

# CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/PV.946  
12 February 2004

ENGLISH

---

## FINAL RECORD OF THE NINE HUNDRED AND FORTY-SIXTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,  
on Thursday, 12 February 2004, at 10.30 a.m.

President: Ms. Amina MOHAMED (Kenya)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 946th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

I have four speakers for today's plenary meeting, namely: Ambassador Jakubowski of Poland, Ambassador Hu of China, Mr. Jang of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and Ambassador Sanders of the United States of America.

I would now like to give the floor to the first speaker on my list, Ambassador Krzysztof Jakubowski of Poland.

Mr. JAKUBOWSKI (Poland): Madam President, as I am taking the floor for the first time at a plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament during your presidency, let me congratulate you on the assumption of this high office. Let me also thank you - as well as your predecessors in the Chair - for the tireless efforts to bring progress to the substantive work of the CD.

To better structure our thinking on the Conference on Disarmament today we should refer to the basis of the CD, namely, to its relevance to the international security environment, to the possibility of holding negotiations in the present situation and to a framework for our actions in this room, that is, the agenda and the programme of work. That could help us, in turn, to better and more comprehensively answer questions often asked by our capitals.

The Conference on Disarmament, as the single multilateral body devoted to negotiating disarmament instruments, remains relevant. Today's world puts tremendous challenges in front of us in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation. Issues like the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, compliance with international treaties in the disarmament field, regional arms control and disarmament seem to be even more relevant today than during the "cold war", when the CD had its best time, as we say today, of course, in terms of the number of treaties negotiated. What other forum of a multilateral character is capable of dealing with those issues? Where else can countries of different regions, States parties to various disarmament treaties, negotiate global arrangements in this field? What other body is able to secure sensitive national interests in the area of arms control by applying the rule of consensus? The Conference on Disarmament can best, we believe, fulfil all those tasks. And, as many people say in this room, if there were no CD, we would have to invent one. We are in the comfortable situation of not having to invent a CD. What we have to do is to think about and discuss how we can restart substantial work in this body. Consequently, that brings me to another issue, the possibility of starting negotiations in the CD.

I want to start with one observation. I am convinced that although we have not adopted a programme of work and have not started any negotiations since 1998, we have been conducting, and we continue to conduct, substantive work in the Conference. Every plenary meeting, every informal meeting, seminars, side events are widely used to explain national positions, to close gaps between national positions. Perhaps I am boring because for years I have been saying the same things, but this is our deeply held conviction. Yes, we do believe that. It is my strong conviction that every day in the CD brings us closer to starting negotiations. What we are trying to do here is to start negotiations with a consensual understanding as to where they will lead us.

(Mr. Jakubowski, Poland)

And what we expect from the commencement of that work is that they - the negotiations - will bring tangible results, new disarmament treaties. That is why, I am sure, we are now conducting very substantial work in trying to set the stage for successful negotiations.

Now, a popular question: can we start negotiations in this room? My answer is: “yes, we can”. Let me just remind you that in 1998 the Conference accepted the report of the Ad Hoc Committee which started negotiations on a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. (I was in that room, and probably not many were. I witnessed and was part of this decision.) By doing so, the CD also approved the conclusion of that report, which contained a recommendation “to re-establish the Ad Hoc Committee at the beginning of the 1999 session”. In my opinion, the re-establishment of this committee now should also be viewed as a key element of rebuilding the credibility of the Conference and should become proof that we are going to consistently implement the decisions that we undertook on the basis of consensus.

Last year brought us closer to the start of substantial work. The proposal on the programme of work made by five Ambassadors - former Presidents of the CD - gave us ground on which to bring our positions closer. It gave impetus to fresh thinking in key capitals, to new considerations which hopefully will bring us to the starting line. Consultations by the Presidents of the Conference have given us new ground for reaching consensus in many areas, from substantial issues to the wider engagement of civil society.

One of the key results of last year's efforts was a growing understanding of the necessity to dismantle “linkages”, which have been a principal obstacle to the commencement of negotiations. We all know - it was precisely a “linkages” approach that blocked our work in this room, not the rule of consensus. I hope that the spirit of consensus - understood as a common responsibility in the progress of our work - will be present in this room during our future deliberations.

To have a full picture of the environment necessary to start negotiations in this room, we have to consider the issues of the agenda and the programme of work. I would like to touch upon those issues, which seem to be of key importance for a better understanding of the framework for our work here.

Rules 27 and 28 of the rules of procedure are very familiar to all of us. They concern the adoption of the agenda and the establishment of a programme of work. The rules of procedure are clear in this regard. However, the interpretation and practice that we witness lead me to the conclusion that we have allowed ourselves to be caught in a labyrinth without escape. Is it, however, possible to find a way out? Our thinking is the following.

The Conference should adopt the agenda, and in doing so should take into account the recommendations made by the General Assembly and - as we read in the introduction to the rules of procedure - “the relevant provisions of the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament”. Can we, however, go beyond that, trying to

(Mr. Jakubowski, Poland)

accommodate those recommendations to the needs of a present time? Accommodation does not necessarily mean a change. It rather means creative thinking about the agenda as a framework within which we can effectively deal with current challenges.

The Presidential statements made during the adoption of the agenda have highlighted the meaning of rule 30 of the rules of procedure, which provides for “the right of any member State of the Conference to raise any subject relevant to the work of the Conference”. So, using the existing “traditional” agenda we can, for example, tackle “out of the box” issues. How? Well, could we not use agenda item 2 to tackle WMD and terrorism? Or item 6 to discuss the issues of compliance? Can we not use agenda item 7 to discuss confidence-building measures in the area of conventional arms, and so on and so forth? My answer to all these questions and a number of others is “yes”. And it is our thinking that by this approach we can re-establish the credibility of the Conference as the forum which can follow the new trends in international security. By this, the CD could prove it can be effective and remain a centre of multilateral efforts in the area of disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation.

Now let me talk about a programme of work. The comprehensive programme of work has its clear value in taking up priority issues of the States in this room. Still as was made clear in a few statements recently (from the statement of Ambassador Inoguchi at the open-ended Presidential consultations on 19 December last to the statements by Ambassadors Miranda and Trezza made last week), there is neither consensus on nor capabilities among delegations to deal simultaneously with all the items contained in the proposed draft programme of work. What should we do in such a situation? Let us refer again to the rules of procedure.

First, rule 18 says clearly that “the Conference shall conduct its work and adopt its decisions by consensus”, which, in my opinion, makes the whole situation quite clear: if there is no consensus on any of the items, there cannot be a decision in this regard, and subsequently, there can be no immediate negotiations. My understanding is that, unless there is no basis for consensus on the one issue, we should try to concentrate on a search for common ground to start substantial work. At the same time, we should start without delay our work on the subjects that have already met with consensus.

Secondly, article 23 provides an opportunity to create subsidiary bodies “including when it appears that there is a basis to negotiate a draft treaty or other draft texts”. That means that subsidiary bodies can be established to negotiate new treaties. However, the word “including” suggests that subsidiary bodies might be established to discuss issues other than those devoted to negotiating treaties that are accepted by all in this room. It has been a long-accepted practice.

Summing up, perhaps we could view a programme of work more as a “schedule of activities” of the CD (as the rules of procedure suggest) rather than as hard negotiated text. That could give us the necessary flexibility, which, combined with the basic rules of work in the CD (especially the rule of consensus), could provide us with the opportunity to have a “road map” that would actually be a programme of work, containing elements that would have consensual agreement to start immediately work on, while other elements would be awaiting consensus and be further discussed.

(Mr. Jakubowski, Poland)

Speaking generally about the agenda and the programme of work, I am certain that creative thinking, free from stereotypes, can bring progress to our work in this room. This approach should also apply to the Conference as a whole. The CD can be adapted to today's challenges to the extent that we - delegations in this room and decision makers in our capitals - can adapt our way of thinking. And that requires creativity and courage.

Let me speak at the end about a few issues that are now being discussed both formally and informally in the CD. My delegation supports your proposal, Madam President, for holding informal plenary meetings of the CD. This is a legitimate way of conducting business in the Conference, as provided for in rules 19 and 22 of the rules of procedure. Let me also recall that in 2001, the Special Coordinator on the improved and effective functioning of the Conference, Ambassador Prasad Kariyawasam of Sri Lanka, reported that consensus had emerged from his consultations according to which "wider and more frequent use should be made of informal and open-ended consultations".

It is our view however, that such informal plenary meetings should be results-oriented. Deliberations should be given a decent chance to move us forward. Therefore, we see the need for good structuring and thorough intellectual preparation for this kind of work. Let me once again refer to the report of the Ambassador of Sri Lanka, in which he pointed out that there was general agreement on the utilization of "friends of the President", a well-known institution which could be widely used. In my opinion, we could consider the appointment of "friends of the President" in the context of the intellectual and structural preparation for informal plenary meetings. "Friends of the President" could come up with a "non-paper", for instance, containing proposals on the substance and structure of the debate during informal plenary meetings, proposals of course to be adopted by the Conference plenary.

Last but not least, let me address the question of the "out of the box" or "new" issues. I wish to thank the French Ambassador for taking up this subject. As we can see now - it is clear, I think - it gave an intellectual boost to general thinking about the Conference. Let me stress that those issues are of importance to today's international security and peace. Therefore, we see space for those topics to be discussed during informal plenary meetings. The inclusion of those issues should also provoke us to broader thinking about international security and disarmament in a multilateral context. And let me underline: the Conference on Disarmament is a place to meet such an intellectual challenge.

Already once in my statement I have compared our situation to one in a labyrinth. Indeed, many of us in the CD feel that we are walking through the same corridors again and again and cannot find an exit. However, let me remind you that from the myth about brave Theseus who fought the Minotaur in the labyrinth we can draw two lessons. First, the Minotaur is fallible and a way out of the labyrinth can be found. Secondly, when Theseus killed the Minotaur, he was surprised to find out that the face of the beast was in fact the reflection of his own.

I sincerely hope that with all the expertise and talents gathered in this room, and using innovative, creative thinking, we shall be able to find the way out of the labyrinth.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Poland for his important statement and the kind words addressed to the Chair. I would now like to give the floor to Ambassador Hu of China.

Mr. HU (China) (translated from Chinese): Madam President, my delegation sincerely thanks you for the positive efforts you have made to facilitate the substantive work of the Conference on Disarmament. We are pleased that under your guidance the Conference is now in a position to achieve some positive results in this regard. Our gratitude goes also to your predecessor, Ambassador Kuniko Inoguchi, for her valuable contributions.

This year we have a very full agenda, with the Conference on Disarmament, the meetings of the Group of Governmental Experts under the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, the United Nations Disarmament Commission, the third session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2005 NPT Review Conference, expert meetings under the Biological Weapons Convention, and the First Committee of the General Assembly. It fully demonstrates that the “traditional” disarmament and arms control tasks, objectives and agenda are as yet unfinished and call for further efforts on our part. At the same time, we must take a serious approach to the new security situation and security-related issues and threats. It is therefore imperative that we tackle all these challenges in a comprehensive and balanced manner when promoting arms control, disarmament and security in the Conference on Disarmament and from a global perspective.

Non-proliferation is becoming a key issue in the area of international security. The Chinese Government has consistently advocated the complete prohibition and destruction of all kinds of weapons of mass destruction, and is resolutely opposed to the proliferation of such weapons.

For many years, China has been constantly strengthening and improving its non-proliferation legislation in accordance with the principle of the rule of law. To this end it has promulgated a series of laws and regulations in the nuclear, biological, chemical, missile and military fields and adopted stringent and effective export control measures.

On 3 December 2003, the Chinese Government issued a white paper entitled “China’s non-proliferation policy and measures”. This is an authoritative document in which the Government sets out China’s non-proliferation policy and measures. It systematically describes for the first time the features of China’s non-proliferation export control system, specific measures for the application of the laws and regulations governing this system and the strict implementation of these texts. The document clearly reflects the Chinese Government’s resolve and sincerity with regard to non-proliferation; not only will it help government departments and enterprises in China to grasp and implement these policies, laws and regulations, but it will also enable the international community to gain a comprehensive, objective and accurate understanding of China’s non-proliferation policy and practices.

(Mr. Hu, China)

China's non-proliferation export control system features internationally accepted measures, such as an export registration system, a licensing system, end-user and end-use certification, the list control method, non-proliferation-oriented examination and approval, the "catch-all" principle and penalty measures.

The relevant departments of the Chinese Government have made great efforts to ensure the effective implementation of non-proliferation export control laws and regulations, including the strengthening of non-proliferation export control bodies, the publicizing of policies and regulations, inter alia through training courses for enterprises, and the investigation and handling of cases of violation. A mechanism for a clear division of responsibility and coordination has been set up among the functional departments of the Government dealing with export control.

The Chinese Government attaches great importance to the investigation and handling of cases involving violations of the law governing non-proliferation. Upon learning of possible illegal exports, the competent departments will conduct serious investigations and, depending on the seriousness of the violation, administer the corresponding administrative punishments or transfer the cases to the judicial organs so that criminal responsibility can be determined. In recent years the Chinese Government has investigated and dealt with a number of cases involving illegal exports and has administered corresponding punishments to the units and individuals involved, in accordance with the law.

International non-proliferation efforts and national non-proliferation policies and measures are complementary. Over the years, China has participated extensively in the construction, improvement and development of the multilateral non-proliferation regimes. We have signed all the relevant international agreements relating to non-proliferation and have become a member of nearly all the relevant international organizations. Last September, Mr. Li Zhaoxing, Minister for Foreign Affairs of China, addressed a letter to the Chairman of the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), in which he clearly stated that China was ready to positively consider applying for membership of MTCR. Two days ago the first round of dialogue between China and MTCR was held. On 26 January 2004, China submitted its application for membership of the Nuclear Suppliers Group. In the days ahead, China will continue to participate actively in international non-proliferation endeavours and exert great efforts within the framework of the United Nations to preserve and strengthen the existing system of international non-proliferation law. It will constantly increase consultations and exchanges with the multinational non-proliferation mechanisms and will continue to take an active part in international discussions on non-proliferation in order to facilitate the development and improvement of international non-proliferation regimes and contribute to the promotion of international peace, stability and development.

On 27 January 2004, President Hu Jintao of China and President Jacques Chirac of France issued a joint communiqué which embodies a series of basic positions aimed at promoting arms control and preventing proliferation. I quote:

"China and France reiterate the importance of observing and strengthening the international instruments on arms control and proliferation and are resolutely opposed to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. To this end

(Mr. Hu, China)

both countries have agreed to set up a working group on arms control and non-proliferation in the framework of a bilateral strategic dialogue and to strengthen their cooperation and exchanges in the field of arms control, non-proliferation and export control over sensitive items. Both attach importance to the strict observance of the NPT, reiterate the importance of the treaty and determine to make efforts to facilitate the entry into force of the CTBT. Both also reiterate that it is imperative to strictly abide by the CWC and the BWC, and both agree in principle to the holding of a United Nations Security Council summit meeting on the issue of non-proliferation. France welcomes China's enactment of national laws and regulations on export control over sensitive items and supports China's membership in MTCR as soon as possible and in other multilateral export control regimes when appropriate. Both reiterate the importance of preventing an arms race in outer space."

Last October China successfully launched the Shengzhou 5 manned spaceship, an event which not only marks China's significant progress in the field of the peaceful uses of outer space but also constitutes part of the endeavour by the international community as a whole to explore outer space. Outer space belongs to all mankind. It is in the interests of all mankind to prevent weapons from being introduced into outer space and to prevent outer space from becoming the "fourth space" for the arms race and war. China continues to hold the view that the Conference on Disarmament should reach agreement on a programme of work as proposed by the five Ambassadors in document CD/1693/Rev.1 with a view to beginning substantive work on such important agenda items as the prevention of an arms race in outer space and the negotiation and drafting of an international legal instrument in that area.

The PRESIDENT: I should like to thank Ambassador Hu for his comprehensive statement, and I now give the floor to Mr. Jang Chun Sik of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Mr. JANG (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Madam President, allow me to begin, on behalf of the delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, by congratulating you on your assumption of the first presidency of the 2004 session of the Conference on Disarmament. It is my hope that, under your guidance, the CD will lay a sound basis for bringing about tangible results in its work. I also take this opportunity to commend your predecessors for their valuable contributions to guiding the work of the CD last year.

We welcome the adoption of the agenda of the CD for this year under your presidency. Now an early agreement on the programme of work remains our first priority. In this respect, in my delegation's view, the five Ambassadors proposal still remains the basis for our work in the CD, even though it needs further refinement. Therefore, the DPRK is supportive of the A-5 proposal and considers it as a package which should not be delinked.

Nuclear disarmament should be the first priority in dealing with any attempt in the CD. The goal of disarmament in general can be accomplished only when nuclear disarmament is accompanied by the total elimination of nuclear weapons.



(Mr. Jang, Democratic People's Republic of Korea)

More than a decade has passed since the cold war came to an end, and the world greeted the new century. However, the thought mode of the cold war still exists in the field of disarmament, and the reliance of nuclear-weapon States on nuclear weapons is increasing rather than decreasing. The emergence of a recent doctrine of pre-emptive nuclear attack on sovereign States and a unilateral attempt to develop smaller nuclear weapons are making the process of general disarmament, especially nuclear disarmament, more complicated.

Unconditional security assurances to non-nuclear States against the use of nuclear weapons have become a vital issue for nuclear disarmament and in the context of the purpose of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). It is an escapist act to pursue nothing but the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, evading the issue of negative security assurances. This issue is essential to the existence of non-nuclear States and the promotion of global nuclear disarmament.

In the past more than 50-odd years, nuclear-weapon States have disparately declared their commitments to security assurances against the use of nuclear weapons. However, in reality, a nuclear threat by a nuclear-weapon State against non-nuclear States is being openly uttered and even integrated into its policy, as their commitments are unilateral, conditional and legally unbound. It proves that the unilateral commitments made by nuclear-weapon States could never prevent a nuclear war.

From this point of view, the DPRK delegation insists that the doctrine of pre-emptive nuclear attack should be abandoned. It also insists that a legally binding international arrangement to assure non-nuclear States unconditionally against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons and aiming at the total elimination of all nuclear weapons should be secured.

And it is the view of the DPRK that the adoption of an egoistic attitude and double standards on the issue of non-proliferation should not be allowed. We believe that nuclear non-proliferation can only be meaningfully sustained if the non-nuclear States are themselves assured under legally binding commitments that their independence, territorial integrity and sovereignty will be safeguarded against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.

The prevention of the deployment of weapons and an arms race in outer space is becoming a pressing task facing the international community. With the abrogation of the ABM Treaty and the accelerated development of a missile defence system, outer space risks being weaponized.

Outer space should not be allowed to become a sphere of military confrontation, and should be used for peaceful purposes as the common heritage of mankind. Therefore, the DPRK holds that a legally binding international instrument is vital to prevent an arms race in outer space. In this context, we consider that the proposal for negotiating a treaty on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, initiated by the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation, will contribute to ensuring world peace.

(Mr. Jang, Democratic People's Republic of Korea)

We share the view expressed by the United Nations Secretary-General in his message to the CD this year that political will is essential in overcoming the current impasse and revitalizing the Conference.

In conclusion, the DPRK delegation expresses the hope that the CD can reach early agreement on a comprehensive and balanced programme of work so as to allow the Conference to start its work on substantive issues, giving priority to such issues as nuclear disarmament, NSA and PAROS.

The PRESIDENT: I should like to thank the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea for his statement and for his kind words addressed to the Chair. The next speaker on my list is Ambassador Jackie Sanders of the United States of America.

Ms. SANDERS (United States of America): Madam President, I take the floor for the first time as the United States representative to the Conference on Disarmament. It is my distinct pleasure to be able to do so under your presidency. You have demonstrated special energy and skill during the opening weeks of the 2004 CD session, and I have been very impressed as a newcomer to this Conference. And you have accomplished a great deal in focusing the attention of this important body on the relevant security issues facing the international community.

I am honoured to use this occasion to share with you and our colleagues here in Geneva the remarks given yesterday by President Bush at the National Defense University in Washington. The President addressed a topic of major concern to all nations: the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and what must be done to strengthen the world's efforts to stop the spread of deadly weapons.

I have asked the secretariat to distribute a copy of the President's remarks to all delegations and observers present in the chamber. I also request that these remarks be entered as an official document of the Conference on Disarmament.

Thank you, Madam President. I look forward to working closely with you, our incoming President, Ambassador Rajmah Hussain, and all of our colleagues in the coming weeks and months.

The PRESIDENT: I would like to thank Ambassador Sanders for her statement and for making available to the Conference the remarks by President Bush on weapons of mass destruction proliferation.

This concludes my list of speakers for this morning. I would now like to propose, with your permission, that we suspend the meeting for 15 minutes to allow me, as your President, to complete some work that I am doing, on the basis of which I shall be putting two proposals on the table for your consideration. So, if you will allow me, I should like to suspend the meeting now for 15 minutes.

The meeting was suspended at 11.10 a.m. and resumed at 12.05 p.m.

The PRESIDENT: Our plenary session is resumed, and I should like to propose the following: that we take a decision with regard to enhancement of the engagement of civil society in the work of the Conference on which my consultations indicate that there is agreement. If that is acceptable, I shall now read the elements of that proposal.

- “1. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) shall continue to be allowed to attend formal plenary meetings of the Conference and to be seated in the public gallery.
- “2. NGOs shall be entitled, upon request, to receive official documents of the plenary meetings of the Conference.
- “3. NGOs shall be entitled, at their own expense, twice per annual session, to make written material available to the members of the Conference outside the conference hall.
- “4. After the CD adopts a programme of work, it will allocate one informal plenary meeting per annual session to NGOs to address the Conference.
- “5. Only NGOs whose activities are relevant to the work of the Conference will be able to address the Conference on Disarmament. Therefore, a formal selection process will be put in place to consider requests from NGOs to address the Conference. Requests from NGOs will be made to the President of the Conference on Disarmament through the secretariat of the Conference on Disarmament. These requests will be considered at Presidential consultations and thereafter at a formal plenary meeting of the Conference.”

The secretariat will be distributing the text of that proposal. May I take it that this proposal on enhancement of the engagement of civil society in the work of the Conference is acceptable to the members of the Conference and can be adopted?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: It is my understanding that with respect to the selection process on requests made by NGOs, the final decision for NGOs to address the Conference on Disarmament would be given by a formal plenary meeting of this Conference in the same way as it gives approval to decisions that are put before it by consensus.

I believe very strongly that today we have an opportunity to be able also to deal with another issue that is of great importance to the Conference. I also believe that there is considerable support for us to take a decision on that issue. But since I still need some time to conclude my consultations on it, I am going to suggest again that with your permission, we suspend our work for 15 minutes.

If there is no objection, our meeting is suspended.

The meeting was suspended at 12.10 p.m. and resumed at 12.35 p.m.

The PRESIDENT: I should like us to resume our meeting, and I should like to make the following comments on the issue that I had raised before suspending the meeting. It is on the holding of informal plenary meetings.

Despite my efforts, it has not been possible to have an agreement this morning, and therefore what I intend to do with that would be to call for another meeting tomorrow. I believe that between now and tomorrow, the delegations that are having difficulties will have time to consult. I will have time to seek instructions so that when we meet tomorrow we can have a clear picture. As I said before, it is my belief that in fact we are quite close, and I am hoping that we will be able to bridge the very small gap that we have between us. I think it will also give me an opportunity as President to discuss this with any delegations that are having difficulties and to clarify any issues that they would like clarified and to see whether I can actually provide a level of comfort to them that will allow them to come on board. Therefore, we will hold a plenary tomorrow at 3 p.m. I think that will provide sufficient time. If at that point there is still no agreement, then I will be comfortable myself that I will have done all that needs to be done to get this agreement through.

Now, with regard to the decision that we took on civil society, I just wanted to make clear what the understanding is with regard to plenary documents that will be provided to civil society if they so request. It has always been my understanding that the plenary documents that are referred to in that decision relate to the plenary meeting documents that bear the symbol CD, and not to any texts, any rolling texts, any negotiating texts, any informal texts that we may have before the CD.

Since we have some time, and I am not sure how much we will require tomorrow, to hopefully take this decision, I should like to make my concluding remarks now.

I should like to begin by expressing my profound appreciation to all members of the CD for the support, the understanding, the encouragement and the flexibility that I have been fortunate to experience. It has been a unique privilege to preside over this august body and an honour for my country, which had the courage many years ago to believe in the inherent value of belonging to this important multilateral body.

There is a Chinese saying that in my view expresses most aptly what we have been able to do since the beginning of the year. "A journey of a thousand miles begins with one small step." I believe we have taken that step and begun the journey. I am convinced that the CD will only move forward from this point onwards.

In my opening statement I clearly identified agreement on a programme of work as our biggest challenge and our collective responsibility. I hope that a possible agreement on informal plenary meetings will facilitate our work to that end. Informal plenary meetings, which are appropriately provided for in rule 22 of our rules of procedure, can be an effective vehicle that we can use to build confidence, to understand issues and each other's positions. It will also allow us to make efficient use of our time as well as the facilities that are at our disposal. When - and I am not saying "if" - we begin our informal plenary meetings, I would urge all of you to keep in mind the following suggestion by William Lynch: "One of the best safeguards of

(The President)

our hopes” - I am quoting - “I have suggested is to be able to mark off the areas of hopelessness and to acknowledge them, to face them directly, not with despair but with the creative intent of keeping them from polluting all areas of possibility”.

Now, having said that, I would like in conclusion to thank my predecessor, Ambassador Kuniko Inoguchi, for her tireless efforts that have contributed significantly to what we have been able to do so far. I would also like to recognize the work done by successive Presidents on the two issues we have had before us today. On civil society, I would especially like to recognize the excellent work that was done by Ambassador Prasad Kariyawasam of Sri Lanka, Ambassador Mary Whelan of Ireland and Ambassador Yaakov Levy of Israel. I would also like to express appreciation for the role played by the regional coordinators who have helped make my presidency a happy and productive experience. I thank also the secretariat, Ambassador Sergei Ordzhonikidze, Enrique Román-Morey, Jerzy Zaleski, Valère Mantels and their collaborators who have spent endless hours providing guidance and advice. To the interpreters who have worked patiently behind the scenes, but whose voices have all become familiar, I would like to say thank you. I should like to thank all of you for your attention, and if there are no requests for the floor, I should like to adjourn our meeting.

I have been asked to remind you that the next plenary meeting will be held tomorrow, Friday, 13 February, at 3 p.m. in this same Council Chamber.

The meeting rose at 12.45 p.m.