

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE ONE THOUSAND ONE HUNDRED AND TENTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Wednesday, 25 June 2008, at 10.05 a.m.

President: Ms. Christina ROCCA (United States of America)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 1110th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

On behalf of the Conference and on my own behalf, I have the pleasure to welcome our distinguished guest of today, Mr. Javier Solana, the High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy and Secretary-General of the Council of the European Union.

Before assuming these responsibilities, Mr. Solana had a very distinguished career in his national Government, including as Minister for Foreign Affairs and subsequently, as Secretary-General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

His presence here today is a testimony to the importance the European Union attaches to the work of the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating body.

Excellency, you have the floor.

Mr. SOLANA (European Union High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy): It is a great pleasure to be back in Geneva. I have been in this room many times in other capacities, in other moments, very important moments, but I am delighted to be back in this important forum and to have the opportunity to speak to you this morning about an issue that is of great importance. Disarmament and non-proliferation are enormous challenges for the international community today. If I may say, the key question to ask is: will the United Nations disarmament and arms control architecture live up to our hopes and expectations? That is the question. I think the answer must be yes.

This Conference on Disarmament is a key part of the architecture. It has a long and a very distinguished history. We should not forget that it was here, in Geneva, that crucial treaties were negotiated and approved. Among them, the Biological and Toxin Weapons Conventions and the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty, two very important treaties. These achievements should act as source of inspiration for you all.

But, if we are honest, the last 10 years have been what may be called a “lost decade”. When Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon spoke to you at the opening of the 2008 session, he made it clear that he was deeply troubled by the lack of progress. I fully share his view. It is puzzling that, during an entire decade and despite enormous efforts, there is still no agreement even on the question of how to address the issues and in which order.

My core message to you today is that the time has come to start working. The world cannot afford this ongoing stalemate. We in the European Union, for our part, will do whatever we can to revitalize this Conference on Disarmament. Of course, multilateral arms control treaties can also be negotiated outside the established international framework, sometimes with great success. Take, for example, the treaty banning anti-personnel mines. But these efforts are no substitute for the necessary strengthening of comprehensive international agreements on weapons of mass destruction and other arms. That is your collective responsibility.

(Mr. Solana, European Union High Representative
for the Common Foreign and Security Policy)

Everyone knows that the CD is the only place to forge a credible plan shared by nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States alike. Everyone also knows that thinking on nuclear disarmament has evolved a lot recently. Let me, for instance, say that, in the United States, several past Secretaries of State, from Henry Kissinger to Sam Nunn, an important Senator, have called for practical measures to reach the ultimate goal of a world free of nuclear weapons.

I should also like to say that the two candidates in the United States presidential elections have stated their openness to new thinking on nuclear issues, both in terms of numbers of warheads but also in terms of posture. In Europe, in the European Union, several have made the same comment. I mention, for instance, Prime Minister Brown and President Sarkozy, among others, who have called for the immediate start of negotiations on a treaty to ban the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons purposes. This brings me back to this forum.

A workplan is on your table. It would allow you to start negotiations, without preconditions, on a multilateral treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. For us, launching these negotiations is urgent and is important.

But of course the workplan also allows you to engage in substantive discussions - not just an exchange of views - on three other issues, which are no less important: first, nuclear disarmament per se; second, the prevention of an arms race in outer space; and thirdly, the negative security assurances.

It would also allow the CD to continue working on all other issues on the agenda. The proposed work programme has been discussed for years. It is a compromise, with concessions from all sides.

As Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said: "It would not deprive any Member State of the ability to assert its national position in the subsequent phases of the Conference's work." We in the European Union fully believe that this plan gives us a realistic basis to get the CD back to negotiations. We have carefully listened to the difficulties that some countries have with the proposal, and we remain open to discuss any specific security concerns. But we have found no argument that would justify a prolonged hibernation in the CD.

What we need now is to get started, both with the negotiations on an FMCT and the other parts of the workplan. I am here today to call personally on all of you in all your countries to join the emerging consensus.

Allow me to address a few other issues which are high on the non-proliferation and disarmament agenda.

(Mr. Solana, European Union High Representative
for the Common Foreign and Security Policy)

I would like to underline that we are ready to work on all three pillars of the NPT: non-proliferation, disarmament and the peaceful use of nuclear energy. As many of you know, I have spoken publicly about the need to make progress with multilateral fuel-cycle arrangements. You know that.

As for the overall system, the NPT Review Conference in 2010 presents you, presents us, with a unique opportunity. We are determined to ensure a success to that date. But the NPT can only fulfil its role if we are confident about the compliance by all States with their obligations under the Treaty.

As this Conference knows, serious proliferation cases have risen in recent years. The European Union has been actively engaged, with others, to ensure full compliance with the NPT, in full cooperation with the Agency in Vienna. Of course, when we talk about strengthening the non-proliferation/disarmament system, we also need to look at other instruments.

The Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty is fundamental. As I said earlier, its negotiation was one of the CD's great successes. But we need to create a new momentum so that it enters into force. We call on all States, particularly those needed for its entry into force, to sign and ratify the Treaty without delay.

This Conference also deals with other subjects, for instance, the prevention of an arms race in outer space. You have heard Foreign Minister Lavrov of the Russian Federation present his viewpoint, and a draft proposal for a treaty. Preventing arms in outer space is certainly of great importance and preventing an arms race, more important. Without doubt, the issue needs to be addressed. Maybe, however, the time is not yet ripe politically to aim for a treaty.

As an intermediate step, we in the European Union are working on an instrument that could take the form of a code of conduct which would help build transparency and build confidence. It will be presented to you later this year. We look forward to discussing this idea with you.

Of course, there are many other aspects to non-proliferation and disarmament. But this morning I wanted to focus on the one essential to us which is to end the impasse and get started on the basis of a balanced workplan. This Conference on Disarmament must meet the expectations that people have. It is in our shared interest to make real progress on both our non-proliferation and disarmament objectives.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you, Mr. Solana, for taking time from your busy visit to Geneva to address the Conference on Disarmament. It is a reflection of the genuine interest and valuation of the work of this body, and we want to thank him for the nice words addressed to the Chair as well.

(The President)

As your guest for today has other pressing engagements to attend to this morning, I will now suspend the formal plenary meeting for a short period to escort Mr. Solana from the Council Chamber.

This plenary meeting is suspended.

The meeting was suspended at 10.17 a.m. and resumed at 10.22 a.m.

The PRESIDENT: I call to order the formal plenary meeting.

Does any delegation wish to take the floor at this stage? That does not seem to be the case.

So this concludes our business for today. The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held after the summer break, on Tuesday, 29 July, at 10 a.m. in this chamber.

This meeting stands adjourned.

The meeting rose at 10.25 a.m.