

# CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/PV.1098  
5 March 2008

ENGLISH

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## FINAL RECORD OF THE ONE THOUSAND AND NINETY-EIGHTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,  
on Wednesday, 5 March 2008, at 12.05 p.m.

President: Mr. Ahmet ÜZÜMCÜ (Turkey)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 1098th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

Today we are convening the last of a series of plenary meetings during which the Conference has had the pleasure to listen to dignitaries from member States.

On behalf of the Conference and on my own, I would like to extend a warm welcome to His Excellency Mr. Frank Belfrage, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of Sweden. Excellency, you have the floor.

Mr. BELFRAGE (Sweden): Nuclear, biological and chemical weapons are designed to terrify as well as to destroy. They can, in the hands of either State or non-State actors, indiscriminately kill thousands and thousands of people in a single attack. The impact on mind, body and environment of such an attack will be long-lasting. They are the most inhumane of all weapons and threaten the very existence of mankind.

This is the opening message of the report of the Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission, which I have just read out, which was giving its report under the chairmanship of Dr. Hans Blix.

The risk of proliferation and use of weapons of mass destruction must be taken very seriously. That is, of course, the message that we all share. I think we need to remind ourselves of what is at stake. That was one of the great values of that report.

If there were to be one new State with nuclear weapons, there is danger that another would follow, and then another. With every addition, the number of nuclear stand-offs would increase exponentially, and with it the risk that somehow, somewhere, a situation will arise where these weapons will be used, or fall into the hands of terrorists.

The commitment of all parties to the NPT to ease international tensions in order to facilitate the elimination from national arsenals of nuclear weapons and their means of delivery is, as the Minister of Defence of a nuclear-weapon State recently stated in this room, "not some get-out clause for the five recognized nuclear-weapon States". It is a fundamental recognition of the relationship between nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation and the joint commitment and responsibility which follows.

If we are not to succumb to an increasing risk of the use, by State or non-State actors, of nuclear weapons, we need to keep alive the vision of a world free of nuclear weapons, indeed of all weapons of mass destruction.

The nuclear Powers have a special duty - to live up to their responsibilities and show leadership. Leadership demands courage. Courage to resist the temptation to reach for traditional means of defence in the face of new and emerging threats to global and human security.

(Mr. Belfrage, Sweden)

However, that does not absolve the rest of us. We must all contribute to the easing of international tensions. We must all make sure that there is no doubt that we are all committed to prevent the proliferation of these weapons. This is our side of the bargain, which must not be forgotten.

Those who choose to see only one side of this balance are in fact challenging the vision of a world free of weapons of mass destruction. Doing so invites a reaction and undue emphasis on the other side of the balance in other quarters. That road can only lead to mutually assured paralysis, to borrow the phrase of Kofi Annan.

The Conference on Disarmament, established as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, has a special role and should be the place to demonstrate one's willingness to avoid such paralysis. The past successes of the CD, including the negotiation of treaties outlawing chemical and biological weapons, speak for themselves. Those few remaining States that have not already done so should therefore in our view endorse the adoption of a programme of work as contained in the famous document L.1. This proposal contains a carefully crafted compromise. It was never meant to resolve, in and by itself, real differences in security perceptions. However, we remain convinced that it can form the basis for substantive work to the benefit of all members of the Conference, without undermining any member State's ability to defend its legitimate security interests.

In recent months, claims have been made of the possible need to take measures involving nuclear capabilities, such as retargeting missiles in certain circumstances. Threats of this kind are unhelpful, and emanate from a logic dating from the cold war. Today's security challenges need cooperation and full transparency.

Although progress has been slower than planned, the principles underpinning the Six-Party Process can be considered as an example of this. Sweden, like its EU partners, attaches great importance to the common goal of the six parties to achieve the early denuclearization of the Korean peninsula in a peaceful manner.

We remain seriously concerned that the International Atomic Energy Agency, after four years of intense efforts, now reports that it is not yet in a position to determine the full nature of Iran's nuclear programme. The new resolution just adopted last weekend by the Security Council shows the concern of the international community over Iran's nuclear programme. On the basis of the resolutions of the United Nations Security Council, negotiations are the way forward here as well.

Progress towards the vision of a world free of weapons of mass destruction needs to be a common endeavour.

This vision and path towards realizing it was eloquently expressed in the report of the Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission, under the chairmanship of Dr. Hans Blix. I was reading the introductory passage earlier on in my speech. The report is a negotiated document.

(Mr. Belfrage, Sweden)

It takes into account the views and perspectives of 14 Commissioners, with different backgrounds, experiences and nationalities. With its 60 recommendations, 30 of which deal with nuclear weapons, the report provides a realistic platform for our future efforts to realize our common long-term goal.

There is an emerging sense of optimism in the international community, as was reflected in the statement yesterday in this hall by the Norwegian Foreign Minister. We may soon find ourselves in a period of opportunity for international non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament. For example, it is virtually impossible today to discuss these issues without referring to the articles in the Wall Street Journal written by Henry Kissinger, George Shultz, William Perry and Sam Nunn. These seasoned architects of United States national security strategies called for renewed leadership and courage to change the outdated cold war posture of deployed nuclear weapons and to increase warning times to reduce the danger of accidental or unauthorized use, a proposal very much in line with the resolution "Decreasing the operational readiness of nuclear weapons systems" presented at last year's United Nations General Assembly by a group of countries, including my own. In the articles they also argued convincingly, from a security perspective, for further reductions of nuclear stockpiles, renewed efforts for the entry into force of the CTBT, and a negotiated ban on the production of fissile material for weapons purposes.

There is thus a momentum, one could argue, to build on, and the CD is a forum in which to seize this opportunity.

One of the key issues before the CD is the fissile material cut-off treaty. Such a treaty, with the appropriate scope and agreed verification measures, would ultimately limit the ability of its States parties to expand their nuclear arsenals. It can be seen as a litmus test of the political will to avoid new global or regional arms races in the nuclear field.

Recognizing that such negotiations may take time, a formal declaration, pending the conclusion of a treaty, of a moratorium on the production of fissile materials for weapon purposes by all relevant States would surely smooth the way towards substantial FMCT negotiations. Indeed, some States have already made such declarations. Regionally, a moratorium could also help break negative momentum and prove to be of great importance in easing tensions.

Another key, and highly topical, issue before the CD is outer space. In this age of globalization, mankind is becoming ever more dependent on the peaceful use of space, underlining the need for discussions on space security. This involves both preventing an arms race in space as well as the creation of debris through tests or use of anti-satellite weapons. The European Union is presently working on a proposal for a set of transparency and confidence-building measures. Multilateral agreement on such measures would be an important stepping stone towards a strengthened legally binding multilateral regime.

(Mr. Belfrage, Sweden)

Let me also take the opportunity to note a step in the right direction in this area, namely the proposal by Russia, together with China, for a draft treaty on the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space. Nevertheless, I would also note that Sweden has a number of questions and concerns regarding the draft. These include, for example, certain definitions and scope as well as the issues of development and testing of weapons and verification of compliance with any future treaty.

In its Common Position relating to the 2005 NPT Review Conference, the European Union reiterates that it regards the NPT as the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime, the essential foundation for the pursuit of disarmament in accordance with article VI of the NPT and an important element in the further development of nuclear energy applications for peaceful purposes. The 2010 review cycle has begun with both an unacceptable and unnecessary conflict over formalities and - eventually - with a constructive readiness for substantial debate.

I believe that a new platform such as the one suggested by the emerging consensus of the report of the Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission and the Wall Street Journal articles requires new initiatives. Yet we must not let ourselves be blinded by novelty to the point where we forget what has already been achieved. The grand bargain of the NPT is one such achievement. In 1995 and 2000 this was reconfirmed through, inter alia, the decision to extend the treaty indefinitely. At the latter review, 13 practical steps towards nuclear disarmament were also agreed on the disarmament side of the bargain.

How then could the fundamental commitments of the NPT be built upon and developed?

In addition to the immediate launch of negotiations, without preconditions, on an FMCT, perhaps the most obvious example is the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty. The CTBT is a vital component of the common international effort to prevent nuclear weapons proliferation and to bring about nuclear disarmament. It is a matter of deep concern to my Government that the CTBT, more than 10 years after it was opened for signature, has not yet entered into force. The reasons are well known: although it has been ratified by no less than 144 States, 9 out of the 44 States referred to in annex 2 of the Treaty as necessary for its entry into force have not yet done so. Moreover, out of these nine, seven are nuclear-weapon or nuclear-weapon-capable States for whom nuclear testing might still appear as an option under certain circumstances.

Sweden believes that intensified efforts must now be made to convince those nine States to proceed to the ratification of the Treaty and thus to its entry into force. There can, in our mind, be little doubt that the elaborate verification and control system now approaching its completion within the CTBTO makes it virtually impossible to conduct clandestine nuclear testing. As the role and importance of nuclear weapons themselves decrease in a world of new and different security challenges, consequently, so does the need for any further testing.

We urge the nine States in question to seize the opportunity which now exists to ratify the CTBT and thereby ensure its entry into force as well as the operationalization of the CTBTO verification system. At the same time, we encourage all other States which have not yet either signed or ratified the Treaty to do so without delay.

(Mr. Belfrage, Sweden)

Another important example is the effort presently exerted towards a multilateralization, in some form, of the nuclear fuel cycle. A fuel-cycle-centred solution could be a way to strike a balance between, on the one hand, the right to the peaceful use of nuclear energy and on the other hand the risks of proliferation. Such an approach has the advantage of being non-intrusive and inclusive. Sweden hopes for and looks forward to a constructive discussion, in the appropriate forums, of the various proposals that have been presented.

One existing achievement to which a new initiative has been applied is the Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty. The conclusion of the INF Treaty in 1987 was an important international disarmament effort that demonstrated the commitment of the parties to implementing article VI of the NPT. The INF Treaty was also a major contribution to the reduction of tensions in Europe. Even after the end of the cold war, it remains a pillar in the European security architecture. In a joint declaration in October last year the United States and Russia reaffirmed their continued support for the INF Treaty. They also suggested a broadening of the Treaty. A successful multilateralization of this Treaty or its principles would be welcome. However, any new, geographically extended version of the INF Treaty should not undermine existing commitments. And a failure to multilateralize the INF regime cannot be used as an excuse to walk away from this key treaty.

While on the subject of United States-Russian initiatives, let me also welcome the continuation of bilateral discussions between Russia and the United States on an extension of the START agreement. Several nuclear-weapon States have made cuts in their nuclear arsenals since the end of the cold war, and the largest reductions have been made by the United States and Russia. This must be welcomed. Success in extending and deepening these cuts in a transparent and irreversible way would be another important signal reconfirming the vision of a world free of weapons of mass destruction. An extension in some form of the START agreement would also safeguard established verification mechanisms.

In this context, allow me to touch upon the issue of so-called non-strategic nuclear weapons. There is no reason to keep these weapons in a Europe less militarized and with fewer tensions than at any time during the past 100 years. This category of weapons would, in our view, have a natural place in upcoming United States-Russian talks and negotiations. Reaching agreement on the elimination, or at least withdrawal from active duty, of a category of weapons so clearly designed for another age and time would indeed be a show of statesmanship and leadership.

Nuclear-weapon disarmament and non-proliferation will continue to demand the attention of the international community and the CD itself. But we must not forget conventional weapons. Sweden regrets the Russian suspension of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, a cornerstone of European arms control with a valuable and transparent inspection regime. Sweden would welcome the entry into force of the adjusted CFE agreement as soon as possible.

(Mr. Belfrage, Sweden)

More generally, efforts to achieve an arms trade treaty regulating the trade in conventional arms should be accelerated.

The 2001 United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons should be fully implemented and further strengthened. This is essential not least given the direct effect on the security, and thus development, of those countries most affected by these weapons. Sweden looks forward to the biennial meeting of States in July as well as to a continued process at the global level.

With regard then to the ongoing United Nations CCW and Oslo processes on cluster munitions, Sweden would like to reiterate its support for the efforts made in both forums to prohibit cluster munitions that have unacceptable humanitarian consequences. We look forward after Wellington to a continued constructive dialogue and negotiations leading to broad agreement on an ambitious and effective regulation of cluster munitions.

In the years of stalemate in this forum - over a decade of distrust, tactics and blocked negotiations - there has not been a lack of good ideas. Nor has there been a lack of skilled and committed diplomats here in Geneva. I commend all those who have put years of time and energy into breathing life back into the CD. This includes intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, which should continue to play an important and constructive role in the CD, as elsewhere. In this context I want to particularly mention the contribution of the NGO representatives who will meet in this very hall tomorrow, on the occasion of International Women's Day, to discuss "Women, wars, weapons and conflict prevention" and how to fulfil the vision of Security Council resolution 1325.

To sum up, the use of a nuclear or other weapon of mass destruction, whether by a State or non-State actor, would be catastrophic. We need to keep the vision of a world free of weapons of mass destruction alive, and continue our journey towards it, step by step.

It is high time for the Conference on Disarmament to make a contribution towards this end. Let us seize this opportunity.

The PRESIDENT: I thank you, Mr. Secretary, for your comprehensive statement, covering different aspects of disarmament. It is of course commensurate with the active role played by Sweden in this field. Your statement is also, in my view, an expression of the great support of your Government for the work which is being done here. We appreciate it. I shall now suspend the meeting for a couple of minutes in order to escort His Excellency the State Secretary out of the Council chamber.

The meeting was suspended at 12.30 p.m. and resumed at 12.32 p.m.

The PRESIDENT: On my list of speakers I have the Ambassador of the Syrian Arab Republic, Ambassador Hamoui, who will deliver a statement on behalf of the Group of 21. Ambassador Hamoui, you have the floor.

Mr. HAMOUI (Syrian Arab Republic): I have the honour to deliver the following statement on behalf of the Group of 21:

“G-21 statement on negative security assurances

- “1. The Group reaffirms that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. The Group remains convinced that as long as nuclear weapons exist, so also will the risk of their proliferation and possible use remain with us.
- “2. Pending the achievement of the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, the Group reaffirms the urgent need to reach an early agreement on a universal, unconditional and legally binding instrument to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. Such an instrument should be clear, credible, without any ambiguity, and should respond to the concerns of all the parties.
- “3. The Group believes that there is a need to recognize the right of non-nuclear-weapon States not to be attacked by or threatened with the use of nuclear weapons. This position is a long-standing one.
- “4. The Group underlines the unanimous conclusion of the International Court of Justice that there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and to bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control.
- “5. The Group highlights the objectives laid down in General Assembly resolution 62/27, entitled ‘Promotion of multilateralism in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation’, which, among other things, reaffirms multilateralism as the core principle in resolving disarmament and non-proliferation concerns.
- “6. The Group remains deeply concerned at strategic defence doctrines which not only set out rationales for the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, but also maintain unjustifiable concepts on international security, based on promoting and developing military alliances’ nuclear deterrence policies.
- “7. The Group believes that the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned and taking into account provisions of the first United Nations General Assembly devoted to disarmament is a positive step and important measure towards strengthening global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. In this context, the Group welcomes the NWFZs established by the treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Bangkok, Pelindaba, Semipalatinsk and Mongolia’s nuclear-weapon-free status. The Group reiterates that in the context of nuclear-weapon-free zones, it is essential that NWS should provide unconditional assurances against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons to all States of the zones.

(Mr. Hamoui, Syrian Arab Republic)

- “8. The Group reiterates its support for the establishment in the Middle East of a zone free of all nuclear weapons. To this end, the Group reaffirms the need for the speedy establishment of a NWFZ in the Middle East in accordance with Security Council resolution 487 (1981) and paragraph 14 of Security Council resolution 687 (1991) and the relevant General Assembly resolutions adopted by consensus.
- “9. While the Group believes that the NWFZs are positive steps towards strengthening global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, it does not subscribe to the arguments stating that declarations that have been made by the nuclear-weapon States are sufficient, or that security assurances should only be granted in the context of nuclear-weapon-free zones. In addition, given their geographical limitation, security assurances guaranteed to States members of nuclear-weapon-free zones cannot substitute for universal legally binding security assurances.
- “10. The Group recalls that the demand for security assurances was raised by the non-nuclear-weapon States in the 1960s, and it crystallized in 1968 during the concluding phase of the negotiations for the NPT. The response of the nuclear-weapon States reflected in resolutions 255 (1968) and 984 (1995) of the Security Council was considered incomplete, partial and conditional by the non-nuclear-weapon States. The demand for assurances persists.
- “11. The Group accepts that while various approaches exist, efforts to conclude a universal and legally binding instrument on security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States should be pursued. The Group considers that the conclusion of such an instrument would be an important step towards achieving the objectives of arms control, nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation in all its aspects.”

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Ambassador of Syria for his statement.

I have no more speakers on my list. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor? That does not seem to be the case.

This concludes our business for this morning.

The next formal meeting of the Conference will be held on Tuesday, 11 March, at 10 a.m. in this chamber.

The meeting rose at 12.40 p.m.