

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/PV.1063
27 March 2007

ENGLISH

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

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 27 March 2007, at 10.20 a.m.

President: Ms. Sarala FERNANDO (Sri Lanka)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 1063rd plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

I wish to begin with a statement on behalf of the P-6 with regard to the work of this week.

In my statement to the informal plenary last Friday introducing document CRP.4, I provided the assessment of the 2007 Presidents of the Conference (P-6) on the work done during the first part of this year's session, based on our interaction with and inputs received from all coordinators, our own participation in the plenaries and the informal meetings, bilateral consultations with all delegations, and meetings with Groups and Group Coordinators.

I would like to thank on behalf of the P-6 the many delegations across the regions who spoke both at informal and formal plenaries last Friday in support of the Presidential draft decision contained in document CD/2007/L.1. At the same time, there were a few delegations who sought further clarification, mainly in relation to methods of work and procedures. In a spirit of transparency, I would like to address these points in order to assist in assessing the proposal.

With regard to the question of balance, we firmly believe that the proposal has been carefully crafted to reach a compromise between different views, priorities and interests, and what is realistically achievable in relation to short-term and long-term objectives of member States. I would like to stress once again that the proposal contained in document CD/2007/L.1 reflects the views of member States. I would also like to refer to the chapeau of L.1, which states that the Conference will decide on the present draft decision without prejudice to future work and negotiations on its agenda items.

Further, it is our firm view that the proposal is fully compatible with the rules of procedure of the Conference. The rules of procedure clearly state that the work of the Conference can be conducted under any arrangement agreed by the Conference. The Conference is the master of its own rules of procedure, and their role is to facilitate our work. At the informal plenary last Friday the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Ordzhonikidze, further underlined this position.

With regard to the issue of the duration of the draft decision, I would like to inform you that the draft decision, in accordance with the rules of procedure, will be valid for the 2007 session of the CD.

With regard to the timetable, we believe that there is a practical need for flexibility as regards the allocation of time. Therefore, the P-6 will propose a suitable draft timetable in consultation with the Coordinators for the consideration of the Conference after a decision is taken on the present draft proposal.

With regard to the appointment of Coordinators for specific issues by the Conference, during our consultations the prevailing view was that the current method of working with coordinators had been useful and appropriate, and therefore it should be continued and further elaborated. These Coordinators are accountable to the Conference, which will appoint them, and

(The President)

they will present their reports to the Conference for consideration. The meetings chaired by the Coordinators will be informal in nature unless otherwise decided by the Conference. The rules of procedure of the Conference will apply to the meetings presided over by the Coordinators.

Finally, in keeping with the undertaking given by the P-6 at the beginning of this year to the Conference as per the organizational framework presented in January, we intend to conduct a formal plenary on Thursday, 29 March, at 10 a.m. to take a decision on document L.1.

I have the following speakers on my list for today's plenary meeting: Nigeria, Germany on behalf of the EU, Austria, Italy, France, Slovakia - and I see that Algeria has raised its flag, and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

I now give the floor to the representative of Nigeria.

Mr. AWANEN (Nigeria): Madam President, I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of 21.

First of all, I would like to congratulate you on assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament, and to assure you of the Group's full cooperation and support in the exercise of your responsibilities.

The Group of 21 reaffirms that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. The Group remains convinced that as long as nuclear weapons exist, so also will the risk of their proliferation and possible use remain with us.

Recognizing this danger, the G-21 has consistently called for the conclusion of a legally binding international instrument providing security assurances for non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. In this regard, the Group recalls paragraphs 32 and 59 of the Final Document of the Tenth Special Session of the General Assembly, the first special session devoted to disarmament, which underscored the need for effective arrangements, as appropriate, to assure non-nuclear-weapons States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.

The G-21 is convinced that these arrangements, once enshrined in a legally binding instrument, will not only build trust within their ranks, but also strengthen their security and the peace and security of the international community.

The G-21 welcomes the informal consultations that have been held under the framework of the CD on the issue of negative security assurances, as reflected in the P-6 initiatives, and notes with satisfaction that in the CD there is no objection, in principle, to the idea of an international convention to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, although the difficulties with regard to evolving a common approach acceptable to all have also been pointed out.

(Mr. Awanen, Nigeria)

The Group accepts that while various approaches exist, efforts to conclude a universal and legally binding instrument on security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States should be pursued. The G-21 considers that the conclusion of such an instrument would be an important step towards achieving the objectives of arms control, nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation in all its aspects.

The PRESIDENT: I thank you and I now give the floor to the next speaker on my list, that is, the representative of Germany, on behalf of the EU.

Mr. BRASACK (Germany): Madam President, I have the honour to take the floor on behalf of the European Union. As it is the first time that I take the floor on behalf of the EU under your presidency, I would, first of all, like to congratulate you on the assumption of the post of President of the Conference on Disarmament. I can assure you of the European Union's full support in your efforts to guide the work of this Conference, especially at this important moment.

The European Union is very much encouraged by the constructive, structured and substantive discussions during the sessions of the last weeks, brought about by the six 2007 CD Presidents' "organizational framework". The momentum developed as a result of the initiative taken jointly by the six Presidents of the CD last year has clearly been taken up and brought to an even higher level. I would go as far as to say that a new spirit is prevailing in the CD. This has fostered our hope that finally the deadlock in the work of the CD can be overcome and significant work be resumed.

The European Union will not object to the proposal presented by the P-6 in CD/2007/L.1 as it stands.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you. I would appeal to delegations with regard to your mobile phones because this is disturbing the technology. I find it very difficult to listen. So kindly switch off your mobile phones.

I now give the floor to the next speaker, the Ambassador of Austria.

Mr. PETRITSCH (Austria): Madam President, since this is the first time I am taking the floor under your able guidance, allow me to congratulate you on the assumption of this important post.

At the same time, I would like to thank you as well as your fellow Presidents and the various coordinators for their tireless efforts and valuable work which we have witnessed during the last few weeks.

Austria is especially grateful for, and welcomes, the P-6 proposal, which was tabled in document CD/2007/L.1 last Friday. We consider it a very balanced and fair approach and we believe that it has a real potential to break the current deadlock. Austria would therefore like to extend its full support for the Presidential draft decision.

(Mr. Petritsch, Austria)

In this context, we would also like to welcome the working paper delivered by Canada called “an FMCT scope-verification arrangement”. We consider this working paper a valuable contribution to our future discussions - and hopefully negotiations - on an FMCT.

The PRESIDENT: I thank you and I give the floor to the next speaker on my list, the Ambassador of Italy.

Mr. TREZZA (Italy): Madam President, I have the pleasure of informing you and the members of the Conference that the President of the Republic of Italy, Mr. Giorgio Napolitano, has bestowed upon Dr. Joseph Goldblat the title of Cavaliere dell' Ordine al merito della Repubblica Italiana, which in English is Knight of the Order of Merit of the Italian Republic.

The motivation is the following: “Dr. Goldblat is one of the major experts at the global level in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation. As a government official and later as an expert and scholar, he has promoted international peace and security through disarmament, arms reduction and non-proliferation.” I believe that all those who are involved in disarmament and non-proliferation are familiar with the eminent merits of this distinguished scholar and respected expert in the fields relevant to the work of this Conference.

Dr. Goldblat, as you know, follows assiduously our formal sessions from the gallery. Unfortunately he has not been able to be with us today, but I wish to extend to him my warmest congratulations and deep appreciation for the precious role he has played throughout the years in favour of disarmament and non-proliferation.

The granting of this distinction to Dr. Goldblat reflects Italy’s strong commitment in favour of disarmament and non-proliferation at all echelons of its institutions. Let me recall that last month Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Massimo D’Alema made a strong appeal in favour of nuclear disarmament and for non-proliferation on the occasion of his visit to Hiroshima, a city which has become a symbol of international striving for international peace through disarmament.

A few days later, during the high-level segment of our Conference, Under-Secretary of State Vittorio Craxi pleaded for the resumption of substantive work at the Conference and supported the six Presidents’ initiative. Let me add that in the field of humanitarian disarmament, Italy was among the first to subscribe, last month, to the Oslo declaration aiming at the prohibition of a whole category of cluster munitions.

Our Commitment is closely linked to the engagement of the European Union in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation, which has deep roots in the EU’s history, in particular within the framework of its common foreign and security policy. Some of the landmarks of this policy, like the EU Strategy against the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction and the EU Common Position on the Universalization and Reinforcement of Multilateral Agreements in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation, were crafted in 2003 under the Italian presidency of the European Union.

(Mr. Trezza, Italy)

The developments I have mentioned take place at a special time. Last November, results of substance were achieved at the CCW Review Conference under the French presidency. A few weeks later similar positive results were reached at the Biological Weapons Review Conference under the presidency of Pakistan. This year, for the first time ever, the six Presidents have submitted to the Conference on Disarmament a draft decision which would allow the Conference to resume its institutional task: to negotiate international disarmament treaties. My delegation subscribes to the statement made this morning by Germany on behalf of the European Union. Together with a large number of CD member States belonging to almost all regional groups, Italy already indicated last Friday that it can accept this decision, which is demand-driven and a fair and honest compromise based on the elaboration of previous proposals which are familiar to all delegations and on which we have been working for years. This proposal cannot come as a surprise to the delegations that have followed all our deliberations and to capitals that have been briefed. The Presidents have been working and consulting for a long time and have made all possible efforts to reach, well in advance, every delegation and every regional group. We respect the necessity of consulting capitals on this important matter, but the time has come for a decision. I believe that all CD members recognize that the NPT, whose review process will begin next month is the cornerstone of international peace and security. That process would benefit enormously from a positive outcome of our deliberations here in Geneva.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you, and I avail of this opportunity to also extend to Dr. Goldblat our sincere congratulations. He has been well known and close to the Sri Lankan delegation for many years.

I now give the floor to the next speaker on my list, the Ambassador of France.

Mr. DOBELLE (France) (spoke in French): Madam President, since I am taking the floor for the first time in this forum during your term, I would like first of all to extend to you my warmest congratulations. I would also like to thank you sincerely for the effort that you and the other Presidents of the Conference on Disarmament have been making to try to arrive at a compromise solution concerning the programme of activities for the second and third parts of the present session.

If I did not speak on Friday afternoon, it was because we wanted to take time for serious thought in order to study the true worth of this proposal, which will at all events mark an important turning point in the work of the Conference on Disarmament.

In a spirit of compromise, France is prepared not to object to the consensus on this text. In so doing, we are displaying our sincere commitment to the earliest possible launching of negotiations on the fissile material treaty (FMCT), which, as we have pointed out repeatedly in this forum, is as far as we are concerned an indispensable supplement to the CTBT as well as being the next tangible step forward to which the Conference on Disarmament can contribute in the field of nuclear disarmament. In truth this is the only subject which at this stage is likely to meet with agreement on the part of the member States of the Conference with a view to starting negotiations.

(Mr. Dobelle, France)

I would also like to stress in this context that any amendment aimed at strengthening or amending the provisions of the President's compromise concerning nuclear disarmament or negative security assurances would put a complete end to any chances of a consensus. We also regret the fact that this proposal gives excessive importance to nuclear disarmament and insufficient importance to conventional disarmament. We would like to point out that the proceedings of the Conference on Disarmament should not be confined to the four items on the agenda which have been taken up in the President's proposal, but should encompass all of the issues related to general and complete disarmament as well as non-proliferation.

We consider in particular that the Conference on Disarmament should continue to discuss under agenda item 7 the draft arms trade treaty, the question of portable air defence systems (MANPADS) and the question of the transfer of conventional weapons and weapons of mass destruction to non-State actors. These topics are of prime relevance to national security. However, despite the shortcomings that we have identified in this text, as I have already said, France will not block a consensus.

Bearing in mind what has just been said by the presidency of the European Union, if all delegations are able, showing the same flexibility that we are showing, to sign up to this compromise and thus enable the President's proposal to be adopted by consensus before the end of the first part of the work of the present session, we hope fervently that the President will ensure that the discussions during the second and third parts of the session will allocate the negotiations on the fissile material treaty the time they require and will take into account the importance of the issues related to conventional disarmament.

The PRESIDENT: I thank you and I give the floor to the next speaker on my list, the representative of Algeria.

Mr. KHELIF (Algeria) (spoke in French): First of all I would like to congratulate Professor Goldblat on the prize he has been awarded in recognition of his commitment and his efforts for the cause of general disarmament, and I would also like to thank Italy, which, through the awarding of this prize by the country's highest authority, has once again borne witness to that country's commitment to disarmament and non-proliferation, and hence to the promotion of international peace and security.

Madam President, the delegation of Algeria had not planned to take the floor, but given the clarifications that you have provided us with on behalf of the six Presidents, for which we would like to thank you, we have a few comments to make.

First of all, during the informal and formal meetings held last Friday, the Algerian delegation pointed out that the mandates concerning nuclear disarmament and negative security assurances could be improved upon by taking into account the wording adopted by consensus at the NPT review conferences in 1995 and 2000.

(Mr. Khelif, Algeria)

In addition, the Algerian delegation had raised some procedural questions, in particular concerning the annual periodicity of the programme of work. In your statement, Madam President, on the second page, first paragraph, you state that this programme is valid for the year 2007, and I have a few questions of a legal nature on this score. Under rule 28 of the rules of procedure, the agenda and the programme of work are adopted on an annual basis. These rules of procedure were adopted by decision. Your proposal, the Presidents' proposal concerning the programme of work, will also be adopted by a legal decision, a decision of the Conference. In this connection, I would appreciate it if His Excellency the Ambassador of France, given his in-depth knowledge of the law, could shed some light on this. If this decision is adopted by means of a decision, and if the rules of procedure were also adopted by means of a decision taken by the Conference, bearing in mind the fact that your proposal does not mention the annual periodicity - it provides for open-ended mandates that are not limited in time - legally we will find ourselves in two different situations: the decision adopting the rules of procedure and the decision adopting the programme of work. There is no mention there of the annual basis of the programme of work, and in the event that there is a conflict between legal rules, obviously the last legal rule is applicable. Therefore, we do not see why there would be any objection to mentioning explicitly in your proposal that the Coordinators are appointed for the current session. How would that bother the Conference? More clarity would bother no one.

I can read out a proposal:

(spoke in English)

If we say "The Conference on Disarmament decides without prejudice to future work or negotiations on its agenda items to appoint for the duration of the current session ..." and then we nominate the Coordinators,

(spoke in French)

I don't see any difficulty that this would cause in terms of the balance of the documents. There is no problem for the balance of the documents, unless there is something we are not aware of. The above relates to procedure.

Concerning the substance or the wording of the mandates, Madam President, we received your proposal very late on Friday evening and we did not hesitate to send it as soon as possible to our capital. We are still awaiting responses from the Algerian authorities. I hope to receive them by Thursday, but I can not tell you now. Having said this, the Algerian delegation remains ready to hold consultations with the Presidents with a view to making the desired improvements. But it is very important to mention in the decision the annual time frame for the programme of work, because once this phase is completed we will be referring much more to the decision than to the statement by these Presidents.

The PRESIDENT: I thank you and I give the floor to the next speaker on my list, the Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. MOAIYERI (Islamic Republic of Iran): Madam President, since this is the first time I am speaking under your presidency, allow me to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and wish you all success in discharging your important task to move the work of this august body forward. I would also like to extend my appreciation to the six presidencies of the Conference and the coordinators, whose contributions to the work of the CD are admirable.

With regard to the proposal presented to the Conference on Friday, 23 March 2007, I wish to express some comments. We immediately sent the proposal upon receipt to the capital in order to be studied in depth and to receive instructions. Until now, my delegation has not received instructions from the capital. Therefore, my delegation deserves the right to make its final word in that regard at a later stage.

Since it is a very important proposal, it needs to be studied properly by different decision-making bodies within my capital. In order to contribute to the discussion on this subject, some preliminary views of my delegation are as follows.

My delegation has always insisted on a balanced and comprehensive approach with regard to the programme of work of the CD. The four core issues identified earlier by the Conference have their background, history and context. From our point of view, those issues have equal value and are not more or less important than the others. My delegation is of the belief that nuclear disarmament and international legally binding arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons are the highest priorities in the work of the Conference. Therefore, it is without affecting the balance between the four core issues in any programme of work of the CD. The A-5 proposal has established a solid basis for any programme of work for this body. Our expectation is that this proposal be consistent with that standard.

With regard to FMCT, my delegation on different occasions has expressed its position that negotiations on that subject should only be in the framework of the Shannon mandate. Once again, I would like to put on record this principled position of my delegation.

The PRESIDENT: I thank you and I give the floor to the next speaker on my list, Ambassador Shoukry of Egypt.

Mr. SHOUKRY (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): Madam President, may I congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference and wish you every success in your important task? May I also thank you for the statement containing very important clarifications relating to the initiative proposed in document CRP.4? These clarifications will doubtless do much to dispel some of the ambiguity surrounding the initiative, and I take this opportunity to reiterate our gratitude for all the efforts made to clarify this initiative with a view to achieving the desired outcome, namely, ending the stalemate which has characterized the work of the Conference over the past decade.

(Mr. Shoukry, Egypt)

We shall transmit the text of the statement that you have just read out without delay to our capital for detailed study of the initiative, so that my delegation will be in a position to take an appropriate decision, bearing in mind the special and unique nature of this initiative, which is unprecedented at this Conference. The initiative was presented on a take-it-or-leave-it basis, implying that no amendments will be countenanced. My delegation appreciates the importance of this initiative and its potential for achieving the desired outcome. We are fully prepared to consider this initiative in a positive and flexible spirit and in whatever framework you may deem appropriate.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Ambassador of Egypt and I now give the floor to Ambassador Pinter of Slovakia.

Mr. PINTER (Slovakia): Madam President, to begin with, I would like to join the previous speakers in congratulating you on the assumption of your duties as President of the Conference and to wish you much success in your work. At the same time, I want to add that we subscribe to the statement made by the Ambassador of Germany on behalf of the EU.

My delegation has been following the discussions during the first nine weeks of this year's session very carefully, and in particular last Friday's statement on the groundbreaking P-6 proposal on the future activities of the Conference. I had the honour to support it on behalf of last year's CD presidencies during the informal CD plenary.

This proposal has been constructed along the lines expressed by all delegations during the intensive consultations conducted by the P-6. This should serve as a guarantee that it meets the expectations of all member States to such a level that they would lend their support to it at this juncture. Still, at some instances of last Friday's discussion, we experienced the sense of déjà vu. I refer to the preparation of last year's CD report. Without going into details, the dominant feeling we and the majority of colleagues acquired is that the lack of determination or the courage to go beyond the traditional or conservative concepts of behaviour still has its recurrent power. Last Friday, the words of Mr. Ordzhonikidze reminded us that there was no reason not to break this vicious circle. Ten years of non-action in terms of producing any concrete result with regard to negotiations on disarmament issues have left a negative impact on our perceptions of the primary role of this body. Ten years of discussions, whatever objective has been invented in order to express movement forward, have brought us to a crossroads.

We basically have two options: either we show enough responsibility, courage and resolve to kick off a new era in the history of the Conference, or we satisfy ourselves with the devastating status quo. Each of these decisions contains risks we should be aware of. This time, however, we should recall the words of Mr. Kofi Annan, the former United Nations Secretary-General, who during his last visit to the Council chamber stressed that the time is ripe, the choice is clear. Failing to accept the very carefully drafted proposal the P-6 submitted after having listened to each of us would mean seriously failing these words.

We do risk the very existence of this body. It should not be taken for granted that another year of discussions would meet the expectations of our governments and indeed the international community.

(Mr. Pinter, Slovakia)

Already now some people say that the CD, because of a lack of real work, is a body which requires the attention of junior diplomats only. We may not be too distant from the moment when this negative assessment transforms even further and the CD becomes an irrelevant and informal body with no practical meaning and influence.

Some weeks ago I overheard a discussion within a tourist group visiting this chamber. Their impressions could be characterized by one sentence: if only those diplomats - and here in fact they used more expressive terms - who meet regularly in this room paid attention at least once a week to the paintings above their heads, there would be fewer weapons and the world would be less exposed to the horrors of war.

Let me conclude by wishing all of us to pay more respect to the expectations of the representatives of the international community and of the ordinary people.

The PRESIDENT: I thank you and I give the floor to the next speaker on my list, the representative of Poland.

Mr. MISZTA (Poland): Madam President, let me begin by reiterating that Poland stands fully behind the EU statement delivered just a moment ago by the Ambassador of Germany.

Since it is the first time my delegation is taking the floor under the Sri Lankan presidency in a formal setting, let me extend our wholehearted congratulations to you on the assumption of this high post and reassure you of Poland's full support to your doings. My delegation would also like to express words of great appreciation to the whole platform of this year's Presidents, especially to your predecessors of South Africa and Spain, for their enormous efforts invested in guiding the work of the CD. We would also like to congratulate the coordinators appointed by the President for the excellent leadership in conducting substantive discussions carried out on the agenda items. All these collective endeavours have undoubtedly contributed to building a positive momentum in the CD.

We would like to thank and commend you and all the P-6 on the Presidential draft decision presented in document CD/2007/L.1 of 23 March, which reflects the creative approach and application of thinking out of the box about the problems experienced by the CD. We are glad to learn that the ideas envisaged in the proposal build on the progress so far. In our view, they also seem to reflect upon our search for compromise solutions allowing for effectively accommodating the interests of all States represented in this august body. Furthermore, we are of the opinion that the proposal adequately addresses expectations and appeals to overcome the existing stalemate repeatedly expressed by many for such a long time. Hence, it is perceived by Poland as a step forward in our endeavours to revitalize the work of the Conference. By focusing on setbacks rather than advantages at this stage, we put the entirety of efforts to get the CD back to work at risk.

Poland welcomes the Presidential draft decision and its assumptions. We therefore would like to add our voice to those who have already expressed their full support for the proposal. We see it as a sound basis for a decision to be taken by the CD as we appeal to all States to extend their flexibility and constructive approach, indispensable in achieving this goal.

The PRESIDENT: I thank you and I give the floor to the next speaker on my list, the Ambassador of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. CHANG (Republic of Korea): Madam President, as this is the first time my delegation is taking the floor at a formal plenary during your presidency, I would like to convey my heartfelt congratulations to you on your assumption of the presidency of this body. I would also like to thank this year's six Presidents for their dedicated efforts to move the work of the CD forward. My delegation takes this opportunity to assure you of our full support and cooperation.

This year we have embarked on our discussion in the Conference on Disarmament with a sense of renewed purpose in the hope of finding a workable solution to getting the CD back to work after years of frustration, building upon the progress we made last year. We have had intensified and structured debates on all the agenda items. The focused in-depth debates during the course of the last nine weeks have produced a valuable P-6 proposal. We greatly appreciate the strenuous efforts made by the P-6 and fully support the proposal. My delegation feels that the draft decision contained in CD/2007/L.1 is well balanced and duly reflective of the results of the bilateral consultations the P-6 have conducted with all member States.

In this event, I invite all the members to summon the necessary political will and exercise more flexibility in order not to lose the momentum.

The PRESIDENT: I thank you and I now give the floor to the next and last speaker on my list, the Ambassador of Germany.

Mr. BRASACK (Germany): Thank you, Madam President, for allowing Germany the floor in its national capacity. First of all, I would like to express my happiness about the information from the Italian delegation this morning about the fact that Dr. Joseph Goldblat has again been bestowed a very high honour, and it is the second time since I have been here that such an honour has been bestowed on him, and I think that this is very well deserved.

Again, I would like to assure you, Madam, and the other members of the P-6 platform of Germany's fullest support in your efforts to guide the work of this Conference, especially at this crucially important moment. We are confident that under your able guidance the Conference can finally achieve what it has been striving for nine years, namely bringing the CD back to substantial work. It goes without saying - and no one will be surprised - that my delegation subscribes to the statement made this morning on behalf of the EU by Germany.

We are very much encouraged by the constructive, structured and substantive discussions during the sessions of the last weeks, brought about by the six 2007 CD Presidents' "organizational framework".

We therefore wholeheartedly welcome the Presidential draft decision tabled by this year's P-6 in document CD/2007/L.1 on 23 March 2007, and we are of the view that its elements indeed reflect the necessary decisions the CD will have to agree on to get back to work. I am happy again, as I was already last Friday, to express Germany's full and unequivocal support for the P-6 proposal as it stands.

(Mr. Brasack, Germany)

We very much welcome and encourage the efforts undertaken collectively by the six CD presidencies of 2007 to draw the appropriate conclusions from the discussions of the last weeks. In particular, we highly commend the meticulous way in which the P-6 again gathered the views of every single CD member State and managed to merge all these views into a coherent layout proposal for the CD's activities in the remainder of the year - and hopefully beyond. It takes into account in an honest, fair, balanced and comprehensive manner the interests of all CD members - and in a realistic sense of compromise leaves all of them equally unhappy with it.

We also highly appreciate the work done by all the coordinators and are very grateful for their efforts under the respective agenda items. Germany, through the EU and on a national basis, has made substantial contributions to the discussions on each agenda item and will continue to be actively involved in all future debates. In our view, the discussions of the last weeks - through their differing intensities and varying depth and detail - have clearly demonstrated to all CD members that although all the items on the agenda have their own valid raison d'être, a differentiated approach is nevertheless justified as to the degree of work to be done by the CD on different issues. We therefore fully support the differentiated approach taken by the P-6 Presidential draft proposal.

Getting the CD back to fulfilling its function as the single multilateral forum at the disposal of the international community for disarmament negotiations is all the more important against the backdrop of the security challenges that we are facing today.

For now, therefore, it is of utmost importance that the CD adopts the fundamental decision to get back to work. As regards procedural issues - and I would further elaborate on them - we fully subscribe to the views that you, Madam President, presented this morning to the room. We therefore now call upon all delegations to show the utmost flexibility and to display constructiveness to achieve this goal by quickly adopting the Presidential draft decision as proposed by the P-6. There is no realistic and viable alternative to this approach.

The PRESIDENT: I thank you and I give the floor to two more speakers who have just registered on my list. The Ambassador of China has the floor.

Mr. CHENG (China) (spoke in Chinese): I thank you, Madam President, for the introduction you have given to some of the issues. The Chinese delegation, like all other parties, hopes to see the Conference on Disarmament commence its substantive work at the earliest possible stage. In this same spirit, I would like to take this opportunity to make some comments on the draft decision, as contained in document CD/2007/L.1. I hope that certain clarifications can be made in this regard.

First, rule 28 of the rules of procedure stipulates that, on the basis of its agenda, the Conference, at the beginning of its annual session, shall establish its programme of work, which will include a schedule of its activities for that session. In my understanding of this rule, this has indeed been the past practice of the Conference on Disarmament, namely, that in order to conduct substantive work, the Conference should have a programme of work. My question is: what is the relationship between the draft decision as contained in CD/2007/L.1 and the programme of work stipulated in the rules of procedure? Or are we to take it that the draft

(Mr. Cheng, China)

decision is in fact the programme of work stipulated in the rules of procedure? If that is so, why is it not designated as the programme of work? If that is not the case, should the Conference not insist on observing this provision of the rules of procedure in conducting its work? Or is it the view of the six Presidents that the draft decision, as put forward on this occasion, is an exceptional case?

Second, rule 23 of the rules of procedure stipulates that, whenever the Conference deems it advisable for the effective performance of its functions, including when it appears that there is a basis to negotiate a draft treaty or other draft texts, the Conference may establish subsidiary bodies, such as ad hoc subcommittees, working groups, technical groups or groups of governmental experts. Now what about these Coordinators mentioned in the draft decision: are they a kind of subsidiary body? Why should we avoid the use of ad hoc subcommittees or other subsidiary mechanisms that are habitually used in the Conference? And is the appointment of these Coordinators based on a consensus view expressed by all the member States in the course of their bilateral consultations, or merely on the suggestions of certain member States? Why can we not appoint Special Coordinators? Do the reports of the Coordinators represent the personal views of the Coordinators, or do they represent the entire membership of the Conference.

Third, my initial view is that the draft decision as contained in CD/2007/L.1 differs significantly from the proposals put forward by the five Ambassadors. Do the six Presidents share that view, or do you feel that there is no substantive difference between them?

Fourth, in my view the mandates of the Coordinators on the three themes of nuclear disarmament, prevention of an arms race in outer space and negative security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States, as formulated in the draft decision, do not differ from the mandates assigned to the coordinators on those three themes in the organizational framework put forward by the group of six Presidents during the first part of our session. I would like her to quote our previous President, the Ambassador of South Africa, who said: "... the coordinators will arrange and chair deliberations dealing with the agenda items in a comprehensive manner without preconditions, bearing in mind all relevant views and proposals, past, present and future."

(spoke in Chinese)

The draft decision speaks of the appointment of Coordinators to preside over substantive discussion - is my understanding correct? In other words, there is no difference between the two.

Fifth, paragraph 3 in the draft decision talks of "issues related to the prevention of an arms race in outer space". Do these "related issues" simply mean prevention of the deployment of weapons in outer space and prevention of the use or threat of force against outer space objects? If so, why not spell it out?

Sixth, according to the rules of procedure, before the start of each annual session, the Conference should develop a programme of work for that session. However, the draft decision does not set a clear time frame for the Coordinators. In the statement which you have just made, you say:

(Mr. Cheng, China)

(spoke in English)

“[It] will be valid for the 2007 session of the CD.”

(spoke in Chinese)

If this is so, why is this point not clearly spelled out in the draft decision?

These are the issues that are currently on my mind. I hope that the group of six Presidents will be able to respond to each of these issues in an entirely candid manner. This will undoubtedly be of great help to the Chinese delegation in reaching a comprehensive and accurate understanding of these issues and making a detailed study of the draft decision.

The PRESIDENT: I now give the floor to the next speaker on my list, the Ambassador of Bulgaria.

Mr. DRAGANOV (Bulgaria): Madam President, let me congratulate you on your assumption of this high office. We wish you every success in your endeavours. You can count on the full support and cooperation of my delegation. Let me also thank all of the 2007 Presidents for their useful efforts. It is my delegation's sincere hope that the continuity and the work of the 2006 and 2007 Presidents, combined with the good will of all member States, will bring success to the Conference and move it forward this year.

My delegation has been working over the years to help bring this Conference back to substantive work, and I can assure you that we will spare no further effort. I subscribe to the EU joint statement made by Germany just now and join previous speakers who expressed their support for the P-6 proposal. My delegation shares the view that while it may not be perfect, this formula seems to be the only one possible at this stage, and I wish to encourage all member States to grasp the chance and support it in the spirit of constructive cooperation and flexibility.

We should make no mistake about this. The CD may not get a better opportunity any time soon. To use the famous Mandela quote, “the time is now”.

The PRESIDENT: I thank you, and I would like to thank all delegations for the kind words they have addressed to the Chair, to the P-6 and to the coordinators.

The P-6 has tried its best to address the questions of clarification which have been raised at the informal and formal plenaries. We have tried to do it also through intensive bilateral meetings, through the regional group meetings, and we have also invited member States who still seek clarification to meet with the P-6 and eventually to try to take advantage of this momentum in the Conference to take the Conference back to work.

Having said this, having completed the list of speakers for today, I would like to ask if there is any delegation who would wish to take the floor. If not, this concludes our plenary meeting. The next plenary meeting will be held on Thursday, 29 March 2007 at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 11.25 a.m.