

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE ONE THOUSAND AND TWENTY-SIXTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 15 June 2006, at 10.20 a.m.

President: Mr. Valery LOSHCHININ (Russian Federation)

The PRESIDENT (translated from Russian): I declare open the 1026th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

In accordance with the request made by a number of delegations, the Conference will now be holding a plenary meeting on agenda item 3, entitled "Prevention of an arms race in outer space". After the conclusion of the plenary meeting we will have an informal plenary meeting in order to continue the debate in an informal setting.

Before giving the floor to the first speaker on my list, I would like to inform you that at the request of the NGO Committee on Disarmament, written material prepared by a number of non-governmental organizations has been displayed today in the hall next to the Council chamber. This has been done in accordance with a decision taken on 12 February 2004.

I would like to inform you that the following delegations are on the list of speakers: Japan, Algeria, Kazakhstan, Canada. I give the floor to the Ambassador of Japan, Ambassador Yoshiki Mine.

Mr. MINE (Japan): Mr. President, thank you for making an announcement of my small statement of a very modest nature. I would like to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and I assure you of our fullest cooperation.

I would like to state clearly that Japan, like other countries, is concerned about the safety of outer space. We share the view that in recent years the pace of technical innovation, together with the upsurge in satellite technology use, has been truly astonishing. Consequently, for the international community the smooth maintenance of outer space for peaceful use has become a matter of urgency. However, due to the rapid advancement in the use of satellites, there is the possibility that the efforts of the international community could lag behind the growing number of problems surrounding the use of space. As has been pointed out by many speakers who have already taken the floor in the thematic discussions on PAROS, tackling this issue with foresight is not only important but essential, and we must maintain a healthy environment for satellite operations.

In the past several days fruitful discussions have been carried out, and I can say that they helped us to deepen our understanding of related issues. But there is a salient feature which runs through these discussions - that is, the issue of peaceful use and so-called weaponization or militarization are discussed in a disordered manner.

A number of issues have emerged throughout the discussions in the CD and various UNIDIR seminars on PAROS. The following are some examples: space debris, "rules of the road" for satellite operations, information-sharing on the state of satellite operations, cyber-attacks on space-related data, direct attacks on satellites, jamming of satellite transmissions and the misuse of micro-satellites, including the misuse of systems to resist satellite weapons.

(Mr. Mine, Japan)

Of course, this is not an exhaustive list, but with regard to future discussions, we should arrange these and other items in accordance with their importance, urgency and the current state of international efforts. Since many of these items are already handled under the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) and ITU, it is necessary to try and see how far we can deal with these issues within the institutions and frameworks responsible for them.

As to the other types of topics such as the militarization or weaponization of outer space, I would like to draw attention to a few points in this regard. Firstly, we have heard a considerable amount on militarization, weaponization and the distinction between these two concepts, but it is unclear what they mean in reality. We are not sure whether such a problem actually exists or not. Some mention was made of “new-concept weapons”. But what are they, where are they? Without specific explanations I cannot help but say they are part of “science fiction”.

Secondly, outer space technology is often dual-use, and the formulation of regulations would be inherently complex. For example the United States Global Positioning System can guide a warship to its target, but in Tokyo that same system can also guide a taxi driver to its destination. This has been indicated in a number of statements. The distinguished representative of the United States gave ample explanation of the dual aspects of satellites the day before yesterday. Reflecting the inherent dual-use nature of satellites, it has been indicated that the scope of a possible legal instrument should only deal with weaponization.

Thirdly, in our discussions last week I noted some delegations made reference to the Seabed Treaty and the Antarctic Treaty in the context of PAROS. Nevertheless, in my opinion, unlike these treaties, PAROS needs a different type of expertise. These aforementioned treaties did not have to grapple with the specific features of weapon systems. Moreover, within PAROS the study of the extremely technical issues related to satellites is necessary.

Therefore, on such concepts as weaponization or militarization, it is crucial to build up our deliberations by arranging and acquiring a clear understanding of the complex and sophisticated technical problems. We should avoid discussions that would seem to prejudge the final outcome based on these abstract debates. Japan is prepared to continue deliberations in plenary, formal or informal sessions.

I would now like to make a few additional remarks on space debris. In connection with this matter, COPUOS established a Scientific and Technical Subcommittee working group, which drafted a text on space debris mitigation guidelines. As part of Japan’s contribution, a Japanese expert took part in and played a central role, if I may say so, in this Working Group. Japan fully supports these guidelines and highly regards the people involved in this valuable work. Furthermore, in April this year Japan hosted the twenty-fourth meeting of the International Inter-Agency Space Debris Coordination Committee, which was attended by 97 delegates from 10 outer-space-related organizations. The discussions that took place at this committee made a vital contribution to the future direction of study on space debris. Still, this is not the limit of Japan’s contribution. We are fully prepared to actively contribute in any future efforts on space debris.

(Mr. Mine, Japan)

At this stage, we would like to extend our appreciation to the Chinese and Russian delegations for their comprehensive list of specific confidence-building measures concerning space activities, contained in their working paper (CD/1778). That list also includes many existing bilateral and multilateral measures that are already in place. Japan also participates in exchanges of opinion, mutual visits and prior notification measures, amongst other CBM-related activities. To give a recent instance, in November last year as an HCOC confidence-building measure, a visit by representatives from six HCOC participant nations took place at the JAXA Tanegashima Space Centre. The objective of this visit was to confirm that the launches from this facility were for civil purposes, and it proved to be a good opportunity to deepen understanding vis-à-vis Japan's space policy. This is just one example of how CBMs are applied on the ground. Nonetheless, discussions on the utility of CBMs based on the actual state of each measure are still necessary.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Russian): Thank you, Your Excellency, for your statement and the kind words addressed to the Chair. I would now like to give the floor to the representative of Algeria. You have the floor, Sir.

Mr. KHELIF (Algeria) (translated from Arabic): Mr. President, since the Algerian delegation is taking the floor for the first time under your presidency, I would like to extend our congratulations to you on taking over the presidency of the Conference and directing its proceedings. Allow me to make this statement on behalf of Mr. Idriss Jazairy, who unfortunately cannot attend.

The Algerian delegation subscribes to the statement of the Group of 21 which was made by the Indonesian delegation last 8 June. The exploration and use of outer space, including the moon and other celestial bodies, must be restricted to peaceful purposes that all mankind would benefit from. The humanitarian activities and the technological innovation made in this infinite space have opened new perspectives that brought with them joy and optimism, because of the benefits for humanity. Indeed, the peaceful use of outer space has contributed to progress in the field of remote sensing, as well as predictions for meteorology, telecommunications, navigation, fire-fighting and also warning against pollution, urban planning, and a long list of other uses.

Since regaining national sovereignty, Algeria has attached special importance to those peaceful applications by investing in this particular area. It has done so by drawing on the fruits of that research, such as satellites, for agriculture, water resources, disaster prevention and so on. Owing to its strategic position, Algeria also takes part in the global navigation system by means of satellites, and we take part in emergency interventions in cases of pollution at sea.

Alongside this positive trend, we note a trend towards the militarization of outer space. This is a matter of great concern, because an arms race such as this one is a destabilizing factor and a threat to international security, potentially leading to strategic imbalance. Other studies warn that there is a real danger that outer space could be militarized, and could become a theatre for military build-up through the placement of weapons in orbit or on celestial bodies. The studies have gone so far as to warn that it might become possible to develop micro-satellites to be used in military manoeuvres. Such predictions are based on ambitions to integrate outer

(Mr. Khelif, Algeria)

space into military strategic plans. This trend is fed by the development of space technologies that can be used as weapons, and by the lower costs of producing them as compared with the past.

The development of anti-ballistic missile systems makes us even more concerned. Thus the international community is confronted with new challenges that it has to face. The multilateral international legal instruments of the international community - particularly the 1967 Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States on the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies, as well as the Agreement Governing the Activities of States on the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies - are in our view no longer realizing their objectives. These instruments prohibit States parties from launching any satellites equipped with nuclear weapons or any weapons of mass destruction, or from placing them on celestial bodies or even in outer space. However, they do not prohibit doing so with other types of weapons. This obliges us to modernize and develop all the legal instruments of the previous century to make them better suited to the twenty-first century. This will not happen unless the international community as a whole comes together to face this imminent danger in accordance with paragraph 80 of the Final Document of the SSOD-1 in 1978.

We regret that despite the repeated requests presented to it yearly by the General Assembly of the United Nations, the Conference on Disarmament is still powerless before an important issue such as this one. In this respect, the mandate provided by the A5 proposal, CD/1293/Rev.1, is in our view an accepted and objective foundation for starting work on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. Here we must not undervalue the efforts made in this Conference. A number of proposals have been put forward to study PAROS, including, by way of example the proposals presented by Canada in 1998 and 1999 (CD/1487 and CD/1569 respectively) as well as the working papers presented by China and Russia, Viet Nam, Indonesia, Belarus, Zimbabwe and the Syrian Arab Republic in CD/1679, dated 28 June 2002 and the Russian-Chinese working papers that were presented subsequently. All of these efforts represent a foundation rich with ideas to initiate discussion.

While we are waiting for this, organizing meetings such as this one with the participation of experts, all of this will definitely help specify the dimensions of this issue, and what is at stake, and the steps to be taken. We thank the Governments of China and the Russian Federation, the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research and the Canadian Simons Centre for disarmament studies for organizing the Conference which we are accustomed to attending every year.

In conclusion, the Algerian delegation would like to say that introducing outer space, with all its benefits and potential, into strategic and military calculations with a view to controlling it and using it as a source of power - whether indirectly as a strategic and military support, or directly as a theatre of military confrontation - would be to wreck all efforts for disarmament and confidence-building between States. Indeed, the result could be a qualitative and quantitative arms race on earth and in outer space. We hope that we will make every effort and use our intelligence to develop, discover and exploit outer space for purposes beneficial for humanity - for instance, to predict and attenuate calamities as great as the tsunami disaster, instead of finding more ingenious technologies to annihilate our fellow humans.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Russian): I thank the distinguished representative of Algeria. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Canada, Mr. Paul Meyer.

Mr. MEYER (Canada): Mr. President, let me express my delegation's strong appreciation for the very productive work of these past days on the issue of PAROS under the very excellent management of the Russian presidency.

I wanted to refer to an earlier rich exchange of ideas and views on the subject of outer space security that took place in this same Council chamber on 30 and 31 March of this year, to be precise. It is my pleasure this morning to be able to introduce the summary report of this conference that was entitled "Building the architecture for sustainable space security". As you will recall, this conference was organized by UNIDIR and supported by the Governments of the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China, my own Government, as well as by the Simons Foundation of Vancouver, Canada.

I will commend the summary reports to colleagues here, and I think there are copies available at the back of the Council chamber, but I would just note that many of the themes that have been referred to during these last days were also discussed by the experts in the spring, and dare I suggest that the UNIDIR conference may indeed have provided a reservoir of ideas and proposals from which delegations have subsequently drawn extensively in preparing their input for the present sessions.

You will see in the summary the themes of a rules-based approach to space security, verification, confidence-building measures, the notion of leveraging existing United Nations space machinery and opening up communication channels between this Conference and COPUOS, not to mention, perhaps, between the First and Fourth Committees of the General Assembly, attention to the Outer Space Treaty, which will be marking a very important anniversary next year, and to the broad challenge of raising public awareness and public diplomacy in this complex but vital field.

I think another important feature of the UNIDIR conference was the broadening nature of the participation in it, the greater number of participants from developing countries - I would note with pleasure - as well as from the private sector, and indeed from other United Nations bodies with mandates concerning outer space, particularly in the person of Gérard Brachet, the current Chairman of COPUOS, who was able to participate in that conference as well.

So I think it's a reminder that we have a lot of good ideas and quickening pace of activity on this subject, and I think that augurs very well for the future. So, could I, Mr. President, request that this summary report be circulated to all delegations as an official document of this Conference?

The PRESIDENT (translated from Russian): Thank you, Mr. Ambassador, for presenting the report of the conference and for the compliments you extended to the Chair. Your request concerning the circulation of your report as an official document is accepted.

The next speaker on my list is the Ambassador of Kazakhstan, Ambassador Kairat Abusseitov. You have the floor.

Mr. ABUSSEITOV (Kazakhstan): Mr. President, first let me congratulate you on the assumption of the CD presidency and assure you of our fullest support in exercising this function. We highly appreciate the coordinated approach undertaken by the six Presidents to enable structured debates on the CD agenda. We believe that the thematic discussions are a practical attempt to overcome the existing deadlock in the Conference.

Kazakhstan regards the issue of PAROS as an important and integral element of the work of the CD. This is not an option to choose, but a realistic way to address the challenges associated with the increasing exploration of outer space. In this context it is absolutely important to stress the work done by Russia and China in promoting the significance of PAROS.

More and more countries are becoming involved in outer space activities, using the benefits in their economic development and scientific progress. Many aspects of ordinary life are dependent on space-based technologies, and in future this dependence will only grow.

My country is directly associated with space activities, and first of all it is the home of the Baikonur space launch site. We are in the process of developing our own space programme in collaboration with our Russian counterparts. The launch of the KazSat-1 satellite scheduled for 18 June will mark a special date in our history.

The potential placement of weapons in outer space will affect the common interest of all mankind to explore outer space for peaceful purposes. Following the thematic discussions within the CD, it can be stated that no country has so far objected to this idea.

Nevertheless, as discussions evolve it is clear that we all have to intensively work to come to an agreement on the most pressing issues, including the scope and definitions of a future legal instrument, verification, transparency and confidence-building measures.

A clear definition of weapons in outer space is the most problematic issue. There is a general recognition that a defence component is an integral part of national space programmes, and military and legal experts will face a tremendous challenge in drawing a distinction between offensive weapons and legitimate needs.

The proposal to elaborate “rules of the road” in outer space to prevent any incidents related to space objects deserves further in-depth study. In this respect we support the idea of dialogue with other international bodies, including the Vienna-based United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, the International Telecommunication Union and the secretariat of the Hague Code of Conduct.

(Mr. Abusseitov, Kazakhstan)

Verification is not an easy issue, especially when what is subject to verification is yet to be defined. The Chinese proposal to put on hold for a while the verification aspect of a future treaty is a pragmatic example of how to deal with the issue of PAROS. We should start with options we can reach agreement on and gradually generate consensus on more complicated issues.

The same principle can be applied to transparency and confidence-building measures. TCBMs have their own distinctive value while a treaty is yet to be drafted. A good example is the moratorium by the Russian Federation on the placement of weapons in outer space, later joined by members of the Collective Security Treaty. A welcome step is the recent statements by the United Kingdom and the United States that they do not have plans to build and place weapons in orbit. TCBMs cannot be used as a substitute for a treaty, but can play an instrumental role in promoting its objectives.

In conclusion, I would like to mention the very substantive discussions on PAROS and valuable contributions made by delegations, especially by Sweden, Canada and Italy. Let us hope that these discussions will lead to a feasible outcome.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Russian): Thank you, Mr. Ambassador, for your statement and the kind words addressed to the Chair. That brings us to the end of the list of speakers. Are there any other delegations wishing to speak in the formal plenary meeting? I see none. As we agreed earlier, after the adjournment of this meeting we will convene an informal plenary meeting in 10 minutes' time on the issue of transparency and confidence-building measures. This informal meeting will be open to member States of the Conference, observer States, as well as experts who are part of these delegations.

I would also like to inform you that the next plenary meeting will be held on Tuesday, 20 June at 10 a.m. sharp. I would ask delegations to be in their seats by 10 a.m. because we will be opening this plenary with a statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea, Mr. Ban Ki-Moon. On the list of high-level speakers we also have the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, Professor Akiko Yamanaka, and then a statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Myanmar, Mr. Nyan Win. Then, after these statements by high-level speakers, we will begin consideration of the issue of "New types of weapons of mass destruction and new systems of such weapons; radiological weapons". After that, an informal plenary meeting will be held at the request of the French delegation.

Next week, the Conference will have two plenary meetings: on Wednesday, 21 June at 11 a.m., a plenary meeting at which the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, will make a statement; on Thursday, 22 June, at 10 a.m., a plenary meeting consisting of high-level speakers, and continuation of consideration of the issue of "New types of weapons of mass destruction and new systems of such weapons; radiological weapons". That will mark the end of the Russian Federation's term in the Chair. In 10 minutes' time, we will meet in this room, but before we disperse I would like to give the floor to the representative of France.

Mr. DESPAX (France) (translated from French): Mr. President, I just wanted to add a clarification regarding your announcement of next week's programme, because the informal meeting that we requested was requested on behalf of France and Switzerland, the Swiss delegation. Subject to correction by the Swiss delegation, its purpose will be to set out here in this forum the French and Swiss views on the protection of critical civilian infrastructure.

PRESIDENT (translated from Russian): That only further strengthens your proposal for the holding of an informal meeting. So, I now declare a break of 10 minutes.

The meeting rose at 10.50 a.m.