

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE ONE THOUSAND AND FIFTY-SEVENTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Monday, 12 March 2007, at 3.15 p.m.

President: Mr. Juan Antonio MARCH (Spain)

The PRESIDENT (spoke in Spanish): I declare open the 1057th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

Distinguished delegates, today we begin a series of plenary meetings during which the Conference will have the privilege of hearing speeches by a number of Ministers for Foreign Affairs of member countries of the Conference and also observer countries. Today it is an honour to have with us Her Excellency Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of Ecuador. I would like to stress to all of you that the new Government of Ecuador has made peace one of the central issues in its governmental policies and has been expending huge efforts on demining operations on its borders. I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of Ecuador, María Fernanda Espinosa.

Ms. ESPINOSA (Ecuador) (spoke in Spanish): Today's world is facing new conflicts and dangers which the international community has not yet been able to resolve. These risks are creating a climate of insecurity which is the antithesis of the world of peace and stability to which we all aspire.

Classic threats to security linked to the probability of a world war, whether it be nuclear or conventional in nature, have not faded away. Quite the opposite - they have been compounded by new threats which jeopardize world peace.

It is for this reason that States must work together to face the new challenges to security and peace, taking into account their diversity and their multidimensional scale. I would go so far as to assert that the emergence of these new risks places an obligation on countries to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons of all types, and also to move forward in a prompt and sustained manner on a generalized disarmament programme.

It is not possible to understand that in an era in which major scientific and technological progress has been achieved in computing, robotics and nanotechnology, as well as the greatest accumulation of capital in the history of mankind, it has not been possible to achieve a world of peace and stability in which various cultures and religions on our planet can coexist in a harmonious, just and equitable way.

Ecuador recognizes that the Conference on Disarmament is the main forum for multilateral negotiations and therefore reaffirms that multilateralism is a basic mechanism to promote disarmament and non-proliferation, and also to seek effective international cooperation which will offer the States which do not possess nuclear weapons assurances against the use or threat of use of such weapons, in accordance with United Nations General Assembly resolution 60/53 of 8 December 2005.

In this context, Ecuador views as very positive the work undertaken by the United Nations General Assembly to contribute to this process, and to reaffirm, in the current international context which is notable for unilateral actions on the part of a few countries, the need to promote multilateralism as the main mechanism for guaranteeing peace and security in the world.

(Ms. Espinosa, Ecuador)

As a champion and promoter of international law and the peaceful settlement of disputes, Ecuador supports all actions aimed at preventing the emergence of conflict and supports international instruments which are conducive to bringing about the total elimination of nuclear weapons. It also opposes an arms race in outer space. In this context, Ecuador supports dialogue to strengthen the global denuclearization regime and welcomes any initiative, whatever its origin, whether unilateral, regional or universal, which will establish nuclear-weapon-free zones.

In a number of forums Ecuador has expressed its opposition to any unilateral initiative or action, whether it is explicit or presented as a collective initiative, for the use of police-type and repressive measures against other States, if they do not enjoy the backing of the United Nations and involve any supplanting of existing United Nations or international law machinery.

In this context, my country considers that the programme of work which has been developed for 2007 is balanced and takes into account some of the concerns of member States in the area of disarmament. It recognizes the openness and flexibility displayed by a large number of countries present here in addressing some aspects of disarmament in a candid manner. However, my country shares the international community's concern over the deadlock within the Conference, which for a number of years now has not been able or has not managed to adopt an agenda, and which has prevented it from arriving at effective multilateral commitments which would lead to nuclear disarmament, the elimination of weapons of mass destruction and the strengthening of measures to promote transparency and mutual trust.

Ecuador, as a defender of international law, whose foreign policy reflects its firm commitment to the prohibition of all types of weapons of mass destruction, considers that the Conference on Disarmament must commit itself to prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons through a convention, the institution of a regime of transparency in armaments and progress towards the ultimate objective of the total destruction of nuclear arsenals.

The mere existence of nuclear weapons represents a threat to the security of mankind. For this reason, their total elimination is the only guarantee against their use or the threat of their use. In this regard, Ecuador would like to state that until such time as nuclear weapons have been totally eliminated, efforts to conclude a legally binding, universal and unconditional instrument on security assurances for the non-nuclear-weapon States must continue to be a priority issue.

I think it is important to stress that in the area of nuclear disarmament Ecuador has a considerable history of support for the prohibition of nuclear weapons, as it was one of the three countries which backed Brazil's efforts to prohibit nuclear weapons in Latin America in 1962. Likewise, it was one of the five countries which in 1963 signed a joint declaration proclaiming their intention to make the region a nuclear-weapon-free zone.

Since 1969 my country has been a signatory of the treaty for The Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean, also known as the Treaty of Tlatelolco and recognizes the right of States to self-defence and to preservation of their sovereignty. However, it believes that in no case is the use of nuclear weapons justified.

(Ms. Espinosa, Ecuador)

It is not only Latin America and the Caribbean which have made an important contribution in this sphere. Today there are many important nuclear-weapon-free zones, in the South Pacific, South-East Asia, Africa and Central Asia. This demonstrates that with determination and decisiveness the objectives laid down for the Conference on Disarmament can be achieved.

The nuclear danger is a global threat, but there are also other threats which must be addressed and which attempts are being made to address in various ways. Consequently, this Conference should at some stage strive to identify common ground which in a realistic way would make it possible to deal in a concerted way with scourges such as terrorism, illicit trafficking in weapons and in general transnational crime where arms play a fundamental role. In this context my country considers that a fundamental step has been taken with United Nations General Assembly resolution 61/89, which paves the way for the negotiation of a convention on the arms trade, and appeals to countries to participate actively in these negotiations.

Ecuador reaffirms its strong commitment to these important processes and its decision to participate actively, together with the countries with which we share similar principles and positions. Consequently, in concluding I would like to mention a great Ecuadorian internationalist, Dr. Luis Bossano, who, with lucidity and concern, decades before the United Nations Charter of 1945, put before the world his novel proposal for “disarmament of the mind”. Today as then, and perhaps more than ever, we need this type of disarmament, which lies more in the spirit, the real will and the heart of human beings than in budgets or abstract rhetorical propositions.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in Spanish): I thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ecuador on behalf of the entire Conference on Disarmament for her presence among us today, her important words and her support for the idea that this Conference should enter into a process of clear negotiations, a process of tangible contributions in the area of disarmament and other related issues. I therefore thank you for your time, your resolve and your support for the work that is under way here.

I will now suspend the Conference on Disarmament temporarily for five minutes so that the Secretary-General and I can escort the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ecuador out of the room. We will resume our meeting in five minutes to receive the Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Venezuela.

The plenary meeting was suspended at 3.25 p.m. and resumed at 3.35 p.m.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in Spanish): The 1057th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament is resumed. On behalf of the Conference I have the honour to extend a welcome to the next speaker, His Excellency Mr. Jorge Valero, Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. The Vice-Minister has travelled to this city specially to address this meeting and on behalf of the entire Conference on Disarmament I would like to thank him for taking the trouble to make this long trip from Venezuela and the support for the Conference that this indicates. You have the floor, Sir.

Mr. VALERO (Venezuela) (spoke in Spanish): Mr. President, distinguished representatives of various countries of the world, allow me, on behalf of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, to convey to you congratulations from the Government headed by Hugo Chávez Frías as you take the Chair of the Conference on Disarmament for this month.

My country attaches the utmost importance to this forum, in view of its special responsibilities in negotiating multilateral agreements in the area of disarmaments.

We find ourselves in an international situation which is marked by complexity and uncertainty, and the challenges and threats facing peace, security and the economic and social development of peoples are obvious to all. The expectations which arose after the end of the cold war for the establishment of a new international order based on respect for international law, cooperation and solidarity have vanished with the emergence of conflict situations in various regions of the world. These developments during the post-cold-war period, as well as other political and military events which are no less serious, such as the unilateralism and imperial conduct which flout the rules of international law, have diminished the chances of achieving a world of peace, justice and development.

The proponents of the “end of history”, in the service of imperialism, hoped to impose the neoliberal model on the world, an ambition which has been thwarted by the boundless reality, symbolized by imbalances such as the proliferation of poverty and social exclusion, whose effects on peace and stability in the world cannot be concealed.

Resignation in the face of what seemed to be an overwhelming and unstoppable model, uncontrolled capitalism, is giving way to popular opposition and creative protests, demanding justice, respect for human rights, an end to sabre-rattling and the full application of sovereignty and the self-determination of peoples.

The Conference on Disarmament has been suffering from a situation of prolonged inertia since the negotiations on the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty were completed a decade ago.

The Bolivarian Government reaffirms here its commitment to general and complete disarmament and non-proliferation. In this respect it expresses its support for the Conference on Disarmament, as the sole forum for multilateral negotiations on agreements in this area. Therefore my Government calls for joint efforts to revivify this Conference and give a strong boost to its work.

For my country the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, is a priority and an inescapable objective for the world. We call on the international community to tackle this task, because of the dangers that the existence of these weapons entails for all of mankind.

(Mr. Valero, Venezuela)

The countries which possess nuclear weapons must fulfil the 13 practical steps which were agreed on in the Final Document of the sixth conference on the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which lays down the need to carry out negotiations in good faith.

And in parallel with these efforts, the Conference on Disarmament must establish under item 1 of its agenda (on nuclear disarmament) an ad hoc committee with the task of negotiating to conclude an agreement on this subject.

We regret the fact that the refusal on the part of a small number of countries continues to block the practical implementation of nuclear disarmament. This situation affects the credibility of the Conference on Disarmament in the eyes of world public opinion.

It is immoral that the enormous resources which are devoted to this arms race are growing as each day passes, while the socio-economic disasters suffered by the peoples of the world also increase from day to day.

The nuclear-weapon States bear the greatest responsibility. It is they that must make a true political commitment which is geared towards reducing and eliminating nuclear weapons in accordance with the provisions contained in the NPT.

With the utmost cynicism and applying a double standard, some countries which have put themselves forward as alleged champions of non-proliferation are questioning other States about claimed non-compliance with their obligations under the NPT.

And one of the fundamental pillars of the NPT is the right to the development and peaceful use of nuclear energy, which must be carried out in a transparent and non-discriminatory way.

Fostering discriminatory approaches to the subject of disarmament creates mistrust among States and prevents the achievement of tangible progress in this respect.

The Government of President Hugo Chávez Frías appeals to this Conference to start as soon as possible negotiations leading to an international agreement banning the deployment of nuclear weapons or any other warlike system which jeopardizes international peace and security.

The risks involved in the militarization of outer space are of concern to my country, given the negative effects it would have for international peace and security.

My Government considers that it is essential to ensure that outer space, rather than being an arena for war, should be an area for the pursuit of peaceful activities to the benefit of the peoples of the world.

It is vital to make efforts aimed at eliminating the danger posed by the production of fissile material for the production of nuclear weapons. In this context Venezuela advocates transparent negotiations which would help to draw up a convention prohibiting such activities.

(Mr. Valero, Venezuela)

The negotiation of an instrument of this sort must contain specific provisions for verification. It is for this reason that the proposal to leave negotiations on a verification mechanism until the second phase conflicts with the objectives agreed upon during the first special session of the United Nations on disarmament held in 1978.

My Government would warn you of the negative experience which has been encountered in respect of the Convention on the Prohibition of Bacteriological Weapons, which does not have a verification mechanism. It considers that the future fissile material convention should include all fissile material, including stockpiles.

The threat that nuclear weapons may be used against countries that do not possess them is a subject of particular importance.

Undesirable doctrines of deterrence which are being bandied around by some nuclear countries do not rule out the possibility that these weapons may be used. Consequently, my country is in favour of negotiating a binding international instrument which would commit the nuclear-weapon countries not to use them or threaten to use them against those who do not have such weapons.

During the conference of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries which was held in Havana from 14 to 16 September 2006, the heads of State came out in favour of granting such negative security assurances to the non-nuclear countries. My country supported this initiative.

We hope that negotiations can be carried out in good faith in this Conference on Disarmament for the conclusion of an agreement on negative security assurances along the lines that have already been described. The aim is to prevent non-nuclear-weapon States from being threatened with the use of such weapons.

Confidence-building measures are a useful tool to promote international peace and security, with transparency being one of their fundamental components, both in the area of conventional weapons and also in respect of weapons of mass destruction.

The Declaration on Security in the Americas which was adopted in Mexico City in 2003 recognizes that each State has the sovereign right to identify its own national security priorities and to define strategies, plans and actions for addressing threats to its security, in accordance with its legal system and with full respect for international law and the norms and principles of the Charter of the OAS and the Charter of the United Nations.

My Government reaffirms that it is only through cooperation among States based on unlimited respect for State sovereignty that the international community will be able to achieve agreement in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation.

Imposing partisan approaches in nuclear disarmament in no way contributes to promoting dialogue and cooperation, which are so essential in negotiating disarmament and non-proliferation measures.

(Mr. Valero, Venezuela)

I wish to reaffirm the willingness of the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to work with resolve and in concert with the other members of this Conference to achieve general and complete disarmament in accordance with the United Nations Charter. Only in this way can international peace and security be achieved.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in Spanish): Many thanks, Vice-Minister, for your presence with us today and your statement to the Conference on Disarmament, which indicate political support for the work that is under way in this forum. I will now suspend the plenary meeting for five minutes so that the Secretary-General of the Conference and I can escort Vice-Minister Jorge Valero out of this room, and then we will resume our plenary meeting.

The meeting was suspended at 3.50 p.m. and resumed at 4 p.m.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in English): The plenary meeting will be held tomorrow, Tuesday, 13 March 2007, at 10 a.m. sharp. At that meeting, the following dignitaries will address the Conference: Colombia, Dr. Francisco Santos Calderón, Vice-President; Latvia, Mr. Artis Pabriks, Minister for Foreign Affairs; Islamic Republic of Iran, Mr. Manouchehr Mottaki, Minister for Foreign Affairs; Japan, Mr. Masayoshi Hamada, Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs; Poland, Ms. Anna Fotyga, Minister for Foreign Affairs; Viet Nam, Mr. Pham Binh Minh, Assistant Foreign Minister; and Italy, Mr. Vittorio Craxi, Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

Before adjourning, I would like to recall that in accordance with the Conference timetable, this meeting will be followed in five minutes by an informal meeting on agenda item 4.

The meeting rose at 4.05 p.m.