



Conference on Disarmament

6 August 2013

English

Final record of the one thousand two hundred and ninety-fourth plenary meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 6 August 2013, at 10.10 a.m.

President: Mr. Mohammad Sabir Ismail(Iraq)

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The President: Good morning. I declare open the 1294th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

I would like to start this meeting by updating you on my consultations regarding the draft programme of work. As I have said on several occasions, reaching an agreement on a programme of work that reflects the concerns of all Conference on Disarmament members remains my priority. In recent weeks I have conducted numerous consultations. Although, as you are aware, reaching a programme of work is a difficult and complicated task, it is my firm conviction that reaching a balanced programme of work is still not impossible. Therefore, I have focused all my time and efforts on seeking to achieve this goal. I am continuing my efforts to bridge the gaps between the divergent views, in order to reach a programme of work that is acceptable to all Conference on Disarmament members. I have also received feedback from many delegations that encourages me to continue in this task. Consequently, the main purpose of my consultations this week is to meet with the delegations to exchange views on the draft programme of work. As it is too early at this stage to draw any conclusions from the consultations, I would like to present the results of my consultations at the plenary meeting of 13 August, next week. However, it is my intention to circulate the draft of the programme of work that I have prepared at the end of today's plenary meeting, through the secretariat, in order to give you adequate time to consult with your capitals.

At the same time, and as conveyed to you on my behalf by the secretariat last week, it is my intention to devote today's plenary meeting to another discussion of the first proposal presented on 18 June 2013 by the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, Mr. Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, namely the establishment of an informal working group with a mandate to produce a programme of work that would be robust in substance and progressive over time in its implementation. In fact, I am convinced that this proposal needs to be further considered, as a number of delegations have said that they need more time to discuss this issue and receive instructions from their capitals. I also noted during my consultations some concern or uneasiness with regard to this proposal. I believe, therefore, that this proposal needs further discussion before we can formulate any decision concerning this issue. Having said that, I would like to invite members to provide further input or questions concerning this proposal at this plenary meeting. In this respect, it is also my intention to have a meeting tomorrow with all regional groups, in order to clarify points of commonality and to listen to their comments and views. Thank you very much.

I will now turn to the list of speakers for today. Today marks the anniversary of the tragedy that occurred 68 years ago when Hiroshima and Nagasaki suffered the first atomic bombing. I would like to take this opportunity to convey my respects to the victims. The first speaker on my list is the Ambassador of Japan.

Mr. Amano (Japan): Mr. President, since this is the first time that I have taken the floor under your presidency, I would like to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. I assure you of my delegation's utmost cooperation throughout your term. I asked for the floor because of the significance of 6 August, due to the tragic events that occurred 68 years ago. A peace memorial ceremony was held this morning in Hiroshima, and a memorial event will take place in Nagasaki on Thursday, 9 August. I have asked for the floor to say a few words regarding this moment in history.

The desire of the Japanese people to totally eliminate nuclear weapons has been unrelenting since 1945. I believe this is the same goal that the whole international community shares, including all of us in this chamber. Although the number of nuclear weapons is decreasing, Japan is not satisfied with the current number, especially since we are aware of the devastation that can be caused by a single atomic explosion.

On the occasion of a round table held in Hiroshima last week, Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida stated: “As the only country to have ever suffered atomic bombings, it is our country’s mission to pass down the story of the tremendous suffering in Hiroshima and Nagasaki across borders and generations. I would like for our aim to be that of establishing a clear understanding of the humanitarian consequences of the use of nuclear weapons as a point of departure for international nuclear disarmament efforts.” For your reference, the entire statement has been circulated. Japan has long been dedicated to the promotion of disarmament and non-proliferation education. It is our core task to share with the world our experiences of the aftermath of the atomic bombings. The role and responsibility of the younger generation has become critical to this task, since the direct sufferers of the atomic bombings, known as “Hibakusha”, are ageing. It is with this in mind that Foreign Minister Kishida established in June a commission mechanism called “Youth communicators for a world without nuclear weapons”. Together with the “Hibakusha”, young communicators are dedicated to providing a clear understanding of the use of nuclear weapons by preserving and passing on the facts and stories of suffering and survival. In two weeks, I will have the pleasure of introducing the first youth communicators to this chamber.

Japan also believes that discussions of the humanitarian consequences of the use of nuclear weapons should be conducted in an open and inclusive manner. As Foreign Minister Kishida stated, this should be a point of departure that every State can share regardless of whether they possess such weapons.

At the same time, if the international community truly wishes to abolish nuclear weapons, it is not possible to circumvent the wider underlying security issues that are closely tied to the existence of nuclear weapons. In the case of Japan, this predicament is at the forefront of nuclear and security risks in the region. In this context, I would like to quote once again the words spoken by my Foreign Minister at the round table: “I would like to tackle nuclear disarmament by focusing on three areas for reduction that provide a realistic and concrete approach towards a world without nuclear weapons. They are: first, the reduction of the number of nuclear weapons; second, the reduction of the role of nuclear weapons; and third, the reduction of incentives for developing and possessing nuclear weapons.” This idea is based on a responsible and pragmatic approach to developing a sufficiently practical nuclear disarmament strategy, in order to effectively deal with the impending risk. To this end, a number of nuclear disarmament measures can be and have been implemented unilaterally and bilaterally. A world without nuclear weapons is inconceivable, however, without further multilateral measures. As such, this Conference is supposed to be the venue where we reconcile the real risks with the steadfast hope of the people of the world, so that we may move forward towards achieving our shared final goal.

The Conference needs to end its stalemate and fulfil its responsibilities and the high expectations of it.

Finally, Japan will host a Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative (NPDI) ministerial meeting in April 2014 in Hiroshima. Among other initiatives, I hope that the convening of this meeting in such a historic location will give further impetus to nuclear disarmament. Japan always stands ready to work with you, Mr. President, as well as every other State, to draw us closer to a peaceful and secure world free of nuclear weapons.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Japan for his statement. Once again, we have great and deep sympathy for the Japanese people and the families of the victims. I hope that we never see a repeat of what occurred in Nagasaki and Hiroshima. Thank you.

The second speaker on my list is the Ambassador of Ukraine.

Mr. Maimeskul (Ukraine): Mr. President, as this is the first time that the Ukrainian delegation has taken the floor under your presidency, I would like to congratulate you on your assumption of this position.

Let me also commend the tireless efforts of your predecessors — Hungary, India, Indonesia and the Islamic Republic of Iran — in striving to ensure the swift beginning of the substantive work of our forum.

Mr. President, may I join you on behalf of Ukraine and express our fullest sympathy for and solidarity with the families of the victims and the people of Japan, with regard to the Hiroshima tragedy that occurred 68 years ago? May I also take this opportunity to extend our best wishes to the ambassadors to the Conference on Disarmament who are now leaving Geneva and to welcome the newly appointed Ambassadors of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Germany, Chile and the Republic of Korea?

As stated by my delegation in the past, Ukraine considers the adoption of the programme of work and its implementation to be the only veritable evidence of the revitalization of the Conference on Disarmament and the restoration of its credibility as the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating body.

Ukraine consistently supports the further elaboration of the needed “magic formula” on the basis of document CD/1864, which could enable an immediate commencement of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty together with the consideration of other core issues. We could also consider any other results-oriented decision, including the adoption of a simplified programme of work, which would enable the Conference on Disarmament to carry out its negotiating mandate.

Like everyone in this room, Ukraine deeply regrets that the numerous consultations this year’s presidents have held to bridge the gaps have so far not brought us any closer to commencing substantial work. However, my delegation is encouraged by the latest positive message about the developments in the current consultation process and is ready to provide the Iraqi presidency with whatever support is necessary to strike a deal that will open a way forward. In the first place, I mean the adoption of a programme of work of the Conference on Disarmament that is “robust in substance and progressive over time in implementation”.

The last 15 years of standstill in the Conference on Disarmament have been used mostly to speculate on implementing our collective ambition of achieving a world without nuclear weapons, rather than to take collective ownership of the forum that, in its full operational mode, could bring us closer to this desired goal.

The elaboration of the programme of work is obstructed not only by these protracted deliberations but also by the inefficient rules of procedure. Among other complications, a short presidential term makes it difficult to provide long-term consistency and to include all members in the consultative process, especially taking into account the need to build consensus.

There is therefore a long-overdue need to consider stepping back a bit in order to gain a fresh look at the situation and to examine new approaches. In this respect, my delegation commends the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, Mr. Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, for his initiatives on the revitalization of the Conference on Disarmament, which in our view deserve much closer consideration and appropriate action by the Conference.

In particular, Ukraine would like to add its voice to those who support the establishment of an informal working group with a mandate to produce a draft programme of work, in accordance with rule 23 of the rules of procedure.

Do we have any alternatives to this approach? I think not, if we really want to work. First of all, we are starting from the understanding that the primary responsibility for the effective functioning of the Conference rests with all its members. At the same time, and in the same vein, the establishment of the programme of work is the responsibility of all members, including the member State holding the presidency. According to rule 28, “on the basis of its agenda, the Conference, at the beginning of its annual session, shall establish its programme of work”. Thus, the Conference can and should act not only at the final stage — by taking a decision on the programme — but at all stages of establishing the programme that it deems necessary, including while drafting and discussing the elements of the programme.

In this context, our opinion is that there are no procedural restrictions that should impair action by the Conference on Disarmament on that matter or prevent the establishment of a working group with a mandate to support the President and to provide an institutionalized forum for constructive discussions on the draft programme of work.

Although under rule 29 of the rules of procedure it is the right and duty of the President to draw up the provisional programme of work, rule 28 stipulates the right and duty of the Conference to establish a draft programme of work by means such as creating an informal working group.

And it is up to the President of the Conference in office to forward the draft paper to the Conference on Disarmament so that it may consider the draft paper and take a decision on it.

In this context, an informal working group may assist the President by gathering specific proposals and discussing the controversial elements of the draft programme of work, thus contributing to the emergence of a compromise.

Furthermore, to allay concerns about strict adherence to the letter of rule 29 of the rules of procedure, the Conference on Disarmament could consider having the President chair such an informal working group.

The issue of transparency remains high on the international agenda, including in this forum, and the proposed informal working group could provide a vivid illustration of this principle, as it would allow for wider and more effective engagement with all members.

As regards the issue of a time limit, my delegation is ready to support a continuing mandate for the informal working group, since, again, the rules of procedure do not strictly prevent us from taking such a decision.

The Conference could consider it appropriate to adapt rules of procedure for the subsidiary body in the light of rule 24, thus ensuring the functioning of the working group beyond the 2013 session.

It is redundant to say that the main objective of the Conference on Disarmament is negotiations. I presume that it is negotiations on substance — namely on treaties in the field of disarmament — that are at the core of this objective, not negotiations on procedure.

If the substantive work of the Conference remains our ultimate goal, let us not hesitate to explore all options that could bring us closer to its implementation.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Ukraine for his statement and his kind words addressed to the Chair. Would any other delegation like to take the floor? The representative of Sweden has the floor.

Mr. Lindell (Sweden): Mr. President, please allow me to thank you for the hard work that you and your team are undertaking and to commend you on the way in which you are conducting our proceedings. We join you in marking the significance of this day, the

6th of August, and also in thanking the Ambassador of Japan for his thoughtful statement. My contribution will be brief. Should it become apparent that consensus is not possible on a programme of work at this time, my delegation would take a generally favourable view of Secretary-General Tokayev's proposal. In other words, we believe that an informal working group mandated to elaborate a programme of work would be worth a try. If established, we believe it makes sense for such a group to be able to work beyond the end of the current Conference on Disarmament session.

The President: I thank the representative of Sweden for his statement and his kind words addressed to the Chair. Ambassador of Indonesia, you have the floor.

Mr. Wibowo (Indonesia): First of all, allow me to join the previous speaker in conveying a message of sympathy to the people of Japan and the victims of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings. The tragic and catastrophic incident that occurred 68 years ago proved to be a vivid, horrifying memory and a constant reminder that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is our noble duty.

Mr. President, I would like to commend you for your tireless efforts in conducting intensive consultations with Conference on Disarmament members to produce a draft programme of work. I would also like to express my appreciation to you for devoting this plenary meeting to discussions on the first proposal of the Secretary-General of the Conference on the establishment of an informal working group with a mandate to produce a programme of work. Indonesia is studying the draft programme of work that you have prepared and that will be circulated at the end of this plenary meeting. I hope that the Conference can reach a long-awaited consensus on a programme of work. Since May 2009, the Conference has not yet succeeded in adopting a balanced and comprehensive programme of work. During this year's session, the Conference has made three attempts to come up with a programme of work but has still not been able to reach consensus. Our annual failure to adopt a programme of work seems to be the "plat du jour" of our Conference.

The proposals put forward on 18 June 2013 deserve our serious consideration and support. They attempt to end 17 years of impasse in the Conference on Disarmament and also to revitalize the working methods of the Conference. The inability of the Conference on Disarmament to produce a programme of work is not due to a lack of diplomatic skill on the part of the presidents or ambassadors to the Conference on Disarmament, but rather to a lack of real political will to reach consensus. The idea of establishing a working group with a mandate to produce a programme of work is informal in nature. Therefore, any discussion that may arise in the informal working group will not necessarily be binding or limit the positions of the members concerned. Such an informal working group actually gives members of the Conference on Disarmament the opportunity to have an open and frank interactive discussion and to better understand the complexity of the issue and how to deal with it. The political will of a member of the Conference on Disarmament can only be demonstrated by its willingness to make a breakthrough and lift the Conference out of its stalemate. I believe that the proposals made by the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament could provide a way of breaking the impasse. In that regard, the responsibility to produce a draft programme of work remains on the shoulders of the presidents of the Conference on Disarmament. An informal working group will merely assist the presidents in discharging their duties. There is therefore no conflict between the mandate of the chairperson of an informal working group and that of the president of the Conference on Disarmament. As mentioned by the Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference last week, it seems that the Conference on Disarmament is the master of its own procedure and its own fate. It is up to the members to move the Conference on Disarmament forward.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Indonesia for his statement and his kind words addressed to the Chair. Would any other delegation like to take the floor? That does

not seem to be the case. So, thank you very much for your support, and I will see you tomorrow at the regional groups meeting.

This concludes our business for today. The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held next Tuesday, 13 August, at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 11.40 a.m.