

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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ENGLISH

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

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 31 March 2005, at 10.15 a.m.

President:

Mr. Joseph AYALOGU

(Nigeria)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 982nd plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

We have learned with deep distress of a powerful earthquake off Sumatra in Indonesia causing many casualties and much damage. I would like to take this opportunity to express, on my behalf and on behalf of all the delegations to the Conference on Disarmament, our profound sorrow and sympathy at this tragic loss of lives, and to convey our condolences to the families of the victims and to the Government of Indonesia.

At the plenary meeting last Thursday, I outlined to you a road map that I intend to follow during my presidency. I have already taken up the work of my distinguished predecessors aimed at facilitating agreement on the programme of work. I have started ascertaining the views of delegations and groups of delegations on the “food for thought” paper. I will say that there are no new developments yet to report, but I will make a more substantive report of my findings during the next plenary, as I intend to continue consultations during the intersessional period. Incidentally, I have been told that the intersessional period is not a holiday time for the President. I will of course be available to delegations who might want to raise issues up to the end of April, that is, before we go to New York.

I have the following speakers for today’s plenary meeting: Japan, Ambassador Yoshiki Mine, will make a general statement. New Zealand, Ambassador Tim Caughley, will make a general statement on behalf of the New Agenda Coalition. Mexico, Ambassador Pablo Macedo, will make a comment on the nuclear-weapon-free zones conference.

I now give the floor to the representative of Japan, Ambassador Yoshiki Mine.

Mr. MINE (Japan): Today brings us to the last CD plenary for the first session of this year. I have decided to make a few remarks, mainly to reiterate the call for keeping the momentum to initiate substantial work in the CD.

First of all, let me take this opportunity to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency. Your presidency will be especially important given that the NPT Review Conference, a key component of the current nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime, falls during your term. I appreciate your intention to continue to build on the efforts made by your predecessors to bring the CD back to substantive work during this important period. I also thank your predecessors, Mr. Tim Caughley of New Zealand and Mr. Chris Sanders of the Netherlands, for their excellent and untiring work conducted in a smooth and continuous fashion. I would like to assure you of our delegation’s full support as you continue their efforts.

I have been advocating that the term of the CD presidency is too short to ensure the consistency and integrity of the session and, therefore, that it be extended. I have no doubt that you will make an excellent President and that you will achieve a sense of continuity during your term. However, no matter how remarkable the individual capability, it is still regrettable that the

(Mr. Mine, Japan)

CD has to face such a frequent change of Presidents, especially as we must concentrate our efforts on the adoption of the programme of work. To me, it seems to constitute an institutional deficit of the CD.

We have not been able to achieve an agreement on the programme of work in this session. However, throughout the session, consistent efforts have been made by successive Presidents, and I see there has emerged a strong momentum in the CD. I may be an optimist, but I believe diplomats should be optimists rather than pessimists. Even though the first session ends this week and will not resume until after the end of the NPT Review Conference, I do believe that it is the responsibility of the CD members to try to keep the momentum to initiate substantial work in the CD and to make concerted efforts to this end.

I look forward to your continued efforts, Mr. President, to conduct bilateral or regional consultations with member States, as you said a few minutes ago, to find an agreeable solution based on our accumulated efforts in this session.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of Japan for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now call on the distinguished representative of New Zealand, Ambassador Tim Caughley to make his statement.

Mr. CAUGHLEY (New Zealand): Mr. President, on behalf of the New Agenda Coalition, may I congratulate you and Nigeria on your assumption of the presidency of this Conference and offer you and your country our best wishes and support for your term in the Chair?

I make this statement on behalf of the seven members of the New Agenda Coalition - Brazil, Egypt, Ireland, Mexico, South Africa, Sweden and my own country, New Zealand.

As members of this body know, the New Agenda is a cross-regional grouping formed to advance the cause of nuclear disarmament. The focus of our efforts remains within the review process of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, and it is in the context of the upcoming NPT Review Conference that we make this statement.

It is appropriate, however, that our first point relates to the Conference on Disarmament itself. We share deeply the concern of other members that the CD has been unable to meet the expectations of the 2000 NPT Review Conference in respect of this body's programme of work. It is bitterly disappointing that the CD has failed either to establish an appropriate subsidiary body to deal with nuclear disarmament or to begin negotiations on banning the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons.

In the case of a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, the CD has been unable to agree on a work programme that includes conclusion of negotiations within the specified time frame of five years. Worse, we have failed to live up to the measure we agreed in respect of negotiations for such a treaty under the heading "Principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament" at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference.

(Mr. Caughley, New Zealand)

These failures have not only harmed the credibility of the Conference on Disarmament but have done nothing to strengthen the Non-Proliferation Treaty itself. Each unfulfilled agreement and undertaking reached at Review Conferences merely serves to diminish the Treaty, not strengthen it.

More than ever before, the New Agenda wants the CD to get down to work. We acknowledge the efforts that have been made to overcome the impasse in the CD through the A-5 proposal and Ambassador Chris Sanders' "food for thought" non-paper. We strongly urge CD members to make all possible efforts to agree on a programme of work.

The preparatory process for the 2005 NPT Review Conference has been beset by efforts by several of the nuclear-weapon States to renege on the agreed practical steps for the systematic and progressive implementation of article VI of NPT, rather than implement them.

The broad support for the New Agenda Coalition's United Nations General Assembly resolution 59/75, entitled "Accelerating the implementation of nuclear disarmament commitments", surely demonstrates increased impatience and dissatisfaction with progress under this pillar of the NPT.

It is salutary to recall the unambiguous statement from the Final Document of the 2000 Review Conference, to which all States parties agreed: "The Conference reaffirms that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons". In order to reflect developments since 2000, we could add that the achievement of this goal would help contribute significantly to offset the risk of nuclear proliferation to States as well as non-State actors.

It follows from what I have just said that the New Agenda sees the pursuit of nuclear disarmament as a fundamental tool in addressing the international community's deep concern about proliferation. Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation are mutually reinforcing processes. And as the New Agenda Coalition has said before, what does not exist cannot proliferate. In the meantime, our focus must be on systematic and progressive efforts to implement the obligation in article VI to pursue negotiations on effective measures on nuclear disarmament.

The continued retention of nuclear weapons or the unsatisfactory rate of progress in the elimination of those weapons is not a justification for proliferation by other States. However, the challenges to the Treaty come not only from those who would act in contravention of or usurp its rules against proliferation. They also come from other quarters. Plans to extend or modify rather than destroy existing nuclear weaponry challenge the Treaty. Any member who seeks to diminish previous undertakings or reinterprets them challenges the Treaty. Any member whose approach fails to reflect the careful balance of the NPT challenges the Treaty. The New Agenda continues to be concerned that India, Israel and Pakistan remain outside the Treaty.

In his recent report entitled "In larger freedom" the United Nations Secretary-General has pointed out that "the unique status of the nuclear-weapon States also entails a unique responsibility, and they must do more, including but not limited to further reductions in their

(Mr. Caughley, New Zealand)

arsenals ... and pursuing arms control agreements that entail not just dismantlement but irreversibility". We call on the permanent members of the Security Council to seize the opportunity for leadership to help strengthen the NPT as the cornerstone of international security.

We welcome the statement by the President of the United States on the thirty-fifth anniversary of the entry into force of the Non-Proliferation Treaty in which he reaffirmed the "determination of the United States to carry out its treaty commitments and to work to ensure its continuance in the interest of world peace and security". We have taken at face value commitments of this kind to the NPT.

But global security is not a zero-sum game. Every State has a fundamental stake in it. It requires all of our collective efforts, understanding of each other's threat perceptions and willingness to engage and negotiate. Pulling the net tighter around those who seek weapons of mass destruction equally entails a collective endeavour.

In terms of logic it would seem counterproductive towards securing advances on proliferation by attempting to diminish the significance of nuclear disarmament. Ironically, attempts to downplay or undercut the 2000 outcome serve only to draw attention to nuclear disarmament and away from non-proliferation. The New Agenda is prepared to play its part in safeguarding the NPT regime and securing a balanced approach at the Review Conference.

The Review Conference offers a timely, indeed an essential, opportunity for the international community as a whole to address the challenges to which I have referred. Our approach will be to emphasize that nuclear disarmament is a basic tool to help offset proliferation and is therefore a central element in a balanced outcome.

The New Agenda is deeply concerned about plans to research the development of new weapons or the modification of existing ones. We will press for practical implementation of existing obligations and undertakings, including the universalization of the Treaty. We will give credit where credit is due to efforts to de-alert and stockpile weapons, but will insist on further reductions in the strategic and non-strategic nuclear arsenals and the implementation of steps agreed upon. If these measures are to gain the confidence of the international community, they must incorporate the essential elements of irreversibility, verification and transparency. As implied earlier, we will not accept the mere reiteration of solemn undertakings entered into at past Review Conferences but left unfulfilled.

There have been increasing concerns about the lack of compliance and implementation of the commitments made in the context of the NPT regime. The 2005 Review Conference should address this issue in a comprehensive manner taking into account all three pillars of the Treaty as well as the outcomes of the past Review Conferences.

The New Agenda welcomes the efforts that have been made in the context of the six-party talks. These need to address peace and stability in the Korean peninsula, including the Democratic Peoples' Republic of Korea's proclaimed nuclear weapons programme.

(Mr. Caughley, New Zealand)

We also welcome the negotiations that are taking place between Germany, France and the United Kingdom, supported by the High Representative of the European Union, and Iran in regard to addressing the latter's nuclear activities.

The New Agenda is concerned, however, about the risk of non-State actors gaining access to nuclear weapons. We are also concerned about the risk that despite strenuous efforts by the nuclear-weapon States and others, vast amounts of nuclear material worldwide remain susceptible to theft and diversion.

These are all factors that demonstrate that there is only one guarantee for a safe and peaceful world, and that is the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. There has never before been a more urgent need for all States, including the five nuclear-weapon States, to deliver on their commitments under the regime of the NPT in the common interest.

In conclusion, it will be apparent from the New Agenda's approach to the NPT Review Conference that our objective is a world free of nuclear weapons held currently by those who undertook 35 years ago to eliminate them, as well as those who have secured them outside the Treaty.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of New Zealand for his statement on behalf of the New Agenda Coalition and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Mexico, Ambassador Macedo.

Mr. MACEDO (Mexico) (translated from Spanish): Mr. President, first and foremost allow me to congratulate you on taking the Chair of this Conference. I am convinced that you will spare no effort to overcome the unfortunate deadlock affecting this forum. You can count on the full cooperation of my delegation in this respect. We are also grateful to your two immediate predecessors, the Ambassadors of the Netherlands and New Zealand, for their efforts during their terms of office and the initiatives they have undertaken.

Naturally, my delegation subscribes fully to the statement that has just been made by the distinguished representative of New Zealand, who is the coordinator of the New Agenda. This is the last meeting we are holding before we suspend the work of this first phase of the 2005 session. Over the next few weeks, our attention will focus on the work of the Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which will take place in May in New York. With the aim of contributing to the success of that meeting, my Government has taken the initiative of convening from 26 to 28 April in Mexico City the first meeting of States parties and signatories of treaties that establish nuclear-weapon-free zones. In addition to being an input for the NPT Review Conference, this meeting will seek to strengthen the effectiveness of the regime of nuclear-weapon-free zones. As a supporter of the treaty that established the first such zone in a densely populated region, Mexico is convinced that the establishment of new zones and the consolidation of those already in existence make an invaluable contribution to international peace and security and to the causes of nuclear

(Mr. Macedo, Mexico)

disarmament and non-proliferation. It is important to note that once the regimes set up under the already existing treaties are complete, we will have a southern hemisphere which is completely free of nuclear weapons. My Government hopes that the commitment of the States that have been invited will lead to broad and active participation in the Mexico City conference.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Mexico for his statement and the kind words addressed to the Chair. This concludes my list of speakers of today. Does any delegation wish to take the floor? I give the floor to the representative of the United Kingdom.

Mr. FREEMAN (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland): I don't have any prepared remarks, and the remarks I will make are very short, but I am rather a believer in interactive engagement in bodies of this kind, and I think one should from time to time take the opportunity to engage perhaps even slightly off the cuff, though not, I hope, without thought.

First of all, congratulations to you, Mr. President. You enjoy my delegation's support, both as Nigeria and you personally, and we have every confidence in your ability to steer our discussions in this room and in the margins efficiently, effectively and purposefully. And we are pleased that you have described yourself as being part of a continuing process that was started by your two immediate predecessors, and to Ambassadors Caughley and Sanders, we would want to put on record our appreciation for the efforts they have made and which you are able to build upon, and we encourage you in that regard.

I think that the remarks by the Ambassador of Japan this morning were ones that I'd be very happy to associate myself with. The perspective he tried to enjoin on us there seems to me a right perspective to take. We need considered and continued engagement, and we very much hope that you will lead us in that regard, as I say, in the margins as well as in this meeting, and therefore we are grateful also for your references to being available between now and the NPT. I find that there has been some positive evolution in positions. I genuinely think there has been some movement of understanding - a recognition of the possible, as well as not losing sight of the aspirations, which I recognize have varied perspectives. But we hope that you can build on those positive signs and not allow them to drift away, because I think it is that kind of continued engagement, working with trying to accentuate the positive, that stands a good chance of taking us forward.

May I also in passing thank Tim Caughley and his colleagues for their statement this morning? There may be perspectives which he would not be surprised to hear me say I would contest, but there are also elements in terms of objectives with which I would readily agree, and again, I think it is necessary to try and find ways to cross established patterns of engagement if we are going to find a way to establish a new pattern of longer-term engagement in the CD in the months ahead.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of the United Kingdom for his statement and for the kind words to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Indonesia.

Mr. WIRENGJURIT (Indonesia): Mr. President, on behalf of the Government and people of the Republic of Indonesia, allow me to express my appreciation and sincere gratitude for the sentiment and sympathy extended to us by all members of the CD on the tragic natural disaster that devastated the island of Nias, north of Sumatra, a few days ago. This is the second disaster within a period of three months that has hit Indonesia. It is our hope that this will be the last. Such a tragedy has caused unbearable misery to the people and families in the area and the people of Indonesia in general. I will certainly convey these words of condolence from all the members of the CD to the people and the Government of the Republic of Indonesia.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Indonesia for his statement.

This concludes the list of speakers and our business for the day, as well as the first part of the 2005 session of the Conference. The next plenary meeting will be held on 2 June 2005, after the spring recess of the Conference, at 10 a.m. in this conference room.

I wish you an enjoyable intersessional period.

The meeting rose at 10.45 a.m.