

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/PV.962
29 July 2004

ENGLISH

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

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 29 July 2004, at 10.25 a.m.

President:

Mr. Omar HILALE

(Morocco)

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I call to order the 962nd plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

Before proceeding, I should like to draw your attention to the presence of a number of representatives of the NGO Committee on Disarmament and the International Peace Bureau who are going to observe the Conference's work today. This is to coincide with a day dedicated to commemoration of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. As their presence is in conformity with rule 20 of the Conference's rules of procedure, I take it that there is no objection to their presence. I see none.

On behalf of the Conference and through their various representatives, I should now like to offer my sincere condolences to the families of the victims of floods in a number of south Asian countries, particularly Bangladesh and India.

I also wish to express condolences to the families of our Chilean diplomat colleagues who were killed yesterday in Costa Rica.

Allow me now to move on to the substantive part of our meeting this morning. I have on my list of speakers the following delegations: Belgium, Sri Lanka, Russian Federation, United States of America and Canada. I now give the floor to the representative of Belgium, Mr. Angelet.

Mr. ANGELET (Belgium) (translated from French): Mr. President, since my delegation is taking the floor for the first time during your term of office, I should like to say that we are pleased to see you presiding over our work and I should like to assure you of our support in accomplishing your tasks. My delegation was the first to take the floor at the first session of our Conference, at the beginning of this year, and I have the honour to repeat that exercise at the beginning of this third session. My statement concerns the A-5 proposal first and foremost, and it is my wish to confirm our faith in that proposal.

The proposal is the outcome of laborious efforts on the part of many delegations here. It is the fruit of a lengthy search for compromise, and we are obliged to acknowledge that, without necessarily being perfect, to date it has come the closest to our final goal, a work programme acceptable to all, which will enable our Conference to restart its work and rediscover its vocation, which is that of working for a safer world. Indeed, it is for this reason that we find it more than desirable, as was the case last year, for the message we will soon be called upon to address to the General Assembly to reflect adequately the existence of this text and the support it enjoys in our forum.

At the beginning of the year, we also indicated that the A-5 proposal was not aimed at monopolizing thought, that complementary lines of thought - some have described them as additional lines of thought - could be pursued as long as they bring us closer to the conclusion of the work programme. Since the beginning of this year, these matters have been under consideration. We wish to welcome these efforts. It seems to us that the time has come to take cognizance of these ideas generated by these efforts to date, and to attempt to assess the pros and

(Mr. Angelet, Belgium)

the cons in a spirit of critical open-mindedness. For this reason we find it desirable for an informal meeting to take place on the subject, if possible during this session, and the issue of the title to be given to this meeting is perhaps of lesser importance.

That, very briefly, is what I had to say. I wish to conclude by stressing the importance in our view of this third and last session of our Conference, since we know that its principal task is that of adopting the annual report to the United Nations General Assembly, an exercise which we all know is of the greatest importance for our institution, and not necessarily an easy one.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank our colleague from Belgium, Mr. Damien Angelet, for the kind words he addressed to the Chair and for his contribution to the substantive work of our Conference. I should now like to give the floor to Ambassador Sarala Fernando of Sri Lanka.

Ms. FERNANDO (Sri Lanka): Mr. President, at the outset let me congratulate you on the personal commitment and determination with which you are presiding over the CD, with a view to overcoming the present situation which you vividly described as a “*désolante léthargie*”. We join your tribute to the previous Presidents of the Conference on Disarmament, all members of the G-21, who in coordinating their efforts for the holding of the informal plenaries underlined perhaps the real concerns of developing countries on what is widely regarded as a crisis of multilateralism.

Our approach to disarmament is founded on our belief in multilateralism, which most particularly serves the interest of small States. It is in this context that we would wish to update the CD on recent developments in my country.

I take the floor today to inform the members of the CD that Sri Lanka will accede to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects (CCW), and while doing so will also become a party to Amended Protocol II on mines, booby traps and other devices, Protocol III on incendiary weapons and Protocol IV on blinding laser weapons. The formal instrument of accession will be deposited at the Treaty Event 2004 to be held in New York during the fifty-ninth session of the United Nations General Assembly.

Furthermore, Sri Lanka will also be submitting a report on a voluntary basis, under article VII of the Ottawa Convention, in accordance with United Nations General Assembly resolution 58/53.

These measures are a reiteration of my country's unwavering commitment to the further promotion of humanitarian law and its continued constructive engagement with the international community on the issue of landmines. Since the signing of the ceasefire agreement between the Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE in February 2002, the Government of Sri Lanka has embarked on a comprehensive humanitarian mine action programme with the broad objective of making Sri Lanka a mine-free country by the year 2006. The Sri Lanka army was the first to engage and a major force in the country's demining activities, as a result of which the number of

(Ms. Fernando, Sri Lanka)

mine-related incidents has dropped by half and hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons have been resettled in their homes. These measures extend protection to both the civilian population as well as the United Nations and other humanitarian missions operating in the conflict-affected areas.

We therefore also welcome the efforts made by Geneva Call which have been meeting with the non-State parties concerned with a view to their signature of the Deed of Commitment to enable Sri Lanka's accession to the Ottawa Convention.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the Ambassador of Sri Lanka for her kind words addressed to the Chair and for her statement. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of the Russian Federation, Mr. Skotnikov.

Mr. SKOTNIKOV (Russian Federation) (translated from Russian): Mr. President, first of all I would like to congratulate you on taking up the post of President of the Conference. We wish you success, and you can rely on the support of the Russian Federation in fulfilling your difficult tasks. We are convinced that you will be successful.

Today, I would like to make a short statement on an important matter which is directly related to a problem area within the sphere of competence of the Conference on Disarmament. On 19 July, the President of the Russian Federation signed a law on ratification of the Agreement on Adaptation of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, as adopted by the State Duma on 25 June this year and subsequently approved by the Federation Council. Thus the Russian Federation has completed the process of ratification of this Agreement and has become the fourth State to have ratified this instrument, following Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine.

The agreement provides for a major correction to the system of limits and other provisions of the Treaty in the light of the changed military and political situation on the continent, and opens the way to expansion of the number of States parties to the CFE Treaty. It should make a major contribution to strengthening European security.

By ratifying the Agreement on Adaptation of the CFE Treaty and complying with the terms of the modified Treaty, we have played our part, reaffirming that we have opted for joint efforts to ensure security through multilateral instruments for arms control. The ball is now in the court of our treaty partners. Those who continue to delay ratification of the Agreement on a variety of pretexts will bear responsibility for the adverse consequences of their approach.

The entry into force of the modified Treaty should be accompanied by the elimination of "grey areas" in Europe which are not yet covered by the CFE Treaty regime. In this context Russia notes the approach of the countries which have declared their intention to accede to the modified CFE Treaty once it has entered into force and have agreed that their accession will make an important additional contribution to European security. In this regard we understand that these States will act in accordance with the purposes and principles of the CFE Treaty until such time as they become parties to it. The prompt entry into force of the Agreement on Adaptation of the CFE Treaty would be in the interests of all parties.

(Mr. Skotnikov, Russian Federation)

It is our expectation that our partners will promptly carry out domestic ratification procedures and thus comply with the obligation contained in the Final Act of the Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, adopted on 19 November 1999. The Russian Federation believes that there is no constructive alternative to the speedy entry into force of the Agreement on the Adaptation of the CFE Treaty.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the Ambassador of the Russian Federation for his kind words and his words of encouragement to the Chair in its efforts. I also thank him for the statement concerning the ratification by his country of the Agreement on Adaptation of the CFE Treaty. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of the United States of America, Ms. J. Sanders.

Ms. SANDERS (United States of America): Mr. President, I am starting my third CD session today, and I want all of you to know what a pleasure it has been to work with you over these past seven months. We are here at a crucial time in history. The United States and its allies continue the global war on terror. We are proud to be part of international coalitions that are hard at work helping the now free peoples of Iraq and Afghanistan build democratic societies.

On 11 February of this year, President Bush announced a series of new initiatives to counter the threat of weapons of mass destruction and stem the tide of proliferation of dangerous materials into the hands of terrorists and outlaw regimes. These proposals are prompted by the threats that we face in the post-9/11 world and are directed toward improving and modernizing non-proliferation laws, restricting the spread of sensitive nuclear technologies and equipment, closing loopholes in existing non-proliferation regimes, and expanding efforts to secure and destroy weapons and materials of mass destruction.

President Bush's proposals come at a critical juncture in our efforts to combat the development and spread of weapons of mass destruction. While our relentless efforts have met with recent successes, including Libya's renunciation of weapons of mass destruction programmes and the exposure of A.Q. Khan's international nuclear proliferation network, there remains much work to be done. The fact that both Libya's nuclear programme and the A.Q. Khan network were unknown to this body less than a year ago underscores that we probably still do not fully appreciate the scope of the WMD threats that we face. With greater reason therefore we must redouble our efforts here and across the board to combat those threats.

Multilateral efforts are an important part of our campaign to combat the proliferation of WMD. We are working with our allies to bring Iran back into the community of civilized nations and cease its chemical, biological and nuclear weapons programmes, as well as its ballistic missile programme. We are working with IAEA to convince Iran to honour its NPT and IAEA obligations and cease its covert nuclear weapons programme. The United States is working through OPCW and the BWC to convince Iran to end its chemical and biological weapons efforts.

We are also working through the multilateral six-party talks process to convince North Korea to end its pursuit of nuclear weapons. The United States is very grateful to China

(Ms. Sanders, United States)

for its leadership and diplomatic efforts to advance these talks. The bottom line for the United States on this issue is very clear. Pyongyang must cease all routes it is pursuing to make a nuclear bomb, both the plutonium route and the uranium enrichment route, and must completely, verifiably and irreversibly dismantle its nuclear programme.

A little over a year ago, Assistant Secretary of State Stephen Rademaker addressed the CD to lay out our Government's vision of effective multilateralism. As part of that vision we noted our desire to see the CD transform itself into a more effective multilateral instrument. The United States hopes we can collectively revive the CD by agreeing on meaningful steps that this body can undertake to combat the threats confronting us in the twenty-first century. I come before you today to make two proposals to advance towards that goal.

First of all, the United States is pursuing a multifaceted approach involving a number of international bodies to address the international problem posed by the indiscriminate use of persistent landmines. International efforts to combat the harmful effects of anti-personnel landmines date back to the mid-1990s. Yet all of these efforts are incomplete as they fail to address the hazard common to mines that are threatening civilian populations worldwide, regardless of shape and size, and that issue is persistency.

The proposal I lay out today would concentrate on eliminating the threat posed by all persistent landmines, which cause between 12,000 and 16,000 deaths per year and whose long life ensures that they remain dangerous to civilians for many decades after any legitimate military need has passed. The United States has chosen to replace its persistent mines with non-persistent, self-destructing, self-deactivating mines.

We believe that self-destructing, self-deactivating landmines can dramatically reduce the threat to innocent civilians from the lingering hazards generated by persistent landmines. Self-destructing, self-deactivating technologies are relatively inexpensive, particularly when compared to the cost of clearing a mine. Landmines with such technologies have been tested rigorously and have never failed to destroy themselves or become inert within a set time.

As the world's primary forum for multilateral arms control negotiations, the CD is well suited to address this vital issue. For this reason, I wish to announce that the United States has decided to pursue in the CD the negotiation of an international ban on the sale or export of persistent landmines. We will continue our efforts in the CCW to bring anti-vehicular landmines under international controls as well. I look forward to working with all of you on this proposal in the coming months.

Secondly, I would like to announce our position on a fissile material cut-off treaty. Fissile materials - plutonium and highly enriched uranium - are fundamental and essential building blocks of nuclear weapons. A ban on fissile material production for nuclear weapons or nuclear explosives would enhance global non-proliferation strictures against nuclear weapons.

As part of our effort to achieve that goal, the United States reaffirms our commitment to the negotiation in the CD of a legally binding treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. The United States has not produced fissile

(Ms. Sanders, United States)

material for weapons purposes for over 15 years. Our production facilities have been shut down. Instead of making more fissile material, we are working today to dispose of it. We have removed roughly 200 tons of fissile material from our military stockpile. Much of this material has already been eliminated, placed under international safeguards, or both.

The United States also reaffirms its moratorium on the production of fissile material for nuclear explosives, and will call on all States to make comparable public pledges.

The United States policy review, however, raised serious concerns that realistic, effective verification of an FMCT is not achievable. We look forward to presenting our concerns in detail about verification in the CD. We believe an FMCT is ripe for negotiations and must have a clean mandate that is not linked to other unrelated proposals for CD ad hoc committees.

After nearly eight years of inactivity, the CD needs to focus its efforts on achievable goals that address the security issues of today. The United States believes that the two proposals that I have laid out in this speech - a ban on persistent landmines and an FMCT - constitute important achievable goals for this Conference.

My Government will have a team of technical experts visit here in the near future to brief delegations on our new position on FMCT, including a detailed explanation of our concerns about verification. The United States hopes that other governments will be able to support the early negotiation of an FMCT, as well as our landmines proposal.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank Ambassador Jackie Sanders of the United States for her statement and her kind words addressed to the Chair, and I would like to congratulate her on those two proposals, those two initiatives concerning anti-personnel mines and fissile material. I am sure that this presentation will give rise to substantive discussion in the weeks to come, as you said, Madam Ambassador, within the Conference on Disarmament, and will stimulate the discussion and our work. I now give the floor to Ambassador Paul Meyer of Canada.

Mr. MEYER (Canada): Mr. President, allow me first, in this formal plenary, to extend my congratulations on your assumption of the presidency and to assure you of my delegation's full support in the carrying of those weighty responsibilities that go with your office.

We are marking today the reconvening of the CD for its third and final session of this year. In a matter of weeks we will be turning our attention to the preparation of the report to the United Nations General Assembly. I fear that we will have to report that, once again, an agreement on a programme of work has eluded us. On its core business, this Conference has failed to get into gear.

But given the overwhelming priority accorded the programme of work, I believe by all delegations here, we would hope to see in the balance of this session, now that policy reviews in certain capitals have been completed, a series of discussions focused on the key elements of the proposed work plan with a view to hammering out a compromise. This is surely not beyond the capacities of the delegations assembled here, given the right political will.

(Mr. Meyer, Canada)

From our perspective it is important to fashion this work programme from the materials at hand. The A-5 proposal is the quarry from which we should select the building blocks for our programme of work. Canada can accept the A-5 as is, or any reasonable variant thereof that could command consensus support. In this regard, we have suggested that a streamlined version of A-5, consisting of renewal of negotiations on an FMCT under the agreed Shannon mandate, coupled with the establishment of ad hoc committees to discuss nuclear disarmament and the prevention of an arms race in outer space, would represent a solid initial programme to get the CD back into an operational mode. Such a starting package would not be prejudicial to the eventual consideration of a range of other issue areas, and might help to forge a consensus around a work programme that reflects the CD's unique mandate and focus.

It is in this light that we consider the proposal concerning landmines as presented by the United States delegation. I should note, of course, we followed with interest Jackie Sanders' announcement of a decision relating to FMCT, and we will no doubt want to come back to that particular aspect of her statement on another occasion. But on landmines, CD member States will be aware of the important contribution the United States has made, and continues to make, in the efforts of the international community to address the humanitarian devastation wrought by landmines and unexploded ordnance in many parts of the world. Canada and the United States have worked as partners in this effort in many regions, not least in our own hemisphere, where remarkable progress has been achieved. We and others have also worked constructively with the United States on landmines-related issues in other forums, notably in securing agreement last year on the CCW Explosive Remnants of War Protocol. That partnership continues with regard to the United States proposal for a CCW protocol on anti-vehicle mines, where we are one of some 30 co-sponsors of the American initiative.

At the same time, it is recognized that our two countries have adopted different approaches regarding the need for a global ban on anti-personnel mines (APMs), and Canada is joined with 142 other States parties in its commitment to a comprehensive ban under the Ottawa Convention. These differences have not, however, undermined our ability to work together on humanitarian mine action or to collaborate in forums like the CCW, and we have maintained - and remain committed to maintaining - a constructive dialogue on our respective views on the Ottawa Convention itself.

It is in that spirit that we have explained, through informal discussions with United States representatives here, in Ottawa and in Washington, the particular and fundamental difficulties that the United States proposal tabled today creates for us and, we assume, for the 41 other CD members who are also parties to the Ottawa Convention. All representatives present will no doubt appreciate the implications this proposal has for parties to the Ottawa Treaty's comprehensive, unreservable ban on all types of APMs - including its ban on all trade in all forms of APM. Clearly and simply put, such States will not be in a position to enter negotiations on a lesser ban, aimed at arresting trade in one category of APMs alone but implying the acceptability of trade in other categories of these weapons.

Against this background, Canadian officials in Ottawa, Washington and Geneva have sought in discussions with their American counterparts to suggest a range of possible alternative courses of action, whereby it might be possible to advance some of the purposes of the

(Mr. Meyer, Canada)

United States proposal tabled here today. These alternatives include steps that might be taken among non-parties to the Ottawa Convention alone. And they range through initiatives that might be pursued with broader support, including that of Canada, in other forums such as the CCW, where we are co-sponsors of the United States proposal on anti-vehicle mines (which includes a call for no trade in the specific types of mines covered by that proposal). Canada stands ready to work with the United States and other interested delegations on such alternatives.

Let me conclude by returning to the broader context of the CD: as I indicated earlier, we believe the principal current focus of this body should be on fashioning a programme of work on the basis of the existing proposals before the Conference. To introduce a new and, for many here, a problematic proposal for negotiation, in absence of a comprehensive response to the existing outstanding proposal is frankly a complicating factor to our efforts to arrive at a generally acceptable programme of work for the CD. We would therefore encourage the United States delegation to reflect further on this particular initiative and to consider whether it, or elements thereof, would not be better suited for follow-up in other ways and/or in other forums, most notably the CCW, where there exists a solid foundation on which to build something that would enjoy broad support from the outset.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the Ambassador of Canada for his statement and the kind words addressed to the Chair. We have reached the end of the initial list of speakers. I see that the Algerian delegation wishes to speak. I give the floor to Ambassador Mohamed-Salah Dembri of Algeria.

Mr. DEMBRI (Algeria) (translated from French): Mr. President, I have already had an opportunity to congratulate you on your presidency in our group meeting. I would like to reiterate this here, in a public meeting of the Conference on Disarmament, because my delegation is pleased to see an Ambassador of a neighbouring fraternal country preside over this body dedicated to multilateral disarmament negotiations. Rest assured that we will provide you with all the help and support you need in accordance with the objectives of this Conference.

On 22 January 2004, when we were discussing the adoption of our agenda and at the same time our programme of work, the fear of a blank year had already raised its head. Now we are a few weeks away from the conclusion of the Conference on Disarmament's work for 2004 and this fear seems to grow greater each day. For eight years the Conference on Disarmament has been unable to find common ground to demonstrate that its discussions are meaningful and at the same time that it is making genuine efforts to address the concerns of the international community. However, we must recognize that it has one virtue. Never, over this period of eight years, has the Conference been so active, so imaginative, favourable to offering all the compromise solutions.

As to some extent a dean here together with my friend the Ambassador of Ethiopia, Fisseha Yimer, I would like to pay tribute to all these colleagues who are present or who have already left us for other destinations, for everything they have contributed and everything they have placed on the table with a view to finding compromise solutions. Because we need them. And we need to move towards synthesis and not towards the outlining of national concerns.

(Mr. Dembri, Algeria)

We have already pointed out on many occasions that the Conference on Disarmament was singled out by the international community to take account of its concerns and not to be a depository for national concerns, at the risk of accentuating contradictions of course. And this is why, following our distinguished colleague from Belgium who spoke earlier, I would like to point out that for us the five Ambassadors' proposal remains the most appropriate instrument to respond to the objectives and the tasks of the Conference on Disarmament. It is the latest consolidated proposal, clearly based on cooperation and collective work by ambassadors with different political sensitivities. And I think this is what makes this product so original, if we recall all the proposals offered over the last 10 years.

What can we say now as we resume our work? What we have had before us since 22 January 2004 is the agenda, the Decalogue. It is on that basis that our thinking should be constantly moved forward. The Decalogue established in 1978 remains for my delegation a very precise formulation of the concerns of the international community. In that respect this agenda is neither a sequel of the past, nor a product of the cold war, nor an obsolete instrument. It continues to be an instrument which, because of its contemporary nature, accurately reflects the persisting fears of mankind. They relate to the fear of a nuclear holocaust. They relate to the reckless military use of nuclear power. They relate to the proliferation of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction. This Decalogue is still waiting for major negotiations in this forum on the terms of reference of nuclear disarmament, the production of fissile material, the peaceful uses of outer space and, of course, what was recognized right from the beginning in international law - security assurances for the States which have given up nuclear weapons. This is a right, an established right, and up to now nobody can understand why the Conference on Disarmament is not in a position to embark on negotiations on an international convention to guarantee the rights of non-nuclear States.

So we are still there. And now perhaps a glimmer of hope has emerged in the shape of the announcement made by my distinguished colleague from the United States, Ambassador Jackie Sanders, of an American initiative on FMCT. This has drawn our attention, in a positive way, and of course we look forward to seeing the content in more detail.

Our faith in the five Ambassadors' proposal, as Mr. Damien Angelet of Belgium pointed out, remains an essential element. That proposal represents the best way of preventing and combating new threats, preventing and combating any fraudulent attempt to acquire nuclear weapons. The proposal is also of an evolutionary nature, and hence it needs a contribution from each one of us in the form of amendments or any other initiative which will enable it to become for all of us an instrument bringing our ideas together for a major negotiation.

As we move towards the conclusion of our work, the weeks which are to come and which remain to cover the end of the year should be used to focus our minds on the programme of work. The informal meetings can be useful for that purpose, as long as they are viewed as a means of preparing for negotiations and not as an instrument which deflects discussion of huge problems which affect the survival of mankind into academic issues.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the Ambassador of Algeria, Mr. Mohamed-Salah Dembri, for his statement and his kind words addressed to the Chair, and his readiness to cooperate with the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Iran, Mr. Eslamizad.

Mr. ESLAMIZAD (Islamic Republic of Iran): Mr. President, as this is the first time my delegation has taken the floor under your presidency, let me also express my delegation's happiness and congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of the CD and assure you of the full support and cooperation of my delegation.

I have asked for the floor just to exercise my delegation's right of reply to the statement made by the distinguished Ambassador of the United States. The distinguished Ambassador, in her statement informing the CD of the attempts being made to bring the United States back to the multilateral track, did not need to make false accusations in order to make her point more attractive. While denying all accusations, I should say that Her Excellency made again some accusations against my country and claims of Iran following prohibited nuclear, biological and chemical weapons programmes.

I would just like to recall that Iran is an active member of all international instruments dealing with such inhuman weaponry, and we very much encourage the United States to refer any real concern to the proper mechanisms foreseen there and support their cause by reasons rather than rhetoric.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Iran for his statement and his words of congratulation to the Chair. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Finland, Mr. Reimaa.

Mr. REIMAA (Finland): Mr. President, I am very pleased to see you in the Chair of our meeting and conducting our procedures in your usual efficient way as we start the last session of our work this year. You know how anxious we are to start substantive work in the CD.

For a long time, for Finland and our EU partners, FMCT negotiations have been priority number one, without excluding the option of addressing other important issues. While listening to Ambassador Dembri and preparing to make this short statement, I saw in my files my intervention exactly five years ago when Ambassador Dembri's comprehensive approach to solving the issue of the programme of work was under discussion, and certainly I appreciate his continuous intensive efforts to solve our problem.

The informal discussions on a structured basis following the agenda we had adopted at the outset of the year has been characterizing our activities this year. I think it should be useful in some fashion to reflect that in our report to the United Nations General Assembly.

I listened with great interest to the statements made, and in particular that of my American colleague, Ambassador Sanders. I think, and I have a feeling, that I am not the only one who has been waiting for a message with regard to the possible commencement of our

(Mr. Reimaa, Finland)

substantive work in the CD. I think in listening to the first reactions to that statement that perhaps I am not the only one who must take the time to analyse that more carefully and look at the implications for CD work and perhaps even for the outside activities of our common endeavours. We certainly share the concern expressed in the statement that persistent mines are causing unnecessary casualties to civilian populations.

For those reasons, Mr. President, it might be appropriate that I briefly inform you and our colleagues in this room of the most recent efforts and developments in the CCW context, and I listened with great interest to Ambassador Paul Meyer's comment in this regard. The governmental experts of the States parties to the CCW met here in Geneva from 5 to 16 July of this year to continue their work on the basis of the mandate given to them last year. The experts discussed the issues relating to mines other than anti-personnel mines in a very constructive atmosphere. The military experts had a chance to conduct a thorough exchange of views on questions of concern. That discussion was also substantive and constructive. It is our understanding that we made progress in clarifying our positions. We started to identify areas of common ground and narrowed down differences in certain areas.

We governmental experts are supposed to meet again in November of this year, and it is my understanding that nobody is excluding the possibility that we will make further progress in our deliberations. Our mandate for this year is to elaborate appropriate recommendations to the Meeting of States Parties later in November. For those reasons, I personally, as the coordinator for mines other than anti-personnel mines, expressed the wish that all delegations should come to the next meeting and make the preparations in a constructive spirit and, as I said at that time, with a results-oriented determination.

To conclude, in this context it is worth noting that one of the key questions under discussion in the CCW context has been and will be the ban on transfers of anti-vehicle mines.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the Ambassador of Finland for his statement and his kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Mr. Jang Il Hun.

Mr. JANG (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Mr. President, as I am taking the floor for the first time under your presidency, I wish to extend my delegation's warm congratulations to you on your assumption of the presidency and assure you of our delegation's full support.

I have asked for the floor to respond to the statement made by the distinguished Ambassador of the United States concerning the six-party talks. At the six-party talks and elsewhere, we have made it clear more than once that we had no uranium-based nuclear programme. But the continued insistence of the United States on our uranium-based nuclear programme is simply aimed at creating artificial difficulties in the progress of the six-party talks,

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

thus hampering the peaceful resolution of the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula. We interpret the United States' insistence as another attempt to continuously isolate and stifle my country.

And concerning the complete, verifiable and irreversible dismantlement of our nuclear programme, we cannot simply accept this. My country, our country, is not a country that was defeated in the war, and the United States - so we think - has no right at all to ask for disarmament. We will not disarm ourselves in the future, too, in the face of the constant nuclear threat and pre-emptive attack of the United States.

The denuclearization of the Korean peninsula is our goal. Had the United States not pursued a hostile policy towards our country, the nuclear problem or nuclear issue would not have occurred and it would not go on as now.

To achieve our goal, we made a constructive proposal on simultaneous action to solve the nuclear problem with the welcome and support of the parties to the six-party talks. We will continue to make our efforts to solve the problem peacefully and to be acceptable to all at the talks.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea for his statement and his kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of the United Kingdom, Mr. Boucher.

Mr. BROUCHER (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland): Mr. President, at the outset, let me say that it is a great pleasure to see you in the Chair, and I wish you every success in your high office and pledge you the support of my delegation in your difficult task.

I had not intended to speak this morning, but I think it is important to react now to some things that have just been said. For the first time in a long while there are signs of movement, and there is a British saying that one should strike while the iron is hot.

Like the United States, we are fully committed to countering the threat posed by WMD and we look to the CD to play its part in this task. We need to understand what contribution the CD can make to this activity, using its unique capabilities and talents alongside other United Nations and multilateral bodies and treaties.

In this connection the United Kingdom has always attached great importance to negotiating a fissile material cut-off treaty in the CD. We welcome today's confirmation that the United States supports this aim. Our view has been that an FMCT should be effectively verifiable, as specified in the Shannon mandate. But we are always pragmatic, and we never allow the best to be the enemy of the good. So we will approach the United States proposals with an open mind in the hope that they will permit early agreement to start work in the CD. I can confirm that the United Kingdom will maintain the moratorium on producing fissile material for nuclear weapons in the meantime.

(Mr. Broucher, United Kingdom)

On the issue of landmines the United Kingdom, as a signatory of the Ottawa Convention, already has domestic legislation in place prohibiting the sale and export of APLs. We do not therefore need to involve ourselves in new negotiations to bring that about. But in the same pragmatic spirit in which we reacted to the United States announcement on FMCT, we recognize that an agreement by the States not yet party to the Ottawa Convention to ban the trade in persistent mines could have humanitarian value as an interim measure. We do wonder, however, whether the CD is the right forum on which to negotiate this. I noted what my Finnish and Canadian colleagues said about the autumn CCW session, and confirm that my Government will approach that in a positive spirit directed at achieving results.

On the work programme, we have heard some interesting interventions. I have taken careful note of the suggestion made by Canada, and at first sight it could have some attractions. I wonder whether this idea might be developed further with a view to circulating it in writing.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the Ambassador of the United Kingdom for his statement and for his kind words addressed to the Chair. I give the floor to the Ambassador of France, Mr. François Rivasseau.

Mr. RIVASSEAU (France) (translated from French): It was not my intention to take the floor today, but for reasons similar to those given by my British colleague, I wish to respond to the statements I have just heard. The American delegation has made two proposals: the French delegation takes note of those proposals. As the Ambassador of Finland has just said, we appreciate the fact that a country such as the United States should turn to our multilateral forum on important questions.

As to the cut-off, there is a consensus in principle concerning negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament. After the CTBT, the cut-off appears among the commitments referred to in decision II adopted by the 1995 NPT extension conference. France has given its support to those negotiations since 1995, and we remain open to proposals which can help to relaunch them. The United States has just explained to us the status of its thinking, and naturally we are ready to discuss the matter, especially as we ourselves have our own views which we have recently updated. You are aware of our commitment in favour of a moratorium by all the States involved on production. We will support any consultations and efforts you may wish to pursue, Mr. President, between now and the end of the session.

On the subject of landmines, there are international efforts in which the United States is not participating. I am thinking of the Ottawa Convention, which completely bans anti-personnel mines; its first review conference is to be held in Nairobi in November/December this year. My country is playing an active role in the implementation of the Convention, and does not wish to see this instrument undermined. Furthermore, as everyone knows, there is a process in which the United States is participating in the context of the 1980 Convention, which has a protocol on landmines, amended in 1996. Efforts to examine the issue of anti-vehicle mines in that framework here in Geneva are being coordinated by the Ambassador of Finland,

(Mr. Rivasseau, France)

Mr. Markku Reimaa, whose efforts we support. France has signalled its keen interest in those discussions, which have begun to bear fruit. We are unsure about the impact this new American proposal would have on the various efforts I have mentioned. My delegation does not have a response at this stage. However, it is prepared to give the matter some thought.

Lastly, concerning the work programme of our Conference, to which several delegations have referred, the French delegation considers that the question of “new issues” is helping to stimulate our thinking this year. I hope that it will be possible to reflect this in our Conference’s report for 2004.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the Ambassador of France for his statement. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of the Netherlands, Mr. Sanders.

Mr. SANDERS (Netherlands): Mr. President, it is also for me the first time that I take the floor under your presidency, so let me congratulate you and assure you of the full cooperation of my delegation in carrying out your difficult tasks.

We have heard a number of important statements today, and we have heard two proposals by the distinguished Ambassador of the United States, and I would like to take the floor briefly on those two proposals and on a number of comments that were made on the programme of work.

I do not have to explain to this Conference the importance that the Netherlands attaches to FMCT and the negotiation thereof. We have been very active in this domain, and I was therefore happy to hear that the United States has finalized its review of FMCT and indeed does want these negotiations to take place. We look forward to having a substantive debate on the concerns that apparently have emerged on the verifiability of such a treaty. I hope that these discussions on verifiability can be conducted with an open mind and that no premature conclusions will be announced, and we are very interested to see the team of experts from Washington briefing us on these concerns.

On the mines proposal, I have listened very carefully to what a number of other delegations have said, and the Netherlands gives priority to dealing with the landmine issue as well - I must say the “anti-vehicle” mine issue, because of course the anti-personnel mine issue has been settled for our country, but the “anti-vehicle” mine issue in the present discussions led by Ambassador Reimaa in the CCW, where the transfer of these types of mines is also one of the specific points being discussed with a view - in our hope at least - to achieving legally binding measures on anti-vehicle mines, which I think is where all the efforts are aimed at, at least for most of the CCW members, and we would not like to see these efforts duplicated or frustrated by other developments elsewhere.

I also recall what our Canadian colleague has said on the potential effect of dealing with the landmine issue in the CD on ongoing efforts to establish a programme of work which are still well on their way. We still believe that the A-5 proposal is the basis for trying to achieve a

(Mr. Sanders, Netherlands)

programme of work, and I also took note with great interest of what our Canadian colleague said on possible streamlining of the A-5 proposal by making a selection of the three major elements of that A-5 proposal - FMCT, nuclear disarmament and the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

So these were a few observations I wished to make on this particular occasion.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the Ambassador of the Netherlands for his statement and his kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Pakistan, Mr. Umer.

Mr. UMER (Pakistan): Mr. President, I am very happy to see you presiding over our deliberations. We have been following the extensive efforts that you have been making since assuming this responsibility to advance the work and the programme of this Conference. Needless to say, you have our complete support.

Like many others, I also did not intend to speak today, but I think some points have been raised which oblige me to do so. We have of course noted the two proposals made by the Ambassador of the United States. I will not give any formal reaction at this point in time. These are important initiatives and will require very close reflection and examination by us.

I would like to dwell on two issues which have been raised by some delegations. The first was reflecting the substance of the informal discussions we have had so far in the report of the CD. Now we have to be very careful as to what we want to reflect, because no document was prepared, nor was there any agreement to prepare a document on the informal meetings that we had in the past three or four months. So we have to be very careful as to what we reflect in the report of the CD, apart of course from saying that we had seven meetings. That is fine. But beyond that, in terms of substance, we need to be very careful.

Now some of our friends have said today that there are three main issues, referring to the A-5 proposal. We beg to differ with this assessment. We believe very strongly there are four main issues, and all those issues would have to be addressed by that before any ambiguity appears on the scene. We should place our position on the table so that there are no unnecessary difficulties that might arise subsequently.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the Ambassador of Pakistan for his statement and his kind words addressed to the Chair. Are there any other delegations which would like to take the floor? I see none. Our work for today is therefore concluded. The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Thursday, 5 August 2004, at 10 a.m. in this room.

The meeting rose at 11.35 a.m.