

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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ENGLISH

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

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 25 August 2005, at 10.15 a.m.

President: Mr. Masood KHAN (Pakistan)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 993rd plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

Let me begin by bidding farewell to our distinguished colleague, Ambassador Naéla Gabr, who will soon leave Geneva after serving here as Permanent Representative of Egypt to the United Nations Office and other international organizations for three years. During her tenure she has represented her Government with a combination of authority and exquisite diplomatic skills. Outside the field of disarmament, she is a member of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women. Ambassador Gabr has actively engaged in CD activities. Furthermore, she has been head of delegation for the second session of the Preparatory Committee of the 2005 Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons here in Geneva. She has chaired and spoken for the Group of 21. Her dedication to the cause of disarmament in general and her contributions to this Conference have been appreciated by all members. She has been visible and active in the CD. Ambassador Gabr is leaving Geneva to assume new important responsibilities as Assistant Foreign Minister for multilateral affairs in her country's capital, Cairo. Ambassador Naéla Gabr, as you move on to fill an exalted position in Cairo, on behalf of the Conference on Disarmament and on my own behalf, I wish you success and happiness in the future.

Colonel Francis Brossard, Military Adviser to the French delegation here, who has served the delegation for the last four years and has worked here in the CD, is also returning. We wish him success in his next assignment.

I have two speakers on my list today: Ambassador Naéla Gabr of Egypt and Ambassador Yoshiki Mine of Japan. Ambassador Naéla Gabr, you have the floor.

Ms. GABR (Egypt) (translated from Arabic): Mr. President, thank you for your kind words and for your untiring efforts at this meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

At the outset, allow me to thank the President of the Conference and the Presidents who guided our work in the past three years. I would also like to thank the secretariat and the Department of Disarmament Affairs in Geneva, as well as my dear colleagues, the Ambassadors and delegates with whom I have formed close working relationships and enjoyed great cooperation during my time in Geneva.

I will not, in my brief statement, reiterate the position which Egypt takes on disarmament, since this has been clearly stated on numerous occasions, including at the meeting on 15 March when Egypt delivered a statement on behalf of the Group of 21, at the meeting on 23 June 2005, when Egypt delivered a statement on behalf of the Arab Group, and in its various statements on PAROS and FMCT, as well as at meetings of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and other groupings. I would, however, like to give you a brief account of what I have experienced here in Geneva.

I think that the real problem facing this Conference is lack of political will in certain capitals. No real progress will be made here unless account is taken of the interests and priorities of all sides equally, since this is what multilateralism is all about. When we talk about human

(Ms. Gabr, Egypt)

rights, we talk about accepting and listening to others as a basic human right. I think that we all need to learn from one another. The Conference on Disarmament has not achieved what other international organizations such as the World Trade Organization have achieved by dealing with a variety of topics simultaneously and on an equal footing. I am not saying that WTO is an ideal organization, but it successfully deals with all kinds of subjects simultaneously. That takes a lot of effort, but it is the approach that it has taken until now. Non-governmental organizations play a vital role in disarmament and should be encouraged to participate and contribute in order to highlight the human dimension of disarmament and to introduce new ways of thinking about these issues. The Conference on Disarmament must emulate the Commission on Human Rights by establishing an annual high-level segment for ministers for foreign affairs to underscore the Conference's political importance and move the technical and scientific agenda forward.

Although I am disappointed at the ongoing stalemate in the Conference, I am still optimistic that the members of the Conference and observers will continue to recognize the importance of the Conference on Disarmament as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum.

The Conference's agenda must not be altered, as it really is the cornerstone of our work and nothing should be done to bypass it or sidestep the items it contains, since this would undermine the delicate balance that has been struck, together with the credibility of this forum.

I should like to stress the importance and positive benefits of encouraging women to participate in the dissemination of a culture of peace, disarmament and arms limitation and in safeguarding international peace and security. Our experience in Geneva, through the Susan Mubarak Women's International Movement for Peace and its work with international organizations here, has been most useful in this regard.

I should like to thank the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, its Director and all its staff. I should also like to thank the office of the International Atomic Energy Agency in Geneva and all its staff.

Egypt's commitment to peace is based on conviction and experience, as we have reaffirmed every year since Egypt launched the 1997 peace initiative. Our vision of disarmament, then, is sincere, as our words and actions have shown. Our priorities should be therefore taken seriously: we remain committed to international and regional peace and security. The bonds that I have formed with you and the Conference will not be broken when I take up my new post as Assistant Foreign Minister for multilateral affairs. I will continue to closely follow human rights and disarmament issues, as well as relations with United Nations organs in Geneva, New York and Vienna. I look forward to seeing you all in Cairo and to building on the fruitful cooperation that we have established here. I wish you and the Conference every success.

The PRESIDENT: Ambassador Naéla Gabr, thank you so much for your statement and for the kind remarks addressed to the Chair. Ambassador Yoshiki Mine of Japan, you have the floor.

Mr. MINE (Japan): Mr. President, I heard the farewell statement of Ambassador Gabr with very sad feelings, and I would like to express my appreciation for both Ambassador Gabr and Colonel Brossard for their contributions to our work here.

Let me make a few brief remarks on the United Nations Conference on Disarmament Issues I attended last week in Japan, for your information.

Held each year in a different Japanese city, this year's Conference took place in Kyoto on the theme "The United Nations after six decades and renewed efforts for the promotion of disarmament" and was sponsored by the United Nations DDA and the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific, as well as Kyoto prefecture and city. The Conference has multiple objectives and provides a valuable opportunity for disarmament experts from all four corners of the globe to assemble and freely discuss matters of concern to the international community related to disarmament.

This year's participants from Japan's side included high-level government officials, representatives of the major newspapers and non-governmental organizations, as well as representatives from Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and previous conferences have also included members of the Diet.

Allow me to outline the main topics which were broached during the Conference. Firstly, the Conference reflected on the last NPT Review Conference and, in the light of its outcome, many participants pointed out the importance of maintaining the credibility and the viability of the NPT. The topic of the three countries outside the NPT was discussed. Attention was also drawn to the recent United States-India agreement on civilian nuclear cooperation. Strong expectations were expressed for the attainment of nuclear disarmament and, in the context of non-proliferation, compliance and the role of IAEA were stressed. Iran's nuclear programme, as well as the DPRK issue, were discussed. Many participants were reluctant to prejudge the outcome of the six-party talks due to the complex and difficult nature of the issue. The issues of withdrawal and institutional improvements for the NPT and its review process were also discussed. Reform of the whole machinery of the United Nations was addressed, and some participants stressed their expectations for the upcoming United Nations summit in New York. And finally, we also discussed small arms and light weapons issues.

I believe forums which provide the opportunity to share and exchange a wealth of ideas, such as the United Nations Conference on Disarmament Issues, are essential to bring relevant parties together to discuss disarmament issues that affect the international community. Japan will continue to support such events, and strongly encourages further efforts toward disarmament and non-proliferation objectives.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you so much, Ambassador Mine, for this important statement, and I now call upon Ambassador Rivasseau of France, who has expressed his desire to address the Conference.

Mr. RIVASSEAU (France) (translated from French): Mr. President, allow me to congratulate you, since we are moving towards the end of your term of office, on the way you have performed these duties, and also to thank you for the words you addressed to Colonel Brossard, the Counsellor in this mission. I should also like to convey my best wishes to our friend Ambassador Gabr, who is leaving to take up very difficult duties in Cairo, and wish her good luck because the work she will be doing there will benefit all of us here as well.

Very briefly I am taking the floor on the question of new issues. Last year, you know that this delegation worked along with a number of other delegations which had expressed an interest in this area and on 5 August 2004 we shared informally with the Conference as a whole the main elements presented by the various delegations as part of this informal thinking in the form of a non-paper. This thinking continued this year, the non-paper of 5 August 2004 has been updated and we are happy to share this non-paper with the Conference as a whole on the same terms as last year, that is, informally. We hope that this informal contribution will be conducive to the success of the Conference and to consensus on a work plan within our forum.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you so much for your remarks and thank you so much for the remarks that you addressed to the Chair.

This concludes my list of speakers. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor at this stage? If there are no more requests for the floor, I would like to make some concluding remarks, as my term of office is coming to an end today.

On 7 July, when the incumbent President of the Conference on Disarmament, Ambassador Wegger Strømmen, was about to pass the baton to me, he made these remarks: "I regret to report to you that the presidency has received no indications from any delegation that we are closer to a resolution with regard to a programme of work for the Conference. This important outstanding issue has to be transferred to the incoming President."

At the end of this last session under Pakistan's presidency, I have to make a similar statement. There has been no progress of the programme of work, and there is no indication from regional coordinators or individual member States that such a possibility exists in the near future.

At the beginning of my presidency, I had mapped out my endeavour by inviting member States and Coordinators of regional groups to give their inputs on the programme of work. I had also undertaken to hold bilateral meetings and to consult with the past and future Presidents.

I did not receive any inputs or suggestions from member States on the programme of work. However, one delegation held extensive informal consultations on the possibility of extending the duration of the CD presidency. Regional groups during our weekly Presidential consultations continued to inform me that there were no new suggestions on the programme of work. Bilateral consultations, while conducted in a very congenial and collegial spirit, have not given a sense of movement or progress either.

(The President)

I am grateful for the advice given by the past and future Presidents, especially Ambassador Tim Caughley of New Zealand and Ambassador Rapacki of Poland. I also consulted with Ambassador In-Kook Park of the Republic of Korea.

Before the presidency of Pakistan, Ambassador Paul Meyer of Canada had written to me suggesting that we should hold a second round of structured discussions on the four topics that had been discussed during the Norwegian presidency. This suggestion was eminently sensible. Ambassador Meyer believed that a discussion along these lines could create an opportunity for interactivity. Some member States had given flexibility to the President to organize such an interactive dialogue. However, several others were not prepared for another debate on the same subjects so soon. My sense is that there is no opposition to this idea per se and that in the near future such a dialogue can be held provided, as some delegations say, the negotiating character of the CD is not changed.

Let me share with you some of the highlights of our work since 11 July. Twenty statements were made in the plenary sessions. The delegation of the United Kingdom shared with CD members the G-8 Gleneagles statement on non-proliferation. The relevant extract read: "We acknowledge the role of the Conference on Disarmament in advancing our non-proliferation and [nuclear] disarmament objectives and call on it to resume substantive work."

The Norwegian delegation informed us about a proposal of seven Foreign Ministers on non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament. The proposal was not discussed within the CD.

The Russian Federation and China briefed the CD about their efforts in regard to prevention of an arms race in outer space. They informed the CD that they were holding an open-ended meeting on PAROS on the sidelines, which they held on 16 August.

The Swiss delegation, speaking on behalf of Switzerland and France, suggested discussion on the issue of protection of critical infrastructure in the CD because of its relevance to the work of the Conference.

A message from the International Peace Bureau on the sixtieth anniversary of the use of nuclear weapons in Japan was circulated to the CD members.

Nagasaki Peace Messengers as well as citizens and students of Nagasaki observed our plenary meeting on 18 August. In a petition addressed to the United Nations Secretary-General, thousands of students from Nagasaki and Hiroshima called for the abolition of nuclear weapons.

We welcomed three new Ambassadors: Ambassador Bernhard Brusack of Germany, Ambassador Petko Draganov of Bulgaria, and Ambassador Juan Carlos Faidutti Estrada of Ecuador. We bade farewell to six CD ambassadors: Ambassador Dimiter Tzantchev of Bulgaria, Ambassador Elizabeth Astete Rodríguez of Peru, Ambassador Kálmán Petőcz of Slovakia, Ambassador Tibor Tóth of Hungary, Ambassador Markku Reimaa of Finland and Ambassador Naéla Gabr of Egypt.

(The President)

We are grateful to the secretariat for bringing out the documents of the meetings held from 23 June to 7 July, which contain final verbatim records of the debate held by member States on the four core issues - nuclear disarmament, fissile materials, prevention of an arms race in outer space and negative security assurances. Several delegations believe that in-depth study of these documents can help us identify some ingredients for further engagement in these areas.

The next presidency coincides with the period when we shall prepare and transmit a report of our year-long sessions to the United Nations General Assembly. This will require careful reflection and a collective endeavour.

Ambassador Manuel Rodríguez-Cuadros of Peru, our next President, will present his credentials to Director-General Sergei Ordzhonikidze tomorrow. I shall meet him immediately afterwards and discuss modalities for the transfer of responsibilities.

I started my term as the President of the Conference with an open mind and an intention to look out for any idea which could help break the logjam. I encouraged everyone to share their thoughts formally or informally. There is a deep desire amongst CD members to move forward. But the challenge is how to translate this desire into a concrete plan of action. There is no silver bullet that can resolve the procedural squabbles here. A political direction is needed to begin our work.

This is a challenging time for the CD. Proposals range from its activation to suspension to demolition. The jury is still out. After consultations with a large number of CD ambassadors across the spectrum, my sense is that there is a strong desire to preserve and promote the CD as a negotiating forum on disarmament and to ensure its continuity and effectiveness. Because of the prevalent political impasse, delegations are looking for a new alchemy which will give them the right formula to commence work in this forum. The requisite expertise and the setting are there. What we need to do is to put all the agreed agenda items on the table and start negotiations on them instead of discussing the size and shape of the table.

I would like to thank Ambassador Hu Xiaodi of China, Ambassador Türkekul Kurttekin of Turkey, Ambassador Sergei Aleinik of Belarus and Ambassador Philip Richard Owade of Kenya for their support as regional coordinators. I would also like to mention particularly Ambassador Carlo Trezza of Italy, who was the first ambassador to call on me and to share his valuable insights on the work of the CD. I would also thank Ambassador Yoshiki Mine for his hard work throughout this period.

Secretary-General Sergei Ordzhonikidze has constantly given his direction and guidance. Thank you so much, Secretary-General. I would also like to thank Mr. Enrique Román-Morey for supporting the presidency from consultations to the preparation of notes to the convening of the sessions. His contribution has been remarkable. Secretary-General, you have an excellent team here. I would in particular like to mention Mr. Jerzy Zaleski, Political Officer, and Mr. Valère Mantels, who were there with us all the time to guide and support us. There were others from the Department of Disarmament Affairs who were working behind the scenes. Thank you all. And we will not forget the interpreters. We would not have been able to put across our point of view without your help. You've done a great job, as usual.

(The President)

A distinguished Ambassador, in a conversation with me recently, used the metaphor of “a hollow vessel”. The CD should not be such a vessel, nor the CD President captain of such a vessel. When there is no political will to start work, an artificial flurry of activity will not jump-start the process. The President tries to aggregate the will of member States. He cannot be more than the sum of the membership.

It was indeed a great honour and privilege for Pakistan to preside over the sessions of the Conference on Disarmament. Pakistan as a country fully supports the international community’s objectives of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. We remain steadfast in this resolve. Global peace and security are goals that transcend procedural battles, however heroic they may appear. The CD owes it to the world citizenry to save the world from a dangerous arms race and promise them a secure future.

We have to ask ourselves why we gather here week after week, month after month, year after year. There is a higher purpose and a higher calling - the calling to prepare the world for nuclear disarmament and stem the spread of weapons of mass destruction. We must respond to it.

I have a request from the Ambassador of Kenya to make the following announcement. The Group of 21 will meet in this Council Chamber immediately after the plenary meeting.

It remains for me to wish my successor in this post, Ambassador Manuel Rodríguez-Cuadros of Peru, every success during his term of office.

This concludes our business for today, unless a delegation wants to take the floor. I do not think that is the case.

The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Thursday, 1 September 2005, at 10 a.m. in this conference room.

The meeting rose at 10.40 a.m.