

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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ENGLISH

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

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 17 August 2006, at 10.15 a.m.

President:

Mr. Ousmane CAMARA

(Senegal)

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I declare open the 1034th formal plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

At the outset I would like to extend a warm welcome to this plenary meeting to the Nagasaki Peace Messengers and the citizens of Nagasaki who are accompanying them. As in previous years, the students of Nagasaki have come to bring petitions calling for the abolition of nuclear weapons to the Geneva branch of the Department for Disarmament Affairs. These petitions, which are addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, have been signed by thousands of students from Nagasaki and Hiroshima. It is encouraging to note that the young people of Japan have for years been demonstrating a keen interest in issues relating to arms control and disarmament and the work of our Conference.

The following speakers are on the list for today: Ambassador Yoshiki Mine of Japan and Ambassador Françoise Roux of Belgium. In addition I myself will make a statement as Senegal's term of office is coming to an end.

But before beginning our work, I should like to say farewell to one of our colleagues, Ambassador Françoise Roux, who will be leaving Geneva very soon to take up new duties. Ambassador Roux arrived in Geneva only two years ago, but over that brief period of time he has given us convincing proof of his skill as a diplomat and his outstanding authority. Although most of his responsibilities were not relevant to this body, his involvement in the work of the Conference was appreciated by all. On behalf of the Conference, then, I wish him every success and satisfaction in his future work.

I now give the floor to Ambassador Yoshiki Mine of Japan.

Mr. MINE (Japan): Mr. President, with your permission, I would like to make a few remarks rather belatedly on security assurances.

Security assurances are one of the two biggest issues that have existed since the beginning of negotiations on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. But just as other issues related to nuclear disarmament have not been fully implemented, security assurances also remain unresolved. There are differing views on how much progress has been made or how much has been realized, since States have been arguing about it whenever there has been an opportunity, such as in the Conference on Disarmament or the NPT Review Conferences. The difference in these views seems to be typically expressed as the glass being either half empty or half full.

Today, I have no intention of attempting to record the final word in this debate. I would, however, just like to share with you a few points of importance regarding security assurances. First, what needs to be asked is: how important is the pursuit of elevated levels of negative security assurances? In 1995, within the framework of the NPT, it was agreed that further steps should be considered on NSA. This meant steps further than United Nations Security Council resolution 984 and the declarations by the nuclear-weapon States (NWSs), which were issued

(Mr. Mine, Japan)

before the Review and Extension Conference. It was also agreed in 1995 that those steps could take the form of an internationally legally binding instrument. In 2000, it was additionally agreed that legally binding security assurances would strengthen the nuclear non-proliferation regime.

In these agreements, negotiators seem to have carefully chosen the right words so that States parties could later pose questions in order to clarify what the international community actually wanted. Now I would like to highlight a few issues on which States parties must be convinced in order to advance to the next stage. It is generally assumed that there are two different types of security assurances - positive and negative. Are negative security assurances better and stronger than positive ones? Related to this question I must ask further if a globally legally binding instrument can be truly effective as opposed to regional ones such as those contained within nuclear-weapon-free zones (NWFZs), in view of the different security environments of each country.

With regard to negotiations on negative security assurances, some countries have expressed doubts about whether the CD or NPT is the appropriate venue for negotiations, because we must be explicit about the beneficiaries of such assurances. But there are more fundamental questions that require our attention. Security assurances are to be given to non-nuclear-weapon States (NNWSs), but is the concept of NNWS clear in the context of NSA? Are countries that allegedly possess nuclear weapons eligible for assurances? Similarly, is a country that neither affirms nor denies the possession of nuclear weapons eligible? Is a country that intends to acquire nuclear weapons, if there are any, eligible? Or, on the flip side of the coin, do we then have to grant the status of quasi-nuclear-weapon State to countries that have conducted nuclear-weapon tests, or claim to possess nuclear weapons? If so, wouldn't this have a devastating effect on the integrity of the NPT? I am uncertain what kind of position should be taken on these questions. These are obviously important, but beyond my capacity to answer today, and I would like to leave them as they are for the moment.

We are of the view that security assurances should be guaranteed not just through official commitments - positive or negative, legal or political - but also through raising awareness of the true nature of nuclear weapons. In this connection, awareness of the inhumanity of nuclear weapons has been strongly publicized through the efforts of the *hibakusha*, living witness of the catastrophe caused by nuclear weapons, and the International Court of Justice's 1996 advisory opinion. Both have made irreplaceable contributions to awareness-raising, but on the other hand there is an unfortunate tendency for people to forget the agonies of the past. Moreover, the *hibakushas* are fast disappearing, with their average age now almost 74. Therefore, it is an urgent task for the international community to pass down their experiences and stories to future generations. We must sustain and improve our efforts to draw the attention of the people and decision makers to the true nature of nuclear weapons.

In this context, I would like to reiterate the importance of disarmament education. Education may sound too narrow to express the broad spectrum of items which are required to promote disarmament education. Not only education in schools but also public lectures and forums, training courses for diplomats, seminars and other endeavours help to raise the awareness of the terrible nature of nuclear weapons.

(Mr. Mine, Japan)

This year Hiroshima witnessed a new activity in which a group of mostly amateur foreign performers acted out the horrors of atomic bombs. Not only did it catch the keen attention of the public, but it also helped deepen understanding about the effects of nuclear weapons for those people with only limited textbook knowledge of the events. This year too we have the pleasure of inviting the United Nations Disarmament Fellows to Japan. We also welcome the “little ambassadors for peace” from Nagasaki, who are sharing the painful experiences of *hibakusha* and trying to warn the world about the threat of nuclear weapons. We all appreciate these efforts and reaffirm our commitment to advance awareness-raising, which may be a more rapid and practical way of attaining security assurances.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the Ambassador of Japan for his statement and I give the floor to Ambassador Françoise Roux.

Mr. ROUX (Belgium) (translated from French): Mr. President, as I am taking the floor for the first time during your term in the Chair, allow me first of all to congratulate you on the way in which you have been guiding our work and to thank you for the kind words that you addressed to me at the start of this meeting.

The future of the Conference on Disarmament is looking considerably brighter today than when I took the floor for the first time a little more than two years ago. The concerted efforts of our six successive Presidents during this session, to whom I wish to pay tribute today, have enabled us to draw up a calendar for structured and in-depth debate in a spirit of consistency and continuity. The benefits of this initiative can already be seen. In this way we have probably come closer to a better understanding of each other's positions and priorities and, by extension, to a possible consensus that will finally make it possible for the Conference once again fully to assume its role as the sole forum for multilateral negotiation in the field of disarmament. Our Conference should not miss this opportunity to contribute to multilateralism that effectively responds to the considerable challenges which face us in the area of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. The credibility of this assembly, to which my country, Belgium, remains very much committed, is at stake.

Belgium's approach, because that is what we are talking about today, is and has always been proactive, as we have shown in this forum, particularly by developing with Algeria, Chile, Colombia and Sweden the famous “five Ambassadors' initiative”, in which one of my predecessors, Ambassador Lint, played an active role. Belgium will continue to play an active role in all forms of cooperation that could contribute to the achievement of a consensus without preconditions, in a progressive and practical manner, so as to achieve tangible results.

We now have an opportunity to make practical progress towards the negotiation of the famous treaty on fissile material intended for use in the manufacture of weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. This is an issue which is of priority importance for Belgium, an importance which in no way detracts from the importance we also attach to other topics which the Conference is called upon to address in the context of a balanced agenda. I wish to remind you of the important words uttered in this very room by our Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, on 21 June, and I will cite them in the language in which they were delivered, that is to say the language of Shakespeare:

(Mr. Roux, Belgium)

(continued in English)

“It is long overdue for this negotiating body to abandon the all-consuming linkages that have dominated our approach in recent years and get down to substantive work”.

(continued in French)

Negotiations on this issue should begin as soon as possible.

Allow me to conclude this brief farewell statement by extending thanks to all the colleagues in this Conference whose commitment and outstanding diplomatic skills I have had many opportunities to appreciate. I would also like to express my appreciation to the secretariat, which I commend for its remarkable professionalism.

We had the ambassadors of the martyred city of Nagasaki here, and I had told myself that I would end on an optimistic note. That note is as follows: the Conference on Disarmament, our Conference on Disarmament, as I see it, possesses every advantage and every means necessary to consolidate the dynamic that has been observed this year. In order to break out of the deadlock, it is necessary, and I think it is enough, for all its members to agree to move on from the stage of lamentation to the stage of negotiation. For my part, I am sure that the members will achieve this.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank Ambassador François Roux for his statement and the kind words addressed to the Chair. We have come to the end of the list of speakers for this plenary session. Does any delegation wish to take the floor at this stage? I give the floor to the Ambassador of the Netherlands.

Mr. LANDMAN (Netherlands) (translated from French): Mr. President, for various reasons, the delegation of the Netherlands has not spoken on the topic that was at the core of your term of office: negative security assurances.

(continued in English)

I find myself in the very happy position, having listened carefully to the very thoughtful remarks made by my Japanese colleague, Ambassador Mine, on the subject, and I would just like to go on record that the position of the Netherlands is largely reflected in the statement he has made on this very important subject, a subject that the Netherlands has always attached great importance to, but which is also linked with many pertinent questions he raised and for which the answer is not yet that easy. I understand that the debates have been useful, but it is also very clear that this is a subject that needs further reflection.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the Ambassador of the Netherlands for his comment. Would any other delegation like to take the floor? Apparently not. I would now like to draw your attention to the invitation extended by the then President of the Conference, Ambassador Doru Costea, on 17 May 2006 to the Director General of IAEA to make a presentation to the Conference on Disarmament on the question of a treaty designed to halt the production of fissile material. You will recall that I received a letter dated

(The President)

7 August 2006 from Mr. Tariq Raluf, head of the verification and security policy section of the Office of External Relations and Policy Coordination of IAEA, in which he informed me that the representatives of IAEA would be in a position to make a presentation on matters relating to a treaty designed to halt the production of fissile material at the Conference on Disarmament during its plenary meeting scheduled for Thursday, 24 August 2006. Mr. Raluf also asked me to indicate whether this proposal would be acceptable to the member States of the Conference. The contents of this letter were brought to the attention of the members of the Conference by the group coordinators.

My consultations with the group coordinators and China on this issue have been concluded successfully. Accordingly, I intend to write to Mr. Tariq Raluf to inform him that the Conference accepts the date he proposed for the presentation by the representatives of IAEA. This presentation will therefore take place at the plenary meeting on Thursday 24 August 2006 at 10 a.m. which will be devoted to the general debate. This formal meeting will be adjourned immediately after the presentation and an informal meeting will then be opened to deal with questions and answers. It is, of course, understood that this case constitutes a precedent that will apply in future to similar situations.

May I take it that the Conference agrees to the sending of this letter? I see no objection.

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I would now like to say a few words since Senegal's term in the Chair is drawing to an end.

Today's plenary meeting marks the end of Senegal's term. Allow me to take this opportunity to make a few brief comments. I do not think that the time has come to draw final conclusions, since the work accomplished this year by this distinguished assembly, characterized by coordination of activities among the six Presidents, constitutes a first phase in the process of revitalization of the Conference on Disarmament. Indeed, the informal discussion on the final report a few days ago showed the importance and substance of our work this year. It is to be hoped that the close and active cooperation among the six Presidents of the 2006 session will be continued next year.

For this initiative of cooperation among the successive Presidents for 2006, I must thank not only the first President, Ambassador Zdzisław Rapacki of Poland, but also the other Presidents - Ambassador Park In-kook and his successor Ambassador Chang Dong-hee of the Republic of Korea, Ambassador Doru-Romulus Costea of Romania, Ambassador Valery Loshchinin of the Russian Federation, as well as Ambassador Anton Pinter of Slovakia, who will be President for the last term of the 2006 session.

During Senegal's term in the Chair, delegates have had an opportunity to engage in discussions on effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons and on the comprehensive programme of disarmament. I think I can say that the discussions have been rich and encouraging, and I thank all delegations present in this room for their active participation in the debates.

(The President)

As regards negative security assurances, one of the important items on the agenda, we were able to note that there are divergent positions, but the discussions have contributed significantly to clarifying the various positions and gaining better understanding of the concerns of the non-nuclear-weapon States and their strong aspiration.

I was also encouraged by the active participation of delegations in the seminar that I organized in this connection with the assistance of UNIDIR and its dynamic director, Dr. Patricia Lewis, with the presence of distinguished researchers. During this seminar various ideas and new approaches were raised, and I am convinced that in the future they will be the subject of in-depth discussions both in this forum and in others.

The comprehensive programme of disarmament, which has been on the agenda of the Conference for a number of years, continues to be of crucial importance for a large number of countries. Various proposals have been noted, in particular the proposal on the negotiation of a treaty on trade in conventional weapons. Coming from a continent where small arms and light weapons continue to cause and sustain conflicts, leading to thousands of victims every year, I cannot but applaud and encourage this initiative, which is most timely.

I wish to express my satisfaction at the persevering efforts of the group known as the Friends of the Presidents, who have fully earned the trust placed in them by the six Presidents for 2006. I am referring to our distinguished colleagues Idriss Jazairi of Algeria, Petko Draganov of Bulgaria, Juan Martabit of Chile, Carlo Trezza of Italy, Yoshiki Mine of Japan and Sarala Fernando of Sri Lanka. I thank them for always being available where I was concerned.

I would also like to say how much I appreciate the support of all delegations during Senegal's term in the Chair and their substantive participation in the debates on the items on the agenda falling under my term. I must thank them in particular for responding in large numbers to the consultations that I have had occasion to hold in the context of the discharge of my functions. Of course, I do not overlook the coordinators of the regional groups and the representative of China, who have been effective partners.

I express my warmest appreciation to the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Sergei Ordzhonikidze, and to all his staff, in particular Mr. Tim Caughley, Mr. Jerzy Zaleski and Mr. Valère Mantels, for their assistance and professionalism, which considerably facilitated my task.

Lastly, many thanks to the interpreters, who have been with us throughout our work and have worked efficiently and with dedication. Senegal during its term as President is honoured to have been able to carry out its mission with the assistance of all of you, and I would like to thank you for that.

This concludes our business for today. The next plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament will be held on 22 August 2006 at 10 a.m. in this room.

The meeting rose at 10.45 a.m.