
Conference on Disarmament

11 June 2010

English

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

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Friday, 11 June 2010, at 10.15 a.m.

President: Mr. Alex Van Meeuwen.....(Belgium)

The President: I declare open the 1184th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

Today, I have the honour and the pleasure of welcoming, on behalf of the Conference and on my own behalf, our distinguished guest, H.E. Mr. Gryshchenko, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine. The Minister's presence here today attests to the importance that his country attaches to the work of this body, which is the sole multilateral forum for negotiations on disarmament. Sir, you have the floor.

Mr. Gryshchenko (Ukraine): Mr. President, it is my particular pleasure to address you today since a significant part of my professional career has been dedicated to disarmament and non-proliferation issues. In this sense, I am not new to Geneva. Moreover, I have the honour to represent a nation that took an unprecedented step 16 years ago and voluntarily renounced its nuclear arsenal, the third largest in the world. In 1994, we did not expect that our example would be so relevant today.

Ukraine has consistently emphasized the importance of addressing disarmament and non-proliferation challenges. Recent events give us hope that other States share this approach. The Nuclear Security Summit recently held in Washington, D.C., the signing of the new START treaty between the United States of America and the Russian Federation, and the 2010 NPT Review Conference are milestone undertakings that have set the tone for future activities.

We fully support these developments and continue making our own contributions to the process. The most recent one is our commitment to get rid of all of our stocks of highly enriched uranium. This decision was announced by the President of Ukraine, Viktor Yanukovich, at the Nuclear Security Summit. Our underlying message is crystal clear: Ukraine takes nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament seriously.

Ukraine considers the Conference on Disarmament to be one of the world's most important multilateral forums. We highly appreciate its main 2009 achievement – the programme of work that was finally agreed upon after more than a decade of stalemate. However, Ukraine regrets that, despite all the efforts of the Presidents and member States, the Conference failed to launch the implementation of the programme.

We are convinced that it is crucially important to achieve consensus on the 2010 programme of work as soon as possible. Ukraine believes that the report of the Conference to the United Nations General Assembly contains substantial elements which could serve as a good starting point for the 2010 session. In the light of this, Ukraine highly appreciates the efforts of the presidency of the Republic of Belarus, welcomes the submission of the draft 2010 programme of work and looks forward to its smooth adoption.

Overall, we call upon all participants at this Conference to spare no effort in order to make it a success story.

Mr. President, the elimination of nuclear weapons in their entirety is the only guarantee that they will never be used. However, mere declarations are insufficient for achieving this goal. It requires a set of practical steps.

One of them is to put an end to the production of fissile materials. Thus, a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT) would be a tremendous step towards global nuclear disarmament. An FMCT would also close a number of windows of opportunity for terrorists to obtain nuclear materials which can be used for creating nuclear weapons.

Therefore, Ukraine deeply regrets the continuing deadlock over the resumption of activities of the Conference on this issue and stands for an immediate launch of negotiations on an FMCT.

Another vital step towards nuclear disarmament would be the universalization of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). It is crucially important that the norms set forth by the Treaty are observed worldwide. We strongly hope that the renewed commitment of key States regarding the ratification of the Treaty will finally pave the way for its entry into force.

In the meantime, the moratorium on nuclear tests or any other nuclear explosions should be maintained. We call upon all States to ratify the CTBT, observe the obligations they assume under it and refrain from any action contrary to its objectives.

For Ukraine, it goes without saying that States must not use their nuclear weapons or threaten to use them against non-nuclear-weapon States. Nor should they abuse their nuclear status in order to assist, encourage or induce in any way the use or threat of use of force in international relations or exert any kind of pressure on non-nuclear-weapon States in order to suppress their sovereign rights.

A practical tool for ensuring this is to further endorse and develop negative security assurances. Therefore, Ukraine believes that the assurances outlined in United Nations Security Council resolution 984 (1995) should be once again reaffirmed in a relevant multilateral, legally binding document. We have consistently advanced this principle and will continue to do so.

In particular, this was the major idea underlying Ukraine's participation in the establishment of a working group on effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime. Ukraine is fully committed to the implementation of the NPT in all of its three mutually reinforcing pillars.

In this context, we welcome the outcomes of the 2010 NPT Review Conference. Ever since 2000, the Conference has managed to reach consensus on its Final Document, which outlines realistic steps towards creating a world free of nuclear weapons.

For the first time, the Final Document of the NPT Review Conference addressed the issue of the Treaty's withdrawal provisions. We are proud that the joint proposal of Ukraine and the Russian Federation served as a basis for the relevant provisions of the Final Document.

The Final Document also contains other important provisions in the field of non-proliferation, compliance, disarmament, the peaceful use of nuclear energy and effective international arrangements aimed at securing non-nuclear-weapon States. Undoubtedly, they are of crucial importance in strengthening the universal security architecture.

Ukraine is an active player in the field of outer space. In this regard, we adhere to the relevant principles of international law and ensure the full transparency of our actions. In particular, we comply with the Hague Code of Conduct against the Proliferation of Ballistic Missiles.

In the light of this, Ukraine welcomes the joint initiative of the Russian Federation and China to put forward the draft Treaty on the Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space, the Threat or Use of Force against Outer Space Objects. We also support the efforts of the European Union aimed at improving safety and transparency in outer space by implementing the draft Code of Conduct for Outer Space Activities. Ukraine is convinced that these and other constructive initiatives contribute to substantive discussions on this matter.

Allow me to conclude by recalling an episode in the history of disarmament. In 1898, in an unprecedented move, Russian Emperor Nicholas II initiated an international

conference on disarmament. The Military Minister of Russia at the time, Minister Kuropatkin, commented on the initiative in his diary: "The peoples are enthusiastic while the governments sense mutual distrust. The peoples' enthusiasm is premature ... They will be disillusioned"

Indeed, the international community has achieved a lot on its way to global disarmament since then. Yet, the sentiment expressed by Minister Kuropatkin, more than a hundred years ago, is still in the air.

Ukraine sincerely hopes that this Conference, as well as the forthcoming ones, will not disillusion the peoples of our countries. To avoid doing so, we have to eloquently demonstrate that the efforts of Governments are not futile, that there is trust among them and that there is political will to ensure disarmament.

The President: I thank you, Sir, for taking the time to come here today to address the Conference, and we are grateful for your kind words. So that I may accompany Mr. Gryshchenko out of the room, I am going to suspend this plenary meeting for a few moments.

The meeting was suspended at 10.25 a.m. and resumed at 10.30 a.m.

The President: I have the delegation of Norway on the list of speakers. I give the floor to the distinguished representative of Norway.

Ms. Skorpen (Norway): Mr. President, as my four years in the Conference on Disarmament have come to an end, I would like to take this opportunity to say farewell to so many great colleagues and friends.

As for the state of the Conference on Disarmament, it is pretty much where it was when I arrived in 2006. In 2007 we saw structured debates on all agenda items, and once again it was concluded that an FMCT was ripe for negotiation. Verification was, however, a different matter. The most recent discussions reconfirmed that stockpiles will remain an obstacle to a negotiating mandate for a long time to come, which does not mean that structured debates are not useful. If posturing could be avoided and issues dealt with in an objective and open way, I believe that the Conference could benefit from structured debates on all agenda items. But this kind of exercise quickly becomes a substitute for the more difficult discussions required to reach agreement on a sustainable programme of work. Personally, I have never understood why an FMCT should be the only issue considered ripe for negotiations.

Norway considers nuclear disarmament with a view to the total elimination of nuclear weapons to be a top priority and the only guarantee against the further proliferation and actual use of these most indiscriminate weapons of mass destruction.

We consider it vital that the humanitarian imperative is at the centre of our efforts, and we believe that we have much to learn from the processes that resulted in the conventions prohibiting anti-personnel landmines and cluster munitions.

I was not planning to say very much about the Conference itself, its rules of procedure, the manner in which the consensus rule is applied and so on. I have heard a number of statements to this effect. But there is one aspect of the workings of this body that I would like to revisit once more, and that is the regional groups.

I am less concerned by the fact that there is no reference to regional groups in the rules of procedure. If the existence of regional groups made sense, I would certainly not question their role. But I think that the opposite is the case. I believe that the regional groups and the way they function are directly detrimental to our efforts. We have seen, time and again, that those that want the least are able to hide behind their groups.

The worst part about this is that we do not get the issues out in the open and that it stifles debates that could have brought us forward. It makes it more difficult to find good compromises. The regional groups make it more difficult for members of the various groups to form the personal bonds that are necessary to deliver the kind of results that our authorities and our societies expect us to deliver.

As for myself, I regret that there are so many fantastic colleagues in the Conference that I have only recently got to know — colleagues belonging to other groups — and I blame the existence of regional groups, in part, for this.

Finally, I want to pay tribute to the representatives of the NGOs for not giving up. I look forward to reading the statement of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) next 8 March, and I commend you, up there in the balcony, for providing analyses that I believe we have all benefited greatly from. I also know that WILPF is struggling economically, and I would like to appeal to my colleagues to support WILPF, both economically and in all other ways necessary to ensure that they can play the role that we so greatly need them to play. We really need it. Thank you.

Thank you to all my colleagues for sharing your insights, for your support and for your friendship. I will surely miss this body. I did not think that I was going to say that, but I really, really will. And I will be watching. I am going to go back to Oslo, and I will continue to work on disarmament affairs and write the instructions for this body.

The President: I thank the distinguished representative of Norway for her statement and also for her contribution to our work. We wish her the very best for the future.

There are no more names on the list of speakers. Before finishing our work today, I would like to draw your attention to document CD/WP.560/Amend.1, which is before you. It informs you of certain changes arising from the fact that, on 10 June, the coordinators for items 4 and 5 of the agenda were not available. Furthermore, as you are aware, it was not possible to hold the informal meeting that was scheduled for Monday afternoon, which thus has to be rescheduled. In brief, the meeting set for Monday, 7 June, on items 1 and 2 was put back to the afternoon of 23 June; the meeting of 10 June on item 4 was put back to the afternoon of 16 June; and the meeting of 10 June on item 5 was put back to the morning of 24 June. I understand that these changes were accepted by the Regional Coordinators during the last Presidential consultations.

At the end of this brief, yet at times eventful, presidency, I am pleased to note that we have finally managed, after intense discussions, to establish a full and detailed work schedule that should allow the Conference on Disarmament, a body to which we all have a responsibility, to pursue its mission in a positive and constructive manner. The notable success of the 2010 NPT Review Conference in New York in May no doubt contributed to this result. As my successor, the Ambassador of Brazil, recently recalled, the appeal to the Conference on Disarmament for the immediate commencement of negotiations on a fissile material treaty as part of an agreed, full and balanced programme of work should certainly not become a dead letter; nor should the invitation to the Secretary-General to convene a high-level meeting in September 2010 to support the work of the Conference. This meeting that we are calling for could also be an opportunity, as several of you have suggested, to look closely, in an open and creative manner, at practices that are not necessarily established, and to clarify, for our successors, some rules of procedure. All eyes will now be turned, therefore, to the next presidencies of this 2010 session in the expectation that they may, on the basis of these positive steps, quickly attain the necessary consensus on a future programme of work for the Conference on Disarmament that many delegations have repeatedly called for. Of course, my delegation remains fully at their disposal and stands ready to contribute actively to the success of this undertaking. I would like to conclude by thanking all of you, members and observers, and Conference staff, for your unflagging

support during these four intense weeks, and I wish the next President even greater success. The next plenary meeting will be held on Tuesday, 15 June, at which time the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Brazil will address the Conference. Thank you.

The meeting rose at 10.35 a.m.