

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE NINE HUNDRED AND FORTY-THIRD PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 27 January 2004, at 10.30 a.m.

President: Ms. Amina MOHAMED (Kenya)

* Reissued for technical reasons.

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The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 943rd plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

At the very outset, I would like to inform you that my consultations indicate that there is now agreement on the formulation of the Presidential statement, and therefore we can proceed to the adoption of the agenda. May I take it that the Conference decides to adopt the agenda for its 2004 session, as contained in document CD/WP.533?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: This agenda will be issued as an official document of the Conference by the secretariat.

In connection with the adoption of the agenda I, as the President of the Conference, I should like to state that it is my understanding that if there is a consensus in the Conference to deal with any issues, they could be dealt with within this agenda.

The Conference will also take into consideration rules 27 and 30 of the rules of procedure of the Conference, as well as paragraph 23 of the report of the Conference on Disarmament to the General Assembly contained in document CD/1718 of 10 September 2003.

I should like to take this opportunity to thank all delegations for their kind cooperation and for the spirit of accommodation that has allowed us to adopt the agenda in an expeditious and businesslike manner. It is my sincere hope that this spirit will also prevail during the next stage of our deliberations, when we proceed to seek an agreement on the programme of work. I thank you very much.

I have the following speaker for today's plenary meeting. Ambassador Mikhail Wehbe of the Syrian Arab Republic, to whom I now give the floor.

Mr. WEHBE (Syrian Arab Republic) (translated from Arabic): Madam President, I should like to congratulate our friend the Kenyan Government and to congratulate you personally and most warmly on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. This is a particularly great pleasure for me, because I have known you so well and I saw how active and effective you were during your country's membership of the Security Council. I wish you every success with this complex task, and I am sure that you will succeed, given your long experience and the great wisdom that you have always shown. I hope and trust that you will give this Conference the impetus and boost it needs, particularly as I have learned that the deliberations of an entire year, indeed of many years, have not been sufficient to produce an agreement on the programme of work. This shows just how difficult your task is.

I would be remiss if, on this occasion, I did not express my heartfelt thanks to your predecessor, Ambassador Inoguchi of Japan, for the intensive efforts that she made to give a powerful boost to this Conference with a view to serving the causes of international peace and security. She contacted me when I was in New York on disarmament issues. I should like to confirm that I and my mission stand ready to cooperate fully with you and your delegation to

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ensure the success of your task, which, from everything I have heard and read about disarmament, is indeed a very difficult one. I should also like to take this opportunity to express my warmest congratulations to my friend the Permanent Representative of China and to the Government and people of China on the occasion of the Chinese New Year, which was celebrated a few days ago. I was preparing my statement on the first day of the Chinese New Year.

Since I am taking the floor for the first time before this august assembly, I should like to raise a few general points.

Firstly, as a member of the Group of 21, I would like to say how pleased I am with the results we obtained yesterday and today on the adoption of the revised agenda, particularly in the light of the statement by the distinguished President about the need for consensus to discuss any item on the agenda.

Secondly, Syria attaches great importance to regional security, which we believe can only be guaranteed by ridding all States in the region without exception of weapons of mass destruction. Given the close link between regional security and international security, Syria has consistently called for the establishment in the Middle East of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction and, in particular, nuclear weapons. Last April, we presented an initiative to the Security Council on behalf of the Arab Group in New York. His Excellency Bashar al-Asad, President of the Syrian Arab Republic, informed the Greek side about the initiative, during his recent visit to Greece from 15 to 17 December 2003. I will discuss it later in greater detail, but would first like to complete my review of the other points in my statement.

Thirdly, Syria affirms the need for a binding instrument on effective international arrangements and measures to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.

Fourthly, Syria is convinced that any treaty designed to prohibit the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other explosive devices must include the large stockpiles of fissile material already in existence, which pose a grave threat to international peace and security.

Fifthly, Syria supports the efforts that have been made to establish confidence-building measures and to ensure transparency in devising a system capable of preventing an arms race in outer space.

I should now like to explain the initiative that Syria presented on behalf of the Arab Group, since this forum needs to be informed about it. This is not the first time that Syria has presented such an initiative. A similar initiative was launched at the Paris Conference on Chemical Weapons in the 1980s and won the support of world opinion and of the States Members of the United Nations for the idea of establishing in the Middle East a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction. As you know, the ministerial meetings and summit conferences of the member States of the Non-Aligned Movement have consistently adopted resolutions calling for the establishment of such a zone in the Middle East. Moreover, paragraph 81 of the final

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document of the Summit Conference of the Non-Aligned Movement held at Kuala Lumpur on 24 and 25 February 2003 expressed unanimous support for the establishment in the Middle East of a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction in accordance with Security Council resolution 487 (1981) and paragraph 14 of Security Council resolution 687 (1991). This confirms the good faith of the Arab States and their desire to create a system for the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, which are the most frightening and threatening of these weapons for mankind.

We should like to stress that the 2000 Conference of the States Parties to the NPT adopted a resolution calling for the establishment in the Middle East of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction. Every year since 1974, the General Assembly has also adopted unanimous resolutions calling for the establishment of such a zone in the Middle East, the most recent being resolution 58/34 of December 2003. Madam President, Syria presented the initiative on behalf of the Arab Group at New York in the light of these legal sources, particularly Security Council and General Assembly resolutions relating to the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons which, according to the Charter, are binding on us all, as are the resolutions of the foreign ministers of the non-aligned States and of the Islamic Conference. Syria furthermore sent a note verbale dated 31 December 2003 addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and to the President of the Security Council, under agenda item 70 of the General Assembly, concerning the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.

This is not a political issue, nor has it ever been one. It is both an old and a new issue that stems from the question of why the Security Council resolutions have not yet been implemented. In this connection, allow me to focus on a number of important points and to explain some of the key elements of the draft resolution that was issued in blue and submitted to the Security Council for consideration when the time comes.

The draft resolution refers to a series of very important initiatives aimed at ridding the Middle East region of all weapons of mass destruction. The text is largely based on the resolutions on the Middle East adopted by the two NPT Review Conferences and on the relevant Security Council resolutions, one of which was adopted under chapter VII of the Charter and is therefore a binding resolution. The eighth preambular paragraph of the draft resolution and operative paragraph 4 refer to the threat posed by the possession of weapons of mass destruction by terrorists. The draft resolution furthermore emphasizes the role of the Security Council in adopting a global approach to countering the spread of all weapons of mass destruction in the region without exception, and it stresses the need to implement the relevant Security Council resolutions, particularly resolutions 487 (1981) and 687 (1991) which call for the establishment in the Middle East of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons. Operative paragraph 3 of the draft resolution calls upon all the States of the region to accede to the conventions and treaties on the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons.

Before this august assembly, which deals with questions of disarmament, the first item on the agenda, I should like to reaffirm that Syria, which has been presenting this initiative since the 1980s and did so again eight months ago, is sincere and earnest and is extremely serious in its

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intentions. Syria is committed to the implementation of international resolutions and the safeguarding of international peace and security in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. We demonstrated this commitment during our membership of the Security Council.

We believe that all States must cooperate to convince those who are not yet convinced of the importance of joining in this effort. This effort reflects our sense of responsibility and the seriousness with which we view the need to ensure international peace and security. The minimum that we expect from all those who do believe in the need to implement the international resolutions that have been adopted is that they will adopt this draft resolution, which has been submitted in blue to the Security Council and is contained in document S/2003/1208 dated 29 December 2003.

In conclusion, Madam President, I wish you every success in your task and would like to reiterate our willingness to cooperate with you, your delegation and the Conference to ensure its success.

The PRESIDENT: I should like to thank the representative of Syria for his statement and for the very kind words addressed to the Chair.

I have no other speakers on the list of speakers, and so that concludes my list of speakers for today. Does any delegation wish to take the floor at this stage? If there are no more speakers, I should like to invite the Conference to take a decision on the request for participation in our work from States not members of the Conference, without having considered them in an informal plenary. These requests are contained in document CD/WP.534/Add.1 and were received from the following States: Azerbaijan, Cyprus, Georgia, Greece and Jordan.

May I take it that the Conference decides to invite these States to participate in our work in accordance with its rules of procedure?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: This concludes our business for today. Does any delegation wish to take the floor at this stage? I see none. Before adjourning this meeting, I would like to repeat my appeal to members of the Conference to make good use of the time allocated to us and to inscribe their names on the list of speakers for the forthcoming meeting. The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Thursday, 29 January 2004 at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 10.55 a.m.