



General Assembly

Official Records

Disarmament Commission

354th meeting

Tuesday, 19 January 2016, 10 a.m.
New York

Acting Chair: Mr. Seck(Senegal)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Opening of the session

The Acting Chair: I declare open the 2016 organizational session of the Disarmament Commission.

Draft provisional agenda for the 2016 organizational session of the Disarmament Commission (A/CN.10/L.75)

The Acting Chair: As in past years, the Commission is convened today for a brief session to deal with its organizational matters, including the election of the Chair and other members of the Bureau for 2016.

I wish now to draw the Commission's attention to the provisional agenda for this organizational session, as contained in document A/CN.10/L.75.

Agenda item 4 in the draft provisional agenda should be amended, as the resolution referred to in the agenda item has already been adopted by the General Assembly (resolution 70/68). I therefore submit the draft provisional agenda to the Commission, with the understanding that agenda item 4 therein is to be amended.

I give the floor to the representative of Morocco.

Mr. Eloumni (Morocco): Based on the Chair's amendment to the draft provisional agenda with respect to agenda item 4, I think the item should now read "Review of the resolution of the First Committee at the seventieth session of the General Assembly relating to the Disarmament Commission" or "Review of the

resolution of the seventieth session of the General Assembly relating to the Disarmament Commission". In other words, the words "submitted to" should be removed.

The Chair: Taking into account the proposal of the representative of Morocco, shall I take it that the Commission wishes to adopt the provisional agenda as contained in document A/CN.10/L.75, as orally revised?

The agenda, as orally revised, was adopted.

Election of the Chair

The Acting Chair: In accordance with the established practice of rotation, it is the Group of Asia-Pacific States that has the honour of nominating the candidate for the post of the Chair of the Commission for its 2016 session. I have received an official communication from the Chair of that Group, informing me that the Group has reached an agreement on the nomination of the Ambassador of Vanuatu as the candidate for the chairmanship of the Commission for its 2016 session.

If I hear no objection, I shall take it that it is the wish of the Commission to elect Ambassador Odo Tevi as Chair of the United Nations Disarmament Commission by acclamation.

It was so decided.

The Acting Chair: On behalf of the Commission and on my own behalf, I congratulate Ambassador Odo Tevi, Permanent Representative of Vanuatu, on his election to this high office. I express the commonly

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shared view when I say that we are looking forward to benefiting from his wide experience and diplomatic skills. We wish him success in discharging his newly assumed important duties. For our part, we will remain at his service with support and counsel, as necessary.

With those brief remarks I invite Ambassador Odo Tevi to take the Chair.

Mr. Tevi (Vanuatu) took the Chair.

The Chair: At the outset, allow me to express my gratitude to the members of the Commission for electing me Chair of the United Nations Disarmament Commission and to acknowledge the important task entrusted to me to chair this organizational session. I also want to thank the Chair of the 2015 session for the kind words and wishes addressed to me. I count on the support and cooperation of all Member States in achieving the important goals ahead of the Commission.

Before turning to the next item on our agenda, allow me to pay a well-deserved tribute to the Chair of the United Nations Disarmament Commission at its 2015 substantive session, Ambassador Fodé Seck, for the excellent guidance and leadership he provided to the Commission. My gratitude also goes to other members of the Bureau for their valiant and tireless efforts. And finally, let me thank delegations for their constructive spirit and cooperation during the previous session of the Commission.

We continue with the third item on our agenda, namely, the election of other officers of the Disarmament Commission for 2016. As is the case with the chairmanship, other officers of the Bureau are elected on the basis of the established principle of rotation. Accordingly, it is the turn of the Group of African States to nominate a candidate for Rapporteur of the Commission for the 2016 substantive session and one Vice-Chair.

Now I would suggest that we proceed to the election of Vice-Chairs. I was informed that the consultations are still going on within the regional groups on possible candidates for the posts of Vice-Chairs and the Rapporteur. We can address this issue at a later stage.

Review of resolution 70/68 adopted at the seventieth session of the General Assembly

The Chair: As members of the Commission are aware, the General Assembly has adopted one resolution that has specific bearing on the work of the

Commission. For the sake of clarity and for the benefit of members of the Commission, I would like to refer to that resolution.

Resolution 70/68, entitled “Report of the Disarmament Commission”, was adopted by the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh plenary meeting on 7 December 2015 under agenda item 99 (b). The relevant paragraphs of the draft resolution, namely, paragraphs 5, 6 and 9, read as follows. Paragraph 5 reads:

“Welcomes the fact that, in accordance with General Assembly decision 52/492, at its 347th meeting, on 7 April 2015, the Disarmament Commission adopted the provisional agenda for its substantive session of 2015, on the understanding that consultations would continue on ways and means to implement resolution 69/77, and that the Commission decided that the agenda for its substantive session of 2015 should serve for the period 2015-2017.”

Paragraph 6 reads:

“Recommends that the Disarmament Commission continue consideration of the following items at its substantive session of 2016: (a) Recommendations for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons; (b) Practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons.”

Paragraph 9 reads:

“Requests the Disarmament Commission to meet for a period not exceeding three weeks during 2016, namely from 4 to 22 April, and to submit a substantive report to the General Assembly at its seventy-first session, and stresses that the report of the Commission should contain a summary by the Chair of the proceedings to reflect different views or positions if no agreement can be reached on the specific agenda item deliberated on, as provided for in paragraph 3.4 of the adopted “Ways and means to enhance the functioning of the Disarmament Commission.”

I have just outlined the resolution, which contains the mandate for the upcoming work of the Disarmament Commission.

I open the floor to those delegations wishing to make a statement or comment on anything I have said so far.

Mr. Volgarev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as the Chair of the Disarmament Commission for 2016, and we wish you every success in the work to come.

The Russian Federation advocates activating the work of the Commission as an integral part of the United Nations disarmament triad — the Commission, the Conference on Disarmament and the First Committee of the General Assembly.

The objectives and functions that were assigned to this forum at the tenth special session of the General Assembly, including reaching agreements on the control of armaments, disarmament and non-proliferation, are required more now than ever before. We are confident that the expert potential and the long years of experience in the Commission can be utilized effectively to resolve problems in the area of international security and global stability.

We have long had serious concerns about the actions of a number of States undermining the existing disarmament mechanisms by trying to establish such parallel structures as open working groups with the stated aim to duplicate the work of the Disarmament Commission. Logic dictates that it would be sensible to concentrate on activating the unrealized potential of the Commission, considering its practical scope. Without question, the Commission is aware of the problems that are impeding its work and that of the other parts of the United Nations' disarmament triad. First and foremost, there is a lack of political will to identify priorities in addition to the approaches of Governments.

We are therefore ready to consider constructive ideas to kick-start the activities of the Disarmament Commission. However, we are opposed to any initiative to correct the rules and procedures. The rules of consensus are at the basis of important decisions concerning armament, disarmament and non-proliferation, which are connected with sensitive aspects of guaranteeing military security for States. Russia is convinced that, considering the experience of work within the Commission, it is fully able to provide a high-quality product on the basis of the existing rules and procedures. The General Assembly has also adopted decisions to improve the Commission's

working methods. We assume that the agenda adopted at the 2015 session of the Disarmament Commission are also appropriate for this year as well.

Having said that, we would like to receive some explanation about the status of the issue of adding a third item to our agenda, and also the outcomes of consultations with States, which the previous Chair of the Disarmament Commission intended to hold in the intersessional period. The Russian Federation is ready to look at specific proposals related to the addition of a third agenda item, which would enjoy consensus support from States and allow us to invigorate our forum. For our part, we would like to consolidate the agenda by including the issue of weapons in outer space.

Mr. Eloumni (Morocco): Let me first of all congratulate you, Sir, on your election and assure you of our cooperation and support. Briefly, with regard to the follow-up to General Assembly resolution 70/68 on the report of the Disarmament Commission, we too believe that political will is crucial to any agreement reached in the Commission and elsewhere. In particular, the Commission works on the basis of consensus, and I believe it should continue to work on that basis. That is very important.

We also think that improving the working methods of the Commission can facilitate further our efforts towards any agreement by consensus. That includes implementation of the resolution, especially paragraph 2, which encourages the revitalization of the work of the Commission in its current triennial cycle. It also includes continued efforts towards an agenda that will favour more focused deliberations and discussions. That is something we agreed on and that can be found in paragraph 3 of the resolution, which emphasizes the need for a focused and result-oriented discussion on items of the agenda of the Commission. The same applies to other operational paragraphs, including paragraph 9, which also includes some measures that are important in taking forward the work of the Commission.

Again I reiterate our support to you, Mr. Chair, and I thank you.

Mr. Abdrakhmanov (Kazakhstan): We appreciate your nomination, my dear colleague and friend Ambassador Odo Tevi, and we are confident that Your Excellency will be an able leader in making this Commission a reliable disarmament entity to provide future input for the 2017 preparatory meeting of the 2020 review conference of the parties to the Treaty

on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Please accept, on behalf of my delegation and on my behalf, our sincere congratulations on your nomination and appointment.

I am aware that this is not a forum for the Chairs of the Working Groups to speak and present reports. I therefore do so in my national capacity and represent the views of my delegation, which is genuinely committed to the rationale and process of the Disarmament Commission and its organizational aspects.

I thank my colleague and friend, His Excellency Ambassador Fodé Seck for convening this meeting to prepare and set the stage for the forthcoming session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission this April. As Mr. Seck prepares to step down, I would like to commend his stewardship during this difficult phase of very polarized views, especially on agenda item 4, "Recommendations for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons", and I am particularly thankful to Ambassador Fodé Seck for having asked me to preside over Working Group I, which I was honoured to do under his guidance.

It is critical that informal consultations on the agenda and work programme of the Commission be held between now and April so that the agenda and business are more or less shared in advance and no precious and very valuable and limited time is taken once the meeting commences and the substantive business can start right away. My country will be happy to share its experiences with you, Mr. Chair.

In terms of a few practical suggestions, let me say that we observe that there is a general agreement on the broad objectives and principles of disarmament, but the devil lies in the details vis-à-vis the approaches over which there is a radical difference between various groupings, especially in Working Group I, as was clearly demonstrated during the voting on resolutions in the First Committee and the General Assembly in December last year.

We would like to suggest that the forthcoming meetings be structured in the way that the Working Groups revert back to the practice prevailing until 2013, with meetings scheduled for only half days and then meeting daily so the remainder of the day is used for consultations and drafting. Since, as was mentioned, we are presiding over Working Group I, I intend to hold intensive consultations between now and

April with as many interested key players, experts and regional groups as possible. Representatives are asked to pay due attention to the letter that I am sending to my colleagues, Permanent Representatives of their countries.

While many delegations, at the start of 2015, wanted a third item on the agenda and although it is desirable, it depends on the pace at which each Working Group proceeds. It all depends on the spirit of cooperation and the speed at which delegations want to move. Though these additional items can be envisaged, it is only in April 2016 that we can have a realistic appraisal as to whether or not they can be included.

Allow me to also mention that all Member States could take inspiration from the United Nations summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda, held in September, and the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1) and, later in the capital of France, the adoption of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. I am mentioning these agreements because there were vast differences, but yet Member States came together to work for a common goal, considering the critical times. There is no other option but to take a unified stand, considering the threat of nuclear detonation and terrorism by State and non-State actors. We need to work on elements that unite us and then build the documents accordingly. Therefore, let us pay due attention to all those aspects.

I assure you, Mr. Chair, that Kazakhstan will support you in facilitating a meaningful and optimal process.

The Chair: I would like to thank the delegations for their comments and suggestions. I will engage in consultations with the Chairs of the Working Groups and the broader membership and revert back to the issues raised at a later stage.

Provisional agenda for the substantive session of 2016 of the Disarmament Commission

The Chair: If there are no comments, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to take note of the provisional agenda for the 2016 substantive session as contained in document A/CN.10/L.76.

It was so decided.

Organizational matters

The Chair: The United Nations Disarmament Commission is a subsidiary body of the General

Assembly and meets annually. Its sessions are financed from regular budgets and do not require additional funding. Moreover, in accordance with decision 52/492 of 1998, the annual substantive sessions of the Commission should last three weeks. As a result, during the 2016 session, the Commission will work on the basis of our usual practice, namely, a full three-week session. With this in mind, and based on resolution 70/68, the Secretariat has arranged for the dates for the 2016 substantive session from 4 to 21 April.

I should like to note that, pursuant to resolution 44/119 of 15 December 1989, all organizational matters should be concluded at the organizational session of the Disarmament Commission. Unfortunately, as I have already informed the Commission, we are not in a position to conclude these organizational matters in view of the following outstanding vacancies: one Vice-Chair and Rapporteur from the Group of African States and two Vice-Chairs from each of the following groups: the Group of Asia-Pacific States, the Group of Eastern European States, the Group of Latin American

and Caribbean States, and the Group of Western European and other States.

As members can see, it is a tall order and I would like to use this opportunity to appeal to the regional groups concerned to conduct all necessary consultations in order to enable the Commission to start its substantive work, as planned, on 4 April with a full Bureau. Accordingly, it might be advisable for the Commission to conclude this organizational session and give the Chair and delegations time to carry on further consultations on these issues and to take them at an appropriate time.

If there are no more pressing issues to discuss, I shall take it that it is the wish of the Disarmament Commission to conclude the 2016 organizational session and to resume the unfinished organizational business at the first meeting of the United Nations Disarmament Commission on 4 April.

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 10.40 a.m.