

9 April 2012

Original: English

---

## **Disarmament Commission**

### **2012 substantive session**

New York, 2-20 April 2012

Agenda item 3

## **Facilitating substantive discussions in the Disarmament Commission**

### **Working paper submitted by Japan**

#### **Significance of the Disarmament Commission and the need for its revitalization**

1. The Disarmament Commission has served as a deliberative body in which to discuss wide-ranging issues concerning disarmament and non-proliferation. Despite its previous achievements, especially in the 1990s, the Commission has not produced much of a visible outcome over the past 10 years. In order to revitalize the deliberations in the Commission and regain its momentum, it is essential to view the overall context of international discussions on disarmament and non-proliferation in which this deliberative body is placed.
2. After the successful conclusion of the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, many Member States recognized the need to maintain the positive momentum created by the Conference. Furthermore, various discussions have taken place among Member States in New York and Geneva concerning the revitalization of the Conference on Disarmament, which has not been able to move forward for some time. In this connection, the significance of the 2010 high-level meeting organized at the Secretary-General's initiative, as well as the follow-up debate in the General Assembly in July 2011, should not be overlooked. These meetings and the subsequent First Committee session in October 2011 made it clear that almost all Member States have a strong desire to move the discussion on disarmament and non-proliferation forward. It is natural in this context to utilize the Disarmament Commission to provide a venue for Member States to actively deliberate on how to pursue the goal of disarmament and non-proliferation.
3. Furthermore, this three-year cycle falls within an important period in relation to the review process relating to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. One of the key areas of focus will be the international conference scheduled for this year on establishing a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. In setting the agenda for the Disarmament Commission, we must



examine what kind of substantive input will be of greatest benefit over this next three-year cycle with respect to the Commission's relationship with other forums and as we look ahead to the 2015 Review Conference.

4. Against this backdrop, it would be useful for the Disarmament Commission to engage in discussions on how this body can contribute to the global objective of disarmament and non-proliferation. This idea is consistent with the Secretary-General's continued commitment to promote United Nations efforts in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation. The Commission should deliberate on how it can complement the efforts made by other key multilateral forums. Such deliberations would also incorporate broader perspectives that encompass the comprehensive issues related to disarmament and non-proliferation in the framework of the Special Session on Disarmament. In this regard, it should be noted that the discussions will not in any way change the mandate or the deliberative nature of the functioning of the Commission.

5. Given its universal representation, the Disarmament Commission is in an ideal position to discuss more broadly how the United Nations can promote and support global efforts in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation. As the mandate of the Commission is to produce relevant recommendations in these fields, it would be useful to engage in discussions among Member States and also to utilize any relevant resources, including those of think tanks, educational institutions and civil society. These exchanges would also facilitate Member States' consideration of effective and efficient ways for them, or the Chair, to produce useful recommendations for subsequent discussions in the Commission and in other forums.

#### **Key issues related to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation**

6. It is evident from the previous cycle's discussions that many Member States expressed their strong desire to engage in discussions on nuclear disarmament. At the same time, an equal amount of attention has been paid by Member States to the need to engage in discussions on non-proliferation, an essential international effort to strengthen the objective of nuclear disarmament. As both disarmament and non-proliferation efforts serve the strengthening of global security and the stability of international relations, the two should not be seen as quid pro quo or mutually exclusive. While preventing the proliferation of goods and technology related to weapons of mass destruction, the international community can push the objective of arms reduction more aggressively. Sustained efforts in non-proliferation would make nuclear-weapon States more susceptible to the call for nuclear disarmament. In this connection, various efforts undertaken at the United Nations, especially in the Security Council, should be taken into consideration. Although sanctions based on Council resolutions have been implemented, various instances of violations continue to be reported. Efforts not only towards disarmament but also towards non-proliferation are essential, and the Disarmament Commission should address the issues of non-proliferation and disarmament at the same level.

#### **Specific issues that could be deliberated at the Disarmament Commission**

7. The following elements are included in the five-point proposal proposed by the Secretary-General:

- The consideration of such topics as the negotiations on a nuclear weapons convention; the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty; the commencement of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty; the ratification of as well as discussions on nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties; the conclusion of International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards agreements as well as the additional protocol to the comprehensive safeguards agreement; the enhancement of transparency, especially by nuclear-weapon States; and complementary measures related to the prevention of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, including counter-terrorism efforts
- International efforts to promote disarmament and non-proliferation education
- The strengthening of export control and related measures, including Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), to prevent the proliferation of materials and technologies related to weapons of mass destruction

### **Key issues related to conventional arms**

8. The year 2012 bears special significance in the area of the control of conventional arms, as the United Nations Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty and the Second United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects will be held later this year. Many Member States have particular interest in making these conferences a success, and it would therefore be useful to spend a part of the 2012 session of the Disarmament Commission on discussions on how these two major initiatives can contribute to the strengthening of the global security environment. Given the universal representation within the Commission, it is meaningful for us to engage in discussion on arms control for conventional weapons, which pose a tangible threat to a great number of countries.

9. Specific issues that could be deliberated in the Disarmament Commission include:

- Strengthening the role and functioning of the United Nations regional centres for peace and disarmament
- Promoting disarmament education in the area of conventional arms
- Effective use of regional and international conferences such as the United Nations Conference on Disarmament Issues
- Specific confidence-building measures in the area of conventional arms that can be achieved through:
  - The United Nations Register of Conventional Arms
  - The United Nations System for the Standardized Reporting of Military Expenditures
  - The Programme of Action on Small Arms
- Ways to assist/facilitate the submission and updating of national reports by Member States
- Discussions related to an arms trade treaty (which would enhance transparency on international trade on arms)

**Possible ways to strengthen the functioning of the Disarmament Commission**

10. The Disarmament Commission should make the best use of existing resources both inside and outside the United Nations system to conduct in-depth deliberations on wide-ranging issues related to disarmament and non-proliferation. Besides the valuable contribution of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, Member States can benefit from the input and factual information provided by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, which would facilitate the deliberations among Member States on wide-ranging issues related to disarmament and non-proliferation (on both conventional and nuclear weapons). Furthermore, the views of relevant outside resources such as think tanks and educational institutions can also help Member States gain a holistic view of the subject matter. Exchanges of views among Member States, as well as all the appropriate input from think tanks and non-governmental organizations, can pave the way for the Disarmament Commission to produce meaningful recommendations in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation without changing its mandate.

---