

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE ONE THOUSAND AND THIRTY-THIRD PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 15 August 2006, at 10.30 a.m.

President: Mr. Ousmane CAMARA (Senegal)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 1033rd plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

Today, in accordance with the schedule of proposed activities during the presidency of Senegal, the Conference will hold a general debate during which delegations may address any issue on the agenda of the Conference. Once again, we have had to change the venue of our plenary meeting since - as we have been informed by Conference Services - the problems with amplification in the Council chamber have not yet been fixed. I regret to say that, until further notice, all meetings of the Conference on Disarmament will be held in this conference room.

For our meeting today, I have the following speakers on my list: Ambassador Clemencia Forero Ucrós of Colombia and Ambassador Sarala Fernando of Sri Lanka.

I now give the floor to the representative of Colombia.

Ms. FORERO UCROS (Colombia) (translated from Spanish): Mr. President, allow me to congratulate you on the efficient manner in which you have been guiding our work.

At this time, as we are coming to the end of a new session of the Conference, my delegation is struck by conflicting feelings. On the one hand frustration at ending the eighth consecutive year without achieving the programme of work that would lead us to the start of substantive negotiations. Whereas, at the same time, we are moderately optimistic given our perception that this exercise of thematic debates has generated among the members of the Conference on Disarmament awareness that only by showing political will will it be possible to put an end to this unjustified situation of paralysis.

I would like briefly today to take up both the issue before us on the timetable for debates and at the same time to make a practical proposal regarding the issue of the programme of work of the Conference on Disarmament for 2007.

First of all, with respect to the question of the comprehensive programme of disarmament and transparency in armaments, my country views with concern the current international trend towards rising military expenditure and the acquisition of large stockpiles of weapons which frequently considerably exceed legitimate national security requirements. This attitude creates or reactivates arms races that generate potential tensions and mistrust and ultimately, quite unjustifiably, diverts tremendous resources that should be used for the development of our peoples. Because of considerations such as those I have just mentioned, Colombia is of the view that encouragement should be given to all initiatives aimed at devising and implementing measures for the control of the arms trade, particularly the trade in small arms and light weapons, and specifically those that are designed to be carried on one's person, since, as is generally known, these are the weapons that are responsible for the largest number of deaths and injuries in every corner of the world.

Of course, it is necessary to bring about the effective implementation of such instruments as the Programme of Action of the United Nations Conference against the traffic in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects, but in order to move from mere control to genuine

(Ms. Forero Ucrós, Colombia)

disarmament, there is an urgent need to achieve binding international agreements such as a treaty on the trade in weapons or an instrument on a universal moratorium on the production of arms such as personal weapons.

It is clear that there is a surplus of these types of weapons and that there is no justification for continued production at the present time, since their increased quantities will cause their price to continue to fall, they will be increasingly accessible to all and their use will be increasingly widespread. It is a commonplace to continue to repeat that small arms and light weapons have become weapons of mass destruction, particularly in the developing world, but that is not quite accurate, because even in the developed countries, they are also responsible for the greatest number of violent deaths.

My delegation considers that the question of the comprehensive programme of disarmament and transparency in armaments should not continue to be dealt with as a minor or secondary issue, especially within the Conference on Disarmament, and calls for the space and time that such a delicate issue deserves to be devoted to it in our future work, recognizing its status as one of the items on the traditional agenda of the Conference on Disarmament.

Secondly, allow me, in keeping with what my delegation has repeatedly stated both as a co-sponsor of the five Ambassadors' proposal and through our complementary initiative of the "Gentlemen's agreement", to propose what in our particular view could constitute a programme of work for 2007. First of all, that the Conference on Disarmament should establish an ad hoc committee to negotiate a treaty on fissile material with a broad and sufficient mandate so that all relevant issues would be included in the topics for negotiation, including current production, verification mechanisms, universalization, and so on. Secondly, that in parallel, in the light of the experience of the focused thematic debates that we have held during the course of this year, a timetable of progressive deliberations on the other items contained in the five Ambassadors' proposal should be drawn up with a view to achieving broader and more focused understanding of each of them and ensuring that, in our capitals, political support is secured for their positive and progressive evolution towards substantive negotiations. Mechanisms such as the P6 or the Friends of the President could continue to provide support for the Presidents during 2007. We consider that in this way, we would be able to combine commencement of negotiations on one issue without neglecting the others, moving gradually and helping to build synergies.

As I said at the start of my statement, 2006, without being different from the last eight years of the Conference, cannot be considered as being the same. We are sure that this situation will be reflected in our report to the General Assembly. Meanwhile, 2007 is emerging increasingly clearly as a year in which the Conference on Disarmament can recover the time lost and regain its relevance and importance.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank Ambassador Clemencia Forero Ucrós for her statement as well as the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to Ambassador Sarala Fernando of Sri Lanka.

Ms. FERNANDO (Sri Lanka): Mr. President, since this is the first time my delegation is taking the floor under your presidency, may I extend our sincere felicitations and commend the serious manner in which your presidency has been prepared, with wide-ranging consultations, and also for your initiative of organizing the seminar by UNIDIR on negative security assurances, an important topic which continues to engage our attention? You quite rightly reminded us in your opening statement that the issue of negative security assurances has figured from earliest times on the agenda of the Committee on Disarmament since its creation in 1979 and subsequently, in the renamed Conference on Disarmament, due to their continued significance as a confidence-building measure. We also appreciate the impressive compilation of the documents on NSAs put together by the secretariat and distributed in the Conference. Please be assured, Mr. President, of the full support of my delegation and myself personally as a Friend of the President to contribute to the successful conclusion of your undertaking.

The period of your presidency also coincides with a time of increased high-level recognition of the relevance and role of the Conference on Disarmament. The United Nations Secretary-General in his address to the Conference in June referred to the collective power of the Conference to wake the world up to the dangers of the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Mr. Annan also referred to the historic destiny of the Conference and its challenge to rise to the security part of the mission of the United Nations in the twenty-first century. The G8 in its St. Petersburg statement of 16 July reiterated its commitment to the “reinvigoration of relevant multilateral forums, beginning with the Conference on Disarmament”.

The Secretary-General’s address made the point that the new momentum in the Conference this year had been enabled through changes in our methods of work. This is of course due to the P6 initiative, which I might add has been nurtured by the diligence of each of the Presidents who have prepared and accomplished admirably their individual responsibility in this collective undertaking. Delegations during this year have all recognized and paid tribute to the achievements of the P6, and my delegation believes that this should be reflected in some meaningful way in this year’s Conference report.

At the same time, the Conference must also face the question of whether we can, and if so, how, build on the P6 initiative in the work of the Conference in 2007. There have been recommendations for radical change. For instance, the Blix Commission report in June suggested that the consensus rule was a relic of the cold war and should be eliminated, proposing instead a qualified majority two-thirds vote with regard to the adoption of the programme of work of the Conference. Other delegations during this year have urged that reform be brought through “small incremental steps”, as for instance the urging of the Ambassador of Chile, a Friend of the President, and others. The Friends of the President have also made some other recommendations with regard to changes that could be beneficial with regard to the methods of work of the Conference.

All of this should provide food for thought as to how we may together build upon the new steps laid this year by the P6 in order to embark further on what we all believe should be a new period of productivity for the CD. Thanks to the P6 initiative this year, working on a pre-agreed arrangement for the whole year based on a solid foundation of our traditional agenda speedily adopted, we have in fact established a schedule of activities which could very well form the basis

(Ms. Fernando, Sri Lanka)

for the work of the Conference in the years ahead. Our challenge would be to make adjustments in the schedule wherever more time is needed, accommodating both proposals and ideas for discussions, as well as the work for experts, including commencing negotiations on what Mr. Annan reminded us was the “ground-breaking instrument” on FMCT. This can only be done, of course, if we can agree to address on an equal footing the priority security concerns of all member States and if we can maintain the constrictive atmosphere that has prevailed in the Conference during this year.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank Ambassador Sarala Fernando for her statement and her words of congratulation. We have now come to the end of the list of speakers. I turn to those present to see whether there is any delegation which would like to take the floor. Apparently that does not seem to be the case.

(continued in English)

This concludes our business for today.

I would like to recall that following the adjournment of this plenary meeting, I will convene open-ended consultations on the format of the report of the Conference on Disarmament to the United Nations General Assembly. As usual, these consultations will be open to the member States of the Conference and observer States only.

The next plenary meeting will be held on Thursday, 17 August 2006, at 10 a.m. in this conference room. In accordance with the schedule of activities, the meeting will be devoted to a general debate and to wrapping up the presidency of Senegal.

The meeting rose at 10.45 a.m.