

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE ONE THOUSAND ONE HUNDRED AND FIRST PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 18 March 2008, at 10.10 a.m.

President:

Mr. Yevhen BERSHEDA

(Ukraine)

The PRESIDENT (spoke in French): I call to order the 1101st plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. I would like to begin by extending a warm welcome to our new colleague, His Excellency Ambassador Luiz Filipe de Macedo Soares, who has taken up the post of Permanent Representative of Brazil to the Conference on Disarmament. On behalf of the Conference and in my personal capacity I would like to assure him of our cooperation and support in the fulfilment of his new responsibilities.

(spoke in English)

According to the schedule of rotation based on the rules of procedure of the Conference on Disarmament, the delegation of Ukraine, for the second time during its CD membership, is assuming the presidency at this single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum.

Without any doubt it is a great honour and responsibility for my country and for me personally as the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the Conference on Disarmament.

On 4 March 2008 the First Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, Mr. Volodymyr Handogiy, expressed Ukraine's full support for the work of the Conference and restated the commitments of our country in the sphere of disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, which is one of the priorities of Ukraine's foreign policy. Voluntary abandonment of the world's third largest nuclear arsenal is concrete evidence of that fact. This step could be considered as a historic achievement not only for our State but for all of humanity.

Ukraine's high-level representative in his statement also pointed out some assessments and priorities, taking into account the situation at the Conference on Disarmament and how to get the CD back to effective work.

Commencing the presidency, I would like to say warm words of gratitude to my predecessors, the distinguished Permanent Representative of Tunisia, Ambassador Samir Labidi, and the distinguished Permanent Representative of Turkey, Ambassador Ahmet Üzümcü, for their sincere efforts in moving the CD forward.

In that regard, I cannot but welcome the work of the agenda item coordinators, the permanent representatives of Chile, Japan, Canada, Senegal, Bulgaria, Sri Lanka and Indonesia, who spare no efforts in making the informal debates on the agenda items as fruitful and interactive as possible.

I would also like to pay tribute to the 2007 Presidents of the CD for their endeavours, which laid a good basis for our work this year.

And, of course, our work in the CD would be much more difficult without the openness and invaluable support of the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Sergei Ordzhonikidze, and his deputy, Mr. Tim Caughley, as well as their colleagues from the secretariat. My special words of appreciation are also addressed to the interpreters for their assistance.

(The President)

I would like to emphasize that the cooperation between the six Presidents of 2008, who represent the States of four continents and the three regional groups of the CD, is evolving in an atmosphere of transparency, mutual respect, trust and constructive understanding.

The special feature of the 2008 session of the Conference on Disarmament is the unprecedented attention from the United Nations leadership, CD member States and the mass media. The conclusions and concrete proposals mentioned in the statements of the United Nations Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Ban Ki-moon, and the dignitaries of 15 member States undoubtedly demand careful analysis to make good use of them in the further work of the Conference.

While preparing for our presidency, the Ukrainian delegation has taken part in and initiated numerous consultations with colleagues and attentively studied the experience of our predecessors who presided over the Conference not only in 2008 but in previous years.

In order to assess the tasks of the CD during Ukraine's presidency, we have tried to take into consideration the allocation of responsibilities between Presidents based on them belonging to the first, second or third part of the session.

Ukraine is the third President of 2008, and just like last year, our presidency is taking place after concluding informal discussions on the agenda items. The constructive cooperation between the six Presidents of 2007 resulted in the submission at the end of March last year of the Presidential draft decision aimed at commencement of the substantive work of the Conference.

I hope you have noticed that during the informal debates in February-March 2008 the most active discussions have been held on the agenda items reflected in the Presidential draft decision of 2007.

Thus it can be assumed that the content of the Presidential draft decision of 2007 has not lost its relevance.

With this in mind, and taking into account the results of the CD work in 2007 and during the first eight weeks of this year, the 2008 CD Presidents have distributed for consideration by the Conference a draft decision (CD/1840). CD/1840 is an attempt to integrate the efforts of each and every CD member to step up the work of the Conference and gain consensus on the way forward. It provides a good basis for the continuation of consultations and the intensification of our common endeavours towards achieving global security.

The atmosphere of cooperation, tolerance, openness and transparency, the willingness to take into account the views of each and every member, which dominates the Conference on Disarmament, is a precondition for the successful accomplishment of consensus-building.

Let me remind you that the Conference on Disarmament possesses an extensive range of well-tried methods to achieve decisions which are acceptable to all our member States.

(The President)

These methods include formal and informal plenary sittings as well as bilateral consultations, regional group meetings, Presidential consultations and regional consultations. The key element of our success is proper diplomatic support.

In our view, a gradual approach in the content of debates in the CD to the negotiations format could contribute to finding a compromise decision. One of the possible ways to achieve this goal could be to make our discussions more interactive and to exchange views.

This approach would envisage moving the emphasis from declaring national positions to concrete comments on the items set out in the agreed Conference agenda for 2008. The implementation of different methods could make a positive input on the situation at the CD, but the presence of political will remains key to achieving consensus.

In conclusion, I would like to inform you that in accordance with the updated organizational framework for the 2008 session, the work of the CD during the presidency of Ukraine will be conducted according to the schedule which includes weekly plenary meetings, regional group consultations, P-6 meetings and P-6 consultations with the regional coordinators and CD members.

A week ago during the CD plenary we heard the disturbing statement which the participants at a seminar on disarmament made on the occasion of International Women's Day. The attention of civil society to the work of CD as well as criticism of the Conference is increasing.

Undoubtedly, conducting multilateral negotiations on disarmament is a very complicated and delicate process, which does not bring immediate results. As Sir Winston Churchill said: "To build may have to be the slow and laborious task of years. To destroy can be the thoughtless act of a single day."

Taking into consideration that, in fact, the problems of world, regional and national security are being discussed, our members behave reasonably and cautiously and make a comprehensive analysis of discussed issues. Moreover, the success of the CD depends on the geostrategic and internal situation in member States. However, may I remind you that forthcoming results are worth the spent endeavours and are long expected by the world community?

(spoke in French)

For the time being I have no speakers on my list for today's plenary meeting, but I see that the Ambassador of China would like to take the floor.

Mr. WANG (China): Mr. President, may I begin by telling you how pleased I am to see you here in the presidency of the CD? I would like to offer my warmest congratulations. I would also like to commend all your work and efforts, because despite the fact that this is the very first day for you to assume the presidency, nevertheless, you virtually have already endeavoured and carried out wide and informal consultations with a view to advancing the work of the CD.

(Mr. Wang, China)

We for our part are very much appreciative of all these efforts on your part. And I would like to commend you in particular for the sentiments you have outlined in your statement, especially to the effect that the atmosphere of cooperation, tolerance, openness and transparency, and the willingness to take into account the views of each and every member, which dominates the Conference on Disarmament, is a precondition for the successful accomplishment of consensus-building. I see much wisdom in this indication, so let me assure you that my delegation will be fully cooperative and will support your work.

In addition, my delegation also wishes to express our appreciation for the enormous work done by the six Presidents, including the distinguished Ambassador of Tunisia, the distinguished Ambassador of Turkey and also the distinguished Ambassador of Syria. We would also like to thank them for all their efforts. We would also like to thank the Secretary-General as well as the Deputy Secretary-General of the CD for the enormous efforts they put into the work of the CD.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in French): I thank the Permanent Representative of China for his statement and for his kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Brazil.

Mr. de MACEDO SOARES (Brazil) (spoke in French): Mr. President, I did believe that I had put my name down to speak, but you will pardon some minor confusion on the part of a newcomer. I would like to thank you very much for the kind words which you addressed to me and for your words of welcome. I also thank my colleague from China for his words of welcome.

(spoke in English)

Allow me to turn to English now. It is for me a happy coincidence to start my formal participation in the Conference on Disarmament as Permanent Representative of Brazil this very day when you are presiding over your first plenary session of the CD in the capacity of its new President. Let then my first words signify a pledge of cooperation on the part of the representative of Brazil to the success of your tenure, which will surely correspond to your recognized qualities as the Permanent Representative of Ukraine.

The fact that Brazil decided to establish a permanent diplomatic mission in Geneva to ensure its representation to the Conference on Disarmament and to deal with the multilateral treatment of the themes related to disarmament - non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the transfer of sensitive technologies and international security and related matters - demonstrates our strong commitment to the international efforts to reach meaningful agreements on questions essential to the United Nations central goal, which is peace. This decision taken by Brazil is also evidence of our belief in the relevance of the Conference on Disarmament as the single multilateral forum with a mandate to negotiate agreements on disarmament.

May I, on a personal note, express the honour and the satisfaction I experience in the prospect of working with you, Mr. President, and with all my colleagues, permanent representatives and members of their delegations, feelings that are extended to the

(Mr. de Macedo Soares, Brazil)

Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, Mr. Sergei Ordzhonikidze, the Deputy Secretary-General, Mr. Tim Caughley, and their staff? From all of you, I am sure I will be receiving the most valuable ideas, in return for which you may count on my faithful and permanent collaboration.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in French): I thank the Permanent Representative of Brazil for his statement and for his kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. CHANG (Republic of Korea): Mr. President, first of all, let me congratulate you on your assumption of the third presidency of the 2008 Conference on Disarmament at this important moment. You have my delegation's full support in your endeavour to guide our work. I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to Ambassador Ahmet Üzümcü of Turkey, who laid out an excellent basis for substantive work throughout this year. Last Thursday former President Üzümcü distributed a document entitled "Draft decision by the Presidents of the 2008 session of the Conference on Disarmament", contained in CD/1840. Above all, I appreciate the dedicated efforts of the P-6 to place the CD back to work and begin negotiations and substantive discussions on the core issues, which have finally produced the new document on the programme of work.

I would like to remind distinguished colleagues present here today that we have now arrived at an important crossroads, and we should choose the right direction. If we take the wrong turn and lose this opportunity, it will again take a long time and a lot of efforts to get back on the right track. I know it is never an easy job for you to lead the Conference at this crossroads and to mobilize the necessary consensus. However, as the First Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine emphasized in this Council chamber on 4 March, my delegation believes you will lead this Conference to a constructive dialogue aimed at breaking the current impasse and getting the CD back to effective work.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in French): I thank the representative of the Republic of Korea for his statement and for his kind words addressed to the Chair. Allow me to give the floor to the Permanent Representative of the Netherlands.

Mr. VAN DONKERSGOED (Netherlands): Mr. President, as coordinator for WEOG, the delegation of the Netherlands would like to congratulate you on the assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament in this 2008 session. Thank you for your inspiring words. Please allow me also to thank the outgoing President, the distinguished Ambassador of Turkey, for guiding us through our work in these last weeks. We welcome you as our President, and we assure you as a group of our full cooperation and support. We look forward to actively participating in the continued consultations on the Presidential draft decision contained in document CD/1840, with a view to breaking the deadlock in the Conference and agreeing on a programme of work for this very important and august body.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in French): Thank you. I now give the floor to Indonesia.

Mr. PUJA (Indonesia): Mr. President, first of all let me congratulate you on your presidency and assure you of my delegation's support and cooperation in assisting you in the discharge of your challenging tasks. Allow me also to commend your predecessors, the Ambassadors of Turkey and Tunisia, for their leadership and for the great efforts undertaken in trying to get the CD out of its stalemate.

I believe that we have fully agreed that the CD has to move forward and make further progress. We always appreciate any endeavours to break the impasse in such a way as to bring the CD back on track. We also appreciate the more transparent and open manner in which the Presidents have conducted this process. I wish also to underline the merit of thorough and prior consultations, which should be conducted as broadly as possible in order to ensure that any proposal is worth further discussion. I believe in the strength of intensive consultations that will help strengthen the conducive situation that is being developed thus far.

In this connection, my delegation shares the view of the previous speakers that genuine and constructive dialogue, which is vital to ensuring the success of the CD, should become the means through which a transparent approach is applied to our efforts to move this process further along. In addition, a balanced and comprehensive approach is equally essential. Progress can be best achieved through the consideration of the concerns of all. I also believe that a cohesive process through intensive informal meetings, a spirit of coordination, understanding and flexibility will encourage us to achieve further progress.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in French): I thank the Permanent Representative of Indonesia and I give the floor to the representative of Algeria.

Mr. KHELIF (Algeria) (spoke in French): First of all, Mr. President, the delegation of Algeria would like to congratulate you on taking the Chair to preside over our proceedings at a very crucial phase for the Conference on Disarmament and would like at the same time to pay tribute to your predecessors, the Ambassadors of Tunisia and Turkey, for all their ceaseless efforts in the interests of the Conference. It would also like to thank the Permanent Representative of Turkey for presenting us with a new proposal which is based in particular on document L.1 of last year and was issued under the symbol CD/1840. The Algerian delegation takes note of this proposal, which it believes is a significant step forward in comparison to document L.1. Nevertheless, and despite the improvements made to document L.1, some concerns remain. This is why we invite you, Mr. President, as well as all the other Presidents for 2008, to continue the consultations in whatever framework you find appropriate in order to bring positions together and overcome the stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament, which has lasted long enough.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in French): Thank you very much. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor at this stage? It seems not. I would now like to make a statement on behalf of the Presidents of the 2008 session of the Conference on Disarmament. The Presidents of the 2008 session of the Conference on Disarmament have the honour to thank the Permanent Representative of China for his request concerning the interpretation of the draft decision proposed in document CD/1840 by the Presidents of the 2008 session of the Conference in the context of rule 18 of the rules of procedure, a request made during the plenary meeting

(The President)

on 13 March 2008, and wish to state the following: the request of the Permanent Representative of China was considered by the Presidents of the 2008 session together with the representative of the secretariat of the Conference on Disarmament. The Presidents of the 2008 session proceed from the principle that document CD/1840 is a draft decision proposed to the Conference by the Presidents of the 2008 session on 13 March 2008 for consideration and adoption. The presentation of document CD/1840 should be considered as aimed at facilitating consultations in a spirit of flexibility and compromise with a view to the early commencement of the substantive work of the Conference.

Before adjourning the meeting I would like to draw your attention to the “Survey on Conference Services provided by UNOG”. As in previous years, the Conference Services Division seeks the cooperation of the delegations participating in the work of the Conference on Disarmament in completing the questionnaires on conference services provided to the Conference on Disarmament by the United Nations Office at Geneva, with particular reference to meeting scheduling, interpretation, linguistic quality of documents, their timely issue and distribution, the electronic document distribution system and conference room officers. Your replies to the questionnaire will assist the Division to improve the quality of the services provided to member States. I would appreciate it if you could fill it in and return it to the conference room officer, preferably before the adjournment of this meeting. I thank you for your cooperation.

I see that the Permanent Representative of China would like to take the floor.

Mr. WANG (China): Mr. President, in relation to the clarifications you have just offered, I want to say that such clarification is duly taken note of; and secondly, in relation to the reply to the personal question I posed, I would have to say that I am very much appreciative of the six Presidents’ sincere efforts, as well as their professional spirit.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in French): Thank you very much. This concludes our business for today. The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Thursday, 27 March 2008, at 10 a.m. in this room. The meeting stands adjourned.

The meeting rose at 10.45 a.m.