

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 11 August 2005, at 10.10 a.m.

President: Mr. Masood KHAN (Pakistan)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 991st plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. I welcome you all after the brief summer recess and the start of the last part of the 2005 session of the Conference.

I would like to extend a warm welcome to our three new colleagues who have assumed their responsibilities as representatives of their Governments to the Conference, and they are Ambassador Brasack of Germany, Ambassador Draganov of Bulgaria and Ambassador Faidutti Estrada of Ecuador. On behalf of the members of the Conference on Disarmament, I would like to take this opportunity to assure the three new ambassadors of our cooperation and support in their assignments.

Today, regretfully, we also bid farewell to our distinguished colleague Ambassador Petőcz of Slovakia, who will be leaving Geneva soon to assume other important duties. Ambassador Petőcz has served as Permanent Representative of the Slovak Republic to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva since 1999. During his tenure he represented his Government with authority and distinction. Apart from his important duties outside the field of disarmament, Ambassador Petőcz has actively engaged in CD activities. He also presided over the Second Annual Meeting of States Parties to Amended Protocol II to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. His dedication to the cause of disarmament in general and his contributions to the successful outcome of this Conference has been appreciated by all States parties. On behalf of the Conference on Disarmament, and on my own behalf, I would like to wish Ambassador Petőcz and his family success and happiness for the future.

I now turn to the list of speakers for today's plenary meeting. The first speaker on my list is Ambassador Bernhard Brasack of Germany.

Mr. BRASACK (Germany): Thank you very much, Mr. President, for your kind personal words. Before I start my short statement, I would like to mention, on a more personal note, that the first time I was in this room was 16 years ago in 1989. I was a junior officer then. It was on the occasion of the farewell speech of the then German CD Ambassador, Mr. von Stülpnagel, who was succeeded by Mr. von Wagner, about whom some of you might have heard, so it is a particular pleasure to be back in this room again.

Since it is the first time that I have the honour to take the floor in this Conference, let me first of all congratulate you, Ambassador Khan, on the assumption of the responsible task of being the President of the CD, for which I pledge the full and sincere support of the German delegation. At the same time, allow me to thank your predecessors, Ambassador Chris Sanders of the Netherlands, who has already left for another important task, Ambassador Tim Caughley of New Zealand, Ambassador Joseph Ayalogu of Nigeria and Ambassador Wegger Strømmen of Norway for their efforts - which I followed with great attention - to bring different positions closer together in order to come as soon as possible to a CD programme of work.

(Mr. Brasack, Germany)

As you are all aware, Germany supports all efforts which bring us closer to a programme of work, and in particular the A-5 proposal, because we consider it an acceptable comprehensive compromise proposal taking into account the differing priorities and security concerns. But it requires political flexibility, willingness to compromise, readiness to move and not least readiness to make one's formal positions known. This is also the basis for developing an agreed balanced approach on this difficult issue. The stalemate in the CD does not have its roots in the regional group structure, as one might say. The vast cross-group support for the A-5 proposal proves the opposite.

Despite the long stalemate in the CD, I start my work here in Geneva with great optimism and confidence. I am deeply convinced that all delegations are ultimately striving for the same objective, are supporting effective multilateralism in the area of disarmament and arms control. I fully share the view expressed by the United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan in his "In larger freedom" concept that success through multilateralism is not always guaranteed, but that States have no reasonable alternative to working together, even if collaboration means taking the priorities of your partners seriously to ensure that they will take your own seriously in return.

The issues before us are long-standing, which clearly indicates their complexity, but not at all that they have become obsolete. They are fundamental to the international agenda and remain so, even or in particular in the light of the changed international environment. Besides, to deal with them in an adequate and comprehensive manner requires among other things a broader involvement of the civil society and the global community. Unblocking the Conference on Disarmament would be a visible sign of willingness to decisively continue global disarmament efforts.

I would like to assure you that it is with great pleasure and confidence that I assume my duties as Ambassador of Germany to this Conference even at this challenging time. That is why I strongly appeal to all of us to undertake renewed efforts - to redouble our efforts - to bring the Conference on Disarmament back on track to substantial work in order to fulfil the mandate given to us.

You may count on the full support and cooperation of the German delegation in your efforts to move this Conference towards a programme of work as swiftly as possible.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you so much, Ambassador, for your kind remarks addressed to the President of the CD and your expression of support for the presidency. The next speaker on my list is Ambassador Petko Draganov of Bulgaria.

Mr. DRAGANOV (Bulgaria): Mr. President, I congratulate you on the assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. I truly hope your efforts will bring this Conference closer to its intended purpose. You do have my delegation's support in the exercise of your demanding duties. I would like to take this opportunity to thank as well the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Sergei Ordzhonikidze, and his deputy, Mr. Enrique Román-Morey, all the staff and members present here for the warm welcome extended to me since my arrival.

(Mr. Draganov, Bulgaria)

The position of Bulgaria in finding a basis for consensus within the CD was once again placed on record during the recent plenary meeting by my predecessor, so I am not going to repeat my delegation's views on the core issues or the agenda of the CD. I will just repeat some general observations.

I am proud to represent a country which has been a member of this august body since its inception and is party to all major multilateral agreements on arms control. International arms control and disarmament are a priority in terms of our national security doctrine. Thus my country has a vested interest in the work of this Conference.

This is not my first statement to this venerable assembly. In August 2000 I even had the honour to preside over the Conference on Disarmament, so I happen to know your predicament. I recall back then how member States realized that the political and strategic environment of our work had changed and that there was a need for a more determined political and diplomatic effort to agree on advancing the Conference's goals. This objective was not out of reach then, but it seemed it required more patience and persistence. Today, five years later, we are facing a similar situation and saying more or less similar things. Does that mean we are doomed? I think not. I said it back then and I reiterate it today. I would rather tend to think that when there is a problem in international relations and global security, then surely there is a job for diplomats. We are doomed to persist and to persevere, if you will. I also believe we should not just be mere representatives of our respective Governments here; we should also try harder to be contributors to the formulation of our Governments' policies. We need to exert every possible effort to move on.

Thank you, Mr. President, and thank you for the kind words you addressed to me at the beginning of this meeting.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you so much for the kind words that you have addressed to the presidency. And yes, we take note of your suggestions and your prompting that we must move on and we must remain persistent. The next speaker on my list is Mr. Kjetil Paulsen of Norway.

Mr. PAULSEN (Norway): Mr. President, allow me first to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of this Conference. It will take at least the application of your outstanding diplomatic skills to move us out of the current stalemate.

On Tuesday, 26 July, a letter from the Norwegian Minister for Foreign Affairs in which he called for stronger international commitments in the field of non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament was submitted to the United Nations General Assembly President, Mr. Jean Ping, the Foreign Minister of Gabon.

Attached to the letter was a declaration concerning the above issues, approved by the Foreign Ministers of Australia, Chile, Indonesia, Romania, South Africa and the United Kingdom as well as Norway. These Ministers also submitted a joint proposal for the draft outcome document of the United Nations Summit in September. These two documents are now being circulated in this room for your information.

(Mr. Paulsen, Norway)

This truly cross-regional initiative has also been shared with the entire membership of the United Nations. We are pleased that Secretary-General Kofi Annan warmly welcomed this contribution to the September Summit.

The initiative is balanced and consensus-oriented. It provides a way ahead for this particular part of the outcome document.

The reactions and comments we have received so far show that the initiative is gathering broad support from all regional groups. This is very promising for our common efforts to halt the proliferation of nuclear weapons and to achieve further nuclear disarmament, while at the same time fully respecting the right to peaceful use of nuclear energy within the framework of the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you so much for sharing the details of the Norwegian initiative with the members of the Conference on Disarmament. The next speaker on my list is Ambassador Juan Carlos Faidutti Estrada of Ecuador.

Mr. FAIDUTTI ESTRADA (Ecuador) (translated from Spanish): Mr. President, I should like to begin by expressing very sincere thanks for the kind welcome you have extended to me. I would like to state that for Ecuador and for myself it is a great honour to form part of this distinguished and unique forum responsible for disarmament negotiations. I would also like to congratulate you on your appointment as President of the Conference on Disarmament for this session. I am sure that the holding of meetings under your leadership will make it possible to attain the objectives which you have set yourself. Allow me also to take this opportunity to fulfil the task entrusted to me by the Constitutional President of the Republic of Ecuador, Dr. Alfredo Palacio, and to convey to you, and through you the distinguished members of the Conference, greetings and best wishes to each and every one. As I take the floor for the first time before the Conference on Disarmament, I would like to assure you, Sir, that you may count on the full cooperation of myself and my delegation in carrying out the work of this Conference, and I hope to contribute so that we may shortly be addressing substantive agenda items. I also wish to extend my greetings to Mr. Sergei Ordzhonikidze, the Secretary-General of the Conference, and Ambassador Enrique Román-Morey, the Deputy Secretary-General. These greetings also go to the Conference secretariat for the invaluable support which is provided for this forum.

In the context of the objective of working to promote a peaceful and stable world facilitating the comprehensive development of our peoples, Ecuador's foreign policy attaches particular importance to the maintenance and enhancement of international security, inter alia through the strengthening of the regimes for the prohibition and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, arms control and the strengthening of dialogue and negotiations on sensitive aspects of the international security agenda. The principles with respect to disarmament which my country has upheld in the United Nations General Assembly, in this Conference and at the regional and bilateral level are not unknown. These principles have been guided by Ecuador's

(Mr. Faidutti Estrada, Ecuador)

historical commitment to peace. Ecuador has similarly reiterated its full support for the multilateral disarmament system as a flexible, balanced and complete mechanism for securing agreement on disarmament-related matters. This support for the multilateral system is reaffirmed in the trust that the resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly should be fully implemented, and this Conference should not fall short in that respect.

On the same basis, Ecuador is also linked to the region of the Andes, South America and Latin America, to which it belongs, and which are obliged and committed not to possess nuclear weapons of any kind, the purpose being that no weapons of mass destruction should be developed, still less used. Latin America and the Caribbean have offered the world proof that they constitute a region in which prohibition and non-proliferation are part of their historical heritage. The Treaty of Tlatelolco made it possible to establish the first inhabited nuclear-weapon-free zone as an example which we hope might be imitated elsewhere.

Notwithstanding the major efforts being made in various forums and various regions of the world, the international strategic picture is not unduly encouraging. There is great and continuously increasing concern at situations involving a risk of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, running counter to all the efforts being made by the international community to eliminate weapons of all kinds, including nuclear weapons. To this is also added the threat that nuclear material might fall into the hands of terrorists. Given this distressing prospect, joint coordinated action is urgently necessary to strengthen and improve the effectiveness of the non-proliferation regime. I would like to reiterate with regret in this context the deep concern of Ecuador and its Government at the paralysis in the Conference on Disarmament. Countries and peoples such as Ecuador continue to be disappointed at the fact that this forum, which is called on to play the important role of securing agreement on appropriate standards and mechanisms to support international peace and security, is still not able after a number of years to agree on a programme of work which could enable it to fulfil the agenda it has set for itself.

International circumstances today, as well as the pressing economic circumstances in which countless swathes of mankind find themselves, make it urgently necessary to meet the objective of arriving at disarmament agreements which can dispel the shadows of destruction from around the world - destruction which could inter alia result from the use of weapons of mass destruction. The tasks of economic and social development, particularly the challenge of reducing poverty within our societies, are shared national objectives which call for the implementation of initiatives to promote the limitation of external defence expenditure. This will help to boost the efforts being made by our governments to address social needs and contribute to peace and democratic stability and respect for the law, and particularly human rights in general.

As is well known, innumerable efforts and proposals have been made in this Conference, many of them originating from countries in the Group of 21, to which Ecuador belongs and a considerable number coming from Latin American nations, which have in the past made major contributions towards a consensus which will help this forum to arrive at a programme for its work and thus embark on its tasks, which will undoubtedly open up new prospects for providing

(Mr. Faidutti Estrada, Ecuador)

the world with elements to strengthen peace among our peoples. It is the view of the delegation of which I am at present the head that in order to revitalize the Conference on Disarmament, it is necessary first and foremost for member States to display clear evidence of fresh and renewed political will and determination. This requires imaginative concepts conceived and entertained at the highest political levels, with participation by the principal protagonists in the international political arena. The Conference on Disarmament provides invaluable opportunities for dialogue and multilateral negotiation aimed at achieving the objective of disarmament eliminating any threat to mankind. Consequently, I trust that efforts will be redoubled to overcome the current deadlock within this forum. Without disregarding the difficulties and sensitivities which exist on these delicate matters, you, Mr. President, may rely on Ecuador and my delegation to cooperate and contribute towards this complicated objective - securing a prompt, effective and realistic mandate for this unique multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you so much, Ambassador, for your very comprehensive statement, and we should take on board your suggestion that we should move to substantive work as soon as possible. And thank you so much for your supportive remarks for the Chair. The next speaker on my list is Ambassador Kálmán Petőcz of Slovakia.

Mr. PETŐCZ (Slovakia): Mr. President, at the outset, may I congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the CD and wish you every success in fulfilling your duties? I thank you very much for the kind words you addressed to me at the beginning. It is an honour to say goodbye to this august body under your chairmanship. You presented yourself as an outstanding successor to your two colleagues that I have known during my tenure here in Geneva, Ambassadors Munir Akram and Shaukat Umer - eloquent, knowledgeable, with refined diplomatic skills, ready to take a firm stand, any time and at any forum, on behalf of their nation and their group.

I also take this opportunity to welcome our new colleagues, Ambassador Bernhard Brasack of Germany, Ambassador Juan Carlos Faidutti Estrada of Ecuador and Ambassador Petko Draganov of Bulgaria, who is of course a good old friend from the time of his former appointment here to the United Nations Office in Geneva.

I have spent more than six years in Geneva. However, my statement will not be too long. It seems to me that the longer one is involved in CD work, the more difficult it is to contribute to either the procedure or the substance with shockingly new inventions, without being too repetitive. Fortunately, new colleagues, full of enthusiasm and optimism, continue to arrive and bring with themselves new hope and new, or at least revitalized, ideas. Moreover, my Minister Eduard Kukan addressed the CD a few months ago with a substantive statement outlining the position of the Slovak Republic, and I can hardly add anything to his words.

Observing the life of the CD, one can ask the question: why is it that despite the absence of negotiations, the CD attracts the unabated attention and presence of delegations at the ambassadorial level and is still considered the best club in town? I think there are many reasons for this. The CD is not an ordinary United Nations body. It is a semi-autonomous organ created by a special session of the United Nations General Assembly. Secondly, the historical milieu of

(Mr. Petőcz, Slovakia)

this room adds to the honour of the CD and makes our deliberations more serious, sometimes even too serious. The CD successfully preserved the good diplomatic traditions of maintaining very good contacts between delegations outside the conference room, welcoming new colleagues, having farewell statements, simply having respect for each other. Thirdly, and maybe most importantly, the CD deals (or should deal) with issues that are very important from the point of view of the national security interests and national priorities of its members, as you, Mr. President, also pointed out in your opening statement of 14 July.

So what are the national priorities of Slovakia in the CD? What priorities and national security interests can a country and a nation have that as part of Central Europe witnessed the troubled European history of the twentieth century and was often rather the object than the subject of it? What priorities can a small nation have that at present lives in peace and friendly relationship with all its neighbours and is firmly embedded in European and euro-Atlantic economic, political and security structures?

There are, *stricto sensu*, no national priorities of Slovakia in the CD, meaning that we have no special agenda that would compete or interfere with the priorities of others. I can, of course, name the FMCT as a concrete issue that we would like to see negotiations commencing on soon, as the most logical continuation of the work of the CD in our view. Generally speaking, however, our priorities are identical with the primordial principles of the United Nations: to preserve peace and guarantee security in the world. This would bring benefit - either directly or indirectly - to the people and individual citizens of Slovakia, too. This consideration will also be the guiding principle of our work in the Security Council when we assume our duties as a non-permanent member on 1 January next year.

When it comes to the CD, we are ready to support each and every rational proposal or initiative that would bring us closer to an agreement on how to restore the negotiating mood in this body and that would contribute meaningfully to the above-mentioned global goals. Our flexibility has, on the other hand, its limits and cannot be confused with naivety: it is first of all the key delegations and the key capitals that should come to an agreement. We understand and accept, of course, that nations who take a bigger share of responsibility for global security have their specific priorities. We can also understand that nations in geopolitically sensitive regions have their specific priorities. It seems to me that the way out of the present situation in the CD should be a comprehensive solution. I am just not sure whether all those complex considerations can be squeezed into the closed box of the CD programme of work, isolated from the outside world and limited in time by a rigid interpretation of the rules of procedure.

My best memories from my tenure in Geneva are related to events where I assumed responsibility for something, where I could facilitate negotiations or deliberations. I believe that this is the field where small nations, acting in good faith and with open heart, can contribute most to the activities of multilateral bodies. I was regional coordinator of the Eastern Group five times and of the Western Group once, and it was a highly instructive time for me. Moreover, outside the CD, I had the honour and pleasure to preside over the preparatory process and the

(Mr. Petőcz, Slovakia)

proceedings of the Annual Conference of the States Parties to the Second (Amended) Protocol to the CCW in 2000 and be an active participant in the revitalization of the CCW process. Later, in 2001, I was one of the Vice-Presidents and Eastern European coordinator of the World Conference against Racism in Durban. All these functions - and others that I have not mentioned - have given me the opportunity to meet and work with excellent partners of many nations from different parts of the world. I have learned a lot: to be able to listen to others and to approach problems from different angles and points of view.

During my tenure in Geneva, unfortunately, I have not had the privilege and honour to preside over the CD. However, in 2006 it will again be Slovakia's turn in the sequence of CD presidencies. While regretting that I will not take up that challenge, I wish my successor, the incoming Slovakian Ambassador, all the best in his responsible duties. I hope that he, as the last President of the 2006 session, will be able to report to the General Assembly about substantive progress in the work of this, I believe, still very, very important multilateral forum.

Finally, I would like to wish all of you every success in your further endeavours. I thank all of you for your cooperation, good relations and friendship. I thank all the former Presidents for their untiring efforts, especially Ambassador Chris Sanders, who has already left but with whom I spent six years together here in Geneva. I thank also the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Sergei Ordzhonikidze, his Deputy, Mr. Enrique Román-Morey, Mr. Jerzy Zaleski and the other collaborators in the DDA, as well as the members of the technical staff and the interpreters.

I would also like to pay tribute to UNIDIR and to its Director Ms. Patricia Lewis for the analytical and background work provided for the disarmament community, and the non-governmental organizations involved in disarmament and arms control issues. Thank you very much.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you so much, Ambassador, for your very effusive appreciation of my role and contribution. I was pleasantly surprised, but thank you so much. I think your positive characterization of the work of the CD will go down well with those colleagues and member States who are losing hope. And thanks for your suggestions. They are valuable, and I express the hope that your suggestions will stimulate the CD into addressing some of the substantive issues, and though you did not preside over the CD, you have created a special niche here amongst your colleagues. We wish you the best in your next assignment, and you will be missed, with best wishes from all the members of the CD. Thank you so much.

The next speaker on my list is Ambassador Carlo Trezza of Italy.

Mr. TREZZA (Italy): Mr. President, since this is the first time I am taking the floor under your presidency, let me first express to you my congratulations and best wishes for the success of your mandate. Let me also welcome the new colleagues, Ambassador Brasack of Germany, Ambassador Draganov of Bulgaria and Ambassador Faidutti Estrada of Ecuador. Also my regret to see Ambassador Kálmán Petőcz leaving us and my appreciation for his farewell statement.

(Mr. Trezza, Italy)

Mr. President, we listened with attention to your very inspiring inaugural statement on 14 July and took good note of its content. We are ready to support you in your endeavours. You mentioned in your remarks the feelings and concerns of several delegations about the future of the CD and of its negotiating role. We are among those who believe this forum should remain the focal point of any development in the field of multilateral disarmament; the expertise, the knowledge and the network of relationships and mutual trust established among delegations are invaluable assets which should not be lost. As you rightly said, “one does not demolish an institution in order to re-energize it”, and we agree with you that the current impasse should not deter us from exploring ideas and initiatives to revitalize the Conference.

We are grateful to the United Kingdom G-8 presidency for having presented the latest G-8 position on issues which are of interest to the CD, and find comfort in the fact the G-8 leaders acknowledged the role of the Conference on Disarmament in advancing our non-proliferation and disarmament objectives and called on it to resume substantive work.

It is our belief that the lack of substantive results of the seventh NPT Review Conference makes it even more imperative to make progress at the CD, especially in the nuclear field. We therefore advocate progress both on substance and on procedure.

From the point of view of substance, we welcome the vigorous debates on the four core issues during the preceding Norwegian presidency. They were not a substitute for negotiations, but they were a good opportunity to verify positions, in particular after the NPT Review Conference. Italy intervened at each one of those sessions. We would be ready to continue that debate in an interactive mode, either formally or informally. You have suggested not to close the door on this idea. In the absence of progress on a programme of work, we suggest resuming such a structured debate.

The “food for thought” non-paper submitted to us under the presidency of the Netherlands is a welcome evolution. Its content could constitute in our view a more up-to-date basis for a consensual programme of work, since it contains a reasonable compromise between the main priorities expressed by member States. We are ready to continue to work on that basis in a spirit of genuine and effective multilateralism. This document, although it has no formal status yet, is in our view a useful tool, to “bridge the gap” - to use an expression that you have employed - between the perceptions and priorities of member States.

Let me express our satisfaction at your intention to continue to consult the past four Presidents and your successor from Peru. It is our strong feeling that such consultations are indispensable, since continuity and consistency between frequently - too frequently - rotating presidencies is a minimal prerequisite for progress. We also support those delegations which advocate a longer term for each presidency. The price to be paid - a less frequent rotation - would be compensated - more than compensated, I believe - by greater effectiveness and a larger “critical time” for each President to play a more incisive role.

(Mr. Trezza, Italy)

We agree that the onus of finding an agreement on a programme of work is a collective obligation, and we also agree that progress depends on members' political will. The call of the G-8 leaders of States and governments for the resumption of substantive work in the CD is a political message at the highest level. The importance of the Conference on Disarmament was also reaffirmed, together with regret for lack of progress, in last year's final document of the fourteenth Ministerial Conference of the Non-aligned Movement. Both these statements are meaningful expressions of political will, and we should build on them. One of the best ways to foster political will is to encourage participation in the CD at the political level. At the beginning of this year, the President and the Secretary-General extended an invitation to all the ministers of member States, and indeed we witnessed a larger presence of delegations at cabinet level. We suggest that this initiative be repeated. I recall that all CD members welcomed such high-level addresses as expressions of support for the endeavours of the CD in our report to the United Nations General Assembly.

Italy has always believed that the CD should be in tune with issues which are relevant to the current international security environment. In this connection let me express Italy's satisfaction at the resumption last month of the six-party talks on the Korean peninsula and our hope of positive results after the recess. Italy was the first European Union and G-7 member State to establish diplomatic relations with the DPRK. We did so in close consultation with our partners, and in particular with the Republic of Korea. We have always advocated that the Korean peninsula should be free of nuclear weapons. The Italian Under-Secretary of State, Margherita Boniver, was visiting the Korean peninsula at the moment of the announcement of the resumption of the six-party talks.

In the same spirit, and having in mind the relevance of the Iranian nuclear issue for the current international security environment, we recall the major disappointment expressed by the European Union presidency in Vienna at Iran's decision to resume uranium conversion activities. While awaiting the results of the IAEA Board of Governors meeting, we reiterate our continued and strong support for the conclusion of a satisfactory long-term arrangement on the basis of the Paris agreement, and we urge the re-establishment of a full suspension of all enrichment-related activities by Iran.

Finally, and consistent with the above-mentioned G-8 statement, Italy firmly believes that multilaterally agreed norms provide the basis for non-proliferation efforts.

In view of the increasing threat constituted by the potential proliferation of WMD, the international community has the compelling duty to achieve universal adherence and full compliance with these norms, in particular with the NPT, the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention.

Adherence to and compliance with the above international instruments and with other obligations relating to the non-proliferation of WMD must be regarded as one of the most important and significant criteria for membership in the highest multilateral decision-making bodies and institutions.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you so much, Ambassador, for such a substantive statement. I think all the members of the Conference on Disarmament will agree with you that the CD should remain the focal point for all issues relating to security and disarmament and negotiations on these issues. I can tell you that nothing is so reassuring for the President of the CD or any Chair as close attention to one's remarks and inaugural speeches, and you have scanned the statement so carefully and you have quoted from it, and I thank you for that.

Yes, you have pointed out that there is a proposal on the table. It was circulated that we can have interactive dialogue on all the issues before the CD. Last time when we met my sense was that there was no agreement on that proposal. There was dissension, but there was no rejection in the sense that we cannot pursue this path, but it is still on the table. One group had in fact given the flexibility to the President to organize such consultations and interactive dialogue. It was acceptable to the member States. But I do not want to foist anything on you. It should be a natural evolution. I can assure you that I will continue with my consultation with past Presidents and the future President. If there is any synthesis, any new development, I will share it with the members of the CD.

And finally, you have said that political participation helps. I agree with you. One point of view could be that decisions are made in capitals at the highest level and cosmetic or symbolic political participation will not make a difference, but I think that participation by Foreign Ministers increases awareness about the issues being addressed by the Conference on Disarmament, so this is a useful experiment and experience and whenever there is an opportunity, we must try to involve our Foreign Ministers and our political leadership in the deliberations of the Conference on Disarmament.

The next speaker on my list is Ambassador Streuli of Switzerland. I presume you are speaking on behalf of Switzerland and France.

Mr. STREULI (Switzerland) (translated from French): Mr. President, allow me first of all to convey to you on behalf of my delegation how pleased we are to see you once again presiding over this Conference. The Swiss delegation is ready to spare no effort to ensure that this Conference on Disarmament reaches agreement on a work programme and wishes you every success in this task.

As you know, my delegation has been thinking for some time, together with the French delegation and a number of other countries, about certain new issues. It is in this context, then, that I am taking the floor today to present together with our French friends some thoughts on the protection of critical infrastructure. New non-military threats, in particular international terrorism in all its forms, have become a universal and strategic problem. Critical infrastructure is composed of vital systems and networks whose deterioration would severely impinge on the smooth running of society. France and Switzerland remain convinced that the protection of critical infrastructure calls for international coordination and consideration of the potential impact that failures of critical services might have on industry, the entire private sector and the country as a whole.

(Mr. Streuli, Switzerland)

In October 2003, the Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP) organized a forum on the topic of coordination in protecting critical infrastructure at the international level as well as between governments and the private sector. The results of this Conference were published in 2004 in a report entitled “Forum on critical infrastructure”, which is available to the public on the GCSP Internet site www.gcsp.ch.

At the beginning of October 2004 GCSP, in conjunction with the French High Committee for Civil Defence, organized an additional forum in a similar area entitled “The United States, Europe and beyond”. Once again this second forum showed that internal security has become a global concern.

In order to facilitate thinking about the topic of critical infrastructure within the framework of this Conference, we are making the report of this most recent GCSP forum, published in 2005, available to all delegations. We hope that this information will contribute to a substantive discussion of new issues which ought to be considered by our Conference.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you so much for your kind remarks addressed to the presidency. This is a very important statement. You have touched on a new dimension, and I am sure that all member States have taken due note of the proposal that you have made about critical infrastructure.

The last speaker on my list is Mr. Tom Cynkin of the United States of America.

Mr. CYNKIN (United States of America): Mr. President, we note that there will be what is described as an open-ended meeting on PAROS on 16 August. The note we received announcing this event states that this will be held “within the framework of the Conference on Disarmament”. We further note that this meeting will be held in the Council Chamber. We recognize the right of individual delegations to hold unofficial meetings and to reserve various rooms within the Palais, subject to availability.

For the sake of clarity, my delegation would like to note that there was no consensus decision by the Conference on Disarmament to hold, endorse or support this meeting in any manner, including by the CD secretariat staff, let alone within the framework of the Conference on Disarmament, a fact which might not be readily apparent to the uninformed observer.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you so much for your statement. Everybody concerned has heard you out. I give the floor to the Russian Federation.

Mr. VASILIEV (Russian Federation) (translated from Russian): I should like to take this opportunity to join with my distinguished colleague from the United States of America and point out that on Tuesday, 16 August, at 3.15 p.m. here in this room, the Russian Federation will be holding an open-ended group meeting on problems of preventing an arms race in outer space and, more specifically, on the items raised in document CD/1679 and the three subsequent Russo-Chinese papers. I would remind you that the problem of preventing an arms race in outer space is traditionally one of the topics on the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament which we have been unanimously adopting in recent years. Once again I invite all distinguished colleagues to participate in this meeting, and I hope that it will be successful.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you so much for your statement. Before I close this meeting I would like to touch on two points: one is, of course, as I said earlier, while responding to the remarks made by the Ambassador of Italy, that the proposal for an interactive dialogue on the four core issues that were discussed during the Norwegian presidency is still on the table. So if delegations want to make statements on those issues, they are most welcome to do that. If you want to do it in a structured manner, then you can consult amongst yourselves in the regional groups and give authentic feedback to the presidency, and we'll be in your hands. The presidency is open to such a dialogue. There is an approach being suggested that if delegations do not have strong objections or strong reservations to a structured dialogue, we might as well hold such a dialogue, either in the formal or the informal setting. I leave this point at this stage.

The second point is that, as you will recall, in my opening statement I said that we could devote this session to a discussion on the programme of work. Prior to this meeting I consulted regional groups and their coordinators, and the feedback received from them suggests that there are no new proposals or suggestions, and I do not sense any movement from any direction. If you have any suggestions between now and the next meeting, you are most welcome to make them and convey them to the President. I will remain proactive in seeking you out and seeking meetings with you. If you have any proposals - old proposals, new proposals, innovative proposals - you are most welcome to share them with me.

Well, as I said, we have concluded the list of speakers. At this point, I would like to ask if any other delegation wants to take the floor. I don't think that's the case. This concludes our business. The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Thursday, 18 August 2005, at 10 a.m. in this conference room.

The meeting rose at 11.05 a.m.