

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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ENGLISH

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

held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva
on Friday, 15 September 2006, at 3.05 p.m.

President: Mr. Anton PINTER (Slovakia)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 1046th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

I have the following speakers for this afternoon's plenary meeting: Finland, on behalf of the EU, Peru, Algeria, Morocco, Colombia, India, the United States of America, South Africa, Senegal, France, Chile.

So now, with my apologies for not allowing him to conclude his statement during this morning's plenary meeting, I give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador Kari Kahiluoto of Finland, who will make a statement on behalf of the EU.

Mr. KAHILUOTO (Finland): Mr. President, I am speaking on behalf of the European Union. The acceding countries Bulgaria and Romania align themselves with this statement. I wish to congratulate you for the very important work done as President of the Conference on Disarmament, and I can assure you of our full support.

For a decade, the lack of a shared analysis of threats and challenges to the maintenance of international peace and security has kept the CD from moving ahead and conducting the substantive negotiation work.

This year has been clearly different from previous years in the CD as a new momentum has been developing as a result of the innovative initiative of the six presidencies of the Conference: Poland, the Republic of Korea, Romania, the Russian Federation, Senegal and your country, Slovakia. The EU warmly welcomes the revitalizing developments this year, that is, agreement on a schedule of activities, focused structured debates, the valuable work done by the Friends of the Presidents, and proposals for future work in the CD. These have led to a significant improvement in the quality of the CD's activities. We also noted with appreciation the encouragement the Secretary-General of the United Nations provided to the CD this year, and the strong impetus his presence in the CD gave to enhancing this new momentum.

The EU welcomes the focused structured debates held this year. We found all these debates important and participated actively, making statements on several occasions. We wish to see the concerns of all addressed substantively and concretely. We believe that progress can be best achieved with a combination of prioritizing and at the same time allowing for just and meaningful consideration of the concerns of all.

At the same time, the EU recognizes that some items are riper for negotiations than others. The EU will not fail to support actively all efforts aimed at restoring the important and central position of the CD among the international forums we all rely on.

Mr. President, you have done commendable work on this year's report, and we thank you for it. While the EU would have liked to see more forward-looking elements in it, the EU has not insisted on any specific wording, thus taking into consideration the views expressed among the wide CD membership. We can agree to the adoption of the report.

(Mr. Kahiluoto, Finland)

Let me also recall the EU's attachment to the follow-up of the enlargement process of the CD, particularly as regards those EU member States which are not yet members of the CD, as well as candidate countries which have submitted a request for admission to the Conference.

In concluding, the EU encourages and calls on the 2007 Presidents to take the Conference forward, making full use of the progress made this year. We look forward to next year to build on it by further qualitative improvement in the CD, with a perspective to seize the opportunity to start negotiations at the CD again.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of Finland for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair and to this year's six Presidents. I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Peru, Mr. Diego Beleván.

Mr. BELEVAN (Peru) (translated from Spanish): After having adopted this document, my delegation would like to make some comments on it, because it has serious doubts as to whether we can really call it "a report on the 2006 session", since for us, it does not describe the characteristics and circumstances of an event or a subject, instead basically confining itself, if we sum up this document in a few words, to saying that we met throughout the year. Of course, the delegations which are satisfied with the result achieved - and everyone knows the role he or she has played over recent weeks - will argue that those who are really interested (and here I would like to open a parenthesis and express my doubts as to whether there are many of them in the present circumstances) can read our verbatim records and thus get a real idea of what happened over the year.

My delegation has the troublesome impression of having adopted, after negotiations in which it was emptied of its content by means of successive amendments, we eventually adopted a document which was probably wished for by a few delegations from the beginning of the informal plenary meetings, to use the exact term from the much ill-treated and battered rules of procedure of the Conference relating to its adoption. This sterile and contentless document is the outcome of a week of negotiations (an ironic fate awaiting the Conference on Disarmament). For a decade now we have been incapable of initiating negotiations on substantive items, yet we can use the scarce resources available in the United Nations system to hold 12 informal meetings (I counted them, Mr. President, because they attracted my attention) to negotiate a document whose final version is, in a word, insignificant. I would like to make it clear that my delegation accepted this document only because we are not prepared to bear the cost which other skilful manipulators of our rules of procedure should indeed perhaps bear, and we did not wish to bear the cost of not adopting a report for the 2006 session because, as you put it well, that entails a series of consequences for the future of the Conference. In any event, we would like to make it clear that we do not consider this to be an antecedent or a precedent for the future (a word whose meaning has often been abused to block any possible forward movement). Perhaps this may have been the wish of some members, but it has certainly never been Peru's objective when participating in the work of the Conference on Disarmament. My country firmly believes that when there is good faith among States, it is possible to reach agreements which have a positive impact.

It is truly regrettable that after the untiring - I repeat, untiring - efforts undertaken in 2006 by the six Presidents to whom I wish to pay tribute once again here, publicly and on the record,

(Mr. Beleván, Peru)

as well as the good faith shown by the majority of delegations by participating constructively in the interesting proposals and mechanisms (and I deliberately use the word “mechanisms”, despite the absurd document that we have just adopted) which they put forward (and I am referring of course to the P-6) at the beginning of the year, and in particular the appointment of the Friends of the Presidents with the tacit agreement, I wish to remind all those here, of all the members of the Conference on Disarmament; unfortunately they are not going to be mentioned in the document, and the interesting preliminary report which they submitted will not even be annexed to this document, because it was not distributed officially. The Friends of the Presidents were mandated to study the agenda (and a small parenthesis here: for some, it is obsolete, for others it is adaptable to the changing circumstances of the moment, as is our method of work); and this is the clearest example; we can see that the timetable of activities based on this same agenda and the structured thematic debates, both described by this document as absurd or startling ideas, require serious evaluation.

As I was saying, it is regrettable that we have adopted a document which is even more bland - and I use the term which was used yesterday by another delegation in the informal plenary meeting when we adopted the report - than in previous years. Nor does it pay tribute to the valuable and encouraging presence of the United Nations Secretary-General, or evaluate specifically the content of his message; nor is there mention of the interesting documents presented by various members throughout the year on a wide range of subjects, all, I should like to add, related to the primary objective of the Conference, namely, disarmament; in other words, the greater the effort, the smaller the result. Perhaps next year, if we do nothing, we will manage, thanks to this magical ability which some delegations seem to possess to distort reality, to prepare a document where we set down a series of events which never took place and thus enter into that wonderland which the distinguished Ambassador of Romania mentioned a few months ago.

However, and despite all the efforts which may be made by some to discourage us, my delegation will continue to work with those delegations which have shown good faith in seeking solutions which will make it possible for this distinguished but damaged organ to reassume the role which was entrusted to it under rule 1 of its rules of procedure, that is, to function as a negotiating body on disarmament.

Mr. President, my delegation is deeply grateful to you and, through you, it wishes to thank all the members of the delegation of Slovakia, as well as the secretariat, for their untiring efforts to secure the adoption of a report which would really have reflected the spirit of what we did in 2006, that is, the working document which contained the first version of the draft report (CD/WP.543). Also, through you, I take this opportunity to thank the other delegations which made up this innovative platform, this innovative mechanism known as the P-6 (Poland, the Republic of Korea, Romania, the Russian Federation and Senegal), which we hope will serve as an example and a guide for future Presidents of the Conference on Disarmament.

Finally, Mr. President, I would like to take this opportunity to wish Ambassadors Camara and Rivasseau every success in their future functions.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of Peru for his statement and for his kind words addressed to the Chair, to the secretariat and indeed to the P-6. I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Algeria, Mr. Hamza Khelif.

Mr. KHELIF (Algeria) (translated from French): When I asked the secretariat to put the Algerian delegation on the list of speakers, it was with the intention of reaffirming Algeria's position on some questions, assuming that we would be adopting a substantive report. Since we now have a procedural report before us, that changes everything as far as our delegation is concerned, and since I have this opportunity, allow me, Mr. President, to say a few words.

It is a great pity that the Conference has still not managed to get its work going again and that the only two documents that we have been able to adopt are an agenda at the start of the year and a factual report at the end of the year, which basically says that there is no consensus and that we talked about all the items.

(continued in Arabic)

When we began our work in 2006, in accordance with the calendar of activities proposed by the P-6, the aim was to begin discussions on all the agenda items - serious discussions, conducted in good faith, with a view to identifying the points on which consensus could be achieved and allowing us to adopt a programme of work. However, after a whole year of discussions and work and in the light of the heated discussions concerning the annual report, we can come to the following conclusions.

Firstly, these discussions have shown us that we cannot begin any negotiations without a balanced and comprehensive approach which takes account of the interests of all groups of States inside and outside the CD. This requires serious and open discussion, not a forum for trading accusations with one other.

Secondly, the main problem is the Conference's agenda. Here I would like to repeat some of the points that I made yesterday. In the view of the Algerian delegation, the agenda in its present form could allow us to take up any issue that falls within the competence of the CD. The widening of the debate and addition of new items will only lead to new proposals and counter-proposals and make matters worse.

While any delegation has the right to make its viewpoint known on any issue, we must be cautious. If we turn all our national viewpoints and concerns into working papers of the Conference, the working papers will become a kind of mosaic, with some papers having a bearing on the work of the CD and others having nothing to do with it. As we have already said, and we repeat, terrorism issues are important but lie outside the purview of the CD. The same applies to issues of international humanitarian law. This is not the place for them, and we hope that in the future we will confine ourselves to our agenda and to the mandate of the CD, otherwise, any delegation can propose any item which is not related to the mandate of the CD and can also present working papers to you about it. As Darwin said,

(Mr. Khelif, Algeria)

(continued in French)

“An organ that does not work will only atrophy”.

(continued in Arabic)

We hope that this will not be the fate of the CD. We hope that you, Sir, and the future Presidents will do your utmost to reach a consensus on a programme of work that satisfies all and we assure you of our full support. Of course, you will not be starting from zero. There are various proposals and many ideas that have been tabled. Most important is the A-5 proposal. It is true that it does not satisfy everyone. Some feel that it is less than it could be. My delegation feels that way. Others feel that it is too ambitious and unrealistic. However, the A-5 proposal - and I am not saying this because Algeria is one of the parties to this proposal, but because it is true - is the most realistic proposal that has been tabled until now. We should not consider the glass to be half empty, but half full. We call again on all delegations which have reservations to the A-5 proposal or do not consider it to be appropriate to suggest amendments to it. If we adopt this approach, we will find a solution for the Conference. If we do not, I can see no way out of this deadlock in which we find ourselves.

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

Mr. BENJABER (Morocco) (translated from French): “If you will allow me to express a personal hope, instead of walking in my own footprints five years down the road - instead of rereading the statements I made in this same place five years ago alongside the deputy Permanent Representative, and finding to my great displeasure that they are still relevant, I would like the windows of this room to open wide onto the winds of storms to come, and I would like us to prepare our useful response, for responses to the new threats can only emerge collectively. Then and only then will we break this deadlock.” The words I have just spoken are not mine. They are those of His Excellency Mr. François Rivasseau, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of France to the Conference on Disarmament, delivered during his first statement in plenary on 4 September 2003. Today, now that Mr. Rivasseau is leaving us to scan new horizons, which we hope will be more promising, it is clear that what he said then is just as relevant today.

The balance sheet of our Conference over the last nine years is hardly a cause for optimism. The Conference which had achieved historic compromises during the period of the cold war is unable to adopt a programme of work and squanders valuable time in negotiations which nobody can understand. Yet this year's session was very promising. The combined efforts of our six Successive Presidents, to whom I wish to pay tribute, enabled us to establish, in a spirit of consistency and continuity, a timetable for structured, in-depth debate on all the items on the agenda of our Conference, thus reaffirming the relevance of this important reference document. True momentum seemed to emerge within the Conference on Disarmament, crowned in particular by the submission of a draft treaty to ban the production of fissile material for weapons purposes, together with a draft mandate for negotiations on this subject, and a visit from the Secretary-General of the United Nations, who addressed our Conference for the first time since

(Mr. Benjaber, Morocco)

the beginning of the twenty-first century. In this context, the failure of the members of the Conference to adopt a substantive report is certainly a disappointment, a harsh reminder of this deadlock which we would all like to be able to overcome.

My delegation is not going to wallow in fatalism and resign itself to such a fate. As the century begins amidst agitation and international peace and security are in the eye of the hurricane, the Conference on Disarmament is called on to align itself with the legitimate expectations of both the international community as a whole and each of its members. The perception of international responsibility deriving from our status as members of the Conference on Disarmament is a matter of concern for us all.

Twenty-seven years after its establishment, our Conference is today at a decisive turning point in its existence. We must return to fundamentals, espousing the virtues of collective dialogue and multilateralism, and reaffirming the role of the Conference on Disarmament as the sole multilateral negotiating body on disarmament. At the same time, we must work to make the Conference adaptable to the major challenges of our century so that it can respond appropriately to the hazards of an international situation which is both fluid and turbulent and is fraught with many dangers, and thus meet the challenges of this new century, where international peace and security have never been as precarious. It is this approach which Morocco has defended and will continue to defend, faithful to its traditional position of moderation, openness and a constant commitment to strive and contribute to everything which will help to strengthen international peace and security.

I began this statement by quoting His Excellency the Ambassador of France, who is unfortunately going to leave us soon. Allow me, Sir, to end it by extending to him, and to His Excellency Ambassador Ousmane Camara, a great man of Africa, my best wishes for personal and professional success. Their departure is a great loss to our Conference, but it is certainly a significant gain for other international diplomatic circles.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Morocco for his statement. I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Columbia, Mr. Rafael Quintero Cubides.

Mr. QUINTERO CUBIDES (Colombia) (translated from Spanish): Mr. President, I shall be very brief. My delegation would like to thank you in particular, and the six Presidents of this session in general, for the lengthy work you have accomplished in the course of this year, as well as for your spirit and your open mind focused on seeking solutions to the deadlock in the Conference instead of excuses to continue justifying it.

We consider the situation we are confronted with today deplorable - the short-sightedness on all sides, where we are blocking ourselves, ignoring reality, distrusting our own intelligence to handle what we could initiate if we were to dare to take an additional step.

The report that we have adopted today, concerning the nature of which we agree with what was said by Peru, is merely a further bitter pill which we swallow reluctantly. This closing ceremony today seems like a third-rate wake for the Conference on Disarmament, and perhaps

(Mr. Quintero Cubides, Colombia)

for that reason chance has carried us away from its great Assembly Hall and brought us to this impersonal room where we are meeting today, which is much more appropriate for lighting the four funeral candles.

Personally, I shall be concluding my mission to Geneva at the end of this year, and so I am overwhelmed by bitterness at having witnessed four years wasted without progress in any negotiation, without admitting any other State - still less civil society - to this restrictive club; in short, without recognizing our responsibilities or our mistakes, while the world takes firm and irreversible steps towards catastrophe.

The positive side is that I have made the acquaintance of so many intelligent and friendly people under the same roof.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of Colombia and I now give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador of India, Mr. Jayant Prasad.

Mr. PRASAD (India): First I'd first like to say a few words in bidding farewell to Ambassador Camara of Senegal and Ambassador Rivasseau of France.

We will be poorer in the Conference next year without their sagacious presence. We thank Ambassador Camara for guiding our work in the current session with great efficiency and finesse. As for Ambassador Rivasseau, his contribution to disarmament and arms control doesn't end today. We look forward to his guidance at the CCW Review Conference in November this year. We wish them both the very best in their higher national responsibilities.

It's with a degree of reticence that I am taking the floor at this late hour. Over the past few days you have relentlessly sought consensus on a substantive report of the Conference to the General Assembly. If we don't have such a report, it's not for want of your trying. Rather, it's symbolic of our collective failure. Our regret is even greater since we had high expectations and were tantalizingly close to reaching agreement on the entire text of the substantive report.

Lamentable though this has been, all is not lost. We shouldn't allow the contingent liability of the Conference to capture the flavour of what happened this year in its report to detract from the fact that we have an unmistakable change of air. Thanks largely to the initiative of the six presidencies, we've had structured discussions on all items on the CD agenda. A number of significant and concrete proposals were presented by delegations, including that by the United States, which imparted a new focus and dynamism to our debates. Similarly, participation of experts in these discussions enriched our understanding of the issues. It also demonstrated the commitment of member States of the Conference to undertake substantive work.

The 2007 session will be a fresh start. It will provide us with yet another opportunity to concentrate our efforts for reaching agreement on a programme of work for commencing substantive work in the Conference. We are pleased and privileged that South Africa will be the first President of the 2007 session. It has played a unique role in the field of disarmament and has impeccable credentials for guiding our efforts.

(Mr. Prasad, India)

Mr. President, we hope that your own continuing efforts, together with that of South Africa, will bring us closer to our collective desire to end the impasse in the Conference and restore it to its vocation.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of India for his statement and I now give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador of the United States of America, Ms. Christina Rocca.

Ms. ROCCA (United States of America): I'd like to begin by wishing a prosperous future to both Ambassador Rivasseau and Ambassador Camara, and express my personal sorrow that I will not have the opportunity to work longer with both of them, and I wish them both great success.

I also want to thank you and congratulate you, Mr. President, for your hard work in leading the CD to the adoption of a final report, while we are pleased that there is a final report at all. I would like to associate myself with the statement of our Peruvian colleague and similar comments that were made by other colleagues here today. I cannot also fail to mention that one delegation - and one delegation alone - is responsible for our failure to agree to a substantive report. In order to score political points unrelated to the work of the Conference, this delegation has tried to poison the positive atmosphere that's been created here this year because of the focused plenary discussions resulting from the P-6 initiative.

We all know that this Conference is not a universal body, such as the United Nations General Assembly, that it is supposed to address the political concerns of members. It is the negotiating body of the international community for multilateral arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament issues. One of the strengths of the CD over the years has been the willingness of the member States, by and large, to leave bilateral political disagreements at the door and to sit down to work on important arms control and non-proliferation issues.

This one delegation, however, has been unwilling to do this and consciously has decided to put at risk, for petty gains, not just the improved atmosphere we've gained this year but the very work of the Conference itself. Because of that sole delegation, this Conference is unable to tell the international community about our enlivened activities here this year. We're unable to tell the international community that we made real progress by moving closer to resuming negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty, which we believe delegations are ready to discuss in earnest.

Before next January all member States will have to consider very carefully how to respond to this unfortunate and unacceptable behaviour. Our delegation is tempted to exercise its right of reply to the outrageous behaviour and accusations of this one delegation, pointing out in painstaking detail how that Government for decades has consciously sown instability in its region by destabilizing its neighbours and by sponsoring terrorist organizations operating openly within its borders and elsewhere in the region, to cite just two examples of its egregious behaviour. However, we choose instead to let the facts speak for themselves and limit ourselves to rejecting, on the record, the outrageous behaviour of the sole delegation whose government is responsible for the inability of this Conference to submit a substantive report to the General Assembly this year.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of the United States of America for her statement. I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of South Africa, Mr. Johann Kellerman.

Mr. KELLERMAN (South Africa): Mr. President, given the lateness of the hour I will make my brief statement even shorter and not comment on the report we adopted earlier this morning. But first of all, please allow me to also add South Africa's appreciation for your hard work and your tireless efforts throughout the term of Slovakia's presidency of the CD. Your willingness to always listen to and consult with delegations will serve as a useful example to my delegation as we approach our term as the first CD President for 2007.

South Africa looks forward to continuing its cooperation with you during the intersessional period. In this regard, I may mention that we plan to consult with you and all the 2007 CD Presidents soon on the way ahead for next year.

In addition, we envisage consultations with each and every CD member and stand ready to explore all possible avenues and options that may lead us to that elusive, if I may say, missing ingredient that we call a "programme of work". In this regard I should mention that for purely practical reasons, we intend to conduct the bulk of our consultations on the margins of the United Nations First Committee meeting that will be taking place in New York during October this year.

In conclusion, Mr. President, I wish to assure you and all members of South Africa's commitment to seeking a solution to the impasse that has developed in the CD. Needless to say, a solution will only be possible with the cooperation and assistance of all members of the Conference. In this regard, I can only appeal to all delegations to approach the 2007 CD session with an open mind and with a spirit of compromise, flexibility and renewed determination that will allow the Conference to get back to work once again.

Just to conclude, may I also thank Ambassadors Camara and Rivasseau for the cooperation and friendship that they have extended to my delegation during the past few years, and just to wish them well for their future?

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of South Africa for his statement and for the kind words, and I now give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador of France, Mr. François Rivasseau.

Mr. RIVASSEAU (France) (translated from French): I had not planned to speak twice today, but the circumstances in which my report was adopted prompt me to make a statement on that specific subject before the conclusion of this meeting.

Our Conference has just adopted its annual report. The exercise was more difficult than in previous years. This which is not a bad sign in itself, since we worked more in 2006 than in 2005, and therefore it is logical that the report of our work should have taken longer to compile.

(Mr. Rivasseau, France)

The report of the Conference is just a report, an administrative document whose purpose is to capture and convey what we did during the year. Its aim is to inform the General Assembly of the United Nations. In these circumstances, the report has to be true to the facts. It should correspond to a snapshot of our activities, not a caricature or a doctored photograph. This report which we have just adopted is much less detailed, much less precise than you had hoped and than we had hoped. But it does indeed correspond to a photograph taken from far away, from very far away, it is true, fuzzy maybe, with very few pixels as we would say today, but a snapshot nevertheless, and you should be credited with this outcome, Mr. President.

Unfortunately, it was not possible to achieve greater precision. We are all disappointed, and I would like in this context to cite and associate myself with the comments made by my friend and colleague the Ambassador of India, but I would also like to add that, like other delegations which have just taken the floor, the French delegation was surprised at the demands made to it and others as to the price to pay for going into more detail. I was asked to say things which I had never said, to write that certain documents which I had submitted on a particular day had been submitted on another day or in another context, responses were supposed to be provided to questions which my delegation had never asked, and so on and so forth.

My delegation played fair in trying to respond to all these demands, some of which had a hint of the surreal about them. It was not France's fault that a longer report was not adopted. But I must say here how uncomfortable I feel at the provocative attitude which almost thwarted the adoption of any report this year, seeking to rewrite history and to portray the work of our Conference in 2006 in a way which has little to do with reality. This is the seventh time that I have negotiated a report in the Conference on Disarmament. This year certain marks have been overstepped. For the sake of the credibility of the Conference this must not happen again.

I would like to thank all those who, in all the groups, succeeded through dialogue and persuasion in preventing our report from being wrecked or becoming a caricature.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Ambassador of France for his statement, and I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Chile, Mr. Camilo Sanhuela.

Mr. SANHUELA (Chile) (translated from Spanish): The Chilean delegation deeply regrets the final outcome of the work of the 2006 session of the Conference on Disarmament. The Chilean delegation believes that this year substantive work was carried out, which is duly reflected inter alia in the setting up of a joint platform bringing together the six Presidents who guided the Conference, by the establishment of the mechanism of Friends of the Presidents, by the adoption of a timetable of activities, by the holding of a structured thematic date concerning all the items on the agenda, by the effort of having a number of national experts who gave us information about the above-mentioned subjects, by the various seminars held, by the participation of many high-level authorities, and by the presence of our Secretary-General of the United Nations, who, recognizing this positive environment, decided to encourage us to establish the innovative features at the beginning of a new period of productivity for the Conference.

Finally, our delegation wishes to thank you, Mr. President, for your dedication, as well as the other Presidents this year. We also appreciated the untiring efforts made by the

(Mr. Sanhuela, Chile)

secretariat in assisting our work. Finally, we would like to express our best wishes to Ambassadors Ousmane Camara and François Rivasseau in their new responsibilities.

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

Mr. ALI (Syrian Arab Republic) (translated from Arabic): At the outset, Mr. President, allow me to thank the delegation of Slovakia very much for the efforts that you have made during your presidency of the Conference.

(continued in French)

I should also like to pay tribute to Ambassador Ousmane Camara of Senegal and Ambassador François Rivasseau of France and to wish them every success in their professional future.

(continued in Arabic)

On 19 March 2006, I made a statement at the Conference on Disarmament, expressing my feelings about the proceedings at this Conference. We had the impression, which had grown stronger since the beginning of 2004, that some delegations were resorting to manoeuvres and word games about interpretations here, the rules of procedure there, the functions of the Presidents, and so on. In my statement, I advised the delegations that the best way for the Conference to advance its work was to work transparently and sincerely and to respect everyone's priorities. Although we are convinced that the manoeuvring and games have continued, we said that we would wait and see, while others continued to display their intelligence. There is a wise saying that only an ignorant man ignores people or thinks he is cleverer than everyone else.

Some tried to use the policies of force at this Conference. We told them that, at the end of the day, everything would be done by consensus. So, it was better to begin on the basis of consensus. We also said that the main items on our agenda reflected the concerns and interests of everyone at this Conference. It was a mistake for some to regard one item as being more important than others, just because it fitted in with their priorities. In that statement I also repeated what the Ambassador of the Netherlands had said at the meeting on 31 January 2006, when he quoted the United States President Mr. John Kennedy:

(continued in English)

“We cannot negotiate with those who say ‘what is mine is mine. What is yours is negotiable’.”

(continued in Arabic)

We do not consider the Conference's adoption of a procedural report to be a disaster; on the contrary, we regard it as a new birth for the Conference and a return to its basic mandate.

(Mr. Ali, Syria)

There is also a saying that what does not kill you makes you strong. Of course, we wanted the Conference to adopt a substantive report that would reflect the true state of affairs, but some wanted a report that would make a bad situation look good. I am sorry if my frankness bothers some people, but this is the reality. Perhaps I should say:

(continued in English)

“The king is naked.”

(continued in Arabic)

Since one delegation has made comments which may be directed at us, we have no choice but to recall some facts. As this delegation has said, the facts speak for themselves.

We are all aware that the delegation in question represents a great country, which we respect, and a great people, whom we greatly respect and admire. However, it also represents a country that has embarked on a disastrous international policy. Never a year or two passes but that country launches a war against a small peaceful country for no other reason than because it has a different world view. That delegation represents a country that has never renounced any weapons of any kind or the use of such weapons, whether they be nuclear weapons, chemical weapons or biological weapons.

We all know that, even now, children are being born with deformities because of Agent Orange. The world has not forgotten Agent Orange. In Iraq, over 1 million children have leukaemia because of the use of depleted uranium and other kinds of weapons which nobody knows anything about. They have cold-bloodedly killed children, justifying their deaths as being in the service of their geostrategic goals. Tens of journalist have been killed in cold blood for fear that they might tell the world the truth. Still, the world has learned some of the truth and has been shocked. The world has been shocked by the little that it has seen in cities, on the streets and in the prisons of Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay.

Yes, there are things that everyone knows and there are things that we know only a little about. The delegation in question represents a State that has been covering up for Israel's crimes for over 50 years, supplying it with weapons, and preventing international organizations from taking action on Israel's daily violations of all international laws and norms. This delegation represents a State that has taken the United Nations hostage and is now attempting to do the same with the Conference on Disarmament.

The facts speak for themselves. In the past few days, we have been talking about 1.2 million cluster bombs, phosphorus bombs. The facts speak for themselves. It would be better for the delegation which took the floor and the delegation which seems about to take the floor to say nothing, because they are just making the scandal worse. They are war criminals, and if there was justice in this world, those responsible in both countries would have been charged by now and perhaps would even be in prison.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of the Syrian Arab Republic for his statement, and I now give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador of Australia, Ms. Caroline Millar.

Ms. MILLAR (Australia): Mr. President, first of all, I should like to commend and thank Poland, the Republic of Korea, Romania, the Russian Federation, Senegal and Slovakia for the way in which you have collectively presided over the work of the Conference on Disarmament this year, putting aside any national differences to deliver the most constructive, substantive and useful meetings we have had in some years. And I should particularly like to commend you, Mr. President, for the excellent work you have done on this report.

Australia could have agreed to the report you first presented to us last week. We could also have accepted the near-compromise draft yesterday, albeit with some reservations. I do not wish to reiterate those reservations here, but I do want to place on the plenary record, both in my national capacity and as President designate of the Seventh Meeting of States Parties to the Mine Ban Convention, our strong disappointment that even in that near-compromise version, there was no agreement to a factual reference to a discussion of anti-personnel landmines, and I had noted there was such a reference in the 2005 report.

It was clear from our deliberations that despite differing views and priorities, the vast majority of delegations could have accepted yesterday's near-final text in the interests of ensuring that the report reflected the constructive and substantive work of the Conference on Disarmament over the past year. In so doing, the report would have given strong positive momentum to continue our work in such a positive way next year.

It is a matter of concern to Australia that very few delegations could not accept a report that demonstrated the value of our work over this year, and in that context, I would like to associate my delegation with the comments made a few moments ago by the Ambassador of France with respect to the attempts to rewrite history and the surreal nature of those discussions.

We would be concerned if this negative approach to the report by such a very small number of delegations were to signal an unwillingness on their part to work constructively with the rest of us to ensure substantive outcomes from our work next year, because the effect of that would be to undermine the relevance of this body and to limit its ability to contribute constructively to international security and disarmament.

Finally, I should like to bid farewell to Ambassador Camara of Senegal and Ambassador Rivasseau of France. I have very much appreciated working with you in the few months that I have been here in Geneva, and I wish both of you well in your future endeavours.

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

Mr. DUNCAN (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland): Mr. President, I would like to join the Australian Ambassador in thanking the presidencies of 2006, the "P-6" as we have come to know them, and the secretariat for their sterling efforts to re-energize this

(Mr. Duncan, United Kingdom)

Conference in often very difficult and delicate circumstances. We owe you a debt of thanks. I would also like to join colleagues in wishing the Ambassadors from Senegal and from France bon voyage. They have become in a short space of time firm friends, and I have been impressed by the way that they have upheld the highest traditions of multilateral diplomacy.

Much has been said about the report which we have agreed this morning. It has not met our perhaps high expectations, but it has achieved the bare minimum and should allow us to move forward. I join others in expressing regret that some members of the Conference have failed to engage seriously or indeed in good faith in our collective efforts to re-energize this forum.

I will not repeat here what I said in the informal session about the unique nature and importance of this forum in the twenty-first century. I will, however, note that this behaviour contrasts with that of other delegations who, despite undoubted serious differences on a number of policy issues have engaged in a notably responsible, constructive and moderate manner in their interventions, and we thank them for it.

But we move on. As we change national representatives, we lose friends and experience, but also bring new perspectives. Perhaps I should say, in relation to recent interventions, perceptions and new energy to push forward.

Let me assure you, Mr. President and dear colleagues, of the United Kingdom's commitment to help others re-energize this Conference.

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

Mr. ITZCHAKI (Israel): Mr. President, I would also like to join others in thanking you for the tireless efforts you have put into trying to bring together many, many differences and trying finally to have a substantive report. However, we are faced with a situation where we have a report. It is not substantive, but we were very close to it, and this is thanks to your efforts and to your dignity and the fact that you listened to all of the concerns of many States here and have tried to bring them together. This is certainly a good example, and I hope all the succeeding Presidents will follow that example.

We would also like to join others in saying farewell to the Ambassadors of France and Senegal. We wish them all the best and hope that in the world of diplomacy - it is a very small world - we meet again.

We also regret the fact that we were not able to adopt a substantive report. We all know who is responsible for this failure, and we hope that this example will not repeat itself. In any case, some delegations have spoken here about rewriting history. I hope that some facts should be put in the right record in order to remind probably the delegate of Syria of a few facts that are historical facts. Maybe the representative of Syria has forgotten that Israel is a State, a sovereign State, and it can speak for itself. The fact that we chose not to speak and not to be part of the provocations that have been the practice of the Syrian delegation on many, many occasions is

(Mr. Itzhaki, Israel)

because we chose not to get into a very, very ugly discussion that would reveal exactly what is Syria and the true nature of Syria. Maybe the vision that he was talking about is a vision that Syria would like very much - not to have Israel either here or not to have Israel at all. We should remind him that we are still here, and we are still a sovereign State, and we will keep on doing that in the future.

It seems a bit odd, again, that we are being lectured by Syria on our behaviour. We could here have described at length very, very interesting facts about Syrian behaviour. So in a way, listening to lectures by Syria on the behaviour of other States is a contradiction in terms. We would rather prefer to hear from Syria what they have done in order to contribute to stability and peace rather than lecture us about defending our own State.

Once again, we regret that this is the outcome, but we are confident that this may not impede the importance and the dignity of this body.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Israel for his statement. I now give the floor to the delegation of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. ALI (Syrian Arab Republic) (translated from Arabic): Mr. President, honestly, if I did not have so much respect for this august assembly, I would have burst out laughing at what the representative of Israel said. The facts speak for themselves, and I mentioned some of them yesterday in connection with an Israeli journalist. Syria is a country which respects international law. Syria does not occupy the territory of neighbouring countries. Syria does not destroy cities, does not kill children, does not use weapons which are prohibited internationally. On the other hand, we all know what Israel does.

Over the recent years and months, Syria has repeated its invitations to resume peace talks with Israel, and we recalled the Arab peace initiative adopted in Beirut in 2002 with a view to the resumption of negotiations and establishment of a just and comprehensive peace in the region. However, Israel rejected those offers. At the time, it was said it had done so under pressure from another country. In the past few days, Syria renewed its invitation to Israel to resume negotiations, but the Israeli Prime Minister replied that Israel had other new weapons that it had not yet used and that it could use against Syria. That is Israel Mr. President. I say this even though I do not really need to say it because we all can see on the television and can read in the newspapers about what Israel is doing.

If Nazism existed today, it would be ashamed of what Israel is doing.

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

Mr. RIVASSEAU (France) (translated from French): Invective has elastic limits but, coming from a country which suffered from Nazism and from a family affected by it, I must formally protest at the last sentence spoken by my Syrian colleague, and perhaps he himself would agree that it should not be on the record.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you for this intervention. I now recognize the delegation of the United States.

Mr. CYNKIN (United States of America): I think in the interests of common decency that my delegation wishes to associate itself with the remarks of the Ambassador of France.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the delegation of the United States. United Kingdom, you have the floor.

Mr. DUNCAN: (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland): Same position, Mr. President.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you. Before giving the floor to the next speakers, may I ask whether there is any other delegation wishing to take the floor? Germany, you have the floor.

Mr. BRASACK (Germany): I would like to associate myself with the statements of France, the United States, the United Kingdom and Germany about the last sentence of the Syrian statement.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you. Now I give the floor to the delegation of Finland.

Mr. KAHILUOTO (Finland): We also wish to associate the delegation of Finland and the European Union with the statement made by France.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you. Do I see the delegation of Syria asking for the floor? You have the floor.

Mr. ALI (Syrian Arab Republic) (translated from Arabic): Certain people want to talk about the facts, which is what we have been talking about too. I understand that the Europeans feel guilty about what they did to the Jews. We feel solidarity with the Jews. The Jews used to live in Arab communities on the same terms as other religious minorities.

The PRESIDENT: May I ask you to finish your statement? This is the CD.

Mr. ALI (Syrian Arab Republic) (translated from Arabic): This is the Conference on Disarmament and I know what I am talking about, Mr. President. I am speaking in a positive way.

The PRESIDENT: Once again I appeal to you.

Mr. ALI (Syrian Arab Republic) (translated from Arabic): I am saying that Jews have lived in Arab societies. The Europeans committed crimes against the Jews, not the Arabs. Now, the Europeans are trying to cover up Israel's crimes in order to exonerate themselves for what they did to the Jews.

The PRESIDENT: Dear colleagues, this is the real picture of the Conference on Disarmament. That is why we are not negotiating: because some people have decided to open politics, not to focus on disarmament issues, but to use every possible argument to accuse other countries and representatives of other countries.

I would like to ask you to return to the real business of our Conference and of our meeting today. I now give the floor to the delegation of Algeria.

Mr. KHELIF (Algeria) (translated from Arabic): Unfortunately, things here at the CD have become rather agitated. It would seem that emotion has won out, so that delegations are saying things which they would not have said if the discussions had not begun in this way. As we are discussing better ways to promote the Conference's work, I do hope that the incoming President will bear this in mind and will put limits on the Conference, so that our proceedings focus on the agenda and the Conference does not turn into a place for mutual recriminations, which will do nothing to progress our work.

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

Mr. DUNCAN (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland): Mr. President, I support the opinions expressed by our Algerian colleague. I wonder in terms of a point of order whether it might not be advisable perhaps to suspend the plenary for 15 minutes and then reconvene, because I note that we have a number of delegations not present and not aware of what is happening. Perhaps a brief suspension might be in order, but I leave it to your judgement.

The PRESIDENT: Are there any objections to the proposal made by our colleague? There are not. The meeting is suspended for 15 minutes.

The meeting was suspended at 4.20 p.m. and resumed at 4.35 p.m.

The PRESIDENT: We resume the formal plenary meeting. I would like to proceed to the part dealing with the farewell statements of our two colleagues. Do I see the distinguished delegation of Algeria asking for the floor? You have the floor.

Mr. KHELIF (Algeria) (translated from French): Mr. President, allow me to speak once again, and I will be brief because I see that the atmosphere was very tense, and we are sorry that we have come to this pass. But following what was said by our distinguished delegate of Israel, I must assure him that no Arab country contests Israel's right to exist. In fact, there is an Arab peace proposal based on the Beirut initiative. If we have criticized Israel in this session or previously, that criticism is not for what Israel is but for what Israel does. This has been said by the delegation of Algeria here and elsewhere. I wish to assure him that the position of the Arab countries has never been against the existence of the State of Israel, but there are Arab proposals, there are peace proposals, and what we demand is global peace for the whole region.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of Algeria for his statement, and now we are entering the phase of farewell statements. Before giving the floor to the next speaker in this part of our meeting, I would like to take the opportunity to pay tribute to two prominent figures in this Conference who will be leaving Geneva shortly to take up other high duties.

Ambassador Ousmane Camara of Senegal has made an outstanding contribution to this Conference, both as a representative of his country and as our President. I have a special reason to remember him, not only for his kindness and courtesy to me as I succeeded him in the presidency, but also as a staunch member of the P-6 and an active, dignified and advised President. I know that his high and deserved reputation resounds throughout the diplomatic community in Geneva at large and not just in this body.

Ambassador François Rivasseau of France has similarly established a reputation beyond the Conference on Disarmament, notably as President Designate of the Third Review Conference of the CCW. In his leadership in that position and as France's disarmament Ambassador, he has shown great flair and tenacity.

We will miss both of these colleagues.

On behalf of this Conference and on my own behalf, I warmly convey to Ambassador Camara and Ambassador Rivasseau best wishes for their respective futures.

I now give the floor to Ambassador Camara.

Mr. CAMARA (Senegal) (translated from French): Mr. President, allow me first of all to express my sincere congratulations to you for the efforts, persistence and wisdom with which you have guided our work to its conclusion during this important part of the 2006 session of the Conference on Disarmament. Secondly, I would like to thank you for the kind words you addressed to me personally and on behalf of the Conference. I am particularly grateful to the representatives of Peru, Morocco, India, the United States of America, South Africa, Chile, Syria, Australia, the United Kingdom and Israel for their kindness and for their good wishes. In fact I extend those thanks to all my colleagues represented here.

It is not without a hint of emotion that I take the floor today before this august assembly in order to bid you farewell at the end of my posting in Geneva. Just a few weeks ago I had the privilege and honour to preside over the Conference on Disarmament, which without doubt experienced exciting moments this year as a result of the collective efforts undertaken to extract it from its lethargy. It provided me with a rewarding experience in both professional and personal terms. With my colleagues in the P-6 platform I developed relationships based on frank and trustful cooperation which made teamwork possible and led the Conference in a new direction.

The holding of structured and in-depth debates on the various items on our agenda led to a blossoming of better understanding of both subjects and positions and will, I am sure, open the path to the much-awaited resumption of substantive work within our assembly in what I hope

(Mr. Camara, Senegal)

will be the very near future. In such a propitious context, despite the persistent difficulties of which we are aware, Senegal is proud of having made its contribution to the collective effort and of having participated with the greatest constructive spirit in the platform of the six Presidents, and remains alert to any initiative or proposal which is designed to revitalize our Conference and commit it to the path of negotiation.

I would like to make a few brief remarks. Firstly, international security, which remains the major objective, is everyone's business, and everyone has to contribute to it. It seems to me that attaining this objective must be based more on cooperation and dialogue than on confrontation.

Secondly, the decline in the policy of non-proliferation which has been under way for some years has significant consequences and requires not only awareness, but also resolute action to preserve all of mankind against the threats it currently faces. In this context, Senegal will continue to work untiringly to strengthen the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and to expedite the entry into force of the comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. I would like to take this opportunity to point out that my country believes that the five Ambassadors' initiative contained in document CD/1693/Rev.1 continues to deserve the attention of all the members of the Conference on Disarmament. I would also like to pay tribute to the American proposal made this year concerning fissile material.

Thirdly, the Conference on Disarmament, which has demonstrated its capacity to intensify and deepen the debate within itself, should not, however, continue to work in a vacuum, which holds the potential for dogmatic confrontations and the adoption of fixed positions, but should open itself up to opinions from outside. In this regard, more systematic provision should be made for contributions from experts and researchers.

The activities undertaken this year by the Conference on Disarmament reveal the readiness and resolve of our forum to embark on a constructive dialogue. It is now up to the members of this assembly, which is recognized unanimously as the sole multilateral body for negotiations on disarmament, to breathe into it a true spirit of negotiation, which presupposes political will, a readiness for compromise and a keen sense of moderation and balance. It is noteworthy that all eyes still turn towards the Conference on Disarmament when the problems of weapons of mass destruction are raised, while biological and chemical weapons are governed by specific conventions. It remains incomprehensible that the Conference on Disarmament should not be able to make decisive and significant progress in the crucial area of control over nuclear weapons, nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation.

I hope that the efforts made this year by the Conference on Disarmament will be the prelude to substantive work for the next session. This is my dearest wish as I take leave of my distinguished colleagues assembled here, who will have the difficult task of continuing unfinished work and meeting the challenges which are sure to arise along the difficult path of negotiation.

Before concluding, I would like to express my gratitude to all the members of the Conference for the support and cooperation they have given me during my time in Geneva. I would like to refer specially and pay special tribute to my colleagues with whom I have shared

(Mr. Camara, Senegal)

this unique and exciting experience of the P-6 initiative throughout the 2006 session, as well as the Friends of the Chair. I also thank the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, Mr. Sergei Ordzhonikidze, Mr. Tim Caughley, the Deputy Secretary-General, Mr. Jerzy Zalesky and Mr. Valère Mantels, as well as all the staff of the Department of Disarmament Affairs in Geneva, without forgetting the interpreters.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador Camara for his statement and I now give the floor to Ambassador Rivasseau.

Mr. RIVASSEAU (France) (translated from French): Mr. President, I would like to start by extending thanks to you and the five Presidents who preceded you. I am particularly pleased to see here the Ambassador of Poland, who consulted us so much on the launching of the P-6 platform, and also his colleagues, yourself, of course, Mr. President, but also Ambassador Camara, to whom I would particularly like to wish every success, Senegal being a country which shares so many things with us, including the language, and which teaches us so much from its experience and its own philosophy of life, Ambassador Loshchinin and Anton Vasiliev, who are indissociable here, and the Ambassador of Romania, and of course my thoughts also go to the other Ambassadors who are not here - the Ambassador of South Korea. Let me also thank the secretariat. We worked well together, and I would like to ask you to convey all my messages to the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, Mr. Sergei Ordzhonikidze, who was away yesterday and is coming back only today, whose friendship and support never failed me personally, and which I greatly appreciated. Even yesterday from Moscow, the Secretary-General was helping us with suggestions that proved very useful in finalizing our work on the report. I would also like to thank the interpreters, who I have often tortured with my habit of listening to their translation of my own words. I am not doing that today. I am not listening to the translation.

I would also like to pay tribute to the counsellors who are leaving the Conference at the same time as me - those of India, Iran, Colombia and others I have probably forgotten - and tell them how much the French delegation appreciated the quality of their contributions, and wish them all the best. And I would also like to thank all those members of the staff and the administration of the United Nations, without whom we could not work.

At a press conference 44 years ago, only 44 years ago, General de Gaulle answered a question which he had put to himself: "Did somebody not ask me a question about the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva?" It is true, even 44 years ago we had questions on this subject. And General de Gaulle continued: "Because we are not in the negotiations between the United States and Moscow, we are not in the Geneva Conference either. In case you are wondering, without putting it into words, why we are not there, I am going to tell you quickly why. You would, I think", continued General de Gaulle, "need to have a lot of imagination or many illusions to imagine that France's presence in such a Conference would make much difference. Of course, we too deplore the proliferation of bombs and weaponry on both sides, but we do not see any reason to swell the august ranks there of those who seek to present irreconcilable plans and who can only wail and weep like the chorus of ancients in Greek tragedies. An inextricable problem, but what is the solution?"

(Mr. Rivasseau, France)

When I look back over the discussions in our Conference over the last seven years, and the discussion we have just held on the report is another illustration of this, I find that General de Gaulle's comment remains valid. How many times have I heard whole ranks of august colleagues wailing over the elusive and ghostly programme of work? An inextricable problem, but what is the solution?

And yet here we are. It was after an exceptional event, the agreement reached at the first special session of the United Nations General Assembly, that on 25 May 1978 France decided to take up its seat here. As the French President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing said then; "We make no other claims upon your attention than our attachment to the cause of peace, our contribution to disarmament efforts, illustrated by the generous eloquence of Aristide Briand before the war, Aristide Briand, the first representative of France in the Conference on Disarmament. France does not intend to monopolize the discussion, realizing that this is inherently a common undertaking to which each State, from East to West, from North to South, must make its contribution. Needless to say" - I am still quoting the French President - "France will contribute to any meaningful disarmament effort which is decided on, but we cannot speak of disarmament without looking at the world today. Which world should we be disarming?"

That question is more relevant than ever. The world has changed. The world we have to disarm is no longer the world of 30 years ago, or even 10 years ago. It is characterized by the multiplicity of new challenges, the proliferation of weapons of all kinds. If our Conference is to remain relevant, if it wishes to maintain its value, its usefulness and its legitimacy, it must realize that the world we have to disarm is no longer the world of 1978, still less that of 1962.

This does not mean that the subjects which were of concern then to our counterparts have disappeared - oh no! But they must be complemented by work on more recent subjects which our predecessors, our forebears, could not have foreseen, and in this new context we have to display a creative spirit and organize ourselves in new ways.

France makes sure that it regularly keeps the international community and particularly the Conference on Disarmament informed of how our thinking is evolving over time on important subjects for our Conference. It did so again recently on the occasion of the statement made by the French President at Ile Longue on 19 January 2006.

The fact remains that we have to achieve a new meeting of minds. It did not emerge at the last NPT Review Conference, where, moreover, three important States were missing. Nor did it emerge at the United Nations Summit last year. It did not invigorate our thinking on small arms and light weapons this summer. But it is here, in this Conference, whose overlong paralysis is the sharpest illustration of how difficult the exercise is, it is here that the first signs of the new meeting of minds have to appear. They may emerge through this year's programme of activities, through the trust which more than ever remains to be built, through the renewed interest displayed by all delegations - I repeat, all delegations - in concrete activity in this forum, through the idea that all subjects and all security concerns covering them must be dealt with on an equal footing to ensure that all voices are heard - finally, through the idea which runs like a thread

(Mr. Rivasseau, France)

through our report, provided that one takes the trouble to read all the annexes to it, that one subject probably more legitimate and ripe than others could be negotiated immediately in this Conference. We are at the very beginning of the road.

As I say not goodbye but until we meet again, I offer you best wishes for progress *ad augusta per angusta*, an old Latin expression which in a few words reminds us how narrow the path is to the heights and to success.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of France for his statement. This concludes the list of speakers for today. I recognize the delegation of the Netherlands.

Mr. LANDMAN (Netherlands): I do remember this press conference in February 1962 of General de Gaulle and the question he put in front of himself, so to speak, because, as everybody knew, he was able to say by heart a conference of more than three hours, and even note that some questions had not been put which he had prepared.

I am a great admirer of General de Gaulle. I have even written a thesis on some aspects of his foreign policy, but it is true that sometimes he was proven to be wrong, because it is undeniable that this Conference has produced a lot more than irreconcilable plans. And that has resulted in much more than just the clamouring and the *gémir*. But it is also true that in the last 10 years there has been some loss of a sense of direction. I personally had the feeling at certain moments yesterday that where we succeeded in actually reaching agreement on a document of substance, that we had regained that sense of direction. We will see. I do not want to enter into this now.

What I would like to say is that for the future of any diplomat, there is a French saying, "*Il n'y a pas de vent favorable pour ceux qui ne savent pas où ils vont*" - there is no favourable wind for those who do not know where they are going. I have no doubt that our dear colleagues from Senegal and France for sure know where they are going from here. I wish them good luck.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Ambassador of the Netherlands for his statement. There are no other speakers? That does not seem to be the case.

Let me share with you some of my brief concluding remarks.

We are about to complete the third part of the Conference on Disarmament in the year 2006. I suppose it will be remembered first of all as the year of the P-6. The unprecedented initiative launched by the Polish delegation one year ago has developed into an experience that other P-6 members not only felt obliged to cultivate during their term of presidency but they enjoyed it as well.

Personally, I have felt during my term their firm determination to support me in the final stage of this year's deliberations. As my mandate carries on until the end of 2006, the P-6 keeps on existing, not as an institution but as an action-oriented formation that feels responsibility towards the CD membership.

(The President)

In order to translate this obligation and commitment into yet another, more concrete action, we consider it useful to share with the CD delegations our knowledge and experience gathered in the course of the 2006 session. That is why we wish to present to you the P-6 vision non-paper in the form of “food for thought”. The informal non-paper describes the views of the P-6 on what the CD’s state of play was at the beginning of its 2006 session, where we stand now in the Conference on Disarmament and what the possible next steps might be on the route to the revitalization of the CD.

At the same time, this non-paper does not in any way describe the state of maturity of any issue dealt with in the CD, nor evaluate the state or consensus on any issue or proposal in the CD, nor give any concrete proposals for a programme of work or a schedule of activities, nor prejudge any future decisions by the CD or future Presidents.

As I have said above, the non-paper is a kind of “food for thought” non-paper, which, in our opinion, may be inspiring for intersessional consultations and developing a vision for the CD in 2007. However, let me stress that future developments will be the sole responsibility and prerogative of the incoming Presidents and subject to eventual CD decisions.

As I have mentioned, the P-6 prefers action rather than long oration, and this applies particularly to me. Consequently, this brings me to one of my last duties, that is, to express gratitude to those who were especially supportive of my endeavours during the last four weeks. I would like to thank our Friends of the Presidents, Ambassador Sarala Fernando of Sri Lanka, Ambassador Jazairry of Algeria, Ambassador Draganov of Bulgaria, Ambassador Martabit of Chile, Ambassador Trezza of Italy and Ambassador Mine of Japan.

Our work would have practically been impossible without the professional and friendly approach of the CD secretariat. I wish to thank the Secretary-General, Mr. Sergei Ordzhonikidze, the Deputy Secretary-General and Director, Mr. Tim Caughley, Mr. Jerzy Zaleski, Mr. Valère Mantels and Mr. Tom Kono and other members of the secretariat staff, as well as the interpreters who have facilitated communication and understanding among delegations.

Last but not least, I would like to thank those representatives of the CD members who have spared no effort to support me in all aspects of my work. I do thank you very much, and I am looking to the ensuing period with the hope that we will be able to make substantial progress in our endeavours, and that would benefit not only the CD itself but above all, mankind as such.

This concludes our business for today.

The meeting rose at 5 p.m.