

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/PV.1039
31 August 2006

ENGLISH

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

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 31 August 2006, at 10.20 a.m.

President:

Mr. Anton PINTER

(Slovakia)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 1039th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

I have the following speakers on my list of speakers for today: Ambassador Kairat Abusseitov of Kazakhstan will deliver a statement related to the fifteenth anniversary of the closure of its nuclear test site; and Ambassador Carlo Trezza of Italy will deliver a statement on the cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament.

Before giving the floor to the speakers, allow me to extend a warm welcome, on behalf of the Conference, to two groups of visitors to this august body. I welcome the participants in the 2006 United Nations Programme of Fellowships on Disarmament, who are observing the proceedings of this plenary. I am sure they will benefit from their exposure to our forum, and especially from the presentations that will be made to them on the various aspects of the work of the Conference. I would also like to welcome a group of teachers from Italy who are in Geneva to visit a number of United Nations bodies, including the Conference on Disarmament. I wish both groups a fruitful stay in Geneva.

I now give the floor to the representative of Kazakhstan, Ambassador Kairat Abusseitov.

Mr. ABUSSEITOV (Kazakhstan): Mr. President, since I am taking the floor for the first time under your chairmanship, let me congratulate you on your assumption of the CD presidency and assure you of our fullest support in exercising this function.

The subject of my statement today, as you have already mentioned, is the fifteenth anniversary of the closure of the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site.

Fifteen years ago, on 29 August 1991, the President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, following a massive anti-nuclear movement, took the decision to close the Semipalatinsk test site.

Nuclear explosions had been conducted in Semipalatinsk for nearly 40 years, from 1949 to 1989. The President's decision to close the polygon required strength and a sense of responsibility, given the fact that at that time Kazakhstan was still a part of the Soviet Union.

The closure of the test site was the first step in the process which later became the core of Kazakhstan's disarmament policy. After gaining independence, Kazakhstan signed the 1992 Lisbon Protocol stipulating its commitment to join the Non-Proliferation Treaty as a non-nuclear State. In December 1993, the Parliament of the country ratified this treaty. A year later Kazakhstan, along with Belarus and Ukraine, was granted security assurances by the nuclear Powers in recognition of its full and undisputable implementation of disarmament commitments. The Safeguards Agreement was concluded with IAEA in 1994.

(Mr. Abusseitov, Kazakhstan)

The significance of the decision to choose non-nuclear status is highlighted by the fact that Kazakhstan possessed a so-called “full nuclear-weapon cycle” on its soil, including uranium mining and reprocessing as well as capabilities to produce and test nuclear devices. The political will of President Nazarbayev was a major factor in advancing the course of disarmament. It is hard to overestimate the personal contribution made by Kazakhstan’s leader. He invested enormous efforts to earn the reputation of a strong and consistent supporter of the country’s non-nuclear course.

After the withdrawal of the nuclear arsenal, Kazakhstan embarked on the process of the elimination of the military infrastructure. IAEA coordinated international efforts to assist the elimination projects and establish the system of control of nuclear materials designed for peaceful use. The United States-sponsored threat reduction programme, also known as the Nunn-Lugar programme, was a major contributing factor in the elimination of the military legacy and creation of the system to manage and control nuclear installations and materials.

Kazakhstan is an active participant in the ongoing negotiations among countries in the region to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. On 8 September the Foreign Ministers of five Central Asian countries are expected to sign the treaty on the establishment of the zone. This move will definitely facilitate global disarmament processes.

Despite all the rehabilitation efforts, the consequences of testing in Semipalatinsk remain a matter of concern not only for Kazakhstan but for the whole international community. The United Nations has recognized the urgency of the problem by adopting several General Assembly resolutions on Semipalatinsk and elaborating a range of assistance projects. The major challenge faced today by the Government of Kazakhstan is to improve the situation in the health and environment sectors. We are extremely grateful to the United Nations agencies, the individual countries, including Japan, the United States and the United Kingdom, as well as the charities and non-governmental organizations who contributed and continue to do so in assisting the people of Semipalatinsk.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of Kazakhstan for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador of Italy, Mr. Carlo Trezza.

Mr. TREZZA (Italy): Let me first welcome the presence here of this year’s participants in the United Nations Programme of Fellowships on Disarmament and acknowledge the importance of this programme, especially in the field of education in disarmament, which is an important feature of our deliberations.

In keeping within the same area, education in disarmament, let me acknowledge, as you have already done, the presence here today of 50 Italian teachers. As you see, our gallery is rather crowded today. They are here as part of an educational project organized by the province of Trento. They are not tourists in Geneva. They are here to learn and to disseminate what they learn here to their students, and therefore their presence here is again relevant to the issue of

(Mr. Trezza, Italy)

education in disarmament, which is promoted especially by certain delegations in the disarmament forums. This is testimony to the attention of my Government to that chapter of our activities. But as you mentioned earlier, the subject of my presentation today is the cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament.

Several developments have recently taken place with regard to issues relevant to the “nuclear disarmament/cessation of the nuclear arms race” item of our agenda, with particular reference to the FMCT. These developments took place after the structured and focused sessions which were held during the month of May and therefore deserve our attention.

We have read with interest the Final Document of the Ministerial Meeting of the Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement held in Putrajaya last May, which was presented to the CD by the distinguished representative of Malaysia, and took note of its strong focus on nuclear disarmament.

The distinguished representative of the Russian Federation informed the Conference of the results of the Saint Petersburg G-8 summit, which highlighted our work in the CD and supported the early commencement of negotiations on an FMCT. The Secretary-General of the United Nations in his statement to the CD mentioned a new period of productivity for our Conference based, inter alia, on a “ground-breaking instrument on halting the production of fissile materials for weapons purposes”. The immediate negotiation of a “cut-off” treaty without preconditions is one of the core recommendations of the “Blix report”. A positive evaluation of the recent developments with regard to an FMCT was made on 3 August by Egypt on behalf of the New Agenda Coalition.

More recently a comprehensive statement was made by the distinguished representative of Colombia suggesting inter alia the establishment of an ad hoc committee on FMCT negotiations, without omitting suggestions along the way to address other priorities of certain delegations. We were pleased and welcomed the presence, in accordance with rule 41 of the rules of procedure, of a representative of IAEA, who made a presentation on the subject of FMCT. I wish to pay tribute to an Agency so widely respected by the whole international community, the activities and expertise of which are so relevant to our work on nuclear issues.

These developments deserve the attention of the CD at this stage, bearing also in mind the imminence of our deliberations in the General Assembly’s First Committee. In accordance with rule 30 of our rules of procedure, I therefore wish to raise item 1 of our agenda to introduce a document, which is being circulated today, to underline the intrinsic pertinence of an FMCT negotiation to item 1 of our agenda.

Article VI of the NPT and the Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference are in our view the best guidance - at least for States party to the NPT - on what we mean by nuclear disarmament. The same goes for the cessation of a nuclear arms race. We believe that FMCT fully belongs, conceptually, to both categories. A fissile material cut-off treaty is also relevant for nuclear non-proliferation, but we find that such relevance is mainly of a subsidiary nature.

(Mr. Trezza, Italy)

We wish thus to underline that FMCT is a necessary step in achieving nuclear disarmament. We present this document in addition to the two working papers, one on entry into force and the other on the relevance of FMCT for nuclear terrorism, which were presented by Italy earlier this year.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of Italy for his statement. I recognize the Ambassador of Sweden.

Ms. BORSIIN BONNIER (Sweden): First of all, Mr. President, coming back from a long holiday I am very pleased to see you in the Chair, and I pledge my delegation's cooperation with you. I am also very pleased that at the back of the room we have the future, be it Fellows, whom I welcome warmly, or the responsibilities of the Italian teachers, when they do their part to bring up the next generation and make them aware of what it takes for them to grow up in a safer world.

I do not have a prepared statement, but I was inspired to make some impromptu remarks by the previous two speakers.

First of all, I think that the anniversary of the closing of the test site is something that is truly worth celebrating. I wish we had more anniversaries like that.

I was also very much inspired by Ambassador Trezza's statement. I think what is to me important in his paper is that he is highlighting the roots of the FMCT, the key role that it plays in the nuclear disarmament process. I say this because there is a tendency sometimes for people to say that it is mainly a non-proliferation measure, and to my mind, it is not. The roots are in nuclear disarmament.

It was also pointed out in the report of the WMD Commission that the basic rationale for an FMCT is quite simple. While not alone sufficient to bring about nuclear disarmament, ending production would close the taps of fissile material for weapons by applying to enrichment and reprocessing plants in both nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States. It would over time actually remove an element of discrimination between those two categories of States.

I think it is equally important that Ambassador Trezza's intervention here draws our attention to our obligation to fulfil the commitments made in 1995 and 2000 in connection with the NPT. This is particularly urgent in view of the recent setbacks within the NPT, but in the disarmament field as a whole. I think it is up to the CD now to try to bring us back on track, and we can do so by beginning without further delay to negotiate a "fissban" in the CD.

I am aware and I clearly believe that this is not the only issue before the CD, and not the only issue we need to deal with, but nevertheless, it is a key one if we are to be back in business.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of Sweden for her statement. This concludes the list of speakers for today's plenary meeting. Does any delegation wish to take the floor? That does not seem to be the case, so this concludes our formal meeting of today.

In accordance with our schedule of activities, the meeting will be followed in 10 minutes by an informal plenary meeting during which I will introduce the draft report of the Conference on Disarmament to the United Nations General Assembly at its sixty-first session. As usual, this informal plenary meeting is open only to member States of the Conference as well as to observer States.

The next meeting of the Conference will take place on Wednesday, 6 September. At that time a formal plenary meeting will be held, followed by an information meeting during which we will commence the consideration of the draft report.

And some other important information in closing: as from next week, the CD will hold its deliberations in conference room XX.

The meeting rose at 10.40 a.m.