

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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ENGLISH

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

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Wednesday, 21 June 2006, at 11.20 a.m.

President: Mr. Valery LOSHCHININ (Russian Federation)

The PRESIDENT (translated from Russian): I declare open the 1028th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. Allow me at the outset, on behalf of the Conference and on my own behalf, to extend a warm welcome to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan.

Distinguished Secretary-General, we are grateful to you for accepting the invitation extended to you by the President of the Conference to address our disarmament negotiating body. We are also grateful for the encouraging messages that you send to the Conference every year at the opening of its sessions. These messages have always been an important source of inspiration to all of us in addressing the security challenges facing the contemporary world. However, your presence here today is for us all of particular importance and significance for the cause of disarmament. We regard your presence among us today as a demonstration of your enduring commitment to disarmament and non-proliferation, and also as evidence of the importance you attach to our forum. I am certain that I speak for all of us when I say that your presence among us will help give new impetus to our work.

As you know, recently the situation at the Conference has changed for the better. Our meetings have become markedly more active. We are succeeding in holding serious and far-reaching discussions on all agenda items. I will certainly not be mistaken if I say that trust among partners has also increased. This has been greatly helped by the initiative of the six Presidents of the 2006 session of the Conference - Poland, the Republic of Korea, Romania, the Russian Federation, Senegal and Slovakia - an initiative which has made it possible to coordinate our plans and the plans of the Conference.

I would also like to extend a warm welcome to the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, His Excellency Mr. Nobuaki Tanaka, and to congratulate him on taking up this important and senior post. I also welcome the distinguished members of the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters who are with us today. I now give the floor to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan. Please go ahead, Sir.

Mr. ANNAN (Secretary-General of the United Nations): I very much welcome this opportunity to address the Conference on Disarmament. Last month, at the University of Tokyo, I spoke about the present state of the nuclear non-proliferation regime. I said then that the world stood at a crossroads. I believe that description applies with particular force to this body, and so I would like to use our time together today to make an appeal to you, and through you, to the governments you represent.

As members of the Conference on Disarmament, you know as well as anyone that we face two very divergent courses. One path - the path of active engagement - can take us to a world in which the proliferation of nuclear weapons is restricted and reversed through trust, dialogue and negotiated agreement. The other leads to a world in which a growing number of States feel obliged to arm themselves with nuclear weapons and in which non-State actors acquire the means to carry out nuclear terrorism.

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

The international community seems almost to be sleepwalking down that latter path - not by conscious choice, but rather through miscalculation, sterile debate and paralysis of the very multilateral mechanisms created for confidence-building and conflict resolution.

But if any single group has the collective power to wake the world up to that danger, it is the Conference on Disarmament, which for many years pioneered global efforts to control the spread of deadly weapons. And if ever there was a time to break the prolonged impasse that has stymied your work and bring disarmament back into the limelight of the international agenda, it is now, in the aftermath of two very recent and very high-profile failures.

Twice last year, governments had a chance, a chance to strengthen the foundations of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty - first at the Review Conference in May, and then at the World Summit in September. Both times they failed. This sent a terrible signal - of waning respect for the Treaty's authority, and of a dangerous rift on a leading threat to peace and prosperity.

At such times, we would do well to remember what the Treaty has achieved. With near-universal membership, it has entrenched a norm against nuclear proliferation. And it has helped to confound President Kennedy's famous prediction that, by now, there would be 25 or more countries with nuclear weapons. The success of the NPT, the global support it enjoys, and its resilience, too often pass unremarked.

But that should not blind us to the crisis facing the Treaty - a twin crisis, of compliance and of confidence. Today, the contract between the nuclear-weapon States and the rest of the international community, which is the basis of the NPT, has been called into question. And while there has been some progress toward disarmament, nuclear weapons worldwide still number in the thousands, many of them on hair-trigger alert. If we want to avoid a cascade of nuclear proliferation, we need a major international effort.

There is a need to build a common understanding of the most immediate nuclear threats. The debate between those who insist on disarmament before further non-proliferation measures and those who argue the opposite is self-defeating. It should be self-evident that both are essential for security.

We must devalue the currency of nuclear weapons. Japan is one country that has shown that security and status need not be equated with possession of nuclear weapons. South Africa destroyed its arsenal and joined the NPT. Belarus, Ukraine, Kazakhstan gave up nuclear weapons from the former Soviet nuclear arsenal and joined the NPT. And Libya recently abandoned its nuclear and chemical weapons programmes. I urge other countries to resist the perceived allure of nuclear weapons.

We must also resolve two specific situations. The impasse on the Korean peninsula is especially disappointing given last September's agreement, in the six-party talks, which included a set of principles for a verifiable denuclearization of the peninsula. I hope the leaders of the DPRK will listen to what the world is telling them, and take great care not to make the situation

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

on the peninsula even more complicated. Iran, for its part, needs to enable IAEA to assure the world that its nuclear activities are exclusively peaceful in nature. In both cases, we need solutions that are not only peaceful, but that buttress the NPT's integrity.

The NPT has proved an effective instrument. It is an achievement worth strengthening. And the Conference on Disarmament has a central role to play in that effort.

The Conference and its predecessors have registered some truly important gains. Indeed, the world's security architecture rests on the major treaties on weapons of mass destruction negotiated by this body. But the last such success - the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty - was nine years ago, and it has still not entered into force. Once again I urge those States whose ratification is still needed to take action as soon as possible. Since then, the Conference has been barren of achievement. So to the twin crises I mentioned earlier I would add another: the stalemate faced by the Conference itself.

But as at any such moment, there is no shortage of ideas and efforts aimed at rethinking today's security challenges and charting a way forward.

The recent report of the independent commission chaired by Hans Blix merits serious consideration by the international community. Later this year, a United Nations Panel of Government Experts, chaired by John Barrett of Canada, will present its report to the General Assembly. Much is expected from the seven-nation initiative led by Norway. And my own Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters, chaired by Professor Joy Ogwu of Nigeria, is meeting this week in Geneva. We must draw together the fruits of these separate efforts, in order to maximize their impact.

The Conference itself, I am pleased to note, appears much readier than it has been in recent years to make a contribution. One can sense that a new momentum is gathering, and we heard that from the President.

For the first time in a decade, you are working to an agreed schedule, with the result that there are structured debates on key issues. Scientific and other experts are playing an active role. Your meetings are more intense and considerably more frequent, thanks to the continuity and coherence forged by the successive Presidents of the Conference. And you have made particular efforts to reflect the security concerns of all States.

I know that you have before you proposals and ideas from China and the Russian Federation on the prevention of the weaponization of outer space. You also have before you the elements of a ground-breaking instrument on halting the production of fissile materials for weapons purposes. And yesterday President Bush submitted three important instruments for ratification by the United States Congress. These moves by the United States are a promising sign, and one which I welcome. It could also help strengthen the NPT and the disarmament regime.

I hope that these steps represent the beginnings of a new period of productivity. It is long overdue for this negotiating body to abandon the all-consuming linkages that have dominated

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

your approach in recent years and get down to substantive work. I do not discount the depth of the difficulty that you face in settling long-standing differences, especially over nuclear disarmament and negative security assurances. Yet those difficulties pale into insignificance when measured against the immense challenges that the global community faces in the broader sphere of non-proliferation, disarmament and arms control.

Let me stress, in closing, the wider backdrop for your work. The United Nations of the twenty-first century is determined to move forward on three fronts simultaneously - security, development and human rights. These are inextricably linked; they depend on and reinforce one another.

Toward that end, Member States have created a new Human Rights Council, which has begun work this week, in another part of this Palace, to bring a fresh start to our efforts for human dignity. World leaders have endorsed the Millennium Development Goals as a blueprint for a fairer and sustainably prosperous world. Your challenge is to rise to the security part of that mission, and help ensure that security policies really do make the world safer and more peaceful - not threatening whole societies with annihilation, but making human rights and development more attainable for all.

So I urge you to put your differences and well-rehearsed arguments behind you, and rise to the task. The hour is late, and the choice is clear. With political will, this Conference can reclaim its former mantle and generate tangible benefits that could shape the course of history. That is the challenge. That is your challenge. Thank you very much.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Russian): Mr. Secretary-General, allow me to thank you sincerely for this very important statement. Your wishes and recommendations are certainly of great significance for our practical work. I now give the floor to the coordinators of the regional groups and the representative of China, and also the European Union, to make short statements on the occasion of the address of the Secretary-General of the United Nations to the Conference on Disarmament. The first on my list is the Ambassador of Austria, Mr. Petritsch, who will speak on behalf of the European Union. You have the floor, Sir.

Mr. PETRITSCH (Austria): I have the honour to take the floor on behalf of the European Union and the acceding countries Bulgaria and Romania.

The European Union would like to thank the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his statement addressed to the Conference on Disarmament, the single multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament and non-proliferation. It is a manifestation of the importance the Secretary-General attaches to progress on these topics.

Last year, Mr. Secretary-General, in your report "In larger freedom", you underlined the need for working towards a basic consensus in the field of security. You described how, "depending on wealth, geography and power, we perceive different threats as the most pressing". You stated that "unless we can agree on a shared assessment of [the] threats and a common understanding of our obligations in addressing them, the United Nations will lag in providing security to all of its members and all the world's people".

(Mr. Petritsch, Austria)

This lack of shared analysis is precisely what has kept us in the CD from moving ahead. However, over the past months, new momentum has been developing. This can be seen as the result of some new thinking, new approaches and new working methods, best illustrated by the innovative initiative of the common platform of the six presidencies of the Conference on Disarmament of this year, and how this platform has been evolving since January.

The EU feels that at present there is a window of opportunity to move forward. We can achieve progress with a combination of prioritizing, and at the same time allowing for a just and meaningful consideration of the concerns of all stakeholders.

It is with this developing momentum in mind that you referred to in your speech, Mr. Secretary-General, that we particularly commend you for your decision to address the CD today. We are most grateful for your very thoughtful remarks and the strong impetus your presence here provides in maintaining and further enhancing this indispensable momentum.

In concluding, Mr. President, let me take this opportunity to express our appreciation for all your efforts and the efficient and able manner in which you have guided our work throughout your tenure as President of this august body.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Russian): Thank you for your statement, Mr. Ambassador. I now give the floor to Ambassador Wibisono, who will speak on behalf of the Group of 21. You have the floor, Mr. Wibisono.

Mr. WIBISONO (Indonesia): On behalf of the Group of 21, I would like to express our particular thanks and sincere appreciation to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, for his presence in the Conference on Disarmament today. The G21 attaches great importance to his presence in the Conference on Disarmament, which reflects his commitment to disarmament and support for the work of the Conference. The Group of 21 would like to underscore the importance which the Secretary-General attaches to the work of the Conference, and hopes that it will give impetus for the work of the CD to move forward. The Group of 21 hopes that it will encourage all Conference on Disarmament members to demonstrate flexibility enabling the Conference to carry out its mandated role as the world's sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum.

Please allow me to use this exceptional opportunity to renew the commitment of the Group of 21 to foster consensus in the Conference. The Group also wishes to reiterate that it will do its utmost to enable the Conference to start its substantive work on the basis of an agreed programme of work.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Russian): Thank you, Mr. Ambassador. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of China, Mr. Cheng. You have the floor, Sir.

Mr. CHENG (China) (translated from Chinese): The Chinese delegation has listened attentively to the important address delivered by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan. We would like to join the regional groups in welcoming the Secretary-General and expressing appreciation to him for his visit to the Conference on Disarmament.

(Mr. Cheng, China)

Since the start of the year, on the initiative of the P6, the Conference on Disarmament has been engaged in active and detailed discussion on issues relating to nuclear disarmament, cut-off and the prevention of an arms race in outer space. In his address, the Secretary-General conveyed his high hopes for the Conference, and these hopes will, I believe, give new impetus to our work.

The Chinese delegation looks forward to working with all other parties in a common effort to ensure that the Conference on Disarmament can join efforts, at the earliest possible stage, on its substantive work on the basis of a programme of work agreed to by consensus.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Russian): Thank you, Mr. Ambassador. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Switzerland, Mr. Streuli, who will speak on behalf of the Western Group. You have the floor, Sir.

Mr. STREULI (Switzerland): 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 would like to warmly thank the Secretary-General of the United Nations on behalf of our Group for having come to the CD and shared with us his thoughts on the role and responsibilities of this Conference within the disarmament machinery. His presence and this week's high-level segment are sources of welcome injections to prepare the ground for future substantive work in the CD.

The Conference has experienced some positive developments over the past years. In 2005 and after the informal thematic debates in 2004, the CD held a number of formal plenary meetings on core issues on the agenda as well as on other issues relevant to the international security environment under the Norwegian presidency. This year, after the coordinated initiative of the six Presidents of the 2006 session, the P6, our Conference was able to outline a schedule of activities which allows for formal and informal debates on all issues on the agenda and throughout virtually the whole year. This exercise, with the active participation of knowledgeable experts, has proven to be productive and thought-provoking. Most importantly, renewed hopes of overcoming the impasse that has impeded the work of the CD for so long have emerged as a result of important proposals and contributions made during the structured and thematic debate. However, we all know that some very important bridges towards a consensual approach to future work still need to be built.

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

The PRESIDENT (translated from Russian): Thank you, Mr. Ambassador. To speak for the Eastern European Group, I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Ukraine, Mr. Bersheda. You have the floor, Sir.

Mr. BERSHEDA (Ukraine): On behalf of the Eastern European Group in the Conference on Disarmament I have the honour to express our deep appreciation to United Nations Secretary-General Mr. Kofi Annan for his encouraging speech.

The CD has achieved significant results in the past, addressing problems and challenges of vital importance in terms of international peace and security.

We believe the signal that all of us have received today will lead to the strengthening of an atmosphere of constructive cooperation in our chamber with a key objective: to break the current impasse and get the CD back to the leading role it is designed to play in this ever changing world.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Russian): Thank you, Mr. Ambassador. Distinguished Secretary-General, I would like once again to thank you sincerely for your statement to the Conference. This statement was of great significance. Many thanks to you.

Before suspending the meeting, I would like to tell you that we are all grateful for to the work of the secretariat of the Conference, and to the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Ordzhonikidze, your Personal Representative here, and his excellent team, without whose efforts the work of the Conference would be inconceivable. Heartfelt thanks.

Now the meeting will be suspended for literally five minutes while we escort the Secretary-General out of the Council chamber, and I would ask distinguished delegates to remain in the chamber.

The meeting was suspended at 11.50 a.m. and resumed at 11.55 a.m.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Russian): I have nobody on the list of speakers for this meeting, and I understand that at this stage there is no one among the delegations who wishes to speak. I wish to inform you that the next plenary meeting will be held tomorrow, 22 June at 10 a.m. Please be punctual. The programme for the meeting is as follows: at the outset, we shall hear an address by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Myanmar, His Excellency Mr. Nyan Win. Then the Conference will resume its consideration of the subject of "New types of weapons of mass destruction and new systems of such weapons; radiological weapons". And finally, thirdly, our meeting will be concluded with a wrap-up of the Russian Federation's term in the Chair. That is all. This concludes our meeting. I would like to remind you that at 6.30 p.m. today, and I hope you have all received invitations, a reception is being organized at the Russian Mission. I am looking forward to seeing you there. The meeting is adjourned.

The meeting rose at 12 noon.