

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/PV.1121
3 February 2009

ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE ONE THOUSAND ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-FIRST PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 3 February 2009, at 10.10 a.m.

President: Mr. Le Hoai TRUNG (Viet Nam)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 1121st plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. At the beginning and in the name of the delegation of Viet Nam, and also as President of the Conference, I would like to convey to the delegation of India our deep condolences at the passing away of former President Venkataraman of India. We would like to ask the delegation of India to convey our condolences to the Government of India and also to the family of the former President, H.E. Mr. Venkataraman.

I would now like to extend a warm welcome to our distinguished guest, H.E. Dr. Dipu Moni, the newly appointed Foreign Minister of Bangladesh. Her presence here among us today is a clear testimony to the importance attached by our distinguished guest and the Government of Bangladesh to the work of the Conference on Disarmament.

I have the pleasure and the honour to invite H.E. Dr. Dipu Moni to take the floor.

Ms. MONI (Bangladesh): It is a pleasure to address the Conference on Disarmament under the chairmanship of Viet Nam, a fellow Asian country with whom we have excellent bilateral relations.

Bangladesh attaches great importance to general and complete disarmament. It is our constitutional commitment. We know that armaments are not a part of the solution that we seek towards attaining a secure and peaceful world. Thus, Bangladesh is party to all major disarmament treaties. These include the Non-proliferation Treaty, the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty, the Biological and Chemical Weapons Conventions, the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and the Land Mine Treaty. We emphasize the need for strict adherence, non-discriminatory enforcement and full transparency in their implementation.

Bangladesh's abiding commitment to international peace and security is also reflected through our strong participation in United Nations peacekeeping operations. Our armed forces and police personnel have made significant contributions in virtually all post-conflict situations since the eighties.

Weapons of mass destruction pose the gravest threat to humankind. For almost four decades, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty has been the most important instrument for preventing the spread of nuclear arms. As we approach the next Review Conference in 2010, we are aware of the serious challenges faced by the NPT that, if not attended to, might jeopardize the whole process. In this context, the nuclear-weapon States have special responsibilities in fulfilling their commitment to eliminate nuclear armament. As a State party to the NPT, Bangladesh has consciously given up its option to go nuclear. We were also the first country in South Asia to sign the CTBT. We hope that all concerned will move towards strengthening measures for durable peace in South Asia. We continue to hold that only the total elimination of nuclear weapons can provide absolute guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. In this context, we are also supportive of regional approaches to nuclear disarmament. We have appreciated the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones in various regions. We are particularly encouraged by the entry into force on 11 December 2008 of the Central Asian Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty. We support the establishment of such regimes in South Asia, the Middle East and other parts of the world. We believe this will contribute to

(Ms. Moni, Bangladesh)

regional confidence-building measures and reduce threat to the security of non-nuclear-weapon States. While we abhor nuclear weapons, we value the potential of nuclear energy to boost our underdeveloped economies. We also acknowledge that such peaceful pursuits would have to be in accordance with international safeguards.

The continued production of fissile material is a threat to nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. Bangladesh supports a negotiating mandate for a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other explosive devices. Negotiations should extend to existing stockpiles, without which any such treaty would be incomplete.

We stress that non-nuclear States parties to the NPT have a legitimate right to receive an unconditional assurance from the nuclear-weapon States that they will not use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against them. It is, therefore, critically important that the CD undertakes renewed and vigorous efforts to develop a legally-binding framework for providing such assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States.

Outer space is the common heritage of humankind. It must be explored for peaceful purposes only. The militarization of outer space could spiral into an arms race. This “multi-billion dollar race for destruction” has to be prevented. The onus lies on the countries that have the capability to reach outer space. They will have to ensure that outer space is used exclusively for peaceful purposes. When the Conference on Disarmament resumes its substantive work, it must take up this issue of adopting an international instrument to avert the weaponization of space.

Bangladesh places particular emphasis on the Conference on Disarmament. This is the sole multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament. It has a track record of past successes like the CTBT and the CCW. Regrettably, the CD has been going through a barren period since 1996. The Conference needs to turn the corner and come out of the wilderness. We hope that members will reach an agreement soon to renew substantive work in the Conference. I am pleased to note that there have been encouraging indications that the coming years may be more productive for disarmament negotiations. The non-proliferation Review Conference next year and the biological weapons Review Conference the year after would be indicative in this regard. However, in the Conference on Disarmament, a consensus on the programme of work still eludes us. It should be a matter of concern to all of us. We consider it vital that the CD plays its unique role. We must not allow the risk of CD becoming redundant by failing to deliver on its mandated responsibility. A creative consensus among members will allow the CD to embark on substantive negotiations. For that all members have to demonstrate flexibility and strong political will. There is also a need to look at the Conference itself, to see what can be done to bring global voices for disarmament into this august chamber. Bangladesh will continue to lend its support for an early consensus. As the first President of 2010, we are aware of the responsibility that will be placed on us in steering the work of the Conference. We are prepared to work with all delegations to advance our common interest.

(Ms. Moni, Bangladesh)

It is estimated that the world spent a staggering \$1.4 trillion in 2007 on armament - a real-terms increase of 6 per cent over 2006 and of 45 per cent since 1998. This amount corresponds to \$202 for every person in the world. Clearly, States are spending excessive financial, technological and human resources on armament. At a time when the global financial crisis threatens to roll back the development gains, pushing millions below the poverty line and making the Millennium Development Goal attainment extremely difficult, such mindless expenditure must be reversed. Resources need to be freed to address pressing development challenges. Imagine the number of schools we could have constructed, or the early warning systems we could have set up, or the quantum of renewable energy we could have generated if some of that money could be diverted to worthy causes. We urge all countries, especially the major armament producing and procuring countries, to recognize that we can ill afford to continue such spending when our people are hungry, without basic needs and vulnerable to disease, climate change and natural disasters.

I would therefore conclude by urging once again all members to arrive at an early consensus on beginning substantive disarmament negotiations in the Conference.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Foreign Minister of Bangladesh, Ms. Dipu Moni, for her very important statement and for her kind words to my country, Viet Nam. We are proud of the excellent relations that we have with your country, Bangladesh.

Now allow me to suspend the meeting for a short moment in order to escort the Foreign Minister from the Chamber.

The meeting was suspended at 10.20 a.m. and resumed at 10.25 a.m.

The PRESIDENT: We now resume our meeting.

I would like to report to you that the informal consultations I have conducted up to now show that no consensus exists as yet on a programme of work on the basis of any existing formal or informal proposal to commence negotiations on any one issue. I noted during my consultations a number of concerns, but also hopes, on the efforts made in the previous years to enable the Conference to move forward so as to break out of the long years of impasse. Therefore, all delegations believe that we should continue our efforts to bridge the differences and find a way to foster consensus on the start of our substantive work. We have made a good start by adopting the agenda expeditiously. This agenda addresses the concerns of all, since it has enabled the Conference to address issues relevant to international security.

While there are some differing views on procedures coming out of the informal consultations that I and the other Presidents of the year have had with member States and our exchanges with the regional coordinators, I would like to inform you that no principled opposition exists to the appointment by the presidency, and under its responsibility, of coordinators for each substantive agenda item for this year. Therefore, I wish to inform the members that there is an understanding in the Conference that it agrees to the appointment of coordinators by the 2009 Presidents of the Conference for all the substantive items on the agenda, without prejudice to any future decisions of the Conference on this programme of work.

(The President)

Under the authority of the 2009 Presidents of the Conference, the Coordinators will organize and share deliberations dealing with the substantive agenda items in a comprehensive manner, without preconditions, bearing in mind all relevant views and proposals past, present and future. The Coordinators will report the outcome of the discussions on the relevant substantive agenda items to the 2009 CD Presidents, who, in conjunction with each of the Coordinators, will finalize the report on the progress achieved on each of these agenda items. The 2009 Presidents of the Conference will periodically report to the Conference on the progress achieved by the Coordinators.

In accordance with the above-mentioned points, I am pleased to announce that the 2009 Presidents of the Conference on Disarmament appoint the following persons as Coordinators:

Ambassador Portales of Chile, for agenda items 1 (Cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament) and 2 (Prevention of nuclear war, including all related matters), with a general focus on nuclear disarmament

Ambassador Manfredi of Italy, for agenda items 1 (Cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament) and 2 (Prevention of nuclear war, including all related matters), with a general focus on the prohibition of the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices

Ambassador Grinius of Canada, for agenda item 3 (Prevention of an arms race in outer space)

Ambassador Mbaye of Senegal, for agenda item 4 (Effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons)

Ambassador Draganov of Bulgaria for agenda item 5 (New types of weapons of mass destruction and new systems of such weapons; radiological weapons)

Ambassador Jayatilleka of Sri Lanka, for agenda item 6 (Comprehensive programme of disarmament)

Ambassador Puja of Indonesia, for agenda item 7 (Transparency in armaments)

Regarding the forthcoming meetings of the Conference, the organizational framework that contains information about our future meetings has been circulated. In this regard you are requested kindly to note that more specific details regarding the various informal meetings will be forthcoming from the Coordinators in the future in order to assist delegations in their planning for the meetings.

In reaching the above understandings, I wish to thank all delegations for their flexibility and constructive contributions that have allowed us to continue activities under this format so as to enable the Conference to narrow its differences, and we are aware that we hope for more. My

(The President)

profound appreciation goes to our colleagues, the distinguished Ambassadors who have done the Chair the honour and pleasure of accepting the responsibility of coordinating the debate on the various substantive agenda items. I am convinced that they will find all the support and backing that they need among all delegations in order to perform their task in the interest of the Conference.

In my consultations, a number of delegations, including the other Presidents of the year, have raised the issue of the statement delivered on the occasion of International Women's Day. At this stage, I would like to inform you that the discussions are still ongoing about the organization of the event.

This brings us to statements by delegations. I have on my list the following delegations: Georgia and India.

I now give the floor to Mr. Giorgi Gorgiladze, the distinguished Ambassador of Georgia.

Mr. GORGILADZE (Georgia): Mr. President, allow me to express our sincere appreciation to the member States of the Conference on Disarmament for accepting Georgia's request regarding participation at the 2009 session of the Conference as an observer. I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference.

Now let me comment on the statement of the Russian Federation made at the informal meeting on 27 January 2009 concerning the above-mentioned request by Georgia.

I would like to remind the Russian delegation that at the last meeting of the 2008 session the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament appealed not to use the Conference for political propaganda. In this context, let me highlight that Georgia has not been the initiator of the political debates in the course of previous sessions, but when unjustified accusations are put forward, we have to respond based on facts, especially taking into account wide experience of the same rhetoric used by the Russian side before August 2008 in order to pave the way for future aggression.

Allegedly, the Russian side is concerned about the supply of weapons to Georgia in the context of the unresolved conflict. However, the international community is well aware that the claim is groundless and it is Russia that has been supplying its proxy regimes with modern military equipment, even under peacekeeping cover. Currently Russia is engaged in the militarization of the occupied Georgian territories - Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region - at an accelerated pace. In violation of all international norms, principles and international obligations assumed and in addition to the well-known Gudauta military base (which should have been withdrawn by 2001), it is setting up a broad military infrastructure (including land, naval and air components) in Ochamchire, Upper Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region. Furthermore, it is trying to eventually force international missions out of the occupied territories in order to restrict and preferably nullify the international community's access to objective information on an uncontrolled build-up of the Russian occupation troops and their military equipment.

(Mr. Gorgiladze, Georgia)

All the above provide further evidence of what Georgia has been repeatedly trying to prove. All the actions of Russia directed against Georgia - promotion of separatism and support for the separatist regimes, militarization of the conflict zones, direct aggression against a sovereign State, invasion of the Georgian territories, mass and gross human rights violations, ethnic cleansing conducted on these territories, attempts to legitimize proxy regimes, serve the goal of providing a solid bridgehead for the Russian military bases.

In this context, it has to be emphasized that it is Russia which has suspended its participation in the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, continues to supply weapons and military equipment to the conflict zones and poses a real threat to international peace and security.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of Georgia for his statement. I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of India, Ambassador Hamid Ali Rao.

Mr. RAO (India): Mr. President, the Indian delegation congratulates you on your assumption of the presidency. We would like to assure you of our full cooperation in the discharge of your responsibilities. We would also like to thank you for the able manner in which you have undertaken consultations with the membership of the Conference. I thank you for conveying condolences on the death of the former President of India, Mr. Venkataraman.

We associate ourselves with the statement made on behalf of the Group of 21.

We commence the 2009 annual session against the backdrop of an uncertain international situation resulting in multiple challenges to global peace and security. As member States of the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum of the international community, we have a responsibility to work together to fulfil the mandate of this Conference to negotiate multilateral treaties which, while addressing the challenges to international security, also safeguard our vital national security interests. That this Conference has been unable to move forward on its main vocation, that is, the negotiation of multilateral treaties of universal application, for over a decade now is cause for disappointment. The obstacles to such progress are not the CD's rules of procedure or its rule of consensus. We hope that the Conference is able to reach common agreement on substantive issues to take forward our work. As in previous years, India will contribute constructively to discussions with the aim of the CD commencing substantive work by reaching consensus on its programme of work.

India attaches priority to the goal of nuclear disarmament. India's Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh, reiterated in the United Nations General Assembly on 26 September 2008 India's proposal for a nuclear-weapon convention banning the production, development, stockpiling and use of nuclear weapons and providing for their complete elimination within a specified time frame. This is consistent with India's longstanding and steadfast commitment to universal, non-discriminatory and total elimination of nuclear weapons, which was put forward in the Rajiv Gandhi Action Plan in 1988.

(Mr. Rao, India)

India has put forward a number of proposals on nuclear disarmament at the General Assembly. The sixty-third session of the General Assembly approved the resolution sponsored by India on a convention on the prohibition of the use and threat of use of nuclear weapons, which calls upon the CD to commence negotiations on an international convention prohibiting the use and threat of use of nuclear weapons under any circumstances. India tabled a working paper, CD/1816, in the CD containing several proposals on nuclear disarmament.

We welcome the renewed and active debate among scholars and statesmen on nuclear disarmament. A number of countries have also launched initiatives to add new life to the global disarmament agenda. Even among those nuclear-weapon States that were reluctant supporters of nuclear reductions, there appears to be a new willingness to ponder the relevance and future of nuclear weapons. These trends must be further strengthened with the effort to achieve the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, rather than ad hoc steps on non-proliferation, an approach whose limitations we have seen in the past.

We feel that there is a responsibility on the Conference on Disarmament to meaningfully respond to growing international opinion in favour of nuclear disarmament. At the same time, we recognize that these are complex issues, and achieving the goal of global nuclear disarmament, in a verifiable and irreversible manner, will be a long and arduous process. But in order to commence the consideration of these complex issues, India would like to reiterate its proposal made last year that the CD should consider the appointment of a special coordinator to assist in carrying out consultations on a specific set of measures that have the potential of commanding consensus which can form the basis of a mandate for a possible ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament.

India supports the establishment of an ad hoc committee on FMCT as a part of the CD's programme of work. India was one of the original co-sponsors of United Nations General Assembly resolution 48/75/L, adopted in 1993, which envisaged FMCT as a significant contribution to nuclear non-proliferation in all its aspects. India was able to join the 1993 international consensus on FMCT, as it reflected with clarity the common understanding of the basic objective of the treaty. Clarity on the mandate enabled India to join consensus and on that basis support the negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on a non-discriminatory, multilateral, and internationally and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices in 1995 and 1998.

India has had a consistent position on FMCT. We believe that the CD is the appropriate forum for negotiating the FMCT. These negotiations should be conducted through an ad hoc committee or a subsidiary body of the CD in accordance with its rules of procedure and as a part of a formal decision by the Conference on its programme of work. We believe that common understanding and clarity on the mandate would ensure the smooth conduct and successful conclusion of negotiations. India will participate actively to build the necessary international consensus so as to enable the CD to move forward on this important issue, to negotiate and conclude a universal, non-discriminatory and verifiable treaty banning the future production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other explosive devices. It is obvious that the treaty would have to meet India's national security interests.

(Mr. Rao, India)

India supports negotiations with a view to reaching agreement on effective arrangements to ensure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use and threat of use of nuclear weapons. On this important issue, the CD can make a meaningful contribution by undertaking negotiations on an appropriate agreement in an ad hoc committee on negative security assurances. India has espoused a policy of no-first-use and non-use against non-nuclear States and is prepared to convert these undertakings into multilateral, legal arrangements.

There is a growing concern that current technological developments, in particular related to assets, may impact negatively on the present international legal framework on outer space. We therefore support international efforts to reinforce safety and security of space-based assets and to prevent the placement of weapons in outer space. There are a number of proposals on the table, including a draft treaty tabled by Russia and China, which deserve further consideration.

There is no legal regime of universal applicability governing the position and use of missiles. Any proposal to address the issue of missiles should be based on the principle of equal and legitimate security and should be universal and non-discriminatory in its application.

I would like to conclude by placing on record our deep appreciation for the efforts that have been undertaken by you and your predecessors to build on the momentum of the previous years with the aim of finding common ground to enable the CD to commence substantive work. India will work with other delegations to make progress towards our common goal, which is reaching consensus on a programme of work to enable the CD to move forward. We are hopeful that our common efforts will bear substantive fruit in the coming months.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador Rao for his statement, the kind words that he addressed to me and also the support that his delegation has shown for the Presidents of the year. I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of the Russian Federation, Mr. Victor Vasiliev.

Mr. VASILIEV (Russian Federation) (spoke in Russian): Mr. President, my delegation would like to thank you and the other Presidents for the work you have done and, in particular, for the document you circulated containing the organizational framework for our work at the 2009 session. We believe it will afford all of us good opportunities to discuss a wide range of issues in the fields of disarmament and international security, and my delegation plans to participate most actively in these discussions.

Unfortunately I am compelled to react to the statement made by the distinguished representative of Georgia.

Let me first of all correct my distinguished colleague and say that the statement made by my delegation on 27 January was delivered in plenary, in a formal meeting of the Conference on Disarmament, and this was for a very simple reason: to ensure that States could familiarize

(Mr. Vasiliev, Russian Federation)

themselves with the text and have it before them. If you read the statement carefully, the most important idea put forward in it is that the Conference must deal with the questions under its consideration. We feel it is counterproductive to try to sidetrack the Conference. Unfortunately, today we have seen yet another demonstration of the attempts that are being made to divert the Conference from the issues on its agenda. I would like to remind the distinguished representative of Georgia that very soon, on 17 and 18 February here in Geneva, there will be another round of the Geneva discussions, where it will be possible to discuss the most wide-ranging subjects and put the most varied questions, including those contained in the distinguished Georgian representative's statement. I assure you that we have just as many questions for the Georgian side, but I think that these questions should be tackled in the appropriate context and in the appropriate manner.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of the Russian Federation for his statement and also for the kind words that he addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ambassador Nejad.

Mr. NEJAD (Islamic Republic of Iran): Mr. President, my delegation is grateful to you, particularly for your efforts to mobilize the efforts of the CD to make an important first step in 2009 to appoint special coordinators on agenda items of the Conference on Disarmament. The coordinators will have an important role in leading the thematic discussions and an important role in giving their report to the President of the Conference. So we congratulate you and the Conference for this decision today.

On this occasion, I would like to refer to document CD/WP.553 on the organizational framework of the Conference during the 2009 session. In this paper a reference has been made to the group of six, the P6, alongside other regional meetings and groupings in the Conference. I would like to reiterate that, although we have always appreciated the efforts of the Presidents and their joint efforts to contribute to the effective functioning of the Conference, it has been pointed out several times by different delegations, including mine, that the P6 does not evidently constitute a group among the formal groupings in this Conference. So any reference in this working paper to the P6, which we consider just illustrative and not a substantive document, should not be construed as giving any formal status to this grouping. My delegation expects that this position will be taken into account in future documentation of the Conference.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran for his statement, and we do take note of the point that you have raised. I now give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador of Pakistan, Mr. Zamir Akram.

Mr. AKRAM (Pakistan): Mr. President, despite our reservations on the role and status of the Coordinators, Pakistan will not oppose the CD Presidents' decision on appointing these Coordinators, under their own responsibility, to chair informal discussions on all agenda items. I would like to reiterate that there is a need to differentiate between the role of the Coordinators to facilitate informal discussions and the functions of formal CD subsidiary bodies to conduct

(Mr. Akram, Pakistan)

negotiations in the context of the programme of work. The Coordinators will work informally under the authority of the CD Presidents. Their reports will have no status as part of the documents of the CD.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of Pakistan for his statement, and we do take note of the point that he has made.

Does any delegation wish to take the floor at this stage? That does not seem to be the case. So this concludes our business for today.

The next plenary meeting will be on Thursday, 5 February, at 10 a.m. in this Chamber.

The meeting rose at 10.50 a.m.