
Conference on Disarmament

11 February 2010

English

Final record of the one thousand one hundred and sixty-eighth plenary meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Thursday, 11 February 2010, at 10.20 a.m.

President: Mr. Md. Abdul Hannan.....(Bangladesh)

* Reissued for technical reasons on 31 August 2012.

The President: I declare open the 1168th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

Before starting our business for today, allow me to extend a cordial welcome to our new colleague who has assumed his responsibilities as representative of his Government to the Conference, Ambassador Matjila of South Africa. On behalf of the Conference, I would like to take this opportunity to assure him of our full cooperation and support in his new assignment. I understand that Ambassador Matjila would like to take the floor.

Mr. Matjila (South Africa): Mr. President, since this is the first time that I have participated in the work of the Conference, allow me to express my sincere appreciation for those words of welcome. I am indeed honoured to take up duty in my new position during this period of renewed hope in the disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control arena. I look forward to working with you, the other five incoming Presidents for 2010 and other members of this important body in contributing to a more peaceful, secure and prosperous world. I wish to assure you of South Africa's full cooperation and support.

I also wish to thank you for your tireless efforts during the first weeks of the 2010 session aimed at securing a positive start to the work of the Conference and for the transparent and inclusive manner in which you have conducted your work.

The lack of progress in the disarmament arena for more than 10 years has not only prevented progress in the area of international peace and security, but has also served to undermine international confidence in the multilateral disarmament machinery. Given the positive statements made by world leaders during the past year, we believe that 2010 presents a real opportunity for progress and to restore this confidence deficit. It is our hope that with the necessary flexibility and by taking into consideration the security interests of all its members, a compromise can be found, and that the Conference on Disarmament will, once again, be able to play its rightful role as the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating body.

My delegation will remain actively and constructively engaged in efforts to achieve this goal.

The President: I thank Ambassador Matjila for his statement.

Are there any other delegations that would like to take the floor before we move to informal consultations? That does not seem to be the case.

As this is the last formal plenary meeting under the presidency of Bangladesh, I would like to take the opportunity to say a few words. Since we are having informal consultations after the formal plenary, I will be very brief.

Let me begin by thanking all delegations for their wholehearted cooperation with and support for the Bangladesh presidency. Your encouragement and understanding have been our strength as we tried to provide a good beginning for this year's session.

Let me especially thank the incoming presidents for their invaluable role in supporting our presidency. Their collegial spirit and support have guided us in our work, and I thank them all from the bottom of my heart.

I cannot thank Mr. Sergei Ordzhonikidze, the Secretary-General of the Conference, and his very able team enough for the extensive support we received throughout our presidency. I also thank the Conference staff and the interpreters.

As the first President this year, I said in my opening remarks that our objective was to give a smooth and steady start to the work of the Conference. I also mentioned that my approach would be inclusive and transparent. I hope I have been able to do that, despite the difficulties that we have faced in progressing with our work. We have tried to give the

Conference added visibility by having the Foreign Minister of Bangladesh address the Conference. I hope that her call to begin substantive work in the Conference will be heeded soon.

I also thank the delegation of Italy for the important statement made by their Deputy Foreign Minister. As we approach the transition, we shall extend all support to the incoming President from Belarus in his efforts. We shall remain engaged and try to be helpful in every way we can.

I would now like to adjourn this plenary meeting and reconvene in a few minutes in an informal meeting, which will be open to members and observers only.

I see that the representative of Algeria would like to take the floor. Ambassador Jazaïry, you have the floor.

Mr. Jazaïry (Algeria): Mr. President, I think I would be speaking in the name of all the members of the Conference on Disarmament if I took this opportunity to extend to you our deep appreciation for the outstanding way in which you have carried out your mandate at the beginning of the year 2010. Your patience, your understanding, your efforts to achieve compromise have set high standards for the other members of the P-6 in the course of 2010, and I think in difficult circumstances, provide a reason for us to be reasonably optimistic about the future. So I would just like to express to you our gratitude for being such an outstanding President.

I would also take this opportunity to extend a warm welcome to the distinguished Ambassador of Belarus, who will be taking over from you thereafter.

The President: I thank Ambassador Jazaïry for his statement. I now give the floor to the representative of Belarus, Ambassador Mikhail Khvostov.

Mr. Khvostov (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): I should like first of all to acknowledge your efforts to build a consensus in the Conference on such a burning issue as the adoption of its programme of work. I would also note your close cooperation with the P-6 in a spirit of transparency and full collaboration.

Representing the country that is to chair the Conference next week, I should also like to assure you that our delegation will work as actively as you have done to achieve the balance needed to ensure that the Conference gets down to the substance of its work as quickly as possible. The Conference's report for 2009 urges us to do this, as do many of the resolutions adopted by consensus at the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly. Of course, if success in this endeavour calls for collaboration and a constructive and flexible approach from all delegations in the Conference. We in our turn will try to address the concerns that States may have.

I should like to take this opportunity to remind you, Mr. President, and the Conference that on Tuesday, 16 February, at the first meeting of the Conference that we chair, we will welcome Mr. Igor Petrishenko, my country's First Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, who will address the Conference and touch on the question of nuclear disarmament.

The President: I thank Ambassador Khvoskov for his statement. I now give the floor to the representative of Pakistan, Ambassador Zamir Akram.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): Mr. President, I would like to join my colleague, the Ambassador of Algeria, in taking this opportunity to express our sincere appreciation and admiration to you and to your colleagues in your delegation for the manner in which you have conducted the work of the presidency in this opening part of our deliberations.

I am conscious of the fact that being a newcomer to Geneva you were saddled with the responsibility of chairing the Conference on Disarmament from the beginning of this year at a time which we all know is a difficult one. In these particular circumstances, I think you also needed to respond to what I would describe as somewhat enthusiastic persuasion to follow a particular course of action. I think the manner in which you have conducted your presidency is indeed admirable. It is courageous, and we deeply admire you and your colleagues for the way you have fulfilled your duties.

So I would like to add my voice in appreciation to you and to your colleagues and delegation for your presidency.

The President: I thank you, Ambassador Akram, for your statement. I now give the floor to the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Sergei Ordzhonikidze.

Mr. Ordzhonikidze (Secretary-General of the Conference and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General): Mr. President, first of all, thank you for your efforts during your presidency, for promoting the Conference on Disarmament agenda.

I understand that this is an official meeting and that is the reason why I would like to express, on behalf of the Secretary-General, our great disappointment at your efforts, at the efforts of this important body, which is supposed to make progress on multilateral disarmament. We have been expecting progress for 10 years. We thought that last year we were close to making a little progress, but this year what we see is not zero progress but negative progress, because we are not able even to start with the programme of work and adopt this document, which is a basic document for any body, United Nations or otherwise. And do not forget that the Conference on Disarmament, though it is formally a non-United Nations body, is financed from the United Nations budget. And what have we done during the four weeks for the enormous amount of financial expenditure that has been allocated out of the United Nations budget? We have done nothing, and we have to recognize that.

I hope that you will have a nice snowy weekend and take a little bit of rest and think that this is becoming not only intolerable in the Conference, but it is becoming intolerable in the sense of international relations, when the most important organ of the United Nations dealing with multilateral disarmament is not able to do anything, and has even regressed in comparison with last year, when international relations in general and international negotiations were progressing, including on disarmament issues, when there are more and more Member States agreeing on problems so much closer to us, dealing with disarmament and related issues.

So I hope that under the Belarus presidency we will try our best and, at least, start as soon as possible. I understand that this is not up to the President alone. It is up to all the members of the Conference, and I hope that the Conference will not end this session or these four weeks with zero or negative results. I hope that the Conference will make certain this does not happen, because, frankly speaking, I did not know what to answer when the Secretary-General asked me what was going on at the Conference on Disarmament, except to say, "I'm sorry, Mr. Secretary-General, nothing. Nothing is going on".

This is a very unfortunate development, and I would appeal to you on behalf of the Secretary-General to be a little more flexible, because the programme of work of any organ is not much. It is not the finalization of the elaboration of any treaty. It is just a programme of work. We do not know what is going to happen under each item of the programme of work. But we have to see that the Conference on Disarmament is in tune with the current trends in international relations. Otherwise, unfortunately, the Conference is not relevant.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his statement. I believe that the United Nations Secretary-General will get the right perspective from the Secretary-General of the Conference, since he and his team have been with us all through the proceedings.

I would like to adjourn this plenary meeting and reconvene in a few minutes in an informal meeting, which is open to members and observers only.

The next formal plenary meeting of the Conference, under the presidency of Belarus, will be held on Tuesday, 16 February, at 10 a.m. in this chamber.

This meeting stands adjourned.

The meeting rose at 10.50 a.m.