

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE ONE THOUSAND AND FORTIETH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Wednesday, 6 September, at 10.25 a.m.

President:

Mr. Anton PINTER

(Slovakia)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 1040th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

I have on my list of speakers for today the following speakers: Japan, Ambassador Yoshiki Mine; the Netherlands, Ambassador Johannes Landman; the United Kingdom, Ambassador John Duncan; and Pakistan, Ambassador Masood Khan.

I now give the floor to the first speaker on the list, the distinguished Ambassador of Japan, Mr. Yoshiki Mine.

Mr. MINE (Japan): At the outset I would like to extend my warmest thanks to Ambassador Anton Pinter, the head of the Permanent Mission of Slovakia to the United Nations and other international organizations in Geneva, for convening this formal plenary and granting me an opportunity to make a statement.

Conscious of the shared view that the deadlock at the CD must be resolved through substantive discussions, focused structured debates were carried out based on the CD agenda under the P-6 initiative this year. The fact that in-depth discussions on each agenda item took place during these focused deliberations was the most significant outcome of the CD in recent years. In this connection, I would like to thank the six Presidents for their efforts; they have brought new light to the Conference.

However, we should not be content with this achievement, but should carry this year's momentum through to the next and develop it further. Today, in order to provide a basis for this purpose, I would like to give an overview and assessment of this year's work on the four major agenda items - nuclear disarmament, negative security assurances, a fissile material cut-off treaty and the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

Firstly, during the focused debates on nuclear disarmament, the United States and the Russian Federation noted in their statements that they were advancing nuclear disarmament based on the Moscow Treaty. In particular, it should be duly acknowledged and welcomed that both countries based their statements on concrete and detailed figures. It was also encouraging that a few other nuclear-weapon States gave similar statements on their own specific measures for nuclear disarmament. Nevertheless, as already noted by many countries, including Japan, the nuclear-weapon States are being strongly urged to make further reductions to their nuclear arsenals. Accordingly, throughout this year's focused debates it has been indicated that further deliberations are required within the CD on this agenda item.

However, continuing deliberations and establishing an ad hoc committee as a venue for these deliberations are two separate issues. Specifically, since it is the nuclear-weapon States that must carry out actual nuclear disarmament, ultimately it is not possible to establish an ad hoc committee without the agreement of all the nuclear-weapon States. As a result of careful analysis of the statements by the nuclear-weapon States on the establishment of an ad hoc

(Mr. Mine, Japan)

committee to deal with nuclear disarmament, it is clear that no such consensus has emerged. Naturally, attempts will be made to persuade the nuclear-weapon States in future discussions to alter their positions, but until such a change occurs, we must accept, reluctantly as that may be, the reality that establishing an ad hoc committee is not possible.

Moreover, given that even the points at issue are still unclear on nuclear disarmament, priority should be given to the continuation of deliberations rather than establishing an ad hoc committee.

Regarding NSA (negative security assurances), a similar situation to nuclear disarmament can be seen. During this year's focused debates, a regional approach via nuclear-weapon-free-zone treaties and a global approach were discussed. In addition, other important issues were raised, such as the appropriate forum for dealing with NSAs and which countries should receive the full benefits. Once again it was recognized that there were a diverse range of approaches and ideas, and it was indicated that there were still areas that require further discussions at the CD.

Since it is the nuclear-weapon States that provide the NSAs, their positions are crucial when holding discussions on this matter. In the statements by the nuclear-weapon States, none have expressed a negative view about the provision of NSAs via a regional approach. On the other hand, it cannot be said that the establishment of an ad hoc committee on NSA through a global approach commands consensus. Therefore, as for the establishment of an ad hoc committee on this matter, it can be gathered that the current situation surrounding the NSA needs to be taken into consideration.

Under an FMCT, it is obvious that the nuclear-weapon States shoulder the central role. Nevertheless, since the States that have tested nuclear weapons as well as non-nuclear-weapon States must also assume core obligations not to produce fissile materials for nuclear weapons, this agenda item concerns all CD member States. Unlike nuclear disarmament and NSA, FMCT is not an issue that the nuclear-weapon States should bear sole responsibility for. This is a prominent difference. During the structured debates on FMCT this May, around 15 countries, both nuclear and non-nuclear, dispatched over 20 experts from capitals, and a great number of working papers, including the United States draft treaty and mandate, were submitted. Discussions on all aspects of an FMCT, including definition, scope, stocks and verification, also took place, almost fully exhausting the time allocated in the formal and informal meetings.

In the statements by CD member States, although there exists a range of opinions from the perspective of the whole CD schedule, it is a significant fact that no opposition was expressed from any country, including the nuclear-weapon States, to the establishment itself of an ad hoc committee for negotiating an FMCT in the CD.

Lastly, in the focused debates on PAROS in June, a few countries dispatched experts from capitals and a number of working papers were submitted. However, what became apparent over the course of the focused debates was that, first of all, its relationship with existing space-related institutions such as the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) is ill-defined. In

(Mr. Mine, Japan)

particular, it has become evident that such issues as space debris, jamming and cyber attacks can be more appropriately handled by existing related institutions. It has also been pointed out that confidence-building measures can be handled under the existing Outer Space Treaty regime and not the CD.

An important point has also emerged that its central concept for possible negotiations, that is the weaponization of space, is vague and obscure. At first glance a ban on the placement of weapons in outer space seems a fascinating topic. Nonetheless, in all actuality, it is completely nebulous what kind of weapons do exist or could exist, and, of those weapons, what do we want to prohibit the placement of or what should be prohibited.

The CD is not an institution whose aim is to adopt ambiguous political declarations, but rather to negotiate legally binding treaties. In drafting legal documents, clarifying the central concept that governs those documents is a necessary minimum requirement.

Summing up, since our deliberations on PAROS have not reached maturity, due to its ill-defined relationship with existing institutions and the vagueness of its central concept, I must say we are not even at a stage for establishing an ad hoc committee.

This concludes my assessment of this year's discussions and outcomes at the CD. I hope this will be food for thought for the future work of the CD.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of Japan for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of the Netherlands, Mr. Johannes Landman.

Mr. LANDMAN (Netherlands): Mr. President, I would like to thank you for the draft report of the Conference on Disarmament. The draft properly reflects the work of the Conference during this important year, in which we worked on the basis of the so-called "P-6 initiative". Their joint proposal on the Conference's activities has made a marked difference. General debates were held on all agenda items and focused structured debates took place with the participation of experts, while on the other hand any member State of the Conference could raise any subject which it considered to merit attention. This was a significant change for the good and improvement compared to other years. Also, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan, noted in his statement of June this year with respect to this year's activities of the Conference that "one can sense that a new momentum is gathering".

As the draft report notes, the "P-6 initiative" was appreciated by all member States of the Conference. Indeed, we had more meetings, more interventions, more written contributions and more experts present than in any other year of the last decade. Now is the time to translate all this activity into a concrete follow-up.

This brings me to conclusions and decisions which should be contained in the draft report according to rule 45 of the rules of procedure.

(Mr. Landman, Netherlands)

Looking at the final chapter of the draft report, no conclusions are drawn as yet from the positive developments of this year. The approach in fact remains very minimalist as if nothing has changed: no real conclusions, no real decisions, and even no recommendations as rule 45 allows or even expects.

To begin with the most obvious, it is for instance clear that this new coordination between the six presidencies should be continued. At the same time, simply repeating this year's exercise in 2007 would not be a meaningful follow-up.

We should at least be able to conclude that, as for the 2007 session of the Conference on Disarmament, an arrangement has to be found which on the one hand reflects the spectrum of issues with which the Conference should deal, giving each of them its relative weight in the political environment of today. But on the other hand, we should be able to conclude that at least we should be starting concrete negotiations on a mandate for an FMCT, which, as the discussions of this year have shown, is supported, or in any case not opposed by anybody or any single State in itself.

I have two concrete suggestions. First, the Netherlands would like to include a reference to the "P-6 initiative" in paragraph 56 after the first line on the increased coherence and purpose of its activities throughout 2006.

Second, the "relevant proposals" which are mentioned in paragraph 56 should be made more concrete by referring to the NPT Review Conferences. This would lead to the following form of words: "56. Bearing in mind the increased coherence and purpose of its activities throughout 2006 due to the 'P-6 initiative', and with a view to commencing early substantive work during its 2007 session, the Conference requested the current President and the incoming President to conduct consultations during the intersessional period and, if possible, make recommendations, taking into account the outcome of the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference and all relevant proposals, including those submitted as the documents of the Conference on Disarmament, views presented and discussions held, and to endeavour to keep the membership of the Conference informed, as appropriate, of their consultations."

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of the Netherlands for his statement and I now give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador of the United Kingdom, Mr. Duncan.

Mr. DUNCAN (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland): I would like to make a brief statement on a different issue, and this statement to the Conference on Disarmament is on behalf of the United Kingdom and France.

On 31 August the Republic of Kazakhstan formally brought to the attention of the Conference on Disarmament their intention, with other Central Asian States (Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan), to sign a Treaty on a Central Asian Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Semipalatinsk, Kazakhstan, on 8 September.

(Mr. Duncan, United Kingdom)

The United Kingdom and France have long supported the formation of nuclear-weapon-free zones as an important path towards disarmament and non-proliferation. As was highlighted in the decisions of the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the NPT, the establishment of internationally recognized nuclear-weapon-free zones enhances global peace and security.

However, owing to the lack of consultation with nuclear-weapon States and concerning elements of substance, the Central Asian Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone draft treaty does not in our view meet the objectives and principles of nuclear-weapon-free zones as expressed by the 1999 UNDC guidelines. The importance of the negative security assurances associated with nuclear-weapon-free zones, and the need for consultation, were highlighted in these guidelines. Article VII of the NPT sets out the concept of regional treaties and the assurance that they provide of the absence of nuclear weapons in such zones.

We have expressed our concerns about these issues to the C-5 countries and, since 2002, have on a number of occasions requested further consultations in order to resolve these issues. These requests have never been answered.

France and the United Kingdom regret that, despite our representations to the United Nations and requests to the C-5 for further consultations, the C-5 will nevertheless seek to sign the text on 8 September without addressing the issues we have raised. On the basis of the current text the United Kingdom and France will not be in a position to support the Treaty and to sign the relevant Protocols that would grant negative security assurances to the C-5 States signatory to the Central Asian Nuclear-Weapon-Free-Zone Treaty.

The United Kingdom and France request that this statement is circulated to member States represented at the Conference on Disarmament.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of the United Kingdom for his joint statement on behalf of the United Kingdom and France, and I now give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador of Pakistan.

Mr. KHAN (Pakistan): Mr. President, we thank you and the secretariat for putting together the report of the CD. I am making some remarks on the draft that you circulated last week. I understand that during the informal session you will hold today you will be encouraging delegations to consider the entire text paragraph by paragraph. I have some general remarks and suggestions about the whole report, which I would like to share with you and the CD members.

First, some general observations. The basic criterion for the report of the CD to the General Assembly is that it should be factual and reflect the negotiations and work of the Conference.

This year no negotiations took place, but the CD worked, and the report should thus faithfully reflect what happened.

(Mr. Khan, Pakistan)

The CD Presidents or member States, if they are to be quoted, should be quoted in full and in the proper context.

References to the Friends of the Presidents should be concentrated in one place to deal exhaustively with the subject.

Now some specific comments on the report itself.

In paragraph 13, the statement of Ambassador Rapacki of Poland, first President of the Conference on Disarmament in 2006, has been quoted partially. His full remarks should be inserted, which read as: "A majority of delegations supports the A-5 proposal. At the same time, some other delegations are not in a position to support it." These parts of the President's report seem to have been edited heavily. This text may be inserted in full after the second sentence.

The sentence starting with "... there was emphasis on the need for more flexibility, and that the idea of updating the issues with which the CD should deal was also present" does not reflect the factual position, and it should therefore be deleted. Adoption of the agenda of the Conference on the first day confirmed the relevance and importance of the current agenda. It remains valid and operative until January 2007.

Reference to the findings of the Friends of the Presidents at the end of the paragraph should be qualified with the remarks of the President, Ambassador Loshchinin of the Russian Federation, who, while introducing the mid-term report, said: "It does not in any way pretend to be either a balanced, or an inclusive, or a comprehensive non-paper."

In paragraph 14, the phrase "rolling discussion" needs elaboration. Whatever the intention behind this phrase, the meaning is imprecise and ambiguous. Hence, either clarity or deletion. In fact, the plenary meetings of the Conference were held in accordance with the schedule of activities prepared by the six Presidents.

The last part of the paragraph says that every President was encouraged to reserve time for the possibility to report on findings by the Friends of the Presidents, if it was deemed necessary. The question is: by whom? Or, who encouraged the Presidents? The Presidents themselves, I suppose. A little later it is referred to as a proposal which was made without prejudice to any future decisions. Who made that proposal? I think the Presidents again. So what we need here is precision and clarity. We would say that all Friends-related questions and observations could be dealt with comprehensively in one paragraph or section.

In paragraph 15, as for the presentation of the IAEA expert, the agreement within the Conference was that it would be made under the general debate and not as part of a structured debate. This agreement should be reflected in accordance with the understanding that was reached within the Conference, and I think the paragraph can read as follows to make it clearer: "At the 1037th plenary meeting on 24 August 2006, the representative of IAEA, in response to an invitation by the Conference, made a presentation."

(Mr. Khan, Pakistan)

In paragraph 16, the phrase “balanced and/or comprehensive” is not appropriate. The second-last sentence may be phrased as follows: “A number of delegations called for an agreement on a balanced and comprehensive programme of work, with a focus on the four core issues. Some supported a balanced or a comprehensive programme of work, while some delegations emphasized that linkages should not be established between elements of a programme of work.”

Paragraphs 20 and 21 again make references to the Friends of the Presidents and, as I suggested earlier, they should be moved to one place.

In paragraph 25, the last part of the last sentence inadvertently gives the impression that it is trying to scuttle or sideline the programme of work. It is not conceivable that substantive work will start without a programme of work. The sentence should therefore be amended to read: “with a view to reaching agreement on the programme of work of the Conference”.

Paragraph 27 does not reflect the spirit and thrust of the message from the United Nations Secretary-General. The following sentences quoting the Secretary-General should also be added to the text:

The Secretary-General said, “As the last year’s session made clear, the impasse cannot be broken by procedural means or by merely fine-tuning existing proposals”. He urged capitals to “develop a new political consensus on priorities in arms control and disarmament”.

Paragraph 41, like paragraphs 34 (f) and 38 (d), should duly reflect the informal plenary on NSAs and UNIDIR’s seminar on NSAs organized by the Conference President.

References in paragraphs 45, 48, 49 and 53 to the issues of critical civilian infrastructure, APLs, ATT and MANPADs should be qualified by referring to the views of delegations about the relevance of these issues to the agenda of the Conference.

Finally, about paragraph 56, the beginning of the first sentence - “Bearing in mind the increased coherence and purpose of its activities throughout 2006” - is an addition. Coherence is a loaded term in the United Nations. We should be precise in our language and say in plain words that this year an increased number of formal and informal meetings were held and extensive debate took place on the four core issues with the participation of experts, most of whom were member State representatives.

The schedule of activities in 2006 has not produced a concrete result on the programme of work of the Conference or on any substantive aspect. It, however, without a doubt, generated a momentum which could be sustained and enhanced during the 2007 session.

These comments have not been made as solid negotiating proposals, but to help you revise the report to make it even more factual and objective.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of Pakistan for his statement and now I give the floor to the distinguished representative of the United States, Mr. Thomas Cynkin.

Mr. CYNKIN (United States of America): Mr. President, I refer back to the statement by the British Ambassador on the subject of a Central Asian nuclear-weapon-free-zone treaty.

The United States shares many of the concerns articulated by the British Ambassador on behalf of the delegations of the United Kingdom and France. The United States, the United Kingdom and France are concerned and have noted in correspondence with the United Nations Secretary-General that the United Nations Department of Disarmament Affairs representative in charge of the Central Asian nuclear-weapon-free zone did not follow the procedure recommended in the United Nations Disarmament Commission's guidelines of 1999 regarding consultation of the nuclear-weapon States in the negotiation of treaties establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones.

The United States, the United Kingdom and France have been in touch with the five Central Asian States on a number of occasions, most recently in November 2005 and again in the past few weeks, expressing concern over the inadequacy of consultations in developing the draft treaty.

The United States, the United Kingdom and France continue to have substantive reservations concerning the draft treaty. We have been awaiting an invitation in response to our requests for further consultations between the C-5 and the P-5, but nothing has happened. Given these concerns, should the C-5 proceed to sign the draft treaty, the United States would not be able to support it, and we will explain the reasons for that position in due course.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of the United States for his statement and now I recognize the distinguished representative of Syria. You have the floor, Sir.

Mr. ALI (Syrian Arab Republic) (translated from Arabic): My country's delegation did not plan to take the floor at this meeting, but something said by the Ambassador of Japan and the Ambassador of the Netherlands prompts us to do so. What the two of them said regarding the commencement of negotiations on a treaty on the prohibition of the production of fissile material is partially true. They said that there is no member State in the Conference which objects to the setting up of an ad hoc committee to negotiate a treaty on the prohibition of the production of fissile material, and the truth in black and white is that the vast majority of the members of the Conference on Disarmament stipulated that this committee should be set up after the adoption of a comprehensive and balanced programme of work of the Conference on Disarmament which deals on an equal footing with the four core issues included in the agenda, namely, nuclear disarmament, negative security assurances, the prevention of an arms race in outer space and the prohibition of the production of fissile material. A further condition was that the committee should work on the basis of the Shannon mandate, which has already been agreed by the Conference or the majority of its member States.

(Mr. Ali, Syrian Arab Republic)

Since some delegations have referred to the report, allow me to make some basic comments on this report, reserving the right, of course, to come back to any given paragraph as soon as I receive instructions from my capital.

The delegation of my country of course agrees with all the points made by the Ambassador of Pakistan. I would like to add a few comments. Regarding the reference to the Friends of the Presidents, we do not consider it appropriate here, with all due respect, of course, to the Presidents and Friends of the Presidents. We do not think that mention should be made of this group or its tasks in the report, as this is a group which has no official, legal or political status. In paragraph 16 - this has already been referred to by the Ambassador of Pakistan - we wish to point out that some States emphasized the need to adopt a comprehensive and balanced programme of work and that the five Ambassadors' initiative remains the best basis for coming to an agreement on such a programme of work.

In paragraph 20 there is a reference to the fact that the delegations highlighted the importance of reviewing the agenda. These words were true in 2005, but in 2006 the agenda was adopted at the first meeting, and after the adoption of the agenda, some delegations raised the issue of reviewing the agenda and many other delegations expressed their view that the agenda was balanced and comprehensive and reflected all the concerns related to the international security situation.

In paragraphs 25 and 26, there is a contradiction, since at the end of paragraph 25 there is a reference to the need to commence substantive work and in paragraph 26 we read that the substantive work during its 2006 session was such-and-such. So, the question is: have we already started substantive work or not? Of course, the solution to this contradiction is to be found in the reference which appears at the end of paragraph 25, to the effect that the aim of the substantive work is to adopt the programme of work of the Conference on Disarmament.

In paragraphs 34 and 35 we read at length about the agreement for the prohibition of the production of fissile material, and here we would like to see reflected the positions of the States which do not agree with this way of presenting things. So we would like the position we set out just now concerning the treaty on the cessation of the production of fissile material to be reflected in this report, so that paragraph 45 is balanced. As you know, there is no consensus on the question of dealing with this issue or these issues, and therefore we would like either the deletion of this paragraph or a reference to the opposing views we have expressed in this regard on many occasions.

In paragraph 46 (a), we would like either the deletion of this paragraph or a reference to the symbol of the official document setting out our positions on this matter. This also applies to paragraph 53: either it should be deleted or a reference should be added to reflect our positions, namely that there is no consensus in the Conference on the discussion of these issues and that the Conference on Disarmament is not the appropriate place to deal with this matter. The same applies to paragraph 54 (a), which should either be deleted or include the symbol of the document which contains our positions we upheld regarding this matter. Consequently, apart from these comments, my country's delegation reserves its right to return to all these paragraphs of the report pending the instructions we shall shortly be receiving from our capital.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of Syria for his statement. The next speaker on my list is the representative of Peru, Mr. Diego Beleván.

Mr. BELEVÁN (Peru) (translated from Spanish): Mr. President, as my delegation is taking the floor for the first time during your term, allow me first to congratulate you on the efficient way in which you have conducted our work in recent weeks, and particularly your presentation of the draft report distributed last week. In that regard, I extend my congratulations to all the Presidents for the year 2006 for the important and innovative work conducted throughout the current session of the Conference, which gives us hope that it will serve as an example in moving forward the substantive work of the Conference next year.

Since last Thursday, I have had a number of opportunities to exchange ideas on what the rules of the Conference really lay down as regards the annual report it presents to the United Nations General Assembly. All the people I talked to highlighted the need to have an objective report which describes appropriately what happened in 2006. In that regard, if I may take a slightly different path, I would like to point out that the 22nd edition of the Dictionary of the Spanish Language published by the Spanish Royal Academy, which protects the proper use of the language spoken by more than 350 million people, first defines the word “objective” as “pertaining to, or relative to, an object itself independently of how one thinks or feels”. In other words, it describes something without trying to reflect our own prejudices in it. The same dictionary has three definitions for the word “describe”: (a) “to delineate, sketch, represent something, depicting it in a manner which will give a full idea of it; (b) to represent someone or something through language, referring to or explaining his, her or its different parts, qualities or circumstances; and (c) to define something imperfectly, not through its essential characteristics, but giving a general idea of its parts or properties”.

The text before us constitutes a good balance among the three definitions that I have just read. It fully describes the meetings that we held in 2006, it objectively explains the different parts of the work we have accomplished and, finally, it gives a general overview. For this reason my delegation believes that the draft report meets the requirements set out in rule 45 of our rules of procedure and faithfully reflects the events of the 2006 session of the Conference on Disarmament.

Of course, we are aware that any document is always open to improvement, and in that regard we will not refuse to examine proposals which maintain the current harmony and spirit of the draft report.

I would, however, like to highlight some of the elements which, in our view, reflect the innovative mechanisms used this year. We particularly appreciate the way in which the interest of members of the Conference in all the items on the agenda has been reflected, which confirms the wise decision of the P-6 under the leadership of Ambassador Rapacki to draw up a timetable for thematic structured debates based on that document. We also think it is important to make appropriate mention of the coordinated work carried out by the six Presidents for 2006, which contributed to the accomplishment of considerable substantive work throughout the current session.

(Mr. Beleván, Peru)

We also consider important the reference to the Friends of the Presidents, as a mechanism which reflects the acceptance by the members of the Conference of the need to engage in discussion on the possible updating of all the issues relating to the Conference, both those of form and those of substance. In that regard, we express our appreciation of and take note of the first report submitted at the beginning of June through the then President, Ambassador Loshchinin of the Russian Federation.

Finally, the timetable of activities which we all accepted at the beginning of 2006 is appropriately reflected in the description of the meetings we held on each of the items on the agenda of the Conference.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of Peru for his statement, and now I recognize the distinguished Ambassador of the Netherlands.

Mr. LANDMAN (Netherlands): Mr. President, one of the striking aspects of the session we had this year was that we had solid discussion on serious matters in an extremely good mood. I mean there were no polemics. We really worked together in a very constructive and cooperative manner, and that, I must say, your report reflects. I do really hope and I trust and I expect that we will be able in this manner to conclude and agree on this report with the required adjustments.

My second point: I wish to apologize to my colleague from Syria. I have to confess that I did not know that I had already been put on the list and I had not actually clearly finished my speech, so I got a little bit lost at the end, as some may have noticed, so I fumbled, and that must be the reason that I feel that my Syrian colleague maybe missed what I really said and meant to say - certainly not monomaniac and pointing to only one issue. I clearly said - I wanted to say - I would like to repeat it so that it is on record. What I said was that we should at least be able to conclude that as for the 2007 session of the Conference on Disarmament, an arrangement has to be sought which on the one hand reflects the whole spectrum of issues with which the Conference should deal, giving each of them its relative weight in the political environments of today, while at the same time at last starting concrete negotiations on a mandate for an FMCT, negotiations we have all supported or accepted.

I have also listened very carefully to his other remarks, like I have listened carefully, as I always do, to our very distinguished colleague from Pakistan. Great wisdom. Great intelligence. Many of them very pertinent, and we have to ponder them. My delegation has no problem with them. But I do hope that this report succeeds in conveying the message that something happened here this year, something different in comparison to the last 9 or 10 years. I would like to report actually that in this very month, 10 years ago, the register for the signing of the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty was opened, and as I recall quite correctly, it was in this very month that the first signatory was the President of the United States, Clinton. Since then this body has not produced very much, while this year, indeed we have provided some hope, and this should be reflected.

(Mr. Landman, Netherlands)

Now it is true, the facts speak for themselves, and I have noticed, carefully comparing the two texts - last year's report and this year's - we have some five or six pages more, but I am not so sure that our colleagues in New York will do the same and compare. But when you read it at first sight, you see again this document and so on, ça ne saute pas aux yeux. It is not that easy to convey the message to our colleagues in New York who are not daily involved in this, that indeed something different has happened, although the Secretary-General of the United Nations noted it.

I give you one example that really struck me, and I hope that colleagues forgive me, but there was one striking event this year. There was a presentation by a high governmental official of two very significant documents, a mandate text and a treaty text for an FMCT, about which we have been talking for 10 years. It's the first time this happened. Well, when first reading I did not really notice that it was mentioned, but in the end I found it. It was tucked away somewhere in a list of documents. Well, we are all experienced diplomats. When we look at a document, particularly when it has more than four pages, we skip the documents. So, thus it is a question of presentation. One could imagine that there would at least be some paragraph saying that this presentation was made of these documents.

In short, I would like to appeal to colleagues who have many ideas - and particularly those - and I refer here to my Syrian colleague, who is expecting his instructions from Damascus - I really would hope where we have ourselves a role to play as regards instructions that we would promote and endeavour to have these instructions as constructive and positive as possible, and indeed to allow us to be able to convey the message that we are on the right track and that next year will be better.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Ambassador of the Netherlands for his statement, and now I recognize the distinguished representative of Mexico, Mr. Enrique Ochoa.

Mr. OCHOA (Mexico) (translated from Spanish): Mr. President, first of all allow me to congratulate you on taking the Chair of this Conference and assure you of my delegation's full support. I would also like to thank you and the secretariat for having submitted to us this draft report to the General Assembly.

For now, I would just like to make some general comments, since my delegation had intended to make them during the informal discussion but we think it would add some value to them to make them in this context. In this regard I would like to refer to only a few of the paragraphs.

Concerning paragraph 13, to which the distinguished Ambassador of Pakistan referred, my delegation thinks that the quotation from the statement by Ambassador Rapacki is selective and does not reflect the feeling of all the members of the Conference.

(Mr. Ochoa, Mexico)

Between paragraphs 23 and 24 I think we are omitting an issue which was important. On 16 February, a number of delegations called for the statement of the NGO Working Group on Peace of the NGO Committee on the legal and social status of women relating to peace, stability and disarmament to be read by the authors of the statement on International Women's Day. On that occasion no delegation expressed opposition to that proposal. However, despite that, it was the President of the Conference who had to read the statement. It seems to us that this is a real event which happened and should be reflected in the Conference's report.

In paragraph 25, we read "this proposal", referring to the P-6 initiative, which was considered to be useful and constructive and was appreciated by all the member States of the Conference. While my delegation feels that the P-6 initiative is a step in the right direction and we did welcome it, we believe, and this is what we have always thought, that it was only a palliative until we overcome the intolerable stagnation of the Conference on Disarmament and with a view to initiating negotiations in accordance with this Conference's mandate. So I think that this sentence has to be more balanced.

With regard to the last sentence of paragraph 25 and the first sentence of paragraph 26, as the delegation of Syria pointed out, we think that there is a contradiction because, if we talk about intensifying efforts to hold consultations and explore the various possibilities of reaching agreement on the commencement of the substantive work of the Conference, we cannot say in the next paragraph what the substantive work of the Conference was. This is something that logically we cannot express in this manner.

Finally, I would like to refer to paragraph 32, where we also feel we are leaving out an important matter; and that is that Ambassador Park of the Republic of Korea, once the work was concluded, introduced a document on his own behalf on 14 March in which he presented a compilation of the proposals and comments that had been made during the discussions on items 1 and 2 of the agenda under his presidency.

The last point to which I wish to refer, on which I do not want to speak at great length, is related to paragraphs 45, 48, 49 and 53. These paragraphs make specific reference to issues which were dealt with under item (e), on new types of weapons of mass destruction, (f), on the comprehensive programme of disarmament, and (g), on transparency in armaments. It seems to us that the same treatment is not given to the other items on the agenda. On this point I wish to be rather clear. My delegation does not object to the inclusion of these paragraphs, but we would like to bolster the inclusion of other views which were expressed, for example, on the subject of nuclear disarmament, among which we might highlight the frustration arising from the failure of the NPT Review Conference in 2005, or the need to accelerate the 13 steps agreed during the 2000 NPT Review Conference.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of Mexico for his statement. The next speaker on my list is the distinguished Ambassador of Italy, Mr. Carlo Trezza.

Mr. TREZZA (Italy): It was my understanding that during the session the discussion on the report would be held in an informal mode, but I see that we have engaged the discussion in the formal mode, and thus I would like to make my views known with regard to this document.

(Mr. Trezza, Italy)

I would like to say that in general terms the document is factual and objective, and that I think in accordance with rule 45 of our rules of procedure it reflects the negotiations and the work of the Conference clearly, and we have already heard some remarks. There are adjustments to be made, and we are ready to participate in the discussion of the text.

I would suggest that if we enter a drafting mode, or a drafting phase, we should do it in an informal way. Also, with regard to some statements which have been made this morning, I would suggest not to be too ambitious. We do not believe that the report as such can solve problems of the Conference on Disarmament, and especially of the programme of work. We have to report to the General Assembly on our work, but it is difficult to believe that through this instrument we can really achieve what we have not been able to achieve during the year.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Ambassador of Italy for his statement and for recalling that there is an informal plenary meeting which will be devoted to the drafting session. I now have a request for the floor from the distinguished representative of the United States of America.

Mr. CYNKIN (United States of America): I am sorry to take the floor again. I had anticipated that the discussion of the report would be held in a separate informal plenary, and therefore I did not address the report in my remarks limited to the Central Asian nuclear-weapons-free zone.

Just to make a general observation or two about the report, first to commend the secretariat for its effort to produce an intellectually honest report reflecting factually what occurred. That said, we do have a couple of comments.

I note that in the segment of the report addressing PAROS - and I refer you specifically to paragraph 38 - the language is generally fulsome, descriptive and quite rich. I can read this and get an idea of what actually happened. On the other hand, I refer you to paragraph 34, which addresses FMCT. And there it seems that there is a series of footnotes, and you would have to be a very practised hand indeed to come away with an understanding of what actually transpired in these discussions. Most notably I would respectfully propose something in support of what the Dutch Ambassador has said, that we regard it to be highly significant in the evolution of our discussion of FMCT that Assistant Secretary of State Rademaker tabled both a draft FMCT negotiating mandate and a draft treaty, and although I see that that is reflected as a footnote, if you will, in paragraph 35 (g) and (h), nevertheless it seems to me that in the spirit of actually describing what happened factually here, a somewhat more fulsome, actual descriptive reference to this would be appropriate, given the significance of the event. It was the only treaty tabled this year, to the best of my recollection, and the only draft negotiating mandate as well, so perhaps it would merit a special mention.

I would respectfully suggest that perhaps immediately under the heading of 34, the first item that could be listed would be a factual statement along the lines that at its 1019th plenary meeting on 18 May 2006 - I am not giving you negotiating text, but only for the purpose of illustration - United States Assistant Secretary of State Steve Rademaker tabled, then you could say "a draft FMCT negotiating mandate (CD/1776), entitled, etc. and a draft FMCT treaty

(Mr. Cynkin, United States)

(CD/1777), entitled, etc.”. That would be substantively almost identical to what you have, but might give a little more prominence to a highly significant event something along the lines of and in the spirit of the segment on PAROS, which I thought was far better articulated.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of the United States of America for his statement and now I recognize the distinguished Ambassador of Australia, Ms. Caroline Millar.

Ms. MILLAR (Australia): Mr. President, first of all I would like to commend you for a very useful, flat, factual report. The Australian delegation thinks you have done a very good job. We would also like to commend all six Presidents of the Conference on Disarmament this year for the approach that you have taken to this report and more broadly, the collegial constructive approach to our work has indeed helped take us forward. And we endorse the characterization of this in the report, notably in paragraph 25, where it talks about the P-6 approach as useful and constructive. It certainly has been. And also in paragraph 56, where it talks about the increased coherence and purpose this year. And in that context we agree with the Netherlands that this is very much due to the P-6 approach.

Australia would call on the Presidents of the CD for 2007 to adopt a similar approach so this momentum is not lost.

I would now like to turn to a specific issue raised by another delegation on a matter of importance to my delegation, and that is the reference to MANPADS in paragraphs 53 and 54. And in this context I would like to say that the comments I am going to make here apply equally to paragraphs 45 and 46 (b). With respect to the references to the discussion on MANPADS and the paper submitted in paragraphs 53 and 54, I would like to note that these are of a very simple, straightforward and factual kind, and I will just read them: “During the focused debate some delegations addressed the issue of the man-portable air defence systems (MANPADS).” There is no comment or assessment made of this discussion. It happened. It took place. The report says so. That reference should be retained as it is. And also I would add that at a previous meeting we asked if you could circulate the Chair’s summary of Australia’s MANPADS seminar that took place on 16 June as a document of this Conference, and we ask if you could do that and have that reflected in the revised version of this report.

Finally, with respect to FMCT, paragraphs 34 and 35, again we would say these are the flattest, most factual references you could possibly imagine to a discussion that took place. It just mentions it happened and lists the documents submitted. It is really very difficult for this delegation to see what there could possibly be to agree to or disagree to with respect to these references. There is no assessment or judgement about the debate one way or the other. It happened. The document was submitted.

Having said that, we would also support a clearer mention to the draft United States treaty and negotiating mandate, along the lines suggested a minute ago by the representative of the United States. This was a significant development for the Conference on Disarmament, and a flat factual reference to it should be included in this report.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of Australia for her statement and I now recognize once again the distinguished representative of Syria, Mr. Hussein Ali.

Mr. ALI (Syrian Arab Republic) (translated from Arabic): I apologize for taking the floor again. I should like to respond briefly to what was said by the distinguished representative of the United States. Regarding his proposal, nothing in the rules of procedure of the Conference on Disarmament indicates that some agenda items are more important than others, and there is nothing that says that what is submitted by a senior representative, a deputy minister or a minister is more important than something submitted by an embassy attaché. The positions expressed in the official meetings of the Conference on Disarmament all have the same legal and political importance, and consequently we oppose the proposal made by the representative of the United States. Moreover, concerning what was said by the representative of Australia regarding the summary of the seminar organized by the Australian Mission on activities related to portable missiles, we also oppose any reference to this seminar because it has nothing to do with the Conference on Disarmament.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of Syria for his statement, and I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Morocco, Mr. Mohammed Benjaber.

Mr. BENJABER (Morocco) (translated from Arabic): Mr. President, allow me first to express the most sincere appreciation of the delegation of my country for the efforts you are making to move our Conference forward, especially at this sensitive juncture where the attention of the members is focused on the report of our Conference to the General Assembly. In this regard, I would like to congratulate you on the draft report that you have prepared, which should be regarded as extremely realistic. In order to ensure that this report is more thorough and more faithfully reflects our deliberations in the Conference throughout the session, my country's delegation would like to make the following comments.

Firstly, the Friends of the Presidents were appointed by the Presidents directly and informally, as Ambassador Zdzisław Rapacki of Poland confined himself to announcing this decision at the special meeting held on 2 February 2006, without this being followed by any endorsement by the Conference. Consequently, and I say this with no disrespect to the Ambassadors who were appointed, to whom we express full respect and regard, and whose efforts we praise, my country's delegation expresses its reservations concerning a reference to them in the report in their capacity as the Friends of the Presidents. For its part, my country's delegation, as a demonstration of the flexibility needed to reach this consensus on the draft report, declares its readiness to study the proposal made by Pakistan to combine all the points relating to the Friends of the Presidents in a single paragraph.

Secondly, and regarding paragraph 15, on the invitation issued by the Conference on Disarmament to the representative of the International Atomic Energy Agency, my country's delegation endorses what was said by the Ambassador of Pakistan to the effect that it would be preferable to include the agreement that was reached on this issue, as decided by the Conference, and that, if we do not do so, it would be preferable to summarize this paragraph without voiding it of its content.

(Mr. Benjaber, Morocco)

Thirdly, and regarding the substantive work of the Conference during the 2006 session, my country's delegation welcomes the fact that the expression "new issues" has been mentioned in the report, for the first time and explicitly, which is a step in the right direction. I cannot but recall in this regard the efforts made by my country's delegation since it occupied the Chair in 2004 to encourage attempts to adapt our proceedings to new developments in relation to international security and peace. In order to build on this positive development and place it on a firm basis, my country's delegation considers that it is essential to include all the issues raised by the delegations this year in the appropriate parts of the report. For example, without seeking to be exhaustive, it would be a good idea to include the issue of small arms and light weapons, which was raised by both Senegal and Colombia under item 6, relating to the comprehensive programme of disarmament. The same system should be followed in relation to the other subjects such as cluster weapons, military expenditure, transparency in nuclear armaments and information security.

Fourthly and finally, the draft report must be improved in order to ensure that all the paragraphs follow the same pattern, especially in paragraph 32. It is also necessary to check that reference is made to all the meetings held by the Conference, including the informal meeting, which was not mentioned in paragraph 41, on the subject of effective international measures to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.

Thank you, Mr. President, and congratulations once again.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Morocco for his statement and for the kind words, and now I recognize the distinguished Ambassador of Algeria, Mr. Idriss Jazairy.

Mr. JAZAIRY (Algeria): Algeria is a member of the group of Friends of the Presidents, but we did not have an opportunity to make our views known on the final report, document CD/WP.542, and therefore I would like to make our position official by expressing it to you on this occasion.

We have three series of concerns. First, with respect to paragraph 16, we find that the notion of the need for a balanced and comprehensive approach is something that we all support. We don't think that balanced and comprehensive could be alternatives. The approach should be both balanced and comprehensive, and therefore, we don't agree to the word "or" added after "and".

Secondly, in paragraph 25, with respect to the last sentence, we suggest either of two options. Either we say there was a general feeling among the member States of the Conference that efforts should be further intensified in conducting consultations and in exploring possibilities with a view to reaching consensus on the programme of work in order to enable the Conference to start the substantive work. We don't feel that starting the substantive work should be engaged in outside the programme of work, so therefore "consensus on the programme of work in order to enable the Conference to start the substantive work". If this is not

(Mr. Jazairy, Algeria)

acceptable, we would also be happy with the following formulation: "... be further intensified in conducting consultations and exploring possibilities with a view to reaching" - and here comes the text - "consensus on the programme of work in order to enable the CD to start negotiations as mandated by the international community". I will present you with a paper which refers to these options.

The third point refers to paragraphs 45, 48, 49 and 53, in recognition of what a former President, Ambassador Rapacki, said, as mentioned rightly in the same report in paragraph 11, where he said in this connection, "in connection with the adoption of the agenda, ... if there is a consensus in the Conference to deal with any issues, they could be dealt with within the agenda". So, on these issues that are mentioned in paragraphs 45, 48, 49, 53, there wasn't actually a consensus, so they would be covered by Ambassador Rapacki's second sentence when he said, "the Conference will also take into consideration rules 27 and 30 of the rules of procedure ..., as well as paragraph 20 and other relevant paragraphs".

What does rule 30 say in the second paragraph? It says it is the right of any member State of the Conference to raise any subject relevant to the work of the Conference at a plenary meeting and to have full opportunity of presenting its views on any subject which it may consider to merit attention.

I suggest that these points were raised on the basis of this second paragraph of rule 30 of the rules of procedure, which are in document CD/8/Rev.9. So my suggestion is that we either include all those paragraphs under the last item in the report, which is called item H, or that we have an item I, entitled "Statements made in accordance with rule 30 of the rules of procedure, paragraph 2", and then mention all the statements made, because if you put them before H, or even if you spread them across the different items of this report, it would look as though these had been incorporated in the agenda and had therefore been the subject of a consensus, which is not the case. In this case I would also suggest that you add to this list that you mentioned in paragraphs 45, 48, 49 and 53 those other suggestions made under rule 30 of the rules of procedure by Algeria on transparency in nuclear weapons, small arms by Senegal, etc.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of Algeria for his statement, and I now give the floor to the representative of France, Mr. Mikaël Griffon.

Mr. JAZAIRY (Algeria): I am sorry. I did refer to those paragraphs referring to civil critical infrastructure, weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, anti-personnel landmines, an arms trade treaty, MANPADS, plus the items that I referred to brought up by Algeria, Senegal and others.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you. I now give the floor to France.

Mr. GRIFFON (France) (translated from French): My delegation entirely agrees with what was said by the Australian delegation concerning sections E and G in part III of the report. We believe that the subjects should be mentioned under the agenda item where they were actually addressed.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of France. I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. SAJJADPOUR (Islamic Republic of Iran): Mr. President, I appreciate your efforts, and I also appreciate the other Presidents of the CD. The work that the secretariat has provided is really commendable. It is professional reporting, and our delegation appreciates it so much.

However, a high degree of professionalism is not always finalized and complete, and not every man is complete, and not every report is complete and without deficiencies.

Reading the report so meticulously and listening to all the discussions attentively, our delegation is of the view that there is a problem which is the base for all these diversities of views on the report, and that is the mixing of reporting and PV. We know in the CD we have a PV. We have a report. They differ significantly and structurally and there are some selections where the PV is reflected, and I think this is the fundamental base, and I limit my remarks to this general observation at this juncture, but I think it is an issue which should be discussed and detailed later.

We also have some observations especially on paragraphs 13, 25, 26, 45 and 53, but I leave it to a better time, and of course it's not limited to these paragraphs, but I think the fundamental issue which our delegation raised needs to be attentively paid attention to.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you for your statement, and now I recognize the distinguished representative of Canada, Ambassador Paul Meyer.

Mr. MEYER (Canada): Mr. President, let me first commend you and your colleagues for providing us with I think a very professional and well-conceived draft report. I would just echo the sage comments of earlier colleagues. I am thinking of the Pakistani Ambassador when he urged that the report be factual and not interpretive and of my Dutch colleague when he noted that the facts speak for themselves. I think we should be guided by this. Interpretation, I think, opens up real complications for us all, and the closer we can stick to a factual accounting of how the year proceeded, however flat it may seem, I think we are on safer ground. I couldn't agree more with Ambassador Trezza's reminder to us that the report is not going to solve the problems of the CD or our elusive programme of work, and to suggest that frankly colleagues in New York or in our capitals or anywhere are going to pore over this text to extract wisdom or inspiration I think is unrealistic, to put it mildly.

What really is important now is for us to wrap this up as soon as possible, and the solutions to our problems lie in a forward-looking political diplomatic exercise, I would suggest, rather than a backward-looking archival and chronicling exercise.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of Canada for his statement, and I give the floor to the distinguished representative of the Russian Federation, Mr. Anton Vasiliev.

Mr. VASILIEV (Russian Federation) (translated from Russian): Mr. President, I too would like to endorse the words of thanks for the excellent text you have prepared, which, as today's discussion shows, can serve as an excellent basis for further work, and in our view, in the time still available to us, we will be perfectly able to reconcile the various points of view on the issues which are already becoming slowly crystallized, arrive at a common denominator and conclude this special year in the life of the Conference on Disarmament with a good factual report.

Secondly, I would like to express agreement with the distinguished representative of Italy and call for a move to practical work on the text as quickly as possible. I think we must begin an informal meeting and discuss specific wording on specific paragraphs, enabling us to accelerate our work.

Thirdly, a small factual comment in response to the suggestion made by the delegation of the United States of America that the presentation by the United States of America of a draft treaty on FMCT and a mandate for further work on an FMCT should be given somewhat greater prominence. In principle we are prepared to consider this proposal, and we view it quite positively. The only thing I would like to make clear is that the rationale behind this proposal, I think, was not entirely correctly expressed, since the wording of paragraph 38, relating to the list of plenary meetings on PAROS, was compared with that of paragraph 34, relating to the list of plenary meetings on the FMCT. Correct me if I am wrong, Mr. President, but I understand that the point is not that something is deliberately described in more detail in one case and more laconically in another case, the point is that here the wording relating to the meetings of the Conference is given literally in the form in which they were suggested to the Conference by the President at that time - no more than that. In that regard, it seems to me we must simply do justice to the fact that this is simply a factual reflection of what actually took place.

A fourth point. I would like to respond very briefly in the context of our open meeting today to what we have heard in the statement by the distinguished representative of Japan, Ambassador Mine. It is difficult for us to agree with a number of the comments which were expressed in his statement today, but of course we have great respect for what was said. I would just like to appeal to everyone at the current stage to concentrate on what is important, a positive conclusion to a positive year, and I would like to appeal to everyone at the current stage as far as possible to concentrate on what brings us together and avoid setting certain key issues we are discussing against other issues, to display prudence, to display responsibility, to display objectivity. This will help us to maintain this positive impetus in the Conference, which we achieved with great difficulty, thanks to the joint efforts of all in the course of this year, and to carry it forward to next year.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of the Russian Federation for his statement, and I would like to once again appeal to you to limit your statements to general comments only so that we can start our informal plenary meeting as soon as possible. The next speaker on the list is the representative of Argentina, Mr. Marcelo Valle Fonrouge.

Mr. VALLE FONROUGE (Argentina) (translated from Spanish): Concerning the text that we are analysing, we have no objections to approving it as it is. It is a complete text, it is a factual text, and to some extent it reflects what has been happening in this Conference. In that regard we share the view that it should be factual, and therefore we request the inclusion of a paragraph 52 bis when we deal with item (g), Transparency in armaments, considering that this paragraph 52 bis we propose would specifically refer to the debate focused on one of the issues addressed by the delegations in this Conference on the United Nations Register of Conventional Weapons.

As you will recall, on that occasion, this Conference had a report presented orally on the work done by the Group of Experts on the United Nations Register of Conventional Weapons chaired by our Deputy Foreign Minister, Ambassador García Moritán. In that regard we would request not only the drafting of a paragraph 52 bis making specific mention of the issue of “the United Nations Register” in the area of conventional weapons, but also the inclusion of a new subparagraph (c) in paragraph 54 placing on record that the document which we will refer to the secretariat will record the oral presentation by Ambassador García Moritán, which was useful in making known in this office in Geneva the results achieved by this Group of Experts, which I think were satisfactory.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of Argentina for his statement and now I give the floor to the distinguished representative of India, Mr. Indra Mani Pandey.

Mr. PANDEY (India): Mr. President, we would like to join with other delegations in complimenting you for preparing a very factual and balanced report.

In principle we have no major difficulty with the report, and we can go along with the consensus on the report. However, we would like to raise a point regarding paragraph 25, which a number of other delegations have raised, and this is regarding the last sentence of that paragraph. Here we would like a reference to the need for reaching agreement on a programme of work, and this proposal is in line with the statement that the Polish presidency made at the beginning of the P-6 initiative, where it pointed out that it was the special responsibility of the Presidents this year to work together on a common platform so as to try to reach consensus on a programme of work. I also point out that in paragraph 20 of last year’s report, there is a similar sentence at the end of the paragraph, where there is a clear mention that there was a general feeling among the member States of the Conference that efforts should be further intensified in conducting consultations and exploring possibilities with a view to reaching agreement on a programme of work. So if this sentence is a reproduction of that sentence of last year, it should reflect clearly the need for reaching agreement on a programme of work.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of India for his statement, and now I give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador of the United Kingdom.

Mr. DUNCAN: (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland): I shall try to be brief. I am very much encouraged by the recent speakers who have attempted to underline what it is that we are actually engaged on in this endeavour, and that namely is to report fairly and accurately what we have done this year and also perhaps to explain - and that is perhaps the

(Mr. Duncan, United Kingdom)

most important and interesting issue to any outside reader - how we have managed to have success for the first time in re-energizing this organization and this forum for some considerable period. And it's perhaps in that context I will just make a few general remarks to take a step back.

The Conference on Disarmament is unique in that it is the only international forum which is mandated and deals as a matter of routine with the issues of the highest level of political-military sensitivity. And these issues are of fundamental importance to world peace. Unfortunately, for nearly a decade, the CD has languished in procedural wrangling. This may not perhaps be as extreme as the emperor Nero fiddling while Rome burns, but nonetheless, as we enter the twenty-first century we have a heavy responsibility to begin to find the answers to the challenges in the politico-military area of a globalized and interconnected world. These discussions may not be comfortable, but they are of fundamental importance.

Naturally, we must also have a degree of balance and respect the views of national groupings and individual nations, but equally, and I have been encouraged in my short time here to see the development of fundamental parts of what a diplomat does, namely compromise, flexibility and imagination. I very much commend you on your text, which I believe represents a good structural balance, and perhaps more importantly, explains how the Conference on Disarmament managed to extract itself from the procedural quagmire. And I believe that I am right in saying that it is the majority view that we should find a way to build on this year's experience, rather than looking backwards on earlier attempts which, while put forward in good faith, did not produce the success we all seek.

As I say, the question of balance is often raised, and again I am encouraged by the interventions we have heard this morning in that when we talk of balance, we are not talking of symmetry, we are talking about fair treatment and objectivity, and I believe that you have produced a very good draft which reflects that objectivity and fair treatment, which is a necessity for a report going forward. And I agree with other delegations that we should focus on the minor amendments which are required perhaps to improve the text and reflect the very real success we have had this year.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of the United Kingdom for his statement, and maybe the best way to conclude the formal part of this meeting is to give the floor to the first President of this year, Ambassador Zdzisław Rapacki of Poland.

Mr. RAPACKI (Poland) (translated from Spanish): Mr. President, first I would like to congratulate you and thank you for the report, which I personally feel is balanced, objective and reflects the events that occurred during this year's session. Of course, we can always improve it, and I would like to thank all the distinguished representatives of the countries who have spoken so far with the aim of improving the report of this year's session.

But let me refer to two matters. First, the Friends of the Presidents: I would particularly like to refer to the proposal not to refer to the Friends in the report because this institution does not exist in the rules of procedure of the Conference on Disarmament. It does not exist in the rules of procedure, but it does exist in the history of the Conference on Disarmament. What

(Mr. Rapacki, Poland)

I would like to mention here is that in 1994, a Friend of the Chair was appointed to deal with the question of the expansion of the membership of the Conference. It was Ambassador Felipe Lamprea of Brazil, and his appointment was reflected in the report under the item on the agenda and programme of work, and his appointment was also extended by the subsequent Presidents for the year 1994 at that time; I refer to paragraph 8 of the 1994 report. The results of his work were reflected in the part referring to his mandate, entitled "Expansion of the membership of the Conference on Disarmament". This was the precedent which opens up the possibility for us to follow up this experiment in this year's report. I think that what we have in paragraph 13 is a proper reflection of the intention of the six Presidents this year, and also reflects the results of the work of the Friends.

The distinguished Ambassadors who were Friends of the Presidents were extremely helpful during this session, and for this reason, as well as because of the precedent we had in the history of the Conference on Disarmament, merit an appropriate reference in the report. So, please continue with what we have in the report, although, as I said earlier, I personally am prepared and open to improvements in what we have proposed in this report.

The other matter I would like to refer to is my statement as the then first President of this year's session. Some ambassadors have quoted what I said then, and I quite agree with them, they are quite right. What they said is correct - I did indeed say that during the second meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

Many thanks, Mr. President. I hope that we will soon proceed to an informal meeting to discuss in more detail all the paragraphs of our report.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of Poland for his statement. This concludes the list of speakers. I see the distinguished Ambassador of China.

Mr. CHENG (China) (translated from Chinese): It had not been my intention to take the floor during this formal plenary but, as a number of other countries have made their positions known, I would also like to say a few words.

My delegation expresses its appreciation to you, Mr. President, and the members of the secretariat for all the efforts that have gone into preparing this year's report. On the whole, I believe that this draft provides a good basis for our work. As for our more detailed views on the content of the report, I shall be reverting to that issue during our informal plenaries.

At this point, I would merely like to stress that I support the amendments on paragraph 25 proposed by the distinguished ambassadors of Pakistan and Algeria relating to the programme of work.

Finally, I would like to point out that we are here today to discuss the draft report by the President and not to debate the conclusions or views of any individual delegation regarding our Conference. With regard to the discussions that have taken place this year, each country can

(Mr. Cheng, China)

draw its own conclusions, but, if we all decide to put those conclusions forward, we will end up with dozens of them. That will be of no benefit to our discussions. Accordingly, I suggest that we continue to focus our discussions on your draft report rather than making statements that are of no relevance to this issue.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of China for his statement and kind words addressed to the Chair and secretariat. That seems to be the last speaker of this formal plenary meeting. Do I see any other delegations wishing to take the floor? I give the floor to the Netherlands.

Mr. LANDMAN (Netherlands): I have a question. I personally find this hall not really very conducive to collegial and group discussions, sitting personally, for instance, with my back to all colleagues. It is not very helpful. I wonder: when is the presidency thinking that our own conference hall will be available again? I am sorry, but that will improve things a lot.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you for the question. I will ask our Deputy Secretary-General to answer it.

Mr. CAUGHLEY (Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference): The situation with the Council chamber is that the sound system is no longer robust and reliable, and it is not possible to hold meetings in that room until the sound system has been replaced. And I understand from Conference Services that a contract has been let but that the time that it will take to do that will be about seven weeks, so there is no prospect, I'm afraid, of being able to use that room for the course of the 2006 session.

We, as you know, had as a fallback used room VII, which is a rather more intimate one than this for the purposes that you have mentioned. The difficulty with room VII, however, was that a number of delegations felt that the seating there was inconvenient in the sense that only one member of each delegation could sit, if you like, at the nameplate. So we, as a fallback again, sought a room that was available in this part of the Palais, and this was the room that was allocated.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Secretary-General. This concludes our formal plenary meeting of today. In accordance with our plans for today, this plenary meeting will be followed in 10 minutes' time by an informal plenary meeting during which we will proceed to the first reading of the draft report of the Conference.

As usual, this informal plenary meeting is open only to the member States of the Conference, as well as to the observer States.

The next plenary meeting of the Conference will take place tomorrow, Thursday, 7 September, and this will be followed in an informal setting with the continuation of the consideration of the draft report.

The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.