the link between disarmament and development as one of the greatest challenges facing the international community in containing poverty and working to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

In various international forums, particularly at the General Assembly of the United Nations during its sixty-second session, Tunisia has stressed the importance of promoting constructive and positive dialogue on disarmament issues in order to achieve the Conference's objectives, to strengthen security and stability and to disseminate a culture of peace throughout the world, in keeping with the noble and lofty values on which the United Nations is founded.

In this respect, I would like once again to pay tribute to Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations, for the attention that he pays to the issue of disarmament, and for his willingness to give new momentum to the efforts made in this area.

Lastly, I would like to express my thanks and appreciation to the Presidents of the CD for 2008 and wish them every success in their work.

Allow me to say that the Tunisian presidency of the Conference on Disarmament will deal with the issues on the agenda in a positive and responsible manner in order to achieve consensus-based results that are acceptable to everyone and that will create a sense of optimism, opening up new horizons for the Conference on Disarmament.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in French): I thank His Excellency the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Tunisia for his important address. I would also like to inform you that the following speakers are also on the list for today's plenary meeting: the representatives of Italy, Sri Lanka, the Russian Federation and China.

I now give the floor to the Ambassador of the Russian Federation, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States.

Mr. LOSHCHININ (Russian Federation) (spoke in Russian): Mr. President, allow me first of all, on behalf of the Eastern European Group, to express warm greetings to the distinguished Secretary-General, the distinguished Minister for Foreign Affairs of Tunisia, the distinguished Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and the distinguished High Representative of the Secretary-General for disarmament affairs.

On behalf of the Eastern European Group, Mr. President, I would like to welcome you as the first President of the Conference for the 2008 session. I would like to assure you of our Group's readiness to support all your efforts to guide the Conference during your term.

On behalf of the Group I have the honour to express deep appreciation to the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Tunisia, Mr. Abdelwaheb Abdallah, for attending and addressing the Conference, which is the world's only multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament and non-proliferation.

Distinguished Secretary-General, your address has particular meaning and significance for us all. We regard your presence today as a manifestation of your enduring commitment to disarmament and non-proliferation, and also as evidence of how highly our forum is valued by you personally. Undoubtedly, your address to the Conference on Disarmament today and your presence give a new impetus to our work and will help us reach tangible results in the activities of the Conference.

Allow me to take this exceptional opportunity to state that the Eastern European Group intends to use all its influence and capabilities to seek consensus to enable the Conference to start substantive work on the basis of an agreed programme of work.

The Conference on Disarmament has in the past made a major contribution to strengthening peace, security and disarmament by elaborating the most significant international legal instruments which laid the foundations for the present-day global system of security and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

As you are aware, in spite of well-known difficulties, the situation in the Conference has recently changed for the better. Our meetings have become considerably more active. We are succeeding in holding serious and thoroughgoing discussions on all agenda items. Trust among partners has also increased, and that is of great importance. We can achieve progress if we fairly and meaningfully take account of the interests of all parties.

(Mr. Loshchinin, Russian Federation)

We believe the signal that you, Mr. Secretary-General, have sent to the Conference today will lead to further improvement in the atmosphere of constructive cooperation with the aim of ensuring the key role of the Conference in adequately addressing the international security challenges facing the international community today, by devising specific measures to preserve peace on our planet.

I would also like to sincerely thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Tunisia on behalf of the Group for his very important statement. Distinguished Minister, your wishes and recommendations are certainly of great significance for our practical work. Your personal participation at the time when Tunisia is in the Chair of the Conference emphasizes how seriously your country approaches the task of tackling the current tasks facing the international community in the field of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. Allow me to express our appreciation for all your efforts and our confidence that Tunisia's tenure as President of this august body will be a success. We are prepared to work to that end in every way possible.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in French): I thank the Ambassador of the Russian Federation for his statement and for his kind words to the Chair and my country.

I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Sri Lanka, who will be speaking on behalf of the Group of 21.

Mr. JAYATILLEKA (Sri Lanka): Mr. President, I have the honour to address you on behalf of the Group of 21, which, as you know, consists mainly of the countries of the developing world.

Those of us who have had the privilege of working with you have absolute confidence that you will guide the affairs of this Conference with sagacity and commitment. We feel that we are in very safe and just hands.

Mr. Secretary-General, your presence here is an expression of your deep personal commitment to this Conference and to the themes and issues that animate and agitate us, namely, those of disarmament and non-proliferation. Your words have applied what I may call the spur of conscience to the flank of plodding procedure. On behalf of the Group of 21, I assure you of our collective commitment to these causes.

The Group of 21 is perhaps the least complicit and yet the most vulnerable in the issue of nuclear weapons build-up. You reminded us of the nexus between disarmament and development, as did the Foreign Minister of Tunisia, Mr. Abdallah.

We, the Group of 21, stand to gain most from progress in these areas. Our peoples stand to gain most because they are the most vulnerable on the planet. So you may rest assured that we shall cooperate fully with all efforts that are made to achieve progress on the basis of seeking a mutuality of interests, on the basis of seeking to understand the concerns of all.

(Mr. Jayatilleka, Sri Lanka)

I was particularly struck by the approach implicit in the words of the Foreign Minister of Tunisia. All of us who greatly respect the deep civilizational roots in the heritage of Tunisia will not be surprised by the wisdom contained in what he said. But if I may draw attention to a chord that he repeatedly struck, that is, the need for consensus - I think that the words of the Secretary-General and those of the Foreign Minister provide the two pillars on which our work should rest: on the one hand, the urgency or the imperative, the need for maintenance of the pace of the progress; on the other, the need - no less important - for consultation, compromise, constructive dialogue and consensus.

I am sure that under the very able presidency of Tunisia, it is indeed upon these two pillars that our work will rest during this period.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in French): I thank the Ambassador of Sri Lanka for his statement and for his kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to Her Excellency the Ambassador of Italy, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Western European States.

Ms. FIORI (Italy): As Coordinator of the Western Group, it is a great honour and pleasure for me to address the Conference on Disarmament in the presence of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and on behalf of our Group.

I take this opportunity to warmly welcome His Excellency Abdelwaheb Abdallah, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Tunisia, which holds the current presidency of the CD.

I would like to warmly thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on behalf of our Group for having come to the CD and shared with us his thoughts on the central role and responsibilities of this Conference within the disarmament machinery. His presence at this opening session is a positive injection to prepare the ground for future substantive work in the CD.

In 2007 the CD engaged in constructive, structured and serious discussions that took place during its first session and created significant momentum. This momentum was developed through the efforts of the platform of the six Presidents of the CD, the P-6, with the appointment of coordinators for seven items of the CD agenda. The deliberations held under the work of the coordinators took place also with the active participation of knowledgeable experts and proved to be productive and thought-provoking.

This exercise culminated in the presentation of a Presidential draft decision (L.1) and two further documents (CRP.5 and CRP.6) issued in a serious and comprehensive process to add clarity and to provide answers to questions raised by some delegations. However, we are aware that some very important bridges towards a consensus for future work still need to be crossed.

Once again, the Western Group would like to express its great appreciation for the United Nations Secretary-General's visit and address to the opening session of the CD.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in French): I thank the Ambassador of Italy for her statement and for her kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of China.

Mr. LI (China) (spoke in Chinese): Mr. President, at the outset, the Chinese delegation would like to congratulate you on your assumption of the first presidency of the Conference on Disarmament in 2008 and to assure you that it will continue to work in a constructive spirit and lend you its active support.

The Chinese delegation has listened carefully to the statements made by the Secretary-General and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Tunisia. We welcome them today and are pleased that they have been able to find the time in their busy schedules to attend our meeting. We also appreciate the sincere enthusiasm and expectations for our work that they have expressed in their statements.

The Chinese delegation notes that, in their statements, both the Secretary-General and the Minister for Foreign Affairs have fully recognized the progress made over the past two years in the Conference, but also draw attention to the difficulties and challenges facing the Conference at the current time and encourage all member States to engage in genuine cooperation and set aside their differences so that they can embark on substantive work at the earliest possible juncture and help revitalize the Conference. It is the view of my delegation that those comments fully reflect current realities and go to the heart of the matter and that they merit our careful consideration.

Disarmament negotiations have a bearing on the peace and security of all countries. It is in the shared interests of the entire international community for the Conference to achieve a positive outcome. China sincerely hopes that the Conference will respect the concerns of all parties, demonstrate flexibility and gradually narrow differences through patient work so that it can come up with a balanced work programme which is acceptable to all parties and will enable it to embark on substantive work on all the relevant items. My delegation will continue to work with all other parties in a constructive spirit in pursuit of that goal.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in French): I thank the representative of China for his statement and for his kind words addressed to the Chair.

Once again I would like to thank, on your behalf, the Secretary-General of the United Nations for his presence, as well as the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Tunisia. In this way we have completed our work for today.

The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on 25 January 2008 at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 10.40 a.m.