

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE ONE THOUSAND AND THIRTY-SECOND PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 10 August 2006, at 10.20 a.m.

President:

Mr. Ousmane CAMARA

(Senegal)

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I declare open the 1032nd plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

At the very outset I should like, on behalf of the Conference on Disarmament and on my own behalf, to bid farewell to our distinguished colleague the Ambassador of Ireland, Ms. Mary Whelan, who will soon leave Geneva to take up other important duties.

Ambassador Whelan began her assignment to the Conference on Disarmament on 12 September 2001, and from the very beginning represented her Government with dedication, authority and intellectual rigour. Representing a nation with a proud record of steadfastly advocating nuclear disarmament, she has always been actively engaged in efforts in the hope of a resumption of the work of the Conference and in the resolution of the outstanding issues on the Conference's agenda. Ms. Whelan has also been a tireless advocate of enhancing the participation of civil society in the work of the Conference. Her efforts in this respect culminated during her term as President in 2003, when she put forward a number of proposals designed to prompt dialogue with the non-governmental organizations and devise arrangements whereby those organizations could assist the Conference on Disarmament to benefit from their experience and expertise. In fact, these efforts set the stage for further efforts by the Presidents of our body, which culminated in the adoption of a decision on enhancement of the engagement of civil society in the work of the Conference.

Ms. Whelan has been the determined and devoted champion of civil society and non-governmental organizations in all disarmament-related bodies and conferences. With equal devotion, she has fostered the integration of women in the principal activities of the international organizations. On behalf of the Conference on Disarmament and on my own behalf, I should like to convey to Ambassador Whelan and her family every wish for success and happiness.

Before proceeding to the structured debate scheduled to be held on agenda item 6, I am going to give the floor to the following speakers who still wish to speak on item 4, that is, negative security assurances: Ambassador Alberto Dumont of Argentina and Mr. Diego Ibarra Martínez of Venezuela. I give the floor to the representative of Argentina. You have the floor, Mr. Ambassador.

Mr. DUMONT (Argentina) (translated from Spanish): Mr. President, first of all I would like to make clear our appreciation for the guiding of these structured debates which are being held during your term. Our gratitude also goes to the six Presidents who, by means of effective coordination, are facilitating our debates on the items on the agenda of this Conference.

I am making this second statement by my delegation on the topic of negative security assurances for the purpose of reading the joint statement by Latin American States which are parties to the Treaty of Tlatelolco and members of the Conference on Disarmament.

The States parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (the Treaty of Tlatelolco) which are members of the Conference on Disarmament, that is, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru and

(Mr. Dumont, Argentina)

Venezuela, within the framework of the structured thematic debate on agenda item 4, relating to negative security assurances, reiterate that that instrument and the body created in pursuance of it, OPANAL, have constituted an important contribution by our region to disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation, international peace and security and international law. The primary purpose of the Treaty has been fulfilled: in Latin America and the Caribbean today there are no nuclear weapons, and none of the States there have any aspiration to possess them.

Having succeeded in consolidating a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Latin America and the Caribbean, the aspiration today lies in ensuring also that the area does not find itself at risk from a nuclear threat. The fact that the main nuclear Powers recognized as such - the People's Republic of China, the United States of America, the Russian Federation, France and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland - committed themselves under Additional Protocol II to the Treaty of Tlatelolco "not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against the contracting parties to the Treaty" constitutes a guarantee of nuclear security of the utmost importance for our region.

While such guarantees by the nuclear Powers are fundamental, in the view of the declaring parties, further progress could be made if some of those Powers reviewed certain paragraphs of the unilateral declarations which they issued on signing or ratifying the two additional protocols to the Treaty of Tlatelolco at the end of the 1960s or during the 1970s.

In the light of the evolution of international law, some of those statements are difficult to sustain in the twenty-first century, particularly those relating to interpretation of the right of self-defence, recognized in Article 51 of the United Nations Charter. The declaring parties are convinced that the use of nuclear weapons in self-defence in response to an armed attack using conventional weapons - which are the only weapons available to the States in Latin America and the Caribbean - cannot be endorsed by international law as it is not proportionate to the purpose of the defensive action recognized by the United Nations Charter in its Article 51.

The Treaty of Tlatelolco and the other treaties establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones constitute an example of added value which the regional dimension contributes to progress in disarmament around the world. The consolidation and development of such zones represent a decisive solution for the achievement of general and complete disarmament. They place geographical limits on nuclear non-proliferation, restrict the freedom of action of the nuclear Powers and in addition generate a climate of intraregional trust.

The Treaty of Tlatelolco has also demonstrated extraordinary potential as an inspiration and point of reference for the establishment of other nuclear-weapon-free zones in the South Pacific, south-east Asia and Africa, as well as with respect to the zone being developed in Central Asia. Its capacity in terms of initiative and political coordination was demonstrated at the first conference of States parties to and signatories of treaties establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones, which was held in April last year in Mexico City. At that conference the representatives of States which are parties to and signatories of the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Bangkok and Pelindaba, in addition to Mongolia, which unilaterally declared itself

(Mr. Dumont, Argentina)

free of nuclear weapons, issued a declaration which represents the views of 109 States of the world on this fundamental issue, and also agreed to establish machinery for coordination and cooperation among themselves.

With respect to non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament, the States which are parties to the Treaty of Tlatelolco and members of the Conference on Disarmament will continue to promote the values of peace and disarmament in pursuing their fundamental objective of working towards a world free of nuclear weapons. The States which are parties to the Treaty of Tlatelolco and members of the Conference on Disarmament express their conviction that efforts to secure the conclusion of a universal legally binding instrument on negative security assurances for non-nuclear-weapon States should continue.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank Ambassador Dumont for his statement and the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor now to Mr. Diego Ibarra Martínez of Venezuela.

Mr. IBARRA MARTÍNEZ (Venezuela) (translated from Spanish): Mr. President, as my delegation is taking the floor for the first time during your term of office, allow me to convey to you my Government's satisfaction at seeing you preside over our debates. I assure you that you can count on my delegation's complete cooperation.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela supports the statement made by Morocco on behalf of the G21 at the plenary meeting of 3 August 2006, as well as the statement made just a moment ago by Argentina. Venezuela reaffirms its conviction that the only guarantee against the use, the threat of the use and the proliferation of nuclear weapons is the total elimination of this category of armaments, as happened with chemical weapons and biological weapons. We consider that the States which have voluntarily renounced the option of possessing nuclear weapons are entitled to demand a ban on the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons against us. While a sizeable number of States are covered or are in the process of protecting themselves through nuclear-weapon-free zones and some nuclear Powers have voluntarily granted negative security assurances to various non-nuclear-weapon States, Venezuela considers it necessary for such guarantees to take the form of a legally binding instrument as a result of international agreements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of nuclear weapons on the basis of the five Ambassadors' proposal.

Lastly, Venezuela confirms its conviction that the Conference on Disarmament is the appropriate forum to designate an ad hoc committee on negative security assurances, since the Conference on Disarmament is the sole multilateral forum for negotiations on disarmament.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Venezuela for his statement and the kind words addressed to the Chair.

The Conference will now proceed to the structured debate focused on agenda item 6, entitled "Comprehensive programme of disarmament". At this stage I would like to give you a brief outline of the history of consideration of this item by the Conference. The question of a comprehensive programme of disarmament was included on the agenda of the Committee on

(The President)

Disarmament in 1980, and in March that year the Ad Hoc Working Group was established in order to initiate negotiations on such a programme. In 1984 the Ad Hoc Working Group was renamed the Ad Hoc Committee following the decision whereby the Committee on Disarmament became the Conference on Disarmament.

Over the years, this subsidiary body conducted negotiations on a comprehensive programme of disarmament and presented reports to the Conference. Annexed to these reports was the text of the programme as negotiated up to that point. In 1989, the Ad Hoc Committee presented its last report. Since then the Ad Hoc Committee has never been re-established, and from 1990 until 1992 the item was considered directly by the Conference, which summarized the results of its consideration in its reports. Although in 1992 the Conference did agree to consider at the beginning of its 1993 session the organizational framework in which this agenda item would be examined, it never established the framework; paragraphs 83 to 90 of the Conference's 1992 report thus form the last comprehensive record of consideration of the question of a comprehensive programme of disarmament.

In 1997, this item became a platform for considering a new issue, namely, a comprehensive global ban on anti-personnel landmines, which was put forward by the President of the United States, Mr. Bill Clinton, in a message he addressed to the Conference. Subsequently, the Conference appointed a Special Coordinator in the shape of the Ambassador of Australia, Mr. John Campbell, entrusting him with the task of undertaking consultations on a possible mandate on the question of anti-personnel landmines. In 1998 the Conference reappointed Mr. Campbell as Special Coordinator for this issue, this time with the task of seeking the views of the members of the Conference on the most appropriate way to deal with the questions related to anti-personnel landmines taking into account, inter alia, developments outside the Conference. In his report to the Conference, the Special Coordinator stated inter alia that he was unable to put forward a proposal which would enjoy the full support of all members of the Conference, and he concluded that it was less a matter of crafting the right language and more a question of winning the necessary political will to take a decision to negotiate a transfer ban on anti-personnel landmines.

It is also worth noting some of the findings of the Special Coordinators on the review of the agenda. In 1997 the Special Coordinator, Ambassador Péter Náray of Hungary, reported that a great number of delegations from all groups had suggested the deletion of the item "Comprehensive programme of disarmament", or at least indicated the lack of opposition on their side to do so if there were consensus to proceed in this manner. At the same time, others called for this item to be retained and expanded to cover nuclear as well as conventional weapons. In this connection, proposals were also made to replace it by a new item entitled either "Conventional disarmament" or "Anti-personnel landmines".

Consultations conducted in 2001 by the then Special Coordinator on the review of the agenda, Ambassador Gunther Seibert of Germany, revealed a new approach to agenda item 6. Ambassador Seibert recalled inter alia that in 1997 discussions on the agenda of the Conference had ended in a compromise, whereby the Conference maintained its previous agenda essentially

(The President)

unchanged, accompanied by a statement by the President that it was his understanding that if there was a consensus in the Conference to deal with any issues, they could be dealt with within this agenda. Since then, this has been the standard procedure of the Conference at the beginning of its yearly sessions; the Presidential statement confers a degree of flexibility on the agenda. The Special Rapporteur also noted that this flexibility was further enhanced by an apparent general understanding that any disarmament issue could be subsumed under item 6 of the agenda, entitled “Comprehensive programme of disarmament”, if the Conference so decided.

At today’s plenary meeting the Conference will resume its consideration of item 6 - “Comprehensive programme of disarmament” - in a more systematic way. In particular, I encourage delegations to assess what has been done under this item and to consider its prospects for the future. I should like to point out that a compilation of texts on this item is currently being prepared within the secretariat, and that the list of these documents is already available in document CD/2006/CRP.3.

For the discussion today, I have a speakers’ list which reads as follows: Ireland, Ambassador Mary Whelan; China, Mr. Li Yang; the United Kingdom, Ms. Fiona Paterson; Canada, Ambassador Paul Meyer; Senegal; and the Russian Federation. So I should now like to give the floor to our distinguished colleague, Ambassador Mary Whelan. You have the floor, Madam Ambassador.

Ms. WHELAN (Ireland): Mr. President, let me thank you for your very kind statement earlier. You and I have worked together in very many different forums here in Geneva, and I have always admired your calm and balanced approach to whatever meeting it was over which you were presiding.

I am taking the floor today to make my final statement to the Conference on Disarmament. On this occasion I will touch briefly on my experience of this forum and on its adequacy as a mechanism for dealing effectively with disarmament and arms control issues.

When I arrived in Geneva in 2001, the CD was many years into its current stalemate. A proposal to end that period of stagnation - the Amorim proposal - was under discussion. The attraction of this initiative lay in its attempt to ensure that the priorities of all members of the Conference would be addressed as part of the programme of work. To a newcomer this seemed sensible and astute; it had been my understanding that unless all parties in a negotiating forum believed that their interests would be addressed, meaningful results could not be expected.

2001 marked the beginning of a new period in international relations. The third millennium did not usher in an era of peace and security for all. Instead, the last five years has been a period characterized by insecurity and conflict. Fears of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and concerns regarding the efficacy of existing arms control and disarmament agreements have increased.

In Geneva the CD has continued with no business, as usual. The Amorim proposal was unable to move us into working mode. In 2003, not content with this situation, a group of

(Ms. Whelan, Ireland)

five former Presidents of the Conference, representing Algeria, Belgium, Chile, Colombia and Sweden, came together to develop the conceptual basis of the Amorim proposal. They brought forward an initiative which sought a consensus through the progressive refinement of a programme of work based on the agenda of the Conference. As with the Amorim proposal, the A5 attempted to take account of the priorities of all members without prejudice to the security concerns of any. Implicit in this proposal was the notion that some topics were more ready for negotiation than others but that each topic could be dealt with in a manner which did not preclude negotiation should circumstances permit.

Again the concept seemed sound. Yet, despite many efforts to refine and redefine its elements to take account of the views of individual delegations, the A5 proposal did not secure the agreement of all, although it did enjoy the support of an overwhelming majority of the members of the Conference. Since 2003 other Presidents have tried to build on the work of the A5, with much ingenuity but little success.

Thanks to the initiative of the six Presidents of the CD, 2006 has witnessed a move away from a discussion of a formal work programme and towards an exploration of specific agenda items from the perspective of possible future work. This approach seems to hold promise. The challenge is whether that promise can be realized or whether, in pursuing our individual priorities, we will lose sight of those of others and hence manage again to avoid consensus.

In most areas of governmental activity or in international relations, a body without any achievement for a decade would face fundamental questions about its future. Multilateralism is not an end in itself. It is a reflection of a shared understanding of problems and agreed approaches to their solution. Multilateralism works best where it represents the legitimacy arising from an open and transparent negotiating process in which all concerned parties are fully engaged and where there is a shared responsibility for outcomes and implementation. There are issues which, by their nature, create a multilateral imperative for action. Preventing the proliferation of WMD and dealing with inhumane weapons would seem to fall into this category.

If effective multilateralism is the answer to dealing with arms control and disarmament issues, then it is time to ask why the CD is an apparent failure. It is time to ask whether the CD itself has become part of the problem. In truth it has not provided a forum where fundamental disarmament concepts and challenges can be discussed, where assumptions can be challenged or where solutions can be envisaged.

Over the past five years, fundamental questions have been asked about the agenda, methods of work and periodicity of meetings of the CD. Such questions point to a growing sense that the Conference has lost its sense of purpose and direction. There would seem to be no shared perception of current threats to international security and consequently no shared understanding of the potential for multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation diplomacy. Yet no one can credibly query the relevance of the items on the agenda of the CD; these are the topics which preoccupy our peoples and the governments who represent them.

(Ms. Whelan, Ireland)

It may be time to ask whether a reformed or different type of organization could be more effective. The blockage to increased membership of this body, for example, seems to have little relevance to disarmament discussions. The anachronistic procedures, including the monthly rotation of the Chair, the CD's relationship to other entities and to civil society, the largely meaningless group structure - a relic of the cold war - all suggest that this body may be losing its relevance, having already lost its effectiveness.

Despite a sense of disappointment at the work of the CD, it would be wrong for me not to acknowledge the air of expectancy to which our discussions this year have given rise. Perhaps 2006 will prove to be a turning point for the better. I certainly hope so.

In my five years I have had great pleasure in getting to know many very committed disarmament experts, colleagues, friends. I have witnessed the enthusiasm and commitment of a great many CD Presidents. I have benefited from the dedication and professionalism of a great secretariat, which is led with outstanding commitment by Sergei Ordzhonikidze. Let me conclude by wishing you all well in the future and by expressing the hope that our paths will cross again in more peaceful times.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank Ambassador Mary Whelan for her statement and her kind words addressed to the Chair. I would now like to give the floor to the representative of China.

Mr. LI (China) (translated from Chinese): Mr. President, we held meaningful and focused discussions last week during our consideration of the issue of negative security assurances. The Chinese delegation appreciates all the efforts that you have made to further these discussions.

The comprehensive programme of disarmament forms an important element of international disarmament efforts. The programme sets out the principles underpinning the further development of international disarmament work and arms control efforts and the direction that such efforts should take. The Conference on Disarmament has repeatedly designated special coordinators to gather the views of member States on the function and content of the programme. Following recent developments, there are now differing views in the Conference as to whether the item should be kept on the agenda and regarding the issues that should be discussed under the item. China is of the view that, despite significant changes in the international situation, the objectives and principles set out at the first special session on disarmament, held in 1978, remain important in guiding our work on disarmament and security matters today. The Chinese delegation is ready to engage in positive and constructive discussions on the item.

Our discussions on the comprehensive programme of disarmament should take both as their starting point and as their goal the need to adopt fair and reasonable disarmament principles and effective disarmament measures as a means of attaining the objectives of advancing the multilateral disarmament process, preserving world peace and security and promoting common development and prosperity.

(Mr. Li, China)

In that context, China considers the following principles as key to advancing the sound development of the international disarmament process:

The purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and other universally recognized norms governing international relations should be observed;

A new security concept based on mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and cooperation should be developed, confidence should be built through dialogue and common security promoted through cooperation;

The equal rights of all countries to participate in efforts relating to international arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation should be guaranteed and the processes of international arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation should be advanced on the basis of undiminished security for all countries;

Non-proliferation issues should be dealt with by political and diplomatic means within the framework of international law;

The existing legal system for international arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation should be maintained and further strengthened and improved;

The legitimate rights and interests of all countries relating to the peaceful use of science and technology should be protected;

Full advantage should be taken of the role of the United Nations and other multilateral bodies.

In this era of rampant globalization, no country can resolve all its security problems entirely on its own. The international community can only rise to the historical occasion presented by this new world order by unswervingly upholding multilateralism and cooperation and by promoting the rational, fair, comprehensive and sound development of international arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation.

At the present time, priority must be given to the issues of nuclear disarmament and the prevention of the weaponization of and an arms race in outer space.

China maintains that the following elements are essential to advancing the cause of nuclear disarmament:

An international legal instrument on the complete prohibition and thorough destruction of nuclear weapons should be concluded at the earliest possible stage;

Until such time as the goal of complete prohibition and thorough destruction of nuclear weapons is achieved, all countries should strictly observe their non-proliferation obligations and the global non-proliferation regime should be further strengthened;

(Mr. Li, China)

The process of nuclear disarmament should be both just and reasonable and follow the path of gradual reduction until such time as a balance is reached; the countries possessing the largest nuclear arsenals bear both a particular and primary responsibility for nuclear disarmament: they should scrupulously comply with the treaties already concluded on the reduction of nuclear weapons and further reduce their nuclear arsenals in a verifiable and irreversible manner so as to create conditions conducive to attaining the ultimate goal of complete nuclear disarmament;

Until such time as the goal of the complete prohibition and thorough destruction of nuclear weapons is attained, the nuclear-weapon States should give an undertaking not to be the first to use nuclear weapons, they should unconditionally pledge not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States or nuclear-weapon-free zones, and, to that end, they should also negotiate and conclude legally binding international instruments;

Nuclear-weapon States should abandon the policy of nuclear deterrence based on the first use of nuclear weapons and reduce the role of nuclear weapons in their national security;

Nuclear disarmament measures, including the full range of interim measures, should pursue the aims of maintaining global strategic balance and stability and undiminished security for all.

China has always advocated the peaceful use of outer space. The international community should take effective measures to prevent the weaponization of and an arms race in outer space, by negotiating and concluding a corresponding international legal instrument, prohibiting the placement of weapons in outer space and the threat or use of force against objects in outer space, thereby ensuring that outer space is used exclusively for peaceful purposes.

The Conference on Disarmament should endeavour to reach consensus on the programme of work at an early date so that the member States are able to conduct substantive work on the issues of preventing the weaponization of and an arms race in outer space, negative security assurances for non-nuclear-weapon States, nuclear disarmament and a fissile material cut-off treaty. Without any doubt, the efforts of this kind already under way offer an extensive manifestation of the determination of the international community to tackle arms control and disarmament issues in a comprehensive and integrated manner. China stands ready to continue working with all other countries in pursuit of these goals.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of China for his statement and kind words and I now give the floor to Ms. Fiona Paterson of the United Kingdom.

Ms. PATERSON (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland): The United Kingdom would like to make a short statement at this formal session on agenda item 6, "A comprehensive programme of disarmament", on behalf of the seven co-authors of the First Committee draft resolution on an arms trade treaty, those co-authors being Argentina, Australia, Costa Rica, Finland, Japan, Kenya and the United Kingdom.

(Ms. Paterson, United Kingdom)

Over recent years a number of the world's political as well as spiritual leaders have called for the establishment of a new treaty to better regulate the trade in arms.

The international community has already taken a number of steps to deal with specific aspects of the trade in and the use of conventional weapons over a period of years. However, there is currently no comprehensive international legally binding instrument available to provide an agreed regulatory framework for this activity.

An arms trade treaty is not aimed at abolishing the arms trade, but it is aimed at ensuring that it is conducted in a responsible manner. Our Governments consider that the idea of an arms trade treaty is one whose time has come, and our draft resolution aims to reflect the fact that this is a complex and often sensitive issue where, if we are to be successful, we must establish a proper balance between States' rights and States' obligations.

We propose that the United Nations begin work on this important issue as soon as possible by establishing a group of government experts. We recognize, however, that there are clear benefits, once the resolution is adopted, in having a period of wider consultation in order to better inform the discussion by experts. This is reflected in our draft resolution, which has already been circulated to all United Nations Members here and in New York.

We, the co-authors, call on all members of the CD to support this important initiative as we take it forward in the United Nations this autumn.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of the United Kingdom for her statement, and I now give the floor to Ambassador Paul Meyer of Canada. You have the floor, Ambassador.

Mr. MEYER (Canada): Mr. President, let me first, by way of an aside, say that I appreciated your taking the time to provide us with a summary of the history of the treatment of this item in our Conference. I think that went to demonstrate the inherent flexibility of our agenda and the pragmatism of some of our predecessors. Perhaps we can find similar inspiration these days.

I wanted to take the floor during our discussion under this item of a comprehensive programme of disarmament to address the need for a treaty governing trade in conventional arms, often referred to as an arms trade treaty. A comprehensive, legally binding arms trade treaty could provide important international and human security benefits, notably by curtailing the irresponsible trade in all types of conventional arms. Proposals for establishing some form of regime to control the international trade in armaments have been put forward for years. Some relevant arrangements have been developed by regional security organizations or by suppliers' groups, but what has been lacking is a universal system with broad coverage and legal force. Canada supports, in principle, a comprehensive, legally binding conventional arms trade treaty which prevents the illicit flow of arms to conflict zones.

(Mr. Meyer, Canada)

In March of this year, Dr. Kim Howells, United Kingdom Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth office, visited Geneva and highlighted the benefits an arms trade treaty would bring. He noted the impact that unregulated arms trade had in fuelling and prolonging conflicts, and the negative consequences of readily available arms on efforts at post-conflict reconstruction. More recently this June, Foreign Secretary Margaret Beckett has stated: "The humanitarian and moral case for an arms trade treaty is unassailable, but our challenge is to turn that strong moral case into real progress on the ground". We agree with the United Kingdom ministers in their appeal for taking practical steps to establish a universal legal regime to curb illicit arms trading and help prevent the misuse of weapons. Such a legal regime could yield major humanitarian and developmental benefits, in addition of course to their security benefits.

To illustrate what conditions might apply in an arms trade treaty, allow me to cite current Canadian practice. Under Government of Canada policy, the export of military equipment, including conventional arms, is closely controlled (and in most cases, denied) to: (a) countries that pose a threat to Canada and to its allies; (b) countries involved in or under imminent threat of hostilities; (c) countries under United Nations Security Council sanctions; or (d) countries whose governments have a persistent record of serious violations of the human rights of their citizens, unless it can be demonstrated that there is no reasonable risk that such military equipment might be used against the civilian population. Clearly, developing common understandings as to what criteria should govern decisions to transfer or export arms will be a key requirement for an arms trade treaty.

An arms trade treaty would cover a wide variety of weaponry in a single instrument, including small arms and light weapons, MANPADS, and heavier conventional systems, for example. This would set common standards for the trade in different kinds of conventional arms, thus simplifying the international legal framework and eliminating the need to have a separate instrument for each category of weapon.

In Canada's view, the question is thus not whether such an instrument is needed, but rather what is the best way to take it forward. The United Kingdom - and I must pause here to note our appreciation for the leadership role that the United Kingdom and other governments now, as well as international NGOs, have taken on this issue - has developed a resolution to be presented at this year's First Committee. We hope that this resolution will set in motion a process that begins work sooner rather than later on what we see as a crucial complement to the existing multilateral arms control system.

I raised the subject of an arms trade treaty today because we feel it is a major and topical issue relevant to this agenda item. Moreover, work in this area has the potential to result in a multilateral arms control treaty, and thus satisfies one of the critical thresholds for issues being taken up in the CD. We remain open as to the appropriate forum for an eventual negotiation, so long as it is conducive to achieving, in a timely manner, the goal of a global arms trade treaty.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the Ambassador of Canada for his statement. With your consent I will now read out the statement by Senegal.

(The President)

The call for a comprehensive programme of disarmament which was made in 1978 on the occasion of the tenth special session of the United Nations General Assembly is as relevant and important today as it was then. The call was for the adoption of all measures thought to be useful to attain the objective of general and complete disarmament under effective and strict international control. The history of the activities conducted by the Conference on Disarmament to deal with the problem of a disarmament programme of this kind shows that it was not for lack of a legitimate reason to act or for lack of specific proposals on the table that the Conference was unable to complete the intensive efforts that had been made up to 1992. The Conference on Disarmament suddenly seemed to lose its motivation, or perhaps its vision or ambition.

The question of negotiating a comprehensive programme of disarmament in the Conference on Disarmament remains of crucial importance in the view of the delegation of Senegal, which considers that disarmament is a whole and that it should be tackled using a global approach in order to take into account all security needs. The security which is sought through a comprehensive programme of disarmament must be collective security, which cannot be limited to one State or one region. In today's world, which is undergoing profound changes that make security challenges more complex, security is less a question of a State's capacity to protect itself or its deterrence capacity than our collective capacity to prevent and deal with threats of all kinds. My country is convinced that a convergence of views on a comprehensive programme of disarmament will be possible if we approach discussions from the viewpoint of the security concerns of all States.

As to nuclear disarmament, Senegal believes that new efforts need to be made to get the global process of disarmament and non-proliferation back on track, and would like the proposal made in August 1996 by the 28 countries in the Conference on Disarmament which are members of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries to be revisited, precisely because of the current threats to international peace and security. This proposal, let me remind you, deals with a plan of action for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons by the year 2020, an action plan whose initial phase would aim at reducing the nuclear threat and achieving nuclear disarmament.

As to conventional weapons, significant progress has been made over the course of the years. Nevertheless, additional measures need to be taken in order to ensure a steady reduction in, and more strict control of, such weapons, which are used in most current conflicts. In this connection, Senegal would like to make an appeal for more sustained attention to be paid to the question of small arms and light weapons under item 6 of our agenda. Nowadays, these weapons are the prime weapons of mass destruction because of the tremendous damage they are causing in several regions of the world and the sense of insecurity that prevails there as a result.

Addressing the issue of small arms and light weapons is all the more necessary because the most recent conference held to review the United Nations programme of action on small arms concluded on 7 July 2006 in New York with a very mixed outcome.

I should now like to call on the representative of the Russian Federation.

Mr. VASILIEV (Russian Federation) (translated from Russian): Mr. President, I should like to speak on behalf of Ambassador Valery Loshchinin, but first of all I would like to associate myself with the kind words that you addressed to Ambassador Mary Whelan on the occasion of her departure. We would also like to thank Ambassador Whelan for her friendship and cooperation and for the brilliant contribution she has made to the work of the Conference on Disarmament, and to wish her every success in the future.

At our informal plenary meeting on 17 June 2004, a number of States pointed out that at the first special session of the United Nations General Assembly on disarmament, the member States agreed that the goal of multilateral efforts is complete disarmament under effective international control. It must be acknowledged that this goal is not only far from being attained; as President Putin noted in May 2006 - and we have already quoted this once - "it is too early to speak of an end to the arms race. What is more, the arms race has now entered a new spiral and is attaining new levels of technology, raising the danger of the emergence of a whole arsenal of so-called destabilizing weapons." This is the reality. In these circumstances, we bear a special responsibility. For this reason Russia insists in particular on the earliest possible start of negotiations in the CD on a new treaty on the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space, the threat or use of force against outer space objects. It is this that can help halt these negative trends, and it is this treaty that can become the focus of the renewed substantive work of the CD.

Of course, the range of issues which the participants in the Conference on Disarmament could consider under item 6 on its agenda needs clarifying. The general approach must be realistic and pragmatic. In our view, the title of the item provides a good opportunity to display flexibility and to set up, if needed, a sort of agenda within the agenda for preliminary study of traditional and new disarmament issues. Later, should there be a consensus, we could give such issues the status of separate items on the CD agenda.

At this stage, it would be very risky to open up our traditional agenda. If we were to do so, we would further complicate the task of finding a compromise on a balanced programme of work. This is why considering under item 6 of our agenda issues raised by delegations in order to draw the CD's work closer to today's new tasks would help us, without distracting ourselves from the main task, which is to find a compromise on the programme of work, not to waste our efforts and not to make the programme of work a hostage to new linkages, and at the same time to consider in a flexible way those new threats and challenges that the CD could address later on.

At this stage, appointing a special coordinator to explore the views of the members of the Conference on the most appropriate way to address this problem would be for us an acceptable manner to work on this item. This is exactly what is proposed in the five Ambassadors' initiative. The Russian Federation would be ready not to object to this proposal.

Among other issues under item 6, we would be ready to continue to exchange views on the problem of phased and coherent movement towards the goal of disarmament as regard landmines. We are interested in efforts to draw up a universal international agreement on banning transfers of the most dangerous antipersonnel mines. The possibility exists within the

(Mr. Vasiliev, Russian Federation)

framework of the Conference of drawing into negotiations the key producers and users of antipersonnel mines and organizing constructive cooperation amongst States parties and non-parties to the Ottawa Convention. We are convinced that the landmine problem must and can be resolved in a comprehensive fashion taking into account the real defensive and economic capacities of each State.

As to other possible issues, we would welcome a more active role for the Conference on Disarmament in strengthening regimes for the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery, since the problem of proliferation, including its terrorist dimension, is one of the main new threats to the security of mankind today.

A serious and growing new threat is the possibility that States and non-State actors may use rapidly developing information and communication technologies for political and military purposes which are incompatible with the need to ensure international security. This is, if you wish, a sort of supra-disarmament issue, since it does not pertain to specific types of weapons but to the process of decision-making related to the use of weapons, the utilization for political and military purposes of devastation not directly caused by the use of weapons, the manipulation of human consciousness, etc. Issues related to ensuring international security in the field of information were studied by a United Nations group of governmental experts in 2004 and 2005. The group achieved important positive results and, as you know, its work will be continued in 2009.

The significance of this problem has also been confirmed by the efforts that States are making at the regional level. For example, an important statement by member States of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization on international security in the field of information was adopted in Shanghai on 15 June 2006. It underlined the importance of the issue, welcomed the efforts being made by the United Nations in the same field and announced a decision to establish a group of experts from the Shanghai Cooperation Organization member States to formulate a plan of action to ensure international security in the field of information and identify possible ways and means to solve problems concerning international security in the field of information in all its aspects within the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. The Conference on Disarmament too could undoubtedly contribute to resolving the problem of ensuring international security in the field of information.

Russia pursues an open and unbiased approach to possible consideration of so-called new issues in the CD. Of course, in each particular instance it is necessary to check whether a particular issue fits the Conference's mandate and whether there is any overlapping with other international forums. In addition, the possible new issues must not replace or squeeze out traditional items.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of the Russian Federation for his statement. We have reached the end of the list of speakers for this plenary meeting. Does any delegation wish to take the floor at this stage? Apparently not. Our business is therefore concluded for today.

(The President)

I had thought that it would be useful to organize an informal meeting this afternoon, in line with the schedule of activities that I proposed to the Conference, but no delegation has put itself on the list to take the floor at any informal meeting. Under the circumstances, I thought that holding an informal meeting this afternoon would not be useful. Before concluding our business for today, I should like to give the floor to our Secretary-General. Mr. Secretary-General of the Conference, you have the floor.

Mr. ORDZHONIKIDZE (Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations): I believe yesterday the Ambassador of Pakistan raised the question of the programme of work in terms of the timing of the three parts of the sessions that we have, and he said that we might give thought to the rescheduling of the third part, in particular, because obviously, as far as I know about the presence of the Ambassadors and other members of the Missions, August is not the best season for any United Nations or United-Nations-related activities.

It might be an idea worth at least examining, and since the Ambassador of Pakistan proposed this idea, I would like to urge the P6 - now that we have the P5 in New York, we have the P6 in Geneva - to think about rescheduling the third part of the session or maybe the second part. The sessions of the CD are not scheduled once and for all. So if there were much more useful results - I mean with the increased presence of the delegations in terms of more Ambassadors present that would make it more convenient for them to work, and, what is more important, more I would say substantive work and politically charged work of the CD - then we can take a different decision. So I would like to ask the P6, Mr. President, to take up this question, at least for consideration, and then report to the CD.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the Secretary-General for that observation. This proposal will be brought to the attention of my other colleagues in what has now come to be called the P6, and of course we consider the Conference to be sovereign in this respect. I already see our colleague from Italy who has raised his nameplate. Ambassador Trezza, you have the floor.

Mr. TREZZA (Italy): I would like to thank the Secretary-General for bringing up this question which was raised by the Ambassador of Pakistan.

I believe that the Pakistani proposal is worth being examined. I believe that it is a sign of the vitality of this Conference that from time to time we re-examine and call into question issues that have become part of our routine, but which maybe deserve to be called into question. Certainly the idea of adapting the activities of the CD to the mode of work of the rest of the United Nations in Geneva is reasonable, and I think that not only the P6 but also delegations should consider it.

The only - I would not say problem, but issue - that we have to take into account is the deadline that we have with the First Committee. Any change in our schedule has to take into account the fact that we have to have adequate preparation for the work of the First Committee,

(Mr. Trezza, Italy)

not only in terms of a report but also in terms of preparation for the General Assembly. But in fact, and as a first reaction, I think that the month of September gives us the time for that preparation.

But in any case, my delegation is ready to seriously consider this proposal.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): Thank you, Mr. Ambassador. Does anyone else wish to take the floor? Apparently not. I will of course, as I said, refer this matter to my colleagues in the P6, and I think that this is a subject that is worth returning to.

Having said this, the next plenary meeting will be held next Tuesday, 15 August 2006, at 10 a.m. in the Council chamber. In accordance with the programme, that day's meeting will be devoted to a general debate and, as you know, I had also suggested that after this formal meeting we should change to an informal setting so as to give some thought to the format of the report of the Conference on Disarmament.

The meeting rose at 11.25 a.m.