

Conference on Disarmament

15 March 2012

English

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

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Thursday, 15 March 2012, at 10.15 a.m.

President: Mr. Hisham Badr(Egypt)

GE.12-63212 (E) 100414 110414



* 1 2 6 3 2 1 2 *

Please recycle 



The President: I call to order the 1254th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

Turning to the list of speakers for today, I give the floor to the representative of Cuba, Mr. Romero Puentes.

Mr. Romero Puentes (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, the statements made during our most recent plenary sessions confirm the importance that the vast majority of States attribute to the Conference on Disarmament. At the same time, with its usual frankness in stating its position, the Cuban delegation must once again record its concern regarding the insistence of some on putting the Conference aside and starting to negotiate disarmament treaties elsewhere. Cuba does not support such stances, as doing so would be a dangerous step backward. We reiterate that today, more than ever, it is everyone's responsibility to preserve and strengthen the Conference on Disarmament.

We welcome the proposal that the presidency of Egypt submitted in document CD/1933/Rev.1. This proposal includes the establishment of a working group to address the issue of nuclear disarmament. For Cuba, as for the other members of the Non-Aligned Movement, nuclear disarmament is and must remain the highest priority in the area of disarmament, and must therefore have the highest priority in the Conference's programme of work. That is why we favour giving the working group on that issue a negotiating mandate, with the aim of adopting a convention to establish a phased programme for the total elimination of nuclear weapons within a specific time frame and under strict international control.

We reiterate, in this context, the proposal of the Non-Aligned Movement for a plan of action for the gradual reduction of nuclear weapons until their total elimination and prohibition by no later than 2025. This proposal was endorsed by the Movement at its Sixteenth Ministerial Conference, held in Bali, Indonesia, in May 2011, where a statement on the total elimination of nuclear weapons was adopted that includes a call to work towards the convening of an international conference to identify ways and means of eliminating nuclear weapons.

The Egyptian proposal includes the consideration by the Conference of other very important issues, such as those relating to negative security assurances and the prevention of an arms race in outer space, which are very relevant for States that, like Cuba, pride themselves on not possessing weapons of mass destruction of any kind. The working group on fissile material mentioned in the Egyptian proposal could begin work and conduct a comprehensive review of the topic, addressing the issue of stocks.

Mr. President, as we have reiterated in the past, Cuba is of the view that the Conference has the ability to negotiate in parallel a treaty eliminating and prohibiting nuclear weapons; a treaty banning an arms race in outer space; a treaty providing effective security guarantees for States that, like Cuba, do not possess nuclear weapons; and a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

The proposal that you have presented does not, in its current form, fully reflect the national positions of Cuba on the Conference's programme of work, and it has major limitations. At the same time, Cuba believes that this proposal represents a concrete step in the right direction and deserves due consideration. If such a proposal could serve as a basis for a negotiated solution, acceptable to all, that makes it possible to start substantive work in the Conference on Disarmament, then our delegation, faithful to its traditional spirit of flexibility and compromise, is ready to work together with other delegations on that basis.

Mr. President, at a time when life on the planet is facing a serious threat because of the existence of nearly 23,000 nuclear weapons, we can only support you in every way

possible in your efforts to reach agreement on a programme of work for the Conference on Disarmament that will help to safeguard the right of peoples and future generations to life and peace.

The President: I thank the representative of Cuba and give the floor to the representative of Colombia, Mr. Valencia Muñoz.

Mr. Valencia Muñoz (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, allow me first to join the previous delegation in thanking you for tabling a draft programme of work.

We view document CD/1933/Rev.1 as the minimum that we can collectively achieve, given the current political situation in the Conference, although it is not the programme of work that most of us want.

My delegation would like to put on the record some specific comments about your proposal. First of all, there are aspects that we consider positive, including:

- The effort to achieve a comprehensive and balanced text that takes into account countries' security considerations;
- The establishment of a clear timetable, the only essential element of a programme of work, in accordance with the rules of procedure; and
- The early nomination of coordinators for the working groups.

We would also like to draw attention to aspects that we find less satisfactory and that in our view could have been more ambitious in the draft:

- The scant emphasis on nuclear disarmament;
- The absence of negotiating mandates; and
- The failure to appoint a coordinator for the issue of the possible enlargement of the Conference membership.

Despite these shortcomings, for the previously mentioned reasons, Colombia supports document CD/1933/Rev.1 submitted by the presidency, while nevertheless stressing that for Colombia a programme of work is clearly a tool, a first step down a long road, and not a guarantee of progress in our substantive work.

We understand the sensitivities of some members of the Conference concerning some aspects of your proposal. However, we appeal earnestly to all delegations to show flexibility and creativity at this stage.

We agree with the observation by the delegation of Chile at the previous plenary meeting that at this juncture ambiguity is the most pragmatic approach. By nitpicking over the language of the mandates we could spark a reckless debate that would lead us to miss the window of opportunity before us.

We are at a crucial point in our 2012 session. Today we have the opportunity to express our political will, to show that the Conference on Disarmament can work according to its current rules of procedure and restore the merit and worth of this body.

Before concluding my remarks, I would like to acknowledge the efforts of the ambassadors who have volunteered to chair working groups and serve as coordinators.

Allow me also to thank you, Mr. President, and your delegation, on behalf of Colombia and Ambassador Arango Olmos, for your excellent work and the way you have led our work during the past four weeks. I repeat that you can count on the support and flexibility of Colombia during the remainder of your term, and we take this opportunity to extend the same recognition to the delegation of Ethiopia.

The President: I thank the delegation of Colombia very much. I know there has been a loss in the Ambassador's family, so please, on behalf of the Conference, convey our condolences to Her Excellency.

(spoke in Arabic)

I now give the floor to the delegation of Iraq.

Mr. Abbas (Iraq) *(spoke in Arabic)*: Mr. President, at the outset let me express to you our deep appreciation and gratitude for the sincere efforts that you are making during your presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. We recognize the role that you have played and the broad and transparent consultations that took place to reach agreement on the programme of work, which resulted in the draft decision contained in document CD/1933.Rev.1, before us today.

We have studied the draft decision carefully and found it to contain a reasonable balance and a compromise that could serve as a starting point for our work in the future. Some might perhaps consider it to be less than could be hoped for, particularly in view of the length of time during which there has been no programme of work and the Conference has been barren. We are fully aware that many member States have different priorities and concerns. However, teamwork and the spirit of partnership will reduce and overcome these differences. We support the draft decision as the basis for the work of the Conference on Disarmament because it contains many of the positive elements needed to begin substantive work on the four core agenda items. At the same time, we should continue serious discussions on other items, all of which reflect our concerns and those of the majority of member States, since all of the goals to which we aspire in the field of disarmament — and, in particular, nuclear disarmament, which is our highest priority — are of particular importance for us in the Middle East and also serve the interest of international peace and security.

Mr. President, we assure you of our continuing support in your endeavours. We hope to reach a consensus and to turn the draft decision into a programme of work in order to overcome the impasse in the Conference on Disarmament and to resume its substantive work of negotiation, in accordance with its mandate.

The President *(spoke in Arabic)*: I thank the delegation of Iraq for its statement.

(spoke in English)

Now I give the floor to the representative of Belarus, Ambassador Khvostov.

Mr. Khvostov (Belarus) *(spoke in Russian)*: Mr. President, we would like to welcome you to the presidency of this Conference. In our opinion, your assumption of the post is timely. We will help you to fulfil your functions.

We are all aware of the current situation in the Conference on Disarmament. Thus we see your document as an encouraging start for substantive work in the Conference. We support document CD/1933/Rev.1 and are ready to work on that basis. We share the view of other delegations that this document could ideally be more ambitious, but, while we have already called document CD/1864 the "gold standard", in the end we have not been able to start work. There is some truth in the fact that the more we seek perfection, the less perfect we become. Document CD/1933/Rev.1 focuses on four key issues, and we understand that any delegation will be able to raise any issue as it deems necessary. In today's world there is a growing sense of insecurity, and we, the members of the Conference on Disarmament, are partly responsible for that. In our view, it is time for the Conference on Disarmament to be in a position to carry out the substantive work on its agenda. It is the Conference's substantive work that is the basis of our body's importance and viability, which are now being seriously called into question.

In short, I wish to emphasize that our delegation supports the adoption of the programme of work on the basis of document CD/1933/Rev.1. We believe that the proposed draft programme of work is a good basis for the resumption of the negotiating process in the Conference.

The President: I thank the representative of Belarus for his statement. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor? I give the floor to the representative of Pakistan, Ambassador Akram.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): Mr. President, in my statement on Tuesday I outlined certain questions on which I sought clarifications, and I regret to say that the issues that I raised still remain in a state of confusion for my delegation.

But before I come to these, Mr. President, I want to once again put on record our deep appreciation for you and your delegation and express our high praise for the most constructive and transparent manner in which you have conducted your consultations.

In different circumstances, the document that you have produced would have become the basis of work in the Conference on Disarmament. Unfortunately, however — and this is no fault of yours — the conditions that exist outside this room, in the real world, are somewhat different.

Nevertheless, we remain open to working with you and with all our colleagues in the Conference to find the magic formula that can enable us to begin our work. And I think that the formulations that you have put across do have the elements that can take us in this direction.

For the benefit of all our colleagues, I would like to briefly recount the issues on which I sought clarifications. The first was whether or not what we are being asked to do in your working paper, especially with regard to fissile materials, amounts to negotiations. The second clarification was as to why we are not in a position to treat all four core issues equally. And let me say that I know that it is your delegation's view also that all four core issues should be treated equally. In fact, as members of the Group of 21, we all agree that the highest priority should be accorded to nuclear disarmament, which brings me to my third point, which is that, with regard to fissile material, we are asked "to deal with the elements of a treaty" on fissile materials, but with regard to nuclear disarmament we are only talking about "to deal with" nuclear disarmament. I don't think that the countries that prefer this formulation missed the point that there is a distinction between the ways we are being asked to deal with nuclear disarmament on the one hand and fissile materials on the other. And the fourth point on which I sought clarification, Mr. President, was whether or not, as in paragraph 2 of your draft document CD/1933, the reference to the Shannon mandate and, in addition, the sentence "while dealing with all related matters" refer to, or acknowledge, the need to take the issue of stocks, or, more specifically, the issue of reduction of fissile material stocks into the deliberations.

Given the peculiar security situation that my country faces, a situation which has become worse, even as compared to this time last year, there is absolutely no room for Pakistan on the issue of ambiguity. Constructive ambiguity may be very good to paper over differences of approach, but for a country for which the stakes are extremely high — in fact, the stakes are those of an existential problem — there is no room for ambiguity.

I have always stated, and I will say so again in the clearest terms, that in these negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament, Pakistan will always take a position that protects our security interests. In doing so I am not acting any differently from any of my other colleagues. This is clear from the fact that, while Pakistan has problems with negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT), there are countries that have problems with certain other elements of our agenda, in particular the other three core issues

on our agenda – that is, nuclear disarmament, negative security assurances and prevention of an arms race in outer space. And it is because of their own security concerns that they have not agreed to negotiate agreements and treaties on these three core issues. Unfortunately, unlike Pakistan, they have not stated clearly the reasons for opposing such negotiations.

Unless our concerns are addressed in a clear and unambiguous manner by the Conference on Disarmament, it is not possible — and these are my instructions — it is not possible for us to join consensus on the draft proposal contained in document CD/1933.

Nevertheless, we remain prepared to work with you and with your successors as presidents to look for that magic formula I referred to before. We agree with everyone in this room that the Conference must begin substantive work. However, we also need to understand that in order for us to be able to begin work in a substantive manner, we must be ready to address the security concerns of all countries involved. As I said before, no country will agree to any negotiations if those negotiations undermine its security.

We do not agree with those who have argued, implicitly or explicitly, that if there are no negotiations this year on an FMCT then the Conference on Disarmament will become irrelevant. The fact of the matter is that there have been no negotiations on an FMCT for the last 13-odd years, and, if you look at nuclear disarmament, there have been no negotiations on nuclear disarmament for more than 30 years, and for all this period no one has really argued that the Conference has or should become irrelevant. So we cannot agree with this proposition.

We are ready to work with you, with your successors as presidents, with all other delegations to ensure that we find a way to make progress in the Conference, keeping in mind the security interests of all States members of the Conference. We do not want to see it become irrelevant. But, at the same time, if it comes to a choice between our national security and the future of the Conference, then I'm afraid it is our national security that we will have to give priority to.

So, in conclusion, Mr. President, let me reiterate my appreciation for you and your delegation for the work that you have done. We remain ready to continue to work with you to find that magic formula that I referred to. I don't know what it will be, but I am certainly prepared to engage in an effort to look for it.

The President: I thank the representative of Pakistan for his comments and give the floor to the representative of Italy, Ambassador Manfredi.

Mr. Manfredi (Italy): Mr. President, on Tuesday I expressed my country's deep appreciation for your hard work, your commitment and, I may even say, the enthusiasm you showed in conducting the consultations and in drafting our draft programme of work, document CD/1933/Rev.1.

As I also said on Tuesday, there are parts of document CD/1933/Rev.1 that we like and others that we don't. But our first priority, in my country's opinion, must be to start the Conference working again, especially on fissile materials. Our *raison d'être* as a conference is negotiating. If we don't start, we will never know what the outcomes will be – whether there will or will not be provisions on stocks, for example.

Mr. President, negotiations do not undermine security. The outcome of negotiations may, perhaps, undermine security, if these negotiations are not conducted properly by us.

Therefore, in Italy's opinion, we would not have blocked any consensus on document CD/1933/Rev.1.

The President: I thank the representative of Italy for his statement. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor?

If not, now we have document CD/1933/Rev.1 on the revised draft decision on a programme of work for the 2012 session. I call upon the Conference on Disarmament to adopt this draft decision. Is there any objection to this?

I give the floor to the representative of Pakistan.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): Mr. President, I regret very much that I need to take the floor to express our inability to join consensus on document CD/1933/Rev.1, for the reasons that I have just explained.

And, while I have the floor, I just want to respond to the statement about negotiations not being against the interests or security concerns of States, but the consequence of negotiations being against the interests of States.

When a country is faced with an existential threat, there is absolutely no room for ambiguity, number one. Number two, we are being transparent and upfront with our position. We do not want to join any process or any negotiations under false pretences. We are stating very clearly where we draw the line, and that is precisely why we cannot agree to any kind of process that implicitly or explicitly involves negotiating a fissile material cut-off treaty and does not, at the same time, envisage a reduction in stockpiles of fissile materials.

The President: I thank the representative of Pakistan for his statement. I see there is no consensus, so document CD/1933/Rev.1 is not adopted at this time.

This concludes the Egyptian presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. Let me take this opportunity to make some final remarks.

First, let me thank all the delegations that have cooperated with us for their statements. In my notes here, it says to thank each delegation, after their statement, for their kind words to the President. I have not done that today, not because of not feeling appreciation, but out of humility. But I want to thank all of you very much for all the kind words you have said to the President, and to seize this opportunity to tell you that from the bottom of my heart.

Second, we started the Egyptian presidency by promising to take the job seriously. After all, Egypt values the Conference on Disarmament as the sole multilateral negotiating forum for disarmament at a time when the Conference is facing very serious challenges. We have repeatedly expressed our disappointment that the Conference was not able to proceed into substantive work towards negotiating multilateral treaties on disarmament, especially on nuclear disarmament, which the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament identified as a priority.

On assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament, we were determined to exert all efforts to break the deadlock and resume substantive work that would bring us a little closer to a safer world. Our approach in the Egyptian presidency was to go back to the basics. Until it is achieved, the primary job of the President in any given session is to seek and consult on a programme of work. This was our objective, and we have used our presidency to consult and present a programme of work that we still believe presented a good compromise to all members of the Conference, a balanced and comprehensive programme of work that would allow the substantive work to proceed without infringing on the national interests of member States.

We have suggested the mandate “to deal with” as a means of starting substantive work. I believe this formula may well work in the future. I also said in the beginning that no single programme could satisfy all members, that my objective was perhaps to move people out of their comfort zones. I have tried to clarify the mandate, to the extent possible, and I truly believe that any further clarification, or true clarification, of our work necessitates that

we embark on substantive work. Once we embark on the road, only then, seeing the challenges along the road, can we then deal with — as you can see, I like the word “deal” and I repeat it — can we then deal with these challenges in a way that will allow us to go ahead.

I believe that document CD/1933 provided a vehicle on which all of us, all the passengers would be on board, hopefully, to go on a journey, a flexible vehicle, one that is robust and able to deal with the challenges, not so rigid as to break along the way, but that at the same time, hopefully, will make us reach the destination.

Now that the Egyptian presidency is finished, as one of the presidents of the 2012 session, and in our national capacity, we will continue to support the Conference and its function as the sole multilateral body on disarmament. We promise our full support to the incoming president, Ethiopia, not only as a fellow African country but as a country that our history and geography are forever intertwined with, as well as to other incoming presidents for the 2012 session. I wish my Ethiopian colleague and brother good luck — in Amharic, I think it is *me’elkam edil* — and we will continue promoting multilateralism in disarmament and the establishment of a world free of nuclear weapons.

I cannot finish my statement without thanking all the delegations in this room, members and observers alike, for your engagement with the Egyptian presidency and the great flexibility in seeking a programme of work and resuming substantive work. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General very much for his constant support, and the Conference secretariat for their hard work behind the scenes and their impeccable professionalism. I also thank the interpreters for their ability to make us understand each other fluently, despite many arcane terms and philosophical discussions.

Finally, I would like to thank the members of civil society for their engagement. I was particularly pleased with the level of responsiveness there has been during the Egyptian presidency.

Last but not least, I would like to thank my colleague here, Counsellor Hatem Elatawy, for all his dedication and great efforts and, above all, for the friendship and trust that he has with all colleagues in the Conference.

Before concluding, I see the delegation of Algeria requesting the floor.

(spoke in Arabic)

I give the floor to the delegation of Algeria.

Mr. Khelif (Algeria) *(spoke in Arabic)*: The Algerian delegation wishes to express its deep gratitude to you for the efforts that you have made during your presidency of the Conference. We thank you very much for your persistent efforts through which you have sought to bring about a rapprochement between the views of different States and groups of member States in order to reach a consensus formula that would allow the Conference to commence substantive work. However, regrettably, it appears that matters have not yet ripened sufficiently to enable us to agree on a programme of work. Therefore, the Algerian delegation wishes to draw the attention of member States to the need to conceive of a formula that will allow us to undertake substantive deliberations of some kind, because the Conference cannot spend the rest of the year without working. We cannot spend an empty year; therefore, we support the proposal put forward previously by Ambassador Jazaïry, which considers how to agree on a simplified programme of work that will enable us to move forward with substantive work. This does not in any way mean that the Egyptian effort during this period is forgotten. We emphasize our support for the next president of the Conference, Ethiopia. The Algerian delegation is ready to work with the Ethiopian presidency and with the various member States in order to find a way of working that will

lead us to substantive work on the basis of previous consensus and the efforts of the Egyptian presidency.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank the Algerian delegation for its statement.

(*spoke in English*)

I give the floor to the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Mr. Jon Yong Ryong (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Mr. President, in fact, my delegation has taken the floor at this stage to convey its high appreciation to you. We are very grateful to you for the outstanding way in which you have discharged your responsibility in the past few weeks. Your unlimited efforts to move the work of the Conference ahead deserve high appreciation. For this reason my delegation would like to highlight its praise to you and your delegation for the excellent work during the presidency.

Mr. President, my delegation remains ready to make its contribution to our continuing work with you and your successor in the coming days.

Finally, my delegation would like to warmly welcome the incoming president from Ethiopia.

The President: I would like to thank the delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea for their statement. This concludes our business for today. The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Tuesday, 20 March at 10 a.m. under the presidency of Ethiopia.

The meeting rose at 10.55 a.m.