

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/PV.1042
12 September 2006

ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE ONE THOUSAND AND FORTY-SECOND PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 12 September 2006 at 10.25 a.m.

President: Mr. Anton PINTER (Slovakia)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 1042nd plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

I have the following speakers for today's plenary meeting: Kazakhstan, Ambassador Kairat Abusseitov; Ecuador, Ambassador Mauricio Montalvo Samaniego; the Russian Federation, Ambassador Valery Loshchinin; and China, Ambassador Cheng Jingye.

Before giving the floor to the speakers, allow me, on behalf of the Conference, to extend a warm welcome to our new colleague, Ambassador Montalvo Samaniego of Ecuador.

And now I give the floor to the Ambassador of Kazakhstan.

Mr. ABUSSEITOV (Kazakhstan): Mr. President, on 8 September the treaty on the establishment of a nuclear-weapons-free zone in Central Asia was signed by the Foreign Ministers of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, the First Deputy Foreign Minister of Tajikistan and the Ambassador of Turkmenistan to Kazakhstan. It is my understanding that the statement of the Ministers has already been distributed.

The signing ceremony was held in Semipalatinsk, a provincial capital in Kazakhstan, known for being the former venue of the Soviet nuclear test site. The decision to conduct the ceremony in Semipalatinsk, adopted by all the participating States of the treaty, has a deep symbolic value.

The idea of a nuclear-weapons-free zone in Central Asia traces its roots back to 1993, when a formal proposal was made by Uzbekistan during the United Nations General Assembly. The crucial step in moving from an abstract proposal to a concrete policy initiative was taken by the five Presidents of the region in their 1997 Almaty Declaration. The United Nations General Assembly adopted a number of resolutions in support of the Central Asian initiative.

The nine-year work of regional experts resulted in the agreement which explicitly prohibits the production, acquisition and deployment of nuclear weapons and their components or other nuclear explosive devices in Central Asia.

By signing the Treaty the regional States reaffirmed their commitment to the principles of disarmament and non-proliferation. It is our hope that the Central Asian zone will facilitate global efforts to promote disarmament priorities. It is also a significant contribution to the international fight against terrorism, the global campaign to prevent nuclear materials and technologies from falling into the hands of terrorist organizations and non-State actors. The Treaty is, no doubt, an important step in the development of the peaceful use of nuclear energy and the environmental rehabilitation of contaminated areas.

The unique feature of the Central Asian initiative is that all participating States housed parts of the former Soviet nuclear infrastructure, and Kazakhstan voluntarily gave up the fourth largest nuclear arsenal. The first regional nuclear-weapons-free zone in the northern hemisphere borders two nuclear powers - Russia and China - which have already supported the provisions of the new treaty.

(Mr. Abusseitov, Kazakhstan)

In order to enable the nuclear-weapons-free zone to enter into force, the participants of the Treaty will negotiate with the nuclear Powers the text of a protocol to the treaty committing all United Nations Security Council members to respect the non-nuclear status of Central Asia. These obligations include, among others, a provision not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against regional States.

Bearing in mind the close proximity of Central Asia to the regions of proliferation concern, including the Middle East and South Asia, the new arrangement is expected to greatly contribute to enhancing peace and security in Asia. Given the lack of progress in the United Nations and other disarmament forums over the last decade, the Central Asian zone is a bright example of the success of regional aspirations.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of Kazakhstan for his statement, and I now give the floor to our new colleague, the Ambassador of Ecuador, Mr. Montalvo Samaniego.

Mr. MONTALVO SAMANIEGO (Ecuador) (translated from Spanish): As this is the first time I am speaking in this important forum in my capacity as Permanent Representative of Ecuador, I would like to start by expressing my appreciation to you, Mr. President, and all your colleagues in the bureau which is guiding us, and above all for the work done during the course of this year by the six Presidents and the Friends of the Presidents. Their efforts and dedication have made it possible, despite the circumstances of which we are all aware, to take up substantive issues such as, for example, the cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament, prevention of nuclear war, prevention of the arms race in outer space, assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, new types of weapons of mass destruction and new systems of such weapons, and also transparency in armaments, among other aspects.

In this connection my delegation welcomes the openness and flexibility being shown at present by a significant number of countries present here in addressing some aspects of disarmament in a realistic and frank manner after more than nine years of discussions without having managed to come up with a minimum programme of work. Nonetheless, and at the same time, we note with concern the major difficulties that exist in arriving at effective multilateral commitments that would lead to nuclear disarmament, the elimination of weapons of mass destruction and the consolidation of measures that would foster transparency and trust. In other words we note with concern, the absence of a clear resolve to guarantee a more peaceful world with fewer weapons that is non-violent and secure. It is painful and at the same time sad to recognize that the greatest progress was made in disarmament in the past during the cold war. Today we are living in a world that is more heavily armed, one in which States no longer have the monopoly of force, the product of the greater and disturbing presence of new actors on the international arms scene such as terrorist groups, narco terrorists, insurgents and belligerents.

Along this same line of thought, one is struck by the erroneous nature of most of the predictions made approximately 15 years ago as to what ideally today's world would be. At the time it was stated that unprecedented possibilities were being opened up for international cooperation, as demonstrated by the effective action of the United Nations; it was felt that peace

(Mr. Montalvo Samaniego, Ecuador)

would bring about the end of the arms race and foster greater development in all regions of the world; it was assumed that the technological revolution would make it possible to solve the most serious problems of poverty, education, health, housing, employment and deterioration of the environment but these predictions did not go far enough. The most extreme such predictions forecast the “end of history”, implying among other things an end to the traditional conflicts among States in a world in which the globalization of liberal democracy and the market economy would leave no room for traditional wars; these would be replaced by new threats posed by nationalisms, religious movements and transnational crime, which could only be tackled and should be tackled through solid and growing multilateral cooperation.

Ecuador takes this opportunity to reiterate its deep commitment to peace and nurtures the hope that at a given time we will see the fulfilment of minimum international commitments on specific aspects such as the register of military expenditure in bilateral and multilateral forums such as the United Nations and, in our case, the inter-American system; the monitoring and prohibition of the manufacture, possession and use of conventional weapons such as anti-personnel mines; the monitoring, non-proliferation and destruction of non-conventional weapons, as well as small arms and light weapons; and of course the preservation of zones of peace and zones free from weapons of mass destruction.

Similarly, my country maintains the unswerving position that the existence of weapons of mass destruction, whether nuclear, chemical or biological, constitutes a serious threat to mankind. For that reason, it condemns all forms of arms race, wherever they may take place, without any distinctions, and fosters action taken at the regional and universal level to strengthen the non-proliferation regime and secure the total elimination of stocks of weapons of mass destruction.

It is well known, but bears repeating, that Ecuador condemns all forms of international terrorism, including State terrorism. It considers that combating this scourge should be achieved through essentially multilateral police and judicial actions in which cooperation and transparency prevail, in strict compliance with international law and existing human rights norms, and to that end we support the adoption of an international convention in the framework of the United Nations. At all events and in any event, efforts to combat terrorism should be carried out in strict compliance with international law and human rights norms and humanitarian law.

My delegation thanks the secretariat of the Conference for circulating the draft report to the forthcoming session of the United Nations General Assembly. It is of the view that the document adequately reflects work done during the course of this year and hopes that 2007 will be a year in which the Conference on Disarmament overcomes its stalemate, regains its relevance and begins substantive work leading to a renewed phase of efficiency and concrete results.

(Mr. Montalvo Samaniego, Ecuador)

As I conclude, allow me to refer to a great Ecuadorean internationalist, Dr. Luis Bossano, who with great clarity and foresight, decades before the United Nations Charter of 1945, set forth for the world the original proposal for disarmament of the mind. Today as in the past, and perhaps more than ever, we need disarmament of this type, which lies more in the spirits and hearts of men than in strategic assumptions or abstract positions.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of Ecuador for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the presidency, to the six Presidents of this year, to the Friends of the Presidents and to the Board. I now give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador of the Russian Federation, Mr. Valery Loshchinin.

Mr. LOSHCHININ (Russian Federation) (translated from Russian): Russia has unswervingly expressed support in principle for the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones in various parts of the world as one of the key elements involved in expanding the geographical areas free of nuclear weapons, strengthening the security of non-nuclear-weapon States and consolidating international peace and security. On 8 September in Semipalatinsk representatives of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan signed a treaty on a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. The treaty was drafted with the active participation of the United Nations in accordance with the principles and guidelines on the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones adopted by the United Nations Disarmament Commission in 1999. The establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia is an important step designed to strengthen the nuclear non-proliferation regime. We believe that this treaty will help to consolidate peace and stability in the Central Asian region and make a substantial contribution to the fight against international terrorism and efforts to prevent nuclear materials and technology from falling into the hands of non-State actors. The nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia is especially significant to us because that region is close to Russia's southern borders. Russia consistently supports the policy of the Central Asian States on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone, and welcomes the signing of the treaty.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of the Russian Federation for his statement, and I now give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador of China, Mr. Cheng Jingye.

Mr. CHENG (China) (translated from Chinese): The Chinese delegation would like to thank the delegation of Kazakhstan for briefing us on the recent signing by the five countries of Central Asia of a treaty on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. I would like to set out China's fundamental position with regard to this matter. China has been steadfast on the issue of nuclear-weapon-free zones: we respect and support the efforts made by the relevant countries and regions pursuant to consultations held among them and their voluntary agreement, based on the actual conditions in those regions, to set up nuclear-weapon-free zones. We believe that the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones will be propitious to the prevention of nuclear proliferation, the promotion of nuclear disarmament and the establishment of peace, security and security in the regions concerned.

(Mr. Cheng, China)

China traditionally maintains friendly cooperative relations with the five countries of Central Asia. It sets high store by and actively supports the efforts made by those five countries to establish a Central Asian nuclear-weapon-free zone and welcomes the conclusion and signature by the five countries of the treaty on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. China will continue as before to support efforts by countries in other regions to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of China for his statement, and I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic, Mr. Hussein Ali.

Mr. ALI (Syrian Arab Republic) (translated from Arabic): Since 2004, when the CD was about to adopt a programme of work on the basis of the five Ambassadors' initiative, some delegations have proposed new subjects for inclusion in the Conference's agenda. At the time we believed, and we continue to believe, that this was an attempt to divert the Conference from its natural course and, on occasions, to waste the Conference's time. Fortunately for us, in the past three years, the wisdom of the majority has prevailed and an agenda has been adopted without any amendments. We notice that some delegations have exercised their right to raise certain matters that are not included on the agenda. We have dealt with this issue in a very positive and constructive way, stating our position that there is no general consensus on the discussion of such matters and that the Conference is not the right forum to discuss them. These matters are being discussed in other forums, and the Conference has not yet succeeded in discussing the key items on its own agenda.

In the past few days, while debating the report of the Conference, it has come to our attention that certain delegations want to give equal treatment to the items on the agenda on which there is consensus and those which have recently been raised by those delegations. We believe that this is going too far, and we categorically reject this. However, if the Conference is going to open the way for discussion of new items, our delegation has raised a number of issues, from our national perspective, which we deem to be extremely important for the work of the Conference. We therefore reiterate our request that the Conference deals with these issues during the remainder of the 2006 session and during the 2007 session. The issues in question are: firstly, ridding the Middle East of all nuclear weapons; secondly, submitting Israeli nuclear installations to comprehensive IAEA safeguards; thirdly, the issue of Israel burying its nuclear waste in the occupied Syrian Golan; fourthly, the fact that certain nuclear-weapon States are providing Israel with the latest military nuclear technology; fifthly, Israel's use of cluster bombs and other prohibited weapons against Lebanese civilians.

Allow me to digress somewhat and to express our shock and regret that, in the past few days, the United States Congress rejected a draft resolution submitted by a number of Democrats on restricting the use of cluster bombs close to civilian areas. We find this shocking.

These are the subjects that we raised earlier and that we submitted to the Conference for discussion. There are also other topics of great relevance to the Conference's work and which we would like to submit for its consideration. They include the use by American and British forces of depleted uranium during the 2003 invasion of Iraq and the use by American forces of phosphorus bombs in the Iraqi city of Falujah. American forces have already admitted to this.

(Mr. Ali, Syria)

In conclusion, although we are convinced that these topics are of great relevance to the agenda, we would prefer the Conference to concentrate on the four core issues on its agenda and to deal with them in a comprehensive and balanced manner in order to adopt a programme of work that takes account of the priorities of us all.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of the Syrian Arab Republic for his statement, and I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Belarus, Mr. Ivan Grinevich.

Mr. GRINEVICH (Belarus) (translated from Russian): I would like to join other delegations in welcoming the signing in Semipalatinsk of the treaty on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of Belarus for his statement.

I have no more speakers on my list for today. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor at this stage? That does not seem to be the case.

This concludes, then, our plenary meeting. As announced yesterday, the meeting will be followed in 10 minutes by an informal plenary meeting during which we will continue the consideration of the draft report of this year's session of the Conference.

The meeting rose at 11.55 a.m.