

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE NINE HUNDRED AND SIXTY-FIRST PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 24 June 2004, at 10.15 a.m.

President:

Mr. Omar HILALE

(Mongolia)

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I declare open the 961st plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

First of all I would like to extend a warm welcome to the new Ambassador of Nigeria, His Excellency Joseph Ayalogu, and wish him good luck and every success in his new functions as Ambassador representing Nigeria at the United Nations and the Conference on Disarmament.

Right away I would like to bid farewell to the Ambassador of Poland, Mr. Krzysztof Jakubowski, who will soon be leaving Geneva, having been assigned by his Government to assume other important and demanding duties. Since our colleague Jakubowski joined the Conference on Disarmament in 1997, he has always articulated and upheld the positions of his Government with a remarkable combination of distinguished authority and profound knowledge of arms control and disarmament. As an alumnus of the United Nations Programme of Fellowships on Disarmament, he has always demonstrated irrefutable logic and perseverance in searching for imaginative ways and means to revitalize the Conference and secure consensus on the programme of work. All the members of the Conference who have striven to bring the Conference back on the path of negotiations could always count on his broad knowledge as well as his insightful and imaginative advice, encouragement and assistance in the search for joint solutions to outstanding problems. Although the constraints of the alphabet did not allow him to take the Chair of the Conference on Disarmament during his tenure, his skill in mediation, his moderation and his impartiality earned him the well-deserved post of Chairperson of the Commission on Human Rights in 2002, a function which he discharged with his usual dedication and unique diplomatic talent. On behalf of the Conference on Disarmament and on my own behalf, I should like to wish Ambassador Jakubowski and his family much success and happiness for the future.

The following speakers are on the list for today: Ambassador Bekhbat of Mongolia, Mr. Paulsen of Norway, Ambassador Jakubowski of Poland and our colleague from Kenya. However, before giving the floor to the first speaker on my list, I would like to make a statement as Morocco takes the Chair of the Conference.

Mr. Secretary-General, Ambassadors, ladies and gentlemen, allow me to say how pleased I am to take the Chair of the Conference on Disarmament on behalf of my country, the Kingdom of Morocco. It is also an exceptional privilege for me to be here as Moroccan President for the third time since Morocco joined the Conference on Disarmament in 1979. This term of office offers Morocco a further opportunity to reaffirm its unswerving commitment to international peace and security, peaceful coexistence among nations and respect for international commitments on disarmament. It is also an invaluable opportunity to reiterate my country's determination to give its unreserved support to all efforts of the United Nations to reverse the arms race, strengthen arms limitation and disarmament agreements, reactivate multilateral disarmament mechanisms and support the actions of the international community to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons and eliminate weapons of mass destruction.

(The President)

The year 2004 is the year of the Group of 21, and thus I fully appreciate the expectations which the members of the Conference on Disarmament place in their respective Presidents. Allow me to pay tribute to my colleagues Ambassadors Amina Mohamed of Kenya, Rajmah Hussain of Malaysia, Pablo Macedo of Mexico and Khasbazaryn Bekhbat of Mongolia for the skill with which they carried out their duties as President and allowed for the initiation of informal sessions and their subsequent smooth conduct. I would also like to pay tribute to our Secretary-General, Mr. Sergei Ordzhonikidze, and the Deputy Secretary-General, Mr. Roman Morey, as well as the secretariat of the Conference. I know them personally and I know I can count on their support and cooperation.

The profound strategic changes that have taken place in the last few years have given rise to new threats to the international community. International security has never been as vulnerable as it is today, because the vulnerability of our world is no longer a matter of the traditional threats of the nuclear arms race spiral or the progressive militarization of outer space. It can also be seen through the dangers created by failure to respect international obligations, the fact that legal commitments in the area of disarmament are called into question, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, or failure to respect the will of countries to make their regions and continents havens of peace and sanctuaries that are free of all nuclear weapons.

Furthermore, lack of security in the world has become globalized since the emergence of international terrorism. Terrorists seek to undermine the basis of the world order by attacking the values of our civilization, jeopardizing the strengthening of democracy and the socio-economic development of countries and sowing death, destruction and disorder. Its desperate quest for weapons of mass destruction portends an 11 September involving nuclear, biological or chemical weapons, which is no longer a fictional scenario but a strong probability that only the will and determination of the entire international community can prevent. As a component of the United Nations system, the Conference on Disarmament can and must play its role in this worldwide struggle, in particular by providing appropriate responses to this threat. In order to do so, our Conference has no alternative but to adapt to its international environment and to the new challenge of this early part of the century.

The Conference on Disarmament, a creature of the cold war, managed to impose itself as a negotiating body despite the East-West ideological confrontation, and then became a catalyst for disarmament following the fall of the Berlin wall. However, for some years now it has settled into a distressing lethargy. The absence of a programme of work for more than seven years stands in serious contrast to its perilous international environment. Efforts have indeed been made to break this deadlock, and commendable and innovative steps have been taken to build a consensual space that can enable the Conference to carry out its mandate. However, we must recognize that these efforts and initiatives have not managed to break the present stalemate and confer on our Conference the negotiating momentum that it desperately lacks. This depressing acknowledgement of powerlessness should by no means discourage us or condemn us to feelings of resignation. On the contrary, we should draw appropriate lessons while stepping up our efforts, overcoming our differences and displaying flexibility and breadth of vision. This is what is needed to return the Conference on Disarmament to its fundamental calling as the sole multilateral negotiating body in the field of disarmament.

(The President)

There is no doubt that the Decalogue is the Conference on Disarmament's fundamental document. But, like every other document, it is not written in stone. Its strength is to be found in its consensual dimension and its importance as a reference point, and its relevance lies in its potential for adaptation to an international environment which is henceforth characterized by the globalization of terrorism. Hence the need to abandon the dogmatic approach which in the past few years has governed the perception of the problem of the modus operandi of the attainment of its objectives and its plan of action.

We have discovered the limitations of an approach focusing on the obsessive quest for the implementation of the Decalogue without any concessions or flexibility. The outcome has instead been a syndrome of deadlock which has become the normal state of affairs as the years have passed, leading to frustration and concern. After seven years of fruitless, not to say sterile dialogue regarding the adoption of the programme of work, it is time for us to ask ourselves not what the founders of the Conference on Disarmament sought to achieve a quarter of a century ago, but what we are capable of embarking on and achieving in the present circumstances. We must therefore stop seeing the Decalogue as holy writ and reread our mandate pragmatically, adapting our priorities and our needs in the field of security to today's challenges and threats, not to yesterday's fears and concerns. In this context, history will focus less on the litany of our disarmament commitments than on our powerlessness to overcome our differences, come to grips with the present threats, display realism in order to achieve what is possible with lucidity and courage, and prepare the ground for still broader areas of consensus in the future. To this end, both the earlier initiatives and those to come would do best to avoid introducing methodological concepts that are foreign to the Decalogue, which could themselves become part of the problem. Our successive failures to adopt our programme of work carry within them the seeds of the weakening of our Conference. Worse still, every year that goes by without our being able to tackle the items on our agenda in the light of their own merits and the prospects they offer fosters the creeping marginalization of the Conference on Disarmament. I therefore urge you to replace the sterile all-or-nothing approach with the virtues of openness to others, dialogue and compromise. Because, as was said quite rightly by Sir Alfred Jules Ayer, the English empiricist and positivist philosopher of the last century, progressivity can lead to globality, but the reverse is more troublesome.

In this context, and as I am deeply convinced of the need for the Conference to adapt to its international environment, I intend to organize an informal session on the theme that the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, identified in his message on the opening of our annual session: "emerging threats and challenges, such as new forms of terrorism and their potential impact on proliferation of weapons of mass destruction".

This framework for an informal but dense and fruitful exchange of views stems from the discussions that accompanied the adoption of our agenda, and above all the wish expressed by several delegations from all groups in this connection.

I also plan to conduct consultations on ways and means of building on the wealth, the quality and the depth of the statements made, as well as the various proposals put forward in the cycle of informal meetings which is coming to an end today. It goes without saying that these

(The President)

informal discussions, past or future, are not an end in themselves, nor a replacement for the negotiations that we all desire, but rather an opportunity for us to arrive at a mutual understanding of one another's positions, the legitimate ambitions of some parties and the equally legitimate national security concerns of others.

In this way it would be my wish to start a new series of two or three informal meetings, with the goal of prompting a structured and targeted debate. In other words, moving from monologue to interactive dialogue and from confidence-building to the process of seeking rapprochement, the convergence of positions, concepts and interests. The ultimate aim would be to identify common denominators so as to build an evolving consensus that would allow our Conference to discharge its negotiating mandate.

Lastly, as I am greatly encouraged by the positive assessments of many delegations regarding the relevance, quality and constructive nature of the statements made during these informal sessions, I would like to propose that we make use of the opportunity offered to us under rule 22 of the rules of procedure, which gives the Conference the freedom to request the secretariat to prepare unofficial summaries of our informal meetings. The sole objective of this suggestion is to have an inventory of all the proposals in an informal document so that they are not forgotten and, at the same time, we can draw on them in our future consultations and work. In this light, I would voice the hope that I can count on your individual and collective support, your contributions, your proposals, your suggestions, as well as your creative skills. Morocco's goals during its term of office are the expression of your wishes, to explore all paths which may promote the emergence of consensus for the adoption of our programme of work. I rely on all of you to achieve this.

I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Mongolia, His Excellency Khasbazaryn Bekhbat.

Mr. BEKHBAT (Mongolia) (translated from French): Mr. President, as I am speaking for the first time since you took the Chair, allow me to convey to you my warm congratulations and my best wishes for success as you take up the important responsibilities of President of the Conference on Disarmament. You may be assured of the cooperation and unreserved support of my delegation as you carry out the very important and demanding tasks which are facing you. I should also like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank the secretariat, which helped me very generously to draft my statement, which I am now going to read to you as best I can in English.

(continued in English)

The purpose of my statement today is to present the highlights of the informal plenary meetings held under my presidency on 3, 10 and 17 June, during which the Conference discussed the following items on its agenda: "Effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons" (item 4), "New types of weapons of mass destruction and new systems of such weapons; radiological weapons" (item 5), and "Comprehensive programme of disarmament" (item 6).

(Mr. Bekhbat, Mongolia)

As in the previous report, it is not my intention to provide a detailed summary of statements, nor a thorough analysis of nuances in the views expressed during the discussions. Instead, I would limit my presentation to the main issues that were highlighted during the discussion of the above agenda items.

As expected, views on negative security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States differed considerably, and the differences followed a well-established pattern. At one end of the spectrum, there were advocates of a multilateral, unconditional and legally binding instrument negotiated in the Conference on Disarmament, and at the other, those who considered sufficient the existing assurances provided by nuclear-weapon States, either in unilateral declarations or in the context of nuclear-weapon-free zones. Others were of the view that the NPT was the preferred forum for dealing with the issue of security assurances, although some were also ready to accept dealing with NSA within the context of the mandate of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament.

Furthermore, while some States were of the view that all those countries that renounced the option of possessing nuclear weapons had a legitimate right to unconditional and legally binding security assurances, others linked the right to such assurances to full compliance with the provisions of the NPT. There was also the opinion that the importance of security assurances was greatly exaggerated, and that a legally binding treaty was neither achievable nor relevant to today's threats.

On the issue of new types of weapons of mass destruction, delegations mainly addressed the issue of radiological weapons or - in other words - radiological dispersal devices. Some, however, tried to explore new avenues on this subject, be it new weapons, such as, inter alia, radio frequency weapons and information operation weapons, or threats against critical facilities and infrastructure that could endanger the proper functioning of our societies. The latter was also addressed in the context of a "comprehensive programme of disarmament". There were proposals to establish criteria for identifying new weapons of mass destruction, and it was suggested that the Special Coordinator envisaged in the A-5 proposal could provide more insight in this matter.

In addressing radiological weapons, appreciation was expressed for the efforts already made, in particular those by IAEA, aimed at strengthening the protection of nuclear material. In particular, references were made to the current revision of the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Materials, the Code of Conduct on the Safety and Security of Radioactive Sources and the Convention on Nuclear Safety.

While some States remain convinced of the usefulness of a global instrument to ban radiological weapons, and on the role of the CD in this field, others were doubtful as to the efficacy of seeking a ban on radiological weapons since States were not likely to develop such weapons. Accordingly, they were in favour of, inter alia, strengthening existing measures related to the protection of nuclear materials, such as those by IAEA, the G-8 initiatives, and the Global Threat Reduction Initiative, as well as addressing the issue of the potential use of radiological devices by terrorists.

(Mr. Bekhbat, Mongolia)

Discussions on the item entitled “Comprehensive programme of disarmament” led to recalling the original objectives of this item, as well as to exploring its potential utility in addressing arms control and disarmament issues that are not explicitly included in the agenda of the Conference. There was a proposal to expand its scope so as to include also non-proliferation issues and to make it applicable to both conventional and nuclear weapons. More detailed proposals included, inter alia, addressing under this item such issues as verification of and compliance with key arms control and disarmament regimes, certain aspects of small arms and light weapons, including the development of concepts on the brokerage of these weapons, contribution to the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action by comparing regional experience in this regard, or new threats and challenges to international security. In this context, some delegations also raised the issue of critical facilities and infrastructure. There were also proposals to address comprehensive approaches to international security matters under this item.

Finally, as the discussions of items on the Conference’s agenda progress, questions of a possible follow-up to this exercise have also been raised. Lively discussions with elements of interaction among delegations prompted some of them to express interest in the continuation of informal plenary meetings which would be devoted to specific topics that could be identified and agreed upon. There were also proposals that the President of the Conference commence consultations on ways and means of continuing the discussions in a structured manner.

I would like to add my voice to these proposals. As we have all experienced in this part of the session, the efforts of my predecessors in office have generated a new momentum in the Conference on Disarmament. Frank and comprehensive discussions have engaged almost all of our members in clarifying their views on all the items on the agenda of the CD. This may be the long-awaited sign that, after many years of impasse, the Conference has finally moved forward from discussions on the programme of work to a new stage - that of actually addressing the substance of the items on its agenda. This might be a very modest achievement, but it is worth making additional efforts to consolidate and nurture our gains.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank Ambassador Khasbazaryn Bekhbat of Mongolia for his statement and the kind words he addressed to the Chair. I now call on Mr. Kjetil Paulsen of Norway.

Mr. PAULSEN (Norway): Mr. President, let me first congratulate you on assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament.

After this plenary meeting we will, under your guidance, conclude the informal consultations by considering the seventh agenda item of the CD. I have a few remarks in relation to this process.

When we in January this year started discussing the possibility of convening informal consultations, some reluctance was expressed in different quarters. There was a concern that the

(Mr. Paulsen, Norway)

consultations might be unbalanced, that they might be nothing but inflammatory, that they would be limited to so-called “old issues”, that they might distract us from our most important challenge: to agree on a programme of work. Other concerns were expressed as well.

Today I think there is almost full agreement that the consultations so far have been useful, clarifying and constructive. No ghosts have appeared, either in the dark, or in bright sunshine. A large number of delegations have participated and contributed to fruitful discussions and exchanges of views. I think this augurs well if ever we are to enter a phase of real negotiations.

I would like to highlight a few points from the informal consultations on the first six agenda items that were of particular interest to my delegation.

Firstly, while several delegations, including my own, have negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty as their first priority, a corresponding willingness on the part of many of these delegations has been expressed also to address other issues, one way or the other. And those who advocate the prominence of nuclear disarmament or militarization of outer space have not rejected the importance of an FMCT. We do not seem to talk to each other from different sides of the globe and this should be good news.

Secondly, many non-nuclear-weapon States reconfirmed that they take an active interest in the issue of negative security assurances. This should not surprise anyone. It is our hope and belief that the nuclear-weapon States will take the concerns of the non-nuclear-weapon States seriously into account when NSAs are dealt with in the future, whether it is in the context of the CD or of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Thirdly, interesting and important so-called new issues have been introduced, including how to protect critical infrastructure against terrorist attacks. This demonstrates that the CD should be an arena for discussing both long-lasting and perhaps protracted problems, as well as the more acute concerns of today. One so-called “old” issue, radiological weapons, was even revitalized by many delegations when we considered agenda item 5.

Fourthly, some new and specific proposals were made during the informal consultations. These related, inter alia, to FMCT, PAROS, nuclear disarmament and so-called “new issues”. We think that all specific proposals deserve further consideration in a follow-up process after the informal consultations.

Finally, one may develop a certain introverted culture when participating in a body which, unfortunately, is somewhat shielded from the vibrant realities outside these walls. I suppose that interpretations of words, phrases, indications and suggestions become excessively fascinating. But the informal consultations we are about to complete must have demonstrated that we are all capable of communication and discussion and that perhaps there are fewer secret agendas than we anticipate. We may not be closer to a programme of work. But my delegation hopes and believes that the informal consultations have brought the CD a small step closer to the

(Mr. Paulsen, Norway)

real world and the real challenges of our time. In the follow-up process we encourage the upcoming presidencies to exercise leadership, based on the prerogatives offered in the rules of procedure. And I welcome in this context your intention, Mr. President, to conduct additional consultations on the acutely urgent issues of today.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Norway for his statement and for the kind congratulations addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to Ambassador Krzysztof Jakubowski of Poland.

Mr. JAKUBOWSKI (Poland): It is always a great pleasure to see a close friend in the Chair of our meeting, and I am very happy to see you, Mr. President, presiding over our proceedings. I congratulate you very warmly. I wish you all the best, all success, and I truly believe you are among the most capable of bringing us towards success and towards the beginning of the work of this Conference. I should also like to thank you very, very warmly for what you have said directly to me. I do not think I deserve this kind of kind words, but it is always a pleasure to listen to that kind of words, especially coming from the high podium. Thank you once again.

Mr. President, distinguished colleagues, friends, when I look around, I see just friends - friends, friends and friends - and I definitely have kind words for all of you, a lot of thanks, a lot of thoughts to share, but excuse me if I did so, this statement would last and last and last. So with regret, I have to be a little bit more general in my remarks.

The time has come to say farewell to you when, after seven years of troubling you, I am finally leaving Geneva. Certainly, after such a long time spent in one place, one becomes emotional when his or her time to leave has arrived. It is also the time to sum up and to reflect on what has happened and what has been done, what could have been done, and what has been missed.

Let me say that my term of duty as the Ambassador of Poland took place here in Geneva at an absolutely extraordinary time for my country. During my stay here, Poland joined NATO and most recently, the European Union - events that set new horizons for my mission's work here. On the other hand, during my stay here, the tragic events of 11 September took place, which highlighted the need to think about international security from a new perspective. Those are just a few examples of what has happened during those seven years, but they show perfectly that a new reality in international security has been born. It is still taking shape as every day - each and every day - we can see new developments of key importance to global and regional peace and security.

Some people may say that it was not a time rich in developments in the Conference on Disarmament, and to the bewilderment of many of you, I must repeat once again that I think just the opposite. Although we could not agree on a programme of work, the Conference has worked, and worked substantially. It is pretty clear that it is not easy to reach agreement during a time of big changes. But at the same time, the Conference has served as a platform for exchanging views, informing on national positions, broadening mutual understanding. It was a perfect confidence-building measure of its own.

(Mr. Jakubowski, Poland)

In my speech on 22 February, I outlined my delegation's position on the programme of work, the agenda, and more generally on the need for innovative thinking on the substance and organization of the work of the Conference. The ideas which I put forward then are still valid, and I am not going to repeat them. Let me just repeat that the role of the CD remains valid. It is even more so because of the new challenges we face, especially terrorism and weapons of mass destruction. Those new challenges for international security should be reflected in the CD's deliberations and work. New innovative thinking is needed, and you are capable of doing that.

Leonardo da Vinci, a great artist and such a master of innovative thinking, once said: "It is easier to oppose the beginning than the end". It is my real hope that the Conference on Disarmament will make great progress once it is able to get started. The adoption of the programme of work would be a pole position one. Probably it would be easier if we could treat the programme as a schedule of activities or a road map. We have advocated this kind of approach several times. Nevertheless, I think it is important to start and prove that the Conference on Disarmament is not only on paper as the sole multilateral negotiating body in the area of disarmament, but that it can also be productive and effective.

The great Leonardo also said: "Vacuum is born where hope dies". I appeal to you: do not let hope vanish. Keep in mind that a vacuum might be infected with things we do not wish to get into - mistrust and havoc, for example. I have a strong hope - more than hope, conviction - that the Conference on Disarmament - thanks to your skills and innovative thinking - will remain the most important multilateral body in disarmament, very well adjusted to the new challenges.

It has been a real privilege to be part of the "best club in town". I wish to thank you - all of you - for your friendship. I appreciate that I have had the opportunity to work in this room with the most skilled and talented diplomats. And I also wish to thank all my friends on the podium, especially the Secretary-General of the CD, Mr. Ordzhonikidze, Enrique Román-Morey, Jerzy Zaleski, and their staff, for their constant support and cooperation. Last, but not least, I wish to thank all the conference services, the interpreters and all my friends around for their patience and for making my work easier and hopefully more effective. Thank you so much.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank Ambassador Krzysztof Jakubowski for his very warm and moving farewell statement, and I thank him, too, for the kind words he addressed to the Chair. I would like to take this opportunity to tell him on behalf of all his friends, the members of the Conference on Disarmament: how much we will miss you, and I would also like to reaffirm the wishes of all your friends, I repeat, in the Conference on Disarmament for success and happiness for you and your family. Bon voyage, Ambassador.

I now give the floor to Mr. Owade of Kenya.

Mr. OWADE (Kenya): Mr. President, on behalf of the Kenyan delegation to the Conference on Disarmament, allow me to take this opportunity to congratulate you most sincerely on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference. We assure you of the support of the Kenya delegation during your presidency. Ambassador Omar Hilale is an accomplished

(Mr. Owade, Kenya)

diplomat with admirable talent and leadership qualities that we are confident will enable the Conference to promote a positive atmosphere that has characterized the Conference since January when Kenya had the privilege to preside over the Conference.

Allow me also to congratulate your immediate predecessors, Ambassador Pablo Macedo of Mexico and Ambassador Bekhbat of Mongolia, for the tireless efforts they have made to steer the work of the Conference. The informal plenary debates we have had under their leadership, and beginning with the chairmanship of the distinguished Ambassador of Malaysia, have proven that it was indeed a path worth treading in the Conference's efforts to make progress in its substantive work.

I have asked for the floor to join a number of speakers who have previously underlined the importance of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. As you are no doubt aware, my country, Kenya, will be privileged to host the First Review Conference of this Convention in Nairobi from 29 November to 3 December this year.

I wish to take this opportunity to extend an invitation to all delegates to the Conference on Disarmament to attend the Review Conference in Nairobi.

The Ottawa Convention enjoys a membership of 142 States parties as at March 2004, and the list continues to grow. As we approach the Review Conference, we are particularly happy to note that the Convention has achieved significant success in the field of disarmament. It is unique in the sense that it is both a humanitarian and disarmament treaty. Its humanitarian objectives are shared universally even by those who are still outside the treaty. Unlike any other disarmament treaty, the States parties have demonstrated an unparalleled political will to ensure its success.

The partnership between Governments and civil society is yet another unique characteristic of this Convention.

Since its adoption, the resort to the use of anti-personnel mines has diminished considerably, while their production has also decreased. More than 30 million stockpiles have been destroyed.

The First Review Conference will therefore provide us with an important opportunity to evaluate areas of progress and to address the remaining challenges. One of these challenges no doubt is the question of the universality of the Convention. While the Ottawa Convention is a milestone in the history of disarmament, it remains a matter of concern that a number of major States are still not parties, while more than 200 million stocks are still held by States.

The menace of landmines has caused untold damage to innocent civilians, particularly in Africa. The casualty figures in such countries as Angola and Mozambique is indeed mind-boggling.

(Mr. Owade, Kenya)

It is for these reasons that the Government of Kenya has extended an invitation to States parties and non-States parties alike to participate in the Review Conference.

In this regard, we welcome the recent pronouncements by the Governments of the People's Republic of China and the United States at the ongoing intersessional meeting in Geneva reaffirming their support for the principles enshrined in the Convention. In the words of the Chinese delegates at that meeting: "All roads lead to Rome".

We welcome the United States landmines policy announced in February this year in which they have, among other things, categorically given their commitment to stop using persistent anti-personnel or anti-vehicle landmines on any battlefield or for any purpose anywhere in the world by 2010, and to seek a worldwide ban on the sale or export of all persistent landmines to prevent the spread of technology that kills and maims civilians.

These, in our view, are gestures which we must welcome and encourage. We encourage them indeed to proceed with more concrete steps in this direction and to join the Convention as States parties.

Before I conclude, allow me to convey our appreciation to Ambassador Wolfgang Petritsch, President designate of the Review Conference, for the commendable efforts he continues to make to ensure the Review Conference is a success. Our thanks also go to the Friends of Nairobi for the support, financial or otherwise, they have extended, and continue to extend, to Kenya in its preparations to host the Conference. The unflinching support of the Government of Canada to the Convention and to us as the host country is, to say the least, exemplary and worth singling out and emulating.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank Mr. Owade of Kenya for his statement and for his kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Nigeria, Ambassador Joseph Ubaka Ayalogu, who has asked for the floor.

Mr. AYALOGU (Nigeria): Mr. President, let me start by congratulating you most heartily on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. I know that you have all those qualities that make conferences move effectively and efficiently towards achieving expected goals. Therefore, my delegation assures you of our unflinching support.

I also want to take this opportunity to express my deep appreciation for the kind words and the welcome extended to me by all the Ambassadors/Permanent Representatives in Geneva since I arrived. This morning I am also touched by the kind words of the President when he introduced me. As this is the first CD meeting I am attending, I hope to count on the cooperation, wisdom and experience of colleagues in the discharge of my responsibilities.

You can also count on my delegation's support, understanding and cooperation in advancing all disarmament issues as well as challenges to international peace and security.

(Mr. Ayalogu, Nigeria)

I shall in the near future address the CD outlining my country's position on the various issues before us, but for now, I shall just congratulate you once again and thank you for introducing me.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank our new colleague, Ambassador Ayalogu, for his kind words addressed to the Chair, and I would like to say that the members of the Conference on Disarmament and the Chair will be very happy to work together with him and also draw on his contributions and his experience as we seek to implement our programme of work.

I have no more speakers on my list for today. Does any delegation wish to take the floor at this stage? I see that none do. Before concluding the meeting, I would like to inform you that the Secretary-General of the Conference has forwarded to me a letter which he received from the Permanent Representative of Latvia, Ambassador Karlins, containing a request for the admission of the Republic of Latvia as a member of the Conference on Disarmament. Thus Latvia has become the 23rd State which has submitted a request to become a member of the Conference.

This concludes our business for today. In accordance with our timetable, following this meeting, the Conference will hold an informal plenary meeting to discuss agenda item 7, entitled "Transparency in armaments". This meeting will be open only to the delegations of States which are members of the Conference and those of States which have observer status.

. The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Thursday, 29 July 2004, at 10 a.m. in this room. We will reconvene in an informal meeting in about 30 minutes' time, to enable delegations that so wish - as we all do - to attend the ceremony in which the Olympic torch is carried to the Palais des Nations. This is an event that symbolizes peace, harmony and cordiality, and I hope it will be an opportunity which will enable all of us to take part in it. We will resume our work at a quarter to twelve approximately, at the end of the ceremony, so that we can devote ourselves to this informal meeting.

The meeting rose at 11.10 a.m.