

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE ONE THOUSAND AND EIGHTY-FIRST PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 4 September 2007, at 10.20 a.m.

President: Mr. Faysal KHABBAZ HAMOUI (Syrian Arab Republic)

The PRESIDENT (spoke in Arabic): I declare open the 1081st meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. Allow me at the outset to extend a very cordial welcome to our new colleague, His Excellency Ambassador Hans Dahlgren, the Ambassador of Sweden. I should also like, on behalf of the Conference on Disarmament and on my own behalf, to assure Ambassador Dahlgren of our readiness to provide every kind of assistance and support and we wish him the best of luck and success in his new assignment.

On my list of speakers for today there are three delegations. I now give the floor to the first delegation, Algeria.

Mr. KHELIF (Algeria) (spoke in Arabic): His Excellency Ambassador Idriss Jazaïry was supposed to take the floor. However, some urgent last-minute matters have prevented him from attending and he has entrusted me with the delivery of the following statement.

(spoke in French)

Sir, allow me first of all to tell you how happy and pleased we are to see you presiding over our work, which I am convinced will be crowned with success. Your clear-sightedness and your professional skills guarantee it. I should also like to thank your predecessor, the Ambassador of Switzerland, Mr. Jürg Streuli, for the tremendous effort he made during his term as President of the Conference. Mr. President, you are taking up your task at a difficult time, a time marked by both fear and hope. You are also doing so at the end of our 2007 session, when we are expected to report to the General Assembly of the United Nations on the work conducted this year within the Conference, in pursuance of its terms of reference as a multilateral negotiating forum for disarmament. In this connection, I would like to express my gratitude for the draft report that you have presented to us, and through you to the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Sergei Ordzhonikidze, and the entire secretariat of the Conference. It would clearly be very difficult to reflect in a few pages of a report the very smooth debates that we have held throughout the course of this year.

In the absence of agreement on the programme of work, the Algerian delegation welcomed the common platform agreed by the Presidents for this year, which is a follow-up to the mechanism initiated last year. We owe a debt of gratitude to the Ambassador of South Africa and her successors, the Ambassadors of Sri Lanka, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and yourself, Mr. President, for your collective abnegation and the efforts you have made successively, which provided us with a framework for debate adding more visibility and continuity to our work.

In this context, the seven coordinators appointed by the six Presidents on their own responsibility have done good work. Their conclusions on the thematic debate concerning all the items on the agenda, appearing in document CD/1827 dated 16 August 2007, naturally represent their personal assessments; nonetheless, they add new ideas which enhance the assets of the Conference and offer avenues towards a shared understanding of what is at stake.

(Mr. Khelif, Algeria)

In the light of this debate, the six Presidents have engaged in a consolidation exercise designed to bring positions towards consensus on a work programme that is comprehensive and balanced. The package proposed by the six Presidents, comprising a draft decision CD/2007/CRP.6, draft decision CD/2007/L.1 and draft supplementary Presidential statement CD/2007/CRP.5, represent significant progress which could help to overcome the present difficulties and achieve consensus on the programme of work, but we must acknowledge that the content of this package has not yet reached the necessary stage of maturity on the work programme. The efforts thus made, we believe, must be reflected in our report. This report ought not to be a veil concealing developments that have really occurred. In this way, the rule of consensus must not compromise the need to faithfully reflect the positions on all sides, as stipulated in rule 25 of the rules of procedure. Moreover, our report should avoid problematic or selective formulations that could impede our search for agreement or repeat the unfortunate experience of last year. We believe it is important for this report to meet the criteria of the rules of procedure - namely, it should be factual, faithfully reflect the debate and avoid selective quotations and value judgements. In this connection I wish to suggest that our report should reflect the message addressed to the Conference on Disarmament on 21 August 2007 by Mr. Sergio Duarte, High Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations for Disarmament Affairs. The Algerian delegation will have a few comments to make during later discussions in order to improve this draft report, and remains at your disposal, Mr. President, so that together we can send to the General Assembly an objective message which enjoys general acceptance, or at least a lack of opposition.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in Arabic): Thank you very much for those kind words and this important intervention. I would ask you to convey my sincere good wishes to His Excellency Ambassador Idriss Jazaïry.

On the list of speakers for today we have the distinguished Ambassador of China. You have the floor.

Mr. CHENG (China) (spoke in Chinese): Mr. President, allow me, at the outset, to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. It is my firm belief that, under your wise guidance, the Conference will be able smoothly to finalize the work of drafting its annual report. You may count on the active support and cooperation of my delegation.

Since transparency in armaments is an important item on the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament, I would like to take this opportunity to brief you on the latest measures taken by the Chinese Government in this regard. The Chinese Government has always attached great importance to military transparency and transparency in armaments and is making active efforts to build confidence with all other countries. Since 1995, we have published five white papers on national defence and two white papers on arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation, which illustrate in detail China's national defence policy, the progress that it has made in building its national defence and its endeavours to promote arms control and non-proliferation. In addition, we have conducted a series of bilateral and multilateral exchanges aimed at the promotion of transparency in military matters. As a continuation of the above-mentioned efforts, the Chinese Government has recently taken the following two important decisions. First, starting

(Mr. Cheng, China)

from this year, China will participate in the United Nations system for transparency in military expenditures, reporting basic data to the United Nations on its military spending for the previous financial year, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 60/44. Second, in the light of the fact that a certain other country has now stopped submitting data to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms on its illegal exports of arms to Taiwan Province of China, China has decided, with effect from this year, to resume providing information to the Register on its imports and exports of conventional arms in the seven major categories. We have already officially submitted our report for this year to the United Nations Secretariat. These two decisions mark important steps by China in further enhancing its military transparency and demonstrate that China pursues a new concept of security centred on trust and mutual benefit, equality and cooperation and that it supports the key role played by the United Nations in promoting transparency in armaments and mutual trust in the field of security among States. China will continue to work with the international community in a joint endeavour to advance international peace and security.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in Arabic): Thank you, Mr. Ambassador. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Pakistan. You have the floor, Sir.

Mr. KHAN (Pakistan): Mr. President, we would like to congratulate you on the assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament at a very critical moment. We know that the concluding part of the 2007 session needs careful handling, and indeed you are holding consultations in the most prudent and thoughtful manner. Syria has always played a vital role in the field of disarmament. We are glad that you are leading the Conference in an effective manner.

At this point, we would also like to convey our commendation for the skilful leadership of the CD by Ambassador Jürg Streuli of Switzerland.

Yours is the most crucial presidency of the current session, because under your leadership, the CD will complete the report and submit it to the United Nations General Assembly. We are grateful to you for preparing the first draft, which can be an excellent basis for a balanced and consensual report. We appreciate the hard work that has gone into the preparation of this report in order to reflect the developments during the 2007 session.

The CD has given sufficient guidance for report writing, and we have the advantage of precedents because the CD has been presenting reports year after year. The reports give a factual account and reflect the negotiations and work of the Conference; they contain conclusions and decisions, if reached during the year; and they refer to the working papers and proposals submitted during the year.

We will work towards adopting a report that is factual. It should delete repetitive elements and do away with any redundancy. It should avoid value judgements, negative characterizations and selective quotations tilted one way or the other. Wherever we have difficulties in reaching consensus, we can draw upon past precedents.

(Mr. Khan, Pakistan)

Each Conference session adopts its own agenda. No prejudgement is advisable. Our report this year should reflect equal treatment to all issues. It should not indirectly or inadvertently give legitimacy to interim measures taken for functional reasons. Interim measures should not be perceived as alternative mechanisms supplanting the existing ones. Precedents should be a product of conscious decisions taken by the Conference on Disarmament.

Within this framework, we have presented amendments that will, we hope, make the report more balanced. The amendments, which are annexed to our statement, may please be reflected in the official record.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in Arabic): Thank you, Mr. Ambassador, for your statement and for your kind and cordial words to the President of the Conference. I see that the distinguished Ambassador of New Zealand is asking for the floor. You have the floor, Sir.

Mr. MACKAY (New Zealand): Mr. President, could I at the outset echo the comments that have been made by other colleagues with regard to the importance of the role that you have as President? I have complete confidence in the way that you will handle that role. I think too that our confidence is reflected very well in the content of the draft report that you have presented to us.

I have just a couple of comments to make here in the light of the statements that we have heard from distinguished colleagues this morning. The first is to welcome the statement from our distinguished colleague from China. The issue of transparency was something to which a great deal of attention was paid in the informal consultations under the various coordinators. I think that it was clear from the quite extensive discussion about the need for greater transparency on all our parts and greater confidence-building that all colleagues in the Conference attach a huge amount of importance to that. Indeed, I think that the discussion we had about transparency and confidence-building was one of the better discussions that we had in the course of those informal discussions here. We very much welcome further moves by colleagues in the era of transparency and wish to express our appreciation to the distinguished Ambassador of China for the statement that he has given this morning. We look forward to receiving further information following up on the Chinese decision.

Could I then turn to the matter of the report? As I said, I think that the draft that you have presented us with is a draft in which we can have a great deal of confidence. Clearly, from the comments that have been made, several colleagues will have proposals to make to amend it, and I imagine that other colleagues who have not spoken will also have proposals to amend it.

It is very important, I think, that the report maintain the flavour of the discussion that we have had this year. Certainly, as our distinguished colleague from Pakistan has pointed out, for example, there are precedents in relation to other years. As in the nature of precedents, of course, there are good precedents and there are bad precedents. I think that it would be extremely unfortunate if the draft report on this year's work was gutted to the point that a lot of the flavour and the very useful progress that was made during the course of the year under the leadership of the P-6 and also on the basis of the proposal from the P-6 - it would be a great pity if that was to be gutted from the report, because we all know that that work that was done and indeed that

(Mr. Mackay, New Zealand)

proposal and work that was done by the P-6 has advanced our situation a great deal, and I think that if not all of us, certainly the vast majority of us hope that work that was done would enable us to begin our substantive work in the Conference very soon after such a long period of inertia insofar as negotiations are involved.

Obviously, we have not seen all of the proposals for amendments that have been made, and we have just received the proposal from our distinguished colleague from Pakistan, and I thank him for providing his proposed amendments in writing, which is most helpful. I have not had time to go through in detail, having just received them, but I do note that, for example, there is a proposal to delete paragraph 56 of the draft report. Now I think paragraph 56 is one of the few, if not the only, but certainly one of the few, forward-looking paragraphs in the report and it talks about the Conference belief that it should make further intense efforts to build upon the achievements of 2007 for the full harmonization of views on its main priorities and to keep the momentum that has been created to move the Conference on Disarmament out of its long-standing stalemate. I think that that is very clearly the sense of the room from the discussion and comments that I have heard from colleagues, and I think that it would be extremely unfortunate if that particular sentiment, for example, was to be removed from the document.

So my fundamental point is that although precedents are important, we should not allow ourselves to be strangled by precedent. We have had, I think, a particularly good year in the Conference. Unfortunately, it has not been a good year in the sense that we have been able to commence negotiations, but otherwise it has been a good year, and I think that the report needs to reflect that and to retain the flavour of that year. Obviously, we are not in a situation to begin negotiating the report in this formal meeting, but as the amendments in question have been presented formally to a formal meeting at this stage, it seemed to me that it was also desirable to have at least one other view on the record. As I said, I should like to thank our distinguished colleague from Pakistan for providing his proposals in an easily handleable way, and I should like to thank our colleague from Algeria for his intervention, too, on the matter of the report, and again, our distinguished colleague from China for the indications that he has made with regard to the intentions of his Government with regard to greater transparency, which, as I say, is a sentiment I am sure we can all endorse.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in Arabic): Thank you for that constructive statement. Would any delegation like to take the floor at this stage? The Ambassador of Italy, you have the floor, Sir.

Mr. TREZZA (Italy): Mr. President, first of all I would like to welcome our new Swedish colleague and wish him a good and productive stay here in Geneva. I would also like to thank you for circulating the draft report, which in our view correctly reflects the, I would say, exceptional work done by the Conference, and that means all of us this year. We are looking forward to working on it in a constructive way, as other delegations have already said.

Like my colleague from New Zealand, I would express our appreciation for the statement made by the Ambassador of China, who announced that from now on China would participate in the reporting of military expenses as well as in the United Nations Register for arms transfer. This is indeed an indication of transparency, which is to be welcomed.

(Mr. Trezza, Italy)

I thank our colleague from Algeria, who on behalf of his Ambassador made a statement of general support to the report, and I take good note of the constructive remarks and suggestions that he made. He mentioned - for which I thank him - the work done by the coordinators. I happen to be one of the coordinators, and therefore I appreciate this reference. I would like to draw attention to the fact that the work done, which is included in document CD/1827, is a report. This is what the President asked the coordinators to do, to report factually on the work done on the substantial agenda items of this year. So it is work which was based on documents presented by the membership of the CD, as I said, factual as much as possible.

I also refer to the statement by our colleague the Ambassador of Pakistan. We shall read with great attention the amendments that his delegation proposes. I am not in a position to comment on them at this stage. I would, however, like to say that I take good note of his statement that the report should reflect the developments during the 2007 session, which indeed, as I said, was a particularly fruitful session.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in Arabic): I thank Ambassador Trezza of Italy. I see the delegation of the United Kingdom. Ambassador, you have the floor.

Mr. DUNCAN (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland): Mr. President, first let me begin by congratulating you on the assumption of the presidency of the P-6 and also for continuing the consensus-building role of your predecessors in producing this first draft of our report to the First Committee, which is an excellent basis for work, in our view.

The work of the P-6 this year has continued the remarkable efforts of the previous year in developing a method of work which has allowed us to have real discussion in detail on a wide range of issues under the CD agenda. Some of these issues have been contentious, but all delegations have engaged in good faith. From this good basis we have developed a possible compromise package to allow the CD to fulfil its real role and begin negotiations while continuing substantive discussion on key issues, i.e. not simply an exchange of views, but holding the possibility of progress in the real world. Despite our disappointment that it was not possible to achieve consensus on the package put forward by the presidency this year, we have been encouraged by the energy and determination shown by a wide range of delegations to find a solution and a spirit of compromise, which has characterized our discussions.

Turning to the report itself, we have heard over recent weeks from a number of delegations that they wish to capture and report the good work that has taken place this year. There is certainly no desire to seek to attribute blame for our inability to achieve consensus. But, as in the past, those countries which could not yet agree to join the majority should not seek to hide that fact that they have exercised their sovereign and legitimate rights not to join consensus. It would then, in our view, be a mistake to try and hide this fact, and it would do a disservice to the claim which has been made by all members of this institution - and I include those members who were not able to join the consensus on the compromise package - that they value the role of the CD and they see it having a potential role in dealing with the challenges of the twenty-first century.

(Mr. Duncan, United Kingdom)

So to conclude, Mr. President, in our view you have produced an excellent first-draft report, which meets the requirements of balance and honesty. We should stick to it and not change it beyond certain technical details.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in Arabic): Thank you for your statement and kind words. Would any other delegations like to take the floor? The delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran. You have the floor, Sir.

Mr. SAJJADPOUR (Islamic Republic of Iran): Mr. President, I would like to thank you for preparing the draft report of the CD to the United Nations General Assembly. In principle we believe that the report should be factual, not repetitive, and should also avoid value judgements. In the view of my delegation, your report is well prepared and, with some small modifications, can be adopted by the Conference.

Paragraph 4, summarizing the addresses by dignitaries, seems to be inconclusive and needs more elaboration. Some more issues, including the preparation of a balanced and comprehensive programme of work of the CD, raised by the dignitaries, merit mention in this paragraph.

With regard to the initiative of the P-6, we appreciated the initiative by the P-6, but at the same time we are of the view that the rules of procedure should always be followed in the work of the CD. So this should not be interpreted as a precedent in that regard in the future. More elaboration in paragraphs 15 and 29 in that line is also needed.

Our understanding from paragraphs 56 and 57 is that in the work of the Conference on Disarmament all the four core issues should be treated equally, and the programme of work needs to be responsive to all those priorities.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in Arabic): Thank you very much for your statement. Are there any other delegations? The Ambassador of Turkey. You have the floor, Sir.

Mr. ÜZÜMCÜ (Turkey): Mr. President, like previous speakers, I want to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference and assure you of our close cooperation and support.

The report before us, which summarizes the work accomplished by the Conference over the last eight months, is an accurate one. It is factual and, in our view, balanced. We believe that it would be practically impossible to cover all the points made by every delegation, albeit every issue that we discussed was important.

We were not able to achieve what we aimed for in 2007, but we think that we did lay the groundwork for next year. As one of the countries which will assume the presidency during the next year, we hope that no major changes will be proposed to the existing draft report. As it stands, the report in our view provides us with a minimum basis to ensure a smooth transition to the following sessions of the CD.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in Arabic): Thank you for your kind wishes. We, the six Presidents for the current year, also look forward to cooperating with you in the coming days in order, as you said, to make a smooth and acceptable transition to next year. Would any other delegation like to take the floor? I do not see any. Therefore, this concludes our formal meeting. As I told you last week, this formal meeting will be followed in 10 minutes' time by an informal session which shall be confined to members and observer States. We shall meet 10 minutes from now. I declare this formal meeting adjourned.

The meeting rose at 10.50 a.m.