
Conference on Disarmament

3 September 2009

English

Final record of the one thousand one hundred and fifty-eighth plenary meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Thursday, 3 September 2009, at 11.25 a.m.

President: Mr. Christian Strohal(Austria)

The President: I declare open the 1158th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. Welcome to everybody, and a special welcome to our new colleague from Bulgaria, Ambassador Gancho Ganev, who has just arrived and assumed his new post after a very long and very distinguished career in the Bulgarian foreign service, coming straight from the Cabinet of the Minister. So welcome to the Conference. Welcome to Geneva. I am looking forward to cooperating with you.

Let me also extend a warm welcome to the newly appointed Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Jarmo Sareva, sitting here next to me. Same thing. Coming straight from New York, from a distinguished career with the Finnish foreign service, and at the end before joining us here, Chief of the Disarmament and Peace Affairs Branch in the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management in the United Nations Secretariat. I think you certainly arrived at a good moment, so welcome to Geneva, and we are certainly also very much looking forward to the continuation of the excellent support and cooperation we have, not only the P-6 but everybody in this room, with the secretariat.

Now let me turn to business. Our first speaker today is Mr. José Luis Cancela, Permanent Representative of Uruguay to the United Nations in New York and President-designate of the First Committee of the General Assembly, who has kindly come to Geneva to consult with us on preparations for the session of the First Committee. Welcome, and thank you very much for coming, Ambassador, and you have the floor.

Mr. Cancela (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of my Government, allow me to say what an honour it is for Uruguay and for me personally to be able to address the United Nations Conference on Disarmament as Chairperson-elect of the First Committee of this Organization, a task I shall take up within the framework of the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly.

As various delegations have been able to observe, over the last few days and thanks to the generosity of the member States present here, I have held a series of consultations with a large number of member States of the Conference on Disarmament which have enabled me to obtain first-hand knowledge of your suggestions, recommendations, constructive contributions and some concerns about the work of the next session of the First Committee.

In response to the kind invitation extended by the Ambassador of Canada, Marius Grinius, I had the opportunity to hold an enriching meeting with the group of Western countries and countries from Eastern Europe. In addition, thanks to the equally kind invitation from the Ambassador of Sweden, Magnus Hellgren, I carried out very constructive consultations with the member countries of the European Union.

The States members of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the Group of 21 paid me the honour of having a joint working meeting, which I also wish to highlight in this statement. My presence in Geneva also made it possible for me to hold some bilateral meetings with interested delegations which gave me a more in-depth knowledge of the prospects and interests of these countries within the framework of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control.

Last but not least, I wish to inform the Conference on Disarmament that I have also had meetings with some non-governmental organizations about the views of civil society concerning the work of the First Committee.

As I said at the time of accepting the post of Chairperson of the First Committee, its sixty-fourth session falls within a far more constructive and encouraging context than the previous ones. In the last few months we have been particularly pleased to note a series of initiatives for a nuclear-weapon-free world which offer different approaches and political solutions for their implementation.

A generally more favourable stance towards multilateralism, with States that have taken on greater responsibilities and commitments to negotiate in the disarmament field, the five points that the United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon submitted at the end of 2008 to achieve disarmament and avoid the proliferation of nuclear weapons, and the more favourable climate in the recent third Preparatory Committee for the Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which took place in May this year, are just a few of the positive signs that the political situation has changed and that the United Nations has an essential role to play throughout this process.

The adoption by this Conference on Disarmament of a programme of work following a 12-year impasse is a further sign that the multilateral disarmament machinery is a suitable framework for attaining the ultimate goal of general and complete disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control.

I am also particularly pleased to stress the initiative taken by the United States President, Barack Obama, who will chair a high-level meeting of the United Nations Security Council on non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament on 24 September next within the framework of the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly of the Organization. We are pleased to know that this meeting, as stated by the United States delegation in the United Nations, will focus on nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation in general.

At the next session, the First Committee must adopt approximately 50 resolutions. As far as I am able and with the support of the Member States in advance, I will endeavour to pursue the following objectives:

- For the First Committee to contribute to maintaining the positive climate that has been noted in the last few months and constitute a real forum for new understandings, basically bearing in mind the highly important Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, to be held in 2010 in New York City
- To increase the number of resolutions adopted by consensus, as evidence that these tendencies towards the strengthening of multilateralism are properly reflected in the resolutions of the First Committee. Despite this, I do recognize the important differences and approaches that exist on issues of nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. The objective of the consultations I have held with the delegations accredited in Geneva was precisely that of seeking points of convergence which will enable us to achieve the necessary, not to say absolutely essential consensus
- Lastly, to raise through the Bureau of the First Committee all the suggestions, recommendations and concerns I have heard during my consultations in order to identify possible solutions

To conclude, I wish once more to extend my thanks to all the delegations for their valuable contributions and constructive spirit, in the hope that I shall meet them again in New York.

The President: I thank Ambassador Cancela for his statement and for his consultations. We are certainly looking forward to continuing these consultations in the framework of the First Committee in New York, and we wish him a good trip back to New York.

The next speaker on my list for today's meeting is Ambassador Gancho Ganev of Bulgaria.

Mr. Ganev (Bulgaria): Mr. President, may I start by extending my warmest congratulations to you for the dedication and commitment with which you have been presiding over the last weeks of the 2009 session of the Conference on Disarmament? I assure you of the full support of my delegation in the accomplishment of this important and challenging task. I also express deep appreciation to your fellow colleagues from the P-6, the Ambassadors of Viet Nam, Zimbabwe, Algeria, Argentina and Australia, for their professionalism and devotion.

I would also like to extend my greetings to the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Sergei Ordzhonikidze, to whom I presented my credentials a couple of days ago. I join you, Mr. President, in welcoming Mr. Jarmo Sareva, Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, and wish him much success in his new assignment.

I thank you for the kind words of welcome addressed to me. It is an honour and a privilege to represent Bulgaria in this unique multilateral forum. I am assuming my duty with a clear understanding of the crucial juncture at which this body stands. Although my experience in disarmament up to now is only peripheral, disarmament will be an important part of my ambassadorial duties in Geneva, and I assure you of my full-fledged commitment to the work of this forum. I look forward to working successfully with all of you.

Prior to my nomination as Permanent Representative of Bulgaria to the United Nations in Geneva, I was following the proceedings in the Conference on Disarmament, and must admit we were very enthusiastic when the work programme of this Conference was adopted in May this year. For us, as I believe for the majority of countries even beyond the membership of the Conference, this was a significant breakthrough and an encouraging signal that times are changing for the better. When preparing for my current post, I assumed that an important share of my ambassadorial activities would be centred on a working and result-producing Conference on Disarmament. It is for that reason that at the end of this annual session, we share a sense of dissatisfaction at seeing the work of this Conference still held hostage to procedural differences.

Aware of the difficulties of a political and security nature which have been accompanying the work of the Conference on Disarmament in the last decade, Bulgaria continues to attach great importance to the work of this body. It has always been our belief that successful disarmament instruments can only be based on consensus, as they would impose obligations upon all member States. The Conference on Disarmament has an essential role to play in this regard, since it is the sole disarmament negotiating forum of that kind, and hence is a clear expression of multilateralism as a tool to promote a rule-based international system.

Given the current international situation, deemed favourable to progress in the field of nuclear disarmament, we think that the Conference on Disarmament should take this chance to prove able to live up to the expectations of the outside world. Committed to the ultimate goal of a safer world free of nuclear weapons, Bulgaria shares the view that it is in the interest of all countries to overcome their differences and engage in this endeavour.

This understanding has guided us in supporting the well-balanced compromise incorporated in decision CD/1864 for the establishment of a programme of work for the Conference's 2009 session, providing among others for the commencement of negotiations on a treaty on fissile materials. Similarly, we have supported draft decision CD/1870 (and subsequent revisions) for the implementation of decision CD/1864 on the 2009 programme of work. It is of paramount importance to successfully conclude this year's session of the Conference on Disarmament, as it will build a bridge of mutual trust to the year 2010, which we all hope to be a better one for the Conference.

My delegation cannot but applaud the utmost efforts you and your colleagues from the P-6 have deployed all through this annual session to make a difference in the work of the Conference on Disarmament. At the end of the day it is clear that we are not big decision makers in this chamber. Nevertheless, as an incoming member of the collective presidency in 2010, I wish to emphasize the importance of the way you and your colleagues have paved the way with the collective spirit of your endeavour.

The President: I thank Ambassador Ganev of Bulgaria for his statement and his kind words, and let me just also add that we certainly — I think I can speak on behalf of all my P-6 colleagues of this year — that we look forward to Bulgaria being among the P-6 of next year. Bulgaria has presided over this Conference very successfully in the past, and we are sure this will be done next year.

I have no more speakers on my list. Does any delegation wish to take the floor at this stage? I give the floor to Ambassador Danon of France.

Mr. Danon (France) (*spoke in French*): Very briefly, I wish to thank José Luis Cancela for coming to Geneva and for his words to us and to say that we too would like to maintain the positive atmosphere which was characteristic of a large part of the year 2009. We also hope that the difficulties encountered by some of us here, which have prevented the adoption of measures to implement the provisions of document CD/1864, will not also hinder the proceedings in New York and that we will be able to make progress in the First Committee on all subjects, including the resolutions concerning the work done in the bodies in Geneva.

I don't know whether you intend to say anything about the report, Mr. President. I would just like to tell you as of now, since I have the floor, that we appreciate this report that we are going to consider, which, as currently drafted, seems quite satisfactory to us. Finally, I would like to say that it is usual, when some of our Ambassador colleagues leave us, to praise them, but that it is much less frequent to do so for the number twos and the deputies. However, I would like to say, quite as an exception, how sad I am to see Ms. Fiona Paterson from the British delegation leaving, how much we have appreciated her work here, and, perhaps on behalf of everyone here, to wish her good luck in her new duties.

The President: Thank you very much for your statement. I certainly will come back to the report in a moment. I also will certainly come back to Fiona in a moment, if I can put it that way.

Is there any other speaker who would want to take the floor?

Let me mention two subjects on which I want to inform the Conference. One of course is the report, and that was circulated to all of you yesterday, and copies are also available in the room. We would propose to proceed with the first reading immediately after the closure of the formal plenary next Tuesday in an informal plenary open to members and observers. If, in the meantime, any delegation would want to point out anything specifically to my delegation, we would of course be grateful for any such contact.

The second point is to inform you about a request we have received from the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom to address the Conference. I understand that the representative of that organization will speak on behalf of the NGO Committee for Disarmament in Geneva, and that all NGO members of that committee are duly accredited to the United Nations. After having received that request we consulted with the coordinators of the regional groups in accordance with the rules of procedure, and in particular in accordance with the decision which is contained in document CD/1744 of 2004, which states among other things that first, after the Conference adopts a programme of work, it will allocate one informal meeting per annual session to NGOs to address the

Conference, and also goes on to say that such a request will be considered at Presidential consultations and thereafter at a formal plenary meeting of the Conference with regard to the enhancement of the engagement of civil society in the work of the Conference.

So that is the situation. As I have said, we have consulted with regional coordinators and have made a list of the NGOs who are members of that Committee available to them. What I would propose is that the regional coordinators come back to us with a final agreement in time for us to agree to hold such an informal meeting immediately after adjourning the formal plenary the Tuesday after that, so that before the end of the session, we can have this informal session. If that is agreeable, we will proceed like that.

I would now want to say that the next formal plenary meeting of the Conference will be held next Tuesday at 10 a.m. in this chamber, and followed, as I said, by an informal plenary to consider the draft annual report to the General Assembly.

If there is no other delegation that wants to take the floor, and before adjourning, I certainly would want, as I have said, to come back to Fiona, and also want to thank her very much from this side of the room for her contribution, for her strong and always sound and good advice, always delivered with a smile and a very helpful predisposition. The P-6 this year certainly have benefited from the support and the handover from last year's P-6, and certainly Fiona Paterson has been a very strong motor, if I can say so, in many of these activities as in many others, so we certainly regret to have to see her leave. This is part of our lives. We certainly wish her very well for her future, and want to see her back in this room one day. Bon voyage! Thank you so much.

The meeting rose at 11.50 a.m.