
Conference on Disarmament

26 June 2009

English

Final record of the one thousand one hundred and forty-fourth plenary meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Friday, 26 June 2009, at 10.25 a.m.

President: Mr. Roberto García Moritán (Argentina)

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The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I call to order the 1144th meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

I wonder whether any delegation would at this point, and in the light of the plenary meeting yesterday, care to take the floor. As you know, we have two documents in front of us (CD/1866 and CD/1867), which we are all familiar with. The distinguished representative of Sweden has asked for the floor.

Mr. Hellgren (Sweden): Mr. President, thank you for giving me the occasion to speak as coordinator of the Group of Western European and Other States and to reiterate on this occasion what I already expressed in the Presidential consultations yesterday: that our Group is ready — very much ready — to accept the two documents that you have proposed to us that will take us to the next stage of implementing our work programme. So, in the view of the Group of Western European and Other States, CD/1866 and CD/1867 are an acceptable basis on which to start implementing our work programme now. We support your endeavours to finalize your consultations so that we can take the appropriate decisions as soon as possible. We are ready to take them today and at any moment that you feel ready.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the distinguished delegate of Sweden for his statement on behalf of the Western Group. Any other delegation? I recognize the distinguished delegation of Romania.

Ms. Bloecană (Romania): Mr. President, on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States, I would like to express support for the two documents you have presented. Our Group is ready not only to support these papers but also to remain engaged in a constructive continuation of the work here and to support any developments which could help in moving things forward in this endeavour.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the distinguished delegation of Romania for its statement on behalf of the Eastern European Group. Would any other delegation like to take the floor? I recognize the distinguished delegation of Mexico.

Ms. Gómez-Oliver (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, allow me first of all to convey my very sincere appreciation for your performance as President, your devotion, your time, your skill, your professionalism, which unfortunately have not so far been rewarded with a consensus that would enable us to make progress and commence our substantive activities.

I would like to thank you for enabling me to take the floor in order to convey our sense of frustration. We cannot conceal it because we thought that between yesterday and today we would be able to arrive at a consensus that would enable us, as I have already said, to commence our substantive activities. For years, in explaining the lack of activity in this Conference, the argument which we gave to our capital was the impossibility of adopting a programme of work. But now we have a programme of work and yet we have not been able to take the step to commence our substantive activity. This state of affairs places us in an extremely difficult situation vis-à-vis our capitals, our governments, our public opinion. It is much harder for them to understand what reasons continue to keep us inactive, particularly when on the international stage there are very positive prospects for progress which a few weeks ago were very clearly reflected here in this Conference.

We regret the fact that we continue to postpone the commencement of our activities, that we continue to fall short vis-à-vis our population, our public opinion, civil society, the international community in general, to whom we are not yet able to offer our contribution, however modest it may be, to international peace and security.

Nevertheless, my delegation would like to say that we remain optimistic and hopeful, because that is how we can maintain the enthusiasm and energy required to

overcome the obstacles which are facing our mandate on the path towards an objective which, on the basis of what we have heard in recent weeks, is a shared objective, that of achieving a world free of nuclear weapons.

Mexico is ready to adopt documents CD/1866 and CD/1867, and we are also ready to continue to support you, Sir, and the other Presidents for 2009 in taking decisive steps towards the fulfilment of our shared objective, a world free of nuclear weapons.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the distinguished delegation of Mexico for its statement. Would any other delegation like to take the floor? I give the floor to the distinguished delegation of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Duncan (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland): Mr. President, I have to admit to a certain degree of puzzlement as to what exactly is happening. We have heard views of support for your proposal, and, after all, this is a procedural issue. It is not a contentious issue. It is by the nature of a procedure that the decisions have been in circulation for well over a week. In these days of modern communication that ought to be enough for delegations to get instructions.

The United Kingdom and senior politicians had thought that the Conference on Disarmament would be able to get back to substantive work thanks to the decision taken under the Algerian presidency, and that the pressure to take work outside the institutional architecture, as we saw with cluster munitions only 18 months ago, would be a thing of the past. Good as those results were, it is not the way that we wish to conduct international affairs. We believed we were in a new era where the international organizations would assume their responsibility and, as I said yesterday, States who possess nuclear weapons would assume their responsibility and engage constructively with the rest of the world community.

So I am slightly puzzled as to what exactly the problem is now, and I find myself in some difficulty in terms of reporting back to my political authorities — as no doubt other colleagues will in reporting back to theirs — because I think they will find it difficult to understand. In this case, I would be very appreciative if you could ask formally which of the colleagues around the table in this room is not yet in a position to agree on this basically procedural question.

I am sorry to have to ask this, but really, in order to understand and explain the situation to my authorities, I will need to have a clearer idea than I currently have.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the distinguished Ambassador of the United Kingdom for his statement. Would any other delegation care to take the floor at this point? If not, I would like to inform that after yesterday's plenary meeting, where everyone had an opportunity to take note of the various statements that were made in this room, I continued the consultations to see whether we could manage to make progress on the minor details which remain in front of us. The same situation with regard to consultations continued this morning. I find that we are in a situation similar to the one in which we found ourselves in yesterday's plenary. I wonder whether there is any fresh element which might enable us to make progress compared to the situation in which we find ourselves. The silence in the chamber makes clear that we are in the same situation as that in which we found ourselves yesterday morning. I do not find that there is sufficient room for the Conference to be able to adopt a decision this morning. Notwithstanding, if any delegation feels it appropriate to emphasize any question again, I would be more than happy to give it the floor. I recognize the distinguished delegation of France.

Mr. Danon (France) (*spoke in French*): There are days when the atmosphere is heavy, days when silences are positive silences and others when silences are rather

ambiguous. There are days when silences allow you to imagine that you are moving towards a solution, and days when the silences leave us totally doubting everything.

I think we need to try to get out of this very difficult moment where we have the impression that we are close to the adoption of a decision but the moment has not yet come.

Basically, we understood that the consultations do not on the face of it allow you as far as you are concerned to consider that consensus might be achieved. At the same time, it is not a question of pointing a finger at anybody who might have problems with the text, but we could at least make progress on finding out whether countries are against the documents or whether all countries in the room are ready to adopt it except for those which have no instructions, which is not the same thing.

At least we would have taken a small step if we were convinced that in this room there are only countries which are ready to accept the two documents and others which have no instructions as to acceptance of these documents.

The fact of knowing already that no country opposes adoption would, it seems to me, be a small step forward compared with yesterday, but an important symbolic step.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the distinguished Ambassador of France for his statement. I recognize the distinguished Ambassador of Japan, who has asked for the floor.

Mr. Suda (Japan): Mr. President, I will make my intervention very brief. I would just like to endorse very strongly and completely what the previous speakers have said, particularly our Mexican colleague, our United Kingdom colleague and, I think, our French colleague also. They have made very constructive suggestions. We cannot continue to come to the plenaries every week and just sit here without saying anything, just keeping quiet and making no suggestions. So I hope there will be some kind of breakthrough in this work very quickly.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the distinguished Ambassador of Japan for his statement. Would any other delegation care to take the floor?

We find ourselves in a very special situation. We have two documents in front of us – CD/1866 and CD/1867. A number of delegations and regional groups have expressed views and various delegations have stressed the importance of our addressing the matter this morning.

From my consultations, as I told you a moment ago, it appears that we find ourselves in the same stalemate situation as we found ourselves in yesterday. The delegations at yesterday's meeting expressed their points of view. I think we all listened to them carefully. I think we all accordingly have a clear picture of the situation in which we find ourselves.

Yet I believe that there is a possibility for us to find a solution certainly in the next few hours. I think it is important for us to preserve the constructive atmosphere among all delegations in order to make firm progress as soon as possible. I can understand in a very special way the concern of delegations that we should take a decision straight away; in fact, nothing would please me more than to do so. However, it is my understanding that the Conference on Disarmament is not yet in a position to adopt a decision on these two documents. I think that preserving the atmosphere within our Conference is an important aspect which we should all bear in mind and I hope that the weekend will enable us to reflect carefully on the situation we are passing through.

Yesterday's plenary meeting was clear in that respect. I think none of us has any doubt as to the nature of the situation, the difficulties and the requirements for additional delay which we will have to take into account. In this context, unless one of you would like

to take the floor, I think it is important to recall that we have in front of us documents CD/1866 and CD/1867. We will have to take a decision on this matter as soon as possible. As for those delegations which in yesterday's plenary meeting expressed some difficulties and the need for additional time, I think we would be very grateful if they managed to resolve those aspects so that we can all take a decision as speedily as possible. I wonder once again whether any delegation would like to take the floor. If not, I am sure the delegations which require more time will make use of the weekend to that purpose, and I am also sure that the diplomatic skills of my successor, the distinguished Ambassador of Australia, will assure us that the Conference on Disarmament will manage to enter fully into action in the next few days. I wish her every success in that regard. As I see no delegation wishing to take the floor, I would like to express my thanks to the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and all his team for their support, the interpreters and conference services, the coordinators from the regional groups and China, who have had the patience to accompany me during many consultations, I express sincere thanks to you all for your support. Naturally my thanks to the P6, who have always been of great assistance and a source of inspiration. In particular, my thanks to each and every delegation. It has been a pleasure to consult you all. I think that we are on the threshold of major decisions, and I thank all of you for the spirit which has prevailed in those consultations, and I would like to thank Mariela Fogante for the patience she displayed during this month of June. Dear colleagues, thank you all. This concludes our work for today. The next formal plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament is scheduled under the presidency of Australia on Tuesday, 30 June at 10 a.m. in this same conference room, although I would like to note that there is a possibility of convening an earlier plenary. If no other delegation would like to take the floor – I recognize the distinguished Ambassador of Australia.

Ms. Millar (Australia): Mr. President, thank you for your kind, encouraging words to me, and let me personally thank you for your excellent efforts in the past month.

I would just like to advise all delegations, as I informed the regional groups yesterday in our meeting, that at the next plenary meeting, on Tuesday, 30 June, I will have with me in my delegation my former boss, the former foreign minister of Australia, who is going to address the Conference on where the International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament, which he is co-chairing with his Japanese colleague, has got to in its deliberations. I have previously advised most of you about this, and I am very pleased he is able to come. What I intend to do is to close the formal meeting after his address and reconvene an informal session to allow colleagues who may wish to ask Mr. Evans questions or make comments of their own to do so.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Many thanks to the distinguished delegation of Australia. I am delighted to see the enthusiasm with which it is going to take up its forthcoming office. I recognize the distinguished delegation of China, which has asked for the floor.

Mr. Li Yang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Mr. President, the Chinese delegation deeply appreciates the effort you have made, and the constructive results you have achieved, in moving forward the work of the Conference. During our bilateral consultations on the day you assumed the presidency, I recall that the Chinese delegation commented to you about the difficulty of your work. I don't think I need to go into the reasons why, since everyone knows, but you are doing an outstanding job, and for this we express our deep appreciation and gratitude to you.

I would like to make a comparison: if the previous President, the Ambassador of Algeria, can be said to have drawn the blueprint for the work of the Conference, then what you are doing now is laying the physical foundation for that work. The Chinese delegation is of the view that laying the foundation is certainly no less important than drawing up the

plans, and perhaps even more important, because while plans are just on paper, laying the foundation is the beginning of the actual work. If the foundation is not solidly built, the future structure could well collapse, so the work of laying that foundation cannot be rushed. In this regard, we have noted and can testify to the fact that you, Mr. President, have displayed sufficient patience.

We Chinese have a saying: “The melon falls when ripe”; we also say “The melon plucked before ripening will not be sweet”. This “melon” of procedural arrangements of ours is not quite ripe, or at least I don’t think it is, but if we want to give everyone a chance to eat some tasty melon, we won’t have to wait too long. I can assure you all that we’ll soon be able to eat some really sweet melon. We’ll have to wait a little while before that happens, but it won’t be an unreasonable delay.

Why isn’t the current melon ripe yet? Allow me to enumerate a few points: first, we still don’t know what steps these Chairmen of Working Groups and Special Coordinators will next take in presiding over our substantive work; at the moment we only know their names. That is not enough; at the very least, we need to discuss their official duties, or how they will rotate. Nor is it clear whether they will be presiding over this year’s work only, or over next year’s as well, or even over work to be done farther in the future. If we now go ahead and build our high-rise on this foundation while all these questions are still unclear, I have no idea what will happen next year. That is why, Mr. President, I said that you were extremely wise to show such patience. Second, both my delegation and my capital find these two draft decisions you have circulated to be quite strange indeed, because our understanding had been that both of these draft documents were intended to provide arrangements for the implementation of document CD/1840, and that as such they should constitute a very comprehensive and formal all-in-one package decision, an integrated decision. But if we are to approve the two draft decisions we have at present, we need to study exactly how they relate to each other. I appreciate the fact, Mr. President, that yesterday your colleagues provided us with some explanation of the relationship between the two drafts, but those explanations were still insufficiently clear as to what we need to do next to implement them. For example, document CD/1867 is entitled “Draft decision on the implementation of CD/1864”; since it is implementing document CD/1864, and since document CD/1864 established the Programme of Work for the 2009 session, the decisions in document CD/1867 apply only to the year 2009. Yet this document fails to clarify whether these people’s terms of office are only for the year 2009.

The reason I am saying this is because we know that some delegations really hope that these appointments can be carried over into next year. Frankly speaking, if this is the thinking that some delegations have vis-à-vis our work here in the Conference, I feel that it’s like burying a time bomb in the foundation we’re building. As soon as we start our substantive work next year, that time bomb will explode. That is why we wish that these two documents could clearly set out the official duties of the Chairmen and Special Coordinators, as well as on what principle of rotation their work will be based. That is also why we repeatedly stress the need to follow the rules of procedure of the Conference.

Thank you Mr. President; that is all I have to say. My delegation is willing to continue supporting your work and that of subsequent Presidents. As you just pointed out, some delegations need more time to study these two draft decisions; they won’t need a few years or a few months, perhaps just a few days, 10 or 20 days. I think that is a completely reasonable request, from a procedural point of view. If I remember correctly, Mr. President, you distributed these two documents at 11.20 yesterday morning, and now it is 11 o’clock this morning. In other words, not even a full 24 hours have elapsed between the time you handed out these documents and the call, by some delegations, for a vote. We would be taking a vote on a new document after less than 24 hours, a document, moreover, that we have yet to discuss in any kind of detail at all. We are all diplomats who practise

multilateral diplomacy, so what does this mean? I personally feel that if some delegations need a little more time to study the documents and wait for instructions from their capitals, that is perfectly normal and reasonable, and doesn't mean that they are trying to oppose or obstruct them. In this regard, I appreciate comments that the Ambassador of France just made about how waiting for instructions is not the same thing as opposing or blocking the process.

I was lucky to see that all States members of the Conference expressed their political will in 2009 and completed a Programme of Work for the Conference. With this kind of political will, we should have no difficulty in completing the arrangements for our work, so I ask that everyone patiently wait for this sweet melon to ripen and fall into our hands.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the distinguished delegation of China for its statement. Would any other delegation care to take the floor this morning? If not, I think that we are going to have to wait for the melon to become sweeter. I think while we are waiting for the melon to become sweeter, it is important for us to maintain an atmosphere, the spirit which made us particularly happy on 29 May, when we adopted document CD/1864. We must not lose that spirit or that happiness, still less our optimism. I recognize the distinguished delegation of Pakistan, which has asked for the floor.

Mr. Khokher (Pakistan): Mr. President, I will be very brief. I am taking the floor just to express our appreciation once again of your efforts and the way you have conducted your work, and all credit goes to your full team as well.

Regarding the comments made by our Chinese colleague, we fully share these and we also share your assessment that the Conference is not yet ready to take a decision. But I can assure you that when we finally have this "melon", it will have the taste of your leadership.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the distinguished delegation of Pakistan for its statement. As no other delegation has asked for the floor, I will now adjourn the meeting. I would remind you that the next plenary meeting will take place on 30 June and that there is a possibility that a meeting will be held sooner.

The meeting rose at 12 noon.