

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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ENGLISH

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

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 15 September 2005, at 10.20 a.m.

President:

Mr. Félix CALDERON

(Peru)

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I declare open the 996th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. I must apologize for the delay, but as the delegations present here will understand, the President has been conducting consultations on a matter of interest, that is, the programme of work of the Conference.

Before turning to the agenda for today, allow me to pay tribute to a distinguished scientist, Joseph Rotblat, physicist, veteran disarmament campaigner and Nobel Peace laureate, who passed away last week. In his long life, Mr. Rotblat went from working on the beginnings of the programme aimed at producing the nuclear bomb - he moved on from that initial phase to become one of the founders of the Pugwash group and hence a member who constantly followed the development of the Pugwash conferences annually, thus devoting his life to championing not just the principle of science for peace, but also promoting peace among peoples. I would therefore like you to join me in observing a minute of silence in tribute to the scientist Joseph Rotblat.

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The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): Thank you very much. I have no speakers for today's plenary meeting, unless a delegation wishes to take the floor. It seems not.

With respect to the consultations undertaken by the President in an endeavour to find a formula for agreement on the basis of an informal document which he submitted for the consideration of the regional groups, I would like to report to the Conference that there have naturally been reactions of varying degrees, but I would like to be positive. As delegations are aware, it is a prerogative of the President to spare no effort to see whether we can break out of the present stalemate, and in that spirit to work positively so as to be able to break this stalemate. The President has a paper that you will find tomorrow in the pigeonholes, as a document of the Conference, and at this stage I would just like to refer to the thinking underlying it, because in the final analysis, the President understands that it is the prerogative of each delegation to reflect its national position on this proposal.

In that effort to recapitulate what has been done in the almost nine years of bold efforts, one can identify as many as four common elements that are shared by all delegations, and that is what is constructive, that is what is edifying, that is what gives us grounds for optimism - in other words, it means that we have no reason to be pessimistic.

The first element has to do with the spirit shared by all delegations that this Conference should continue negotiating. I have not heard a single voice questioning the negotiating mandate of the Conference on Disarmament.

The second element underlying the President's proposal relates to the shared interest of all delegations in breaking out of the present deadlock. I have not heard any delegation in the consultations that I have held, nor any representative speaking as coordinator of the regional groups, saying the contrary. Everyone wants to see an end to the present paralysis, especially now that we see that in New York Geneva's concerns are not necessarily reflected.

(The President)

The third element is that for a number of years and on the delegations' table there have been a number of criteria, parameters or elements that have made it possible to produce certain working papers on the substantive issue of the programme of work, and the documents in question have been discussed formally and informally. In other words, what you see in the President's document is not new, because it takes into account the efforts carried out over some nine years by all the delegations present here, some of them through working papers. Hence there is nothing that is coming from the outside that is unexpected except for a sort of "déjà vu" analysis of what is known and an attempt is being made to counterbalance, to contrast or where necessary to amend what is already known. So there is nothing new, there are no surprises from that standpoint.

Lastly, the fourth underlying element has to do with the wish, the aspiration, the interest shared by all in working on the basis of consensus. This means that, while national positions deserve much respect, the delegations represented here are keen to find a compromise, and finding a compromise always means finding common ground which does not necessarily have to be the faithful reflection of a national position. The search for consensus, which is a shared aspiration of all the delegations present here, is per se an additional effort that implies relinquishing national positions in the interests of the compromise that would involve everyone.

It is with these four elements that are common denominators in this distinguished body that the President of the Conference, Ambassador Rodríguez, is submitting for your consideration a document which, I repeat, gives rise to reactions, but its philosophy is aimed at seeing how we can all break out of the present deadlock.

To conclude on this point, I would like to bring to the attention of the delegations represented here that it is the intention of the President to convene an informal meeting of this plenary on Tuesday at 4 p.m. with a view to having an informal exchange of views as to the possibilities that delegations see in this President's text. At least Peru will have the satisfaction of knowing that it has spared no effort to ensure that the Conference gets down to work.

If I see no delegation asking for the floor, then I will adjourn the plenary meeting and, as announced last week, in 10 minutes we will have an informal plenary meeting to conduct the first reading of the draft report of the Conference on Disarmament.

The meeting rose at 10.35 a.m.