

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE ONE THOUSAND ONE HUNDRED AND FORTY-EIGHTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 6 August 2009, at 10.20 a.m.

President: Ms. Caroline MILLAR (Australia)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 1148th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

Before beginning - and I know that my Japanese colleague will be speaking on this shortly - I would like to draw delegates' attention to the fact that today, 6 August, is the sixty-fourth anniversary of the day that an atomic bomb was detonated above the Japanese city of Hiroshima. This is a sober reminder to us all of the destruction and devastation of nuclear weapons, and of the compelling importance of this body resuming its work on nuclear disarmament.

Before giving the floor to the speakers, I would like to take this opportunity to extend a warm welcome to our new colleague, Ambassador Hoffman from Germany, who will represent his country in the Conference. I take this opportunity to assure him of our fullest cooperation and support in the assumption of his duties. A very warm welcome.

I have the following speakers for this plenary meeting today: Japan, Germany and the United States of America. I give the floor to the distinguished Permanent Representative of Japan.

Mr. SUDA (Japan): Madam President, although I am myself rather fresh to this Conference, I would like to join other delegates in warmly welcoming Ambassador Hannan of Bangladesh, the Ambassador of New Zealand, and I have just this morning met the new German Ambassador, Mr. Hoffmann. A welcome to you.

Thank you very much for referring to today's very important date. I would like to take this opportunity to state again that today is the sixty-fourth anniversary of the atomic bombing in Hiroshima. In Japan, this day, together with 9 August for Nagasaki, is a day to remember the tragedies so that we can renew our determination to work towards a world free of nuclear weapons through our current and future endeavours.

It seems that we have now entered into a very important period for our efforts in promoting international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. This year, there have been quite a few strong and encouraging political statements, initiatives and cooperative moves in that area. Among others, for instance, Japan and Australia organized the International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament, which is expected to produce an action-oriented report after its final session in Hiroshima this October. Following the productive third PrepCom in May, the international community has already started to work together in order to make the NPT Review Conference next May an unqualified success.

Turning to the Conference on Disarmament itself, after the decade-long stagnation, we have finally adopted a programme of work and are about to embark on negotiations and discussions on the important issues of the Conference agenda. Japan strongly hopes that the Conference on Disarmament will promptly commence substantive work that will lead to concrete results in the near future. My delegation stands ready to cooperate to its utmost with the President and other delegations to bring about a new era of productivity in the Conference on Disarmament.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Ambassador of Japan for his statement, and I would now like to give the floor to our new colleague, Ambassador Hoffmann of Germany.

Mr. HOFFMANN (Germany): Thank you, Madam President, for giving me the floor and for your earlier words of welcome.

As this is the first time that I am taking the floor as Permanent Representative of Germany in the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, I should like to begin by saying how delighted and honoured I am not only to join this forum, but to do so at this particular time.

Ever since I started to work in the field of disarmament and arms control - first in Vienna in the 1980s with the CFE Mandate Talks and more recently during my time as Head of the Nuclear Arms Control and Non-Proliferation Department in the Federal Foreign Office in Berlin - I have entertained the idea of how attractive it would be to make a contribution to the great cause of disarmament as head of the German delegation to an actively engaged Conference on Disarmament in Geneva.

The Conference on Disarmament, including the forums which preceded it, has a long and distinguished history. It was here, in Geneva, that crucial treaties were negotiated. This should not be obscured by the most regrettable stagnation the Conference on Disarmament has seen over a lost decade.

But now, at long last, there appears to be a new willingness among all member States to finally turn the page. I am most delighted that on the very day when I take up my duties, there is confidence that decisions will be adopted in this body which open the way for a new beginning. Our joint political aim should be to put the Conference on Disarmament again in a position to fully play its important role as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum of the international community.

Allow me to say how happy I am to see you presiding over the first Conference on Disarmament session in which I participate. And allow me to congratulate you and the other P6 presidencies of the 2009 session for the significant progress that you have already achieved during this session. I would like to assure all of you of my full support and the full support of my delegation in your efforts to guide the work of this Conference, which is virtually on the last centimetres, so to speak, to overcoming its decade-long impasse and enable it to really start substantial work in 2009.

I would also like to extend greetings to the Secretary-General of the Conference and Personal Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Sergei Ordzhonikidze. I look forward to working with him and the team of the Conference secretariat.

And let me take this opportunity to thank all colleagues that have welcomed me here in such a friendly manner. I look forward to working with you all to contribute to progress in the disarmament and non-proliferation agenda.

(Mr. Hoffmann, Germany)

We are not here for the sake of it. The world is faced with a multitude of risks and threats, and some very crucial ones relate directly to the work of this Conference, and on the day when 64 years ago the first atomic bomb was exploded, it is particularly pertinent to remind ourselves of the fact that there are still some 26,000 nuclear weapons in arsenals around the world, with thousands still on high-alert status. Generations have lived and continue to live with the knowledge that their world could be erased in a single flash of light. In the meantime, the technology to build nuclear bombs has spread and continues to spread.

There are other important issues on the Conference agenda which require our special attention. To name only one, the prevention of an arms race in outer space is a matter of concern for mankind as a whole. Without a doubt this challenge needs to be addressed in an appropriate manner and at the right time.

The Federal Republic of Germany has been a staunch advocate for disarmament and arms control over many decades, which is not surprising given its history and its particular exposure during the cold war.

Foreign Minister Steinmeier recently said: "Today disarmament and arms control are once again on the top of the agenda, and quite rightly so, because these are not themes of the past, but questions of tomorrow's survival It is high time that we finally get rid of the outdated modes of thinking of the cold war The system of nuclear deterrence is not only outdated, it is more and more turning into a risk for world peace."

That is why we very much welcome the renewed international interest in advancing the nuclear disarmament agenda, culminating in a series of prominent and most welcome commitments to the vision of a world free of nuclear weapons. We believe, at the end of the day, the long-term future of the entire global nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime will depend on the extent to which the world community can delegitimize nuclear weapons themselves.

And we also believe that only if and when the States holding nuclear weapons are ready to reduce their arsenals will we be able to prevent their proliferation. It is clear that those holding the vast bulk of nuclear weapons have a special responsibility to take the lead in disarmament efforts.

And to add one more thought: weapons of mass destruction and the issues of their proliferation and their abolition do not exist in a political vacuum. We are all aware that this complex set of questions is in fact closely related to deep-seated conflict configurations, which need to be addressed urgently if a world free of nuclear weapons is to be achieved.

If we here at the Conference on Disarmament can effectively agree on the termination of the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons purposes, we would tackle the issue of nuclear weapons at one of its roots. To achieve this goal, Germany is ready to contribute substantially to the negotiating process. But we are also ready to engage in substantial discussions of the other core issues included in CD/1864. As I elaborated before, nuclear disarmament and the prevention of nuclear war is a highly pertinent topic that merits serious

(Mr. Hoffmann, Germany)

discussion. The prevention of an arms race in outer space is doubtless a matter of concern for all States. We also recognize the great importance of discussing appropriate international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, as well as other issues on the Conference's disarmament agenda. And Germany is certainly willing to take up these substantial discussions with a clear perspective of starting negotiations on these issues, once their time is ripe.

We are, figuratively speaking, only a few centimetres away from starting this important substantial work this year. Procedural matters should no longer prevent us from doing so. Therefore I urge all delegations to show the utmost flexibility and not to object to the adoption of the draft procedural decision on the implementation of our programme of work as contained in document CD/1870/Rev.1. Let me conclude by saying that I start my work in Geneva with great optimism and confidence. Germany wholeheartedly subscribes to a multilateralism which is based on common rules and which is effective. I proceed from the assumption that all delegations in this hall are striving for the same objective.

I wish to again pledge the full and sincere support of the German delegation for our common work.

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

Mr. LARSON (United States of America): I am pleased to announce that President Obama will chair a high-level meeting of the United Nations Security Council on nuclear proliferation and disarmament when the United Nations convenes for the opening of the General Assembly in September. The special session of the Security Council occurs of course while the United States holds the presidency of the Council, and over the next few weeks the United States will work closely with other Security Council members to prepare for the leaders' meeting.

I would add that we here earnestly hope that the work of the Conference on Disarmament over the next few weeks will provide a timely and substantive backdrop to this important event, and we look forward to real progress in meeting our collective mandate.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of the United States for his statement and advice of President Obama's initiative.

I have no more speakers on my list. Does any delegation wish to take the floor at this time? That does not seem to be the case.

On Tuesday I circulated to you draft decision CD/1870 on the appointment of Working Group Chairs and Special Coordinators and on a balanced timetable of activities for the remainder of the Conference on Disarmament's session for 2009. The approach taken in this document has been well known to you since it reflects two previous draft decisions tabled by my predecessor, Ambassador Moritán, in late June in draft documents CD/1866/Rev.1 and CD/1867.

(The President)

As I mentioned on Tuesday, CD/1870 also reflects some principles in a chapeau that some delegations would like to see considered in the implementation of the decision, related to clarifying the modalities of getting down to work. These principles were raised by delegations on the floor of this chamber in previous plenary sessions. We all heard them. The language on them in the chapeau to CD/1870 seeks to reflect these principles consistent with the views of all members of this Conference and is the result of extensive consultations with a very wide range of delegations. And, as I also noted on Tuesday, these principles appear to be uncontroversial and generally supported. At that time I invited any delegation with concerns to raise them with me. None has done so.

The timetable of activities in CD/1870 was drawn up on the basis of four weeks of substantive deliberations and two weeks for consideration of the report. Some delegations have asked for three weeks to consider the report. In order to achieve consensus and start work next week, as most delegations have told me they fervently hope, the secretariat circulated last night CD/1870/Rev.1, which now provides for three weeks of substantive work and three weeks for the consideration of the report. Copies of it are on your desks. The timetable gives each Working Group one afternoon session a week, for three weeks. Due to the change from four weeks to three weeks, this means the Working Groups now have 9 hours available instead of 12. The Special Coordinators each have one session and a further hour on the afternoon of 26 August, giving each of them a total of four hours. This has not changed from the previous version of the timetable, principally because it is important that the Special Coordinators have a second opportunity to meet to allow delegations to consult their capitals before the proceedings are concluded and the finalization of the report. The schedule of activities in CD/1870/Rev.1 continues to reflect a balance between the agenda items.

On Tuesday, I also circulated a short Presidential statement to reflect some other issues raised by delegations. These again have been the subject of very broad consultations. As CD/1870/Rev.1 has probably only been seen by some delegations this morning, I have decided to convene an additional plenary tomorrow morning, Friday 7 August, at which I propose to put the draft decision CD/1870/Rev.1 to the Conference for adoption and to read the Presidential statement.

Thank you all for your statements this morning. There are no further speakers. The meeting stands adjourned.

The meeting rose at 10.40 a.m.