
Conference on Disarmament

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English

Final record of the one thousand one hundred and sixty-seventh plenary meeting

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President: Mr. Md. Abdul Hannan.....(Bangladesh)

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The President: I declare open the 1167th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

Allow me to welcome, on behalf of the Conference and myself, Mr. Vincenzo Scotti, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Italy. Excellency, you have the floor.

Mr. Scotti (Italy): One year after my first visit to the Conference, I am again pleased and honoured to address this distinguished assembly, which serves an important purpose at the service of humanity: banning or limiting war's most deadly instruments.

Last year, I said that nuclear disarmament was a priority for the international community. This is still very much so. Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, thanks to President Obama's vision of a "world without nuclear weapons", has become a priority on the international agenda. Italy, as President of the G8 last year, has consistently promoted this issue in all international forums. I would like to recall the important L'Aquila Statement on Non-Proliferation, adopted by the G8 leaders at last year's summit, which contained *in nuce* most of the elements subsequently reflected in the landmark United Nations Security Council resolution 1887.

In the field of nuclear disarmament, we therefore welcome recent progress in the negotiations between the United States and the Russian Federation for a new treaty which will replace the START and we hope that this new treaty can be concluded in the very near future. The United States and the Russian Federation, which together hold around 90 per cent of all nuclear arsenals, can together send an important message to the world on the eventual elimination of all nuclear weapons.

We also commend the United States for its initiative to host the first Global Summit on Nuclear Security. It is a very timely and very appropriate initiative. The threat of nuclear terrorism requires dedicated action by the international community, individual States, the industry and other actors. We need to acknowledge the urgency to protect vulnerable nuclear material from criminals and to help all countries achieve this goal.

In the multilateral arena, where the role of the Conference on Disarmament is paramount, the priority this year will inevitably also be the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). After the stalemate in 2005, we hope that the growing world awareness of non-proliferation issues will create the right humus for the success of the Conference.

We are also fully aware that international attention is not enough to guarantee a positive outcome. Italy will act, together with its European Union partners, to make sure that the Review Conference results reflect in an adequate manner this new international climate on non-proliferation and disarmament issues.

In order to achieve success at the Review Conference, we ought to set realistic goals of equal priority in all the three pillars: non-proliferation, disarmament and the peaceful use of nuclear energy. Failure is not an option. The NPT remains the cornerstone of all our nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament endeavours; if we fail to achieve results in New York in May, there is the heightened risk that the NPT regime will be submitted to further erosion. Our efforts will thus be thwarted and we could also face an increase in proliferation activities. The latter would be a development none should encourage.

Therefore, it is time to renew and strengthen the "grand bargain" representing the core of the Treaty. Such a goal can be reached only by promoting mutual confidence among all members, more specifically among Western and Non-Aligned Movement countries.

Three issues will likely determine the outcome of the Conference: practical nuclear disarmament steps; mechanisms to take forward the objectives of the 1995 resolution on the

Middle East; and the development of mechanisms to strengthen the Treaty, in order to deal more effectively with issues related to compliance, withdrawal and implementation.

All three issues are very complex. New ideas and initiatives will be needed in New York to make sure that the Conference meets the standards and achieves the results that the world is expecting from it. Italy is ready to do its part in this effort. And, of course, we should also renew the commitment to the universality of the NPT.

There are also two important international arrangements which would perfectly complement the non-proliferation regime. The first is the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, negotiated in this very Conference and signed in 1996. The Treaty has not yet entered into force due to the so-far insufficient number of ratifications. Italy has ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and hopes to see as soon as possible its formal entry into force. Once again, we urge those States that have not yet signed the Treaty, or that have not yet ratified it, to reassess their position.

The second is a fissile material cut-off treaty. This treaty does not exist yet of course, but we think (and many countries share this view) that negotiations on this issue in the Conference on Disarmament are long overdue. By stopping, through appropriate safeguards, all production of weapons-grade fissile materials and encouraging the conversion of their manufacturing plants to civil use, this fissile material cut-off treaty would drain away the supply of the main components of nuclear warheads. Moreover, such a treaty would make nuclear disarmament irreversible.

However, a viable fissile material cut-off treaty needs reliable safeguards to prevent illegal diversions of fissile materials, or use of civil installations for military purposes. Italy's view is that such a treaty needs credible provisions on verification. This assessment is widely shared within this Conference. Experience has shown, time and again, that no treaty on disarmament can endure without a credible and workable verification mechanism. This is the only tool we have to remove the lurking temptation to cheat.

My Government is well aware that other serious matters must be tackled during the negotiation of a successful fissile material cut-off treaty. Not least among them is the issue of stockpiles. We believe that this question should more appropriately be dealt with during negotiations, rather than have it appear as a precondition for them. In any case, any State should feel free to raise questions it considers priority national security concerns. However, in order to effectively start the negotiating process — and address, in that framework, all legitimate national security concerns — the Conference needs urgently to approve a clear programme of work. I would therefore like to express Italy's strong appeal for the adoption of a programme of work in line with the one adopted last year by decision CD/1864.

Other useful tools that give renewed relevance to the cause of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation are negative security assurances. This topic was discussed and appeared in the final documents of the 1995 and 2000 NPT Review Conferences. Regrettably, negative security assurances did not appear in the final document of the 2005 Review Conference. Italy, therefore, considers the attention given by the Conference on Disarmament to negative security assurances both topical and timely.

I cannot conclude my intervention today without mentioning the important work carried out in the field of conventional weapons. The fundamental right of countries to ensure their self-defence, as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, is not open to debate. What we are called upon to do is to reinforce rules on the safety of non-combatants and on the rescue and treatment of civilian victims of warfare.

The task has not always been easy. Italy will actively support in every way current efforts to reach a wider-ranging, legally-binding agreement on cluster munitions in the framework of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, acceptable to those

countries which, for different reasons, are not able to sign the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

Several other topics would have been worth mentioning, but I understand that I cannot try your patience for much longer. I would like to thank you very much for giving me the privilege of addressing the Conference on Disarmament. Your work is precious; you give hope to humanity that, slowly but surely, by defining, limiting and eventually forbidding the use of deadly instruments of warfare, you are making the world a safer and more humane place.

The President: I thank Mr. Scotti, Deputy Foreign Minister of Italy, for his important address. On behalf of the Conference on Disarmament, I would like to thank him most sincerely for his kind presence today, which is a clear indication of the support of the Italian Government for the work of this august body.

I will now suspend the meeting for a couple of minutes to escort the Deputy Foreign Minister from the chamber.

The meeting was suspended at 3.30 p.m. and resumed at 3.40 p.m.

The President: The 1167th plenary meeting is resumed.

I should now like to invite the Conference to take a decision on the request for participation in our work from a State that is not a member of the Conference. The request is contained in document CD/WP.555/Add.3, and has been received from Iceland.

May I take it that the Conference decides to invite Iceland to participate in our work in accordance with the rules of procedure?

It was so decided.

I have two requests from delegations to speak in this plenary: the first is from the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic, and the second from the representative of Brazil. I give the floor to Ambassador Faysal Khabbaz Hamoui of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Khabbaz Hamoui (Syrian Arab Republic): Mr. President, we congratulate you on assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. We are pleased that, under your chairmanship, the Conference has made already its first step for this session by adopting its agenda for 2010. We are confident that your experience and the wide range of activities you and your delegation are engaged in will lead our work to success. I would like to assure you and all presidents of the 2010 session of my delegation's full cooperation and support. I would also like to welcome our new colleagues, the ambassadors of Sri Lanka and Ireland, and assure them of my delegation's readiness to fully support them.

My delegation supports the statement delivered on 26 January by the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on behalf of the Group of 21.

We are pleased and greatly encouraged by the statements delivered in this room by the Foreign Minister of Bangladesh, Dr. Dipu Moni, a few days ago, and by the Deputy Foreign Minister of Italy, Mr. Vincenzo Scotti, today, especially when they emphasized the importance of the four core issues of the Conference, the need to establish a zone free of nuclear weapons in the Middle East, and the need to address all legitimate national security concerns of member States.

We deeply regret that this region has not yet received serious international attention, despite the fact that there is only one country in the region which owns advanced nuclear military capabilities and weapons outside the framework of any international control.

Nuclear disarmament remains the first priority for the Syrian Arab Republic, because as long as nuclear weapons exist in the arsenal of one country in the Middle East, the risk of use or threat of their use will remain present. This country continues to reject all peace initiatives while threatening its neighbours with a fully-fledged war that will transform the region into the most dangerous area in the world since the end of the Second World War.

I would like to mention what Mr. Gareth Evans, Co-Chair of the International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament, said in this room a few days ago, and I quote: "The use of nuclear weapons may happen, sometimes due to a mistake, or sometimes due to a miscalculation or technical error."

The Syrian Arab Republic reaffirms, once again, its commitment to its international obligations under the provisions of the NPT and calls on the international community to urge all parties in the Middle East to accede to the NPT.

We adopted document CD/1864 last year and I would like to pay tribute to the efforts made by Ambassador Al Jazairy of Algeria and by the five presidents of the Conference in 2009. CD/1864 was a compromise text but, as you will have noticed, it does not address the concerns of all members of the Conference, as it does not give clear answers to the issues of a verification mechanism and existing stocks. The Syrian Arab Republic regrets the absence of any concrete treatment of the other three core issues — nuclear disarmament, negative security assurances and the prevention of an arms race in outer space — and it supports all constructive proposals to deal with these very important issues with a view to reaching legally-binding instruments.

We believe that, for this year, we should engage in a constructive dialogue to adopt a programme of work for the 2010 session, based on mutual compromise and in a spirit of understanding. Cloning document CD/1864, which does not deal with the concerns of all States today, will not produce consensus. We have to display our flexibility and readiness to negotiate. We can partially build on CD/1864 but we need to introduce new, necessary elements to improve it.

Mr. President, we hope that you will continue your consultations with all interested delegations, and we are confident of your wisdom and understanding.

The Syrian Arab Republic will support efforts to address all issues and will endorse any balanced accord which meets the satisfaction and concerns of all member States of the Conference on Disarmament. It believes that the enlargement of the membership of the Conference deserves due attention. This enlargement can enrich our work.

My delegation will work with all serious proposals to bridge the existing gaps in the work of the Conference and looks forward to a constructive 2010 session in a spirit of mutual understanding and benefit.

The President: I thank Ambassador Faysal Khabbaz Hamoui of the Syrian Arab Republic for his statement. I see that the representative of Brazil no longer wishes to take the floor. Would any other delegation like to do so? That does not seem to be the case.

At this stage, I would like to make the following statement: I conveyed to delegations during my consultations my intention to hold an informal meeting this afternoon, following the formal plenary, in order to continue discussions on the development of the programme of work for the 2010 session. I have already indicated to the regional coordinators the way I would like to proceed in the presidential consultations which were held earlier today. I also talked about the approach when I met with regional groups as well as the incoming presidents. Since the presidential consultations were held this morning, I understand that regional groups may need a little time to convey my intended course of action to all the group members.

In order to be fair to all delegations, it is my opinion that we should have informal consultations next Thursday instead of this afternoon. Notices will be sent out by the secretariat in due course.

Are there any delegations who would like to take the floor? That does not seem to be the case.

The next formal plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Thursday, 11 February, at 10 a.m. in this chamber. This meeting stands adjourned.

The meeting rose at 3.50 p.m.