

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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ENGLISH

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

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 5 August 2008, at 10.15 a.m.

President: Ms. Christina ROCCA (United States of America)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 1112th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

I have the following delegate wishing to take the floor: the Ambassador of Colombia. I now give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador of Colombia.

Ms. FORERO UCRÓS (Colombia) (spoke in Spanish): Madam President, as this is the first time I am taking the floor under your presidency, may I, on behalf of my delegation, offer you our congratulations and express our pleasure at seeing you presiding over our work and assure you of our full cooperation and support in it. We are grateful for the efforts you are making and will continue to support them and those of the Presidents who will assume office in the Conference after you, efforts aimed at finding solutions to overcome the stalemate that we are in.

My delegation wishes to reiterate the position stated in March of this year by Argentina on behalf of some Latin American countries, including Colombia, in which we expressed support for the proposal put forward by the six Presidents contained in document CD/1840. For Colombia, this proposal is a result of the efforts made by the six Presidents from 2007 and 2008 and provides continuity in the work of the Conference and offers an opportunity to move forward in building a consensus that is still difficult and complex, but not impossible. On several occasions my delegation has shown flexibility in supporting the various proposals that have been put forward in the Conference with a view to approving a programme of work that would make it possible to resume this forum's work. The importance of this has been recognized by the international community because of the significant achievements made in the past in the field of disarmament and security. However, it will be a different story if we do not today have the will to rescue the Conference from this major challenge. It is imperative that the Conference on Disarmament go back to its roots, that is, exercise its functions as a multilateral disarmament negotiating forum and so avoid a further deterioration in its credibility.

I would take this opportunity to refer to another issue of vital importance for my country in the field of disarmament and security. As is well known, the week of 14-18 July last saw the holding in New York, with the presence of 136 delegations, of the Third Biannual Meeting of States in the context of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons, in All Its Aspects. The Meeting, presided over by Ambassador Dalius Cekuolis, Permanent Representative of Lithuania to the United Nations in New York, dealt with the issues of cooperation, international assistance and national capacity-building as an independent and cross-cutting theme; a marking and tracing instrument; illicit brokering, and the management and destruction of stockpiles. After a week of intensive debate on these issues, including an exchange of national experiences, countries managed to adopt a final document that we consider reflects their interest in moving forward in implementing the Programme of Action through the identification of the next steps to be taken in respect of the issues dealt with and the possibility of setting up a follow-up mechanism for the Programme of Action. We are of the view that the adoption of the final document is a major

(Mr. Forero Ucrós, Colombia)

step forward for salvaging and continuing the process of dealing with small arms and light weapons within the framework of the United Nations, a process in keeping with the appeal of more than 100 countries to combat effectively illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons.

In my country we have boldly tackled the terrorist activities of illegal arms groups that acquire large quantities of weapons on the black market, a market that is largely fed by drug trafficking and diversion of State transfers. This makes it necessary for the international community to redouble its efforts to tackle the question of armed non-State actors and prevent the serious consequences of their activities for the civilian population and democratic institutions.

Lastly, on the matter of anti-personnel mines, I am honoured to announce the launching of a national technical training programme for comprehensive action to combat anti-personnel mines that will benefit the people of 16 provinces of the country which have been affected by the presence of these deadly devices. The launching of the plan was carried out last week by the Vice-President of the Republic, Mr. Francisco Santos. This initiative, which represents a step forward at the national level in human-resource training and education, seeks to train people in occupational health, provision of care in the event of accidents, recovery of the population in situations of crises, emergencies and disasters, and assistance to victims of anti-personnel mines and unexploded munitions. In addition, all these efforts will lead to a strengthening of the social fabric in at-risk communities and the promotion of activities to reduce the risks caused by mines. The goal for the end of the year is to train 960 people in the training course entitled "Community education officers". In addition, we aim to provide supplementary training to more than 6,000 persons linked to the productive programmes of the National Training Service. The maximum duration of technical training is 1,760 hours. Graduates will perform their duties in regions affected by the scourge of mines and will be working for public or private entities or international cooperation bodies.

In Colombia, tragically, there are three victims of anti-personnel mines per day. A total of 692 municipalities are affected by the presence of these devices and from 1990 up to 14 July 2008, there have been 7,084 victims of anti-personnel mines. We are one of the countries most seriously affected by anti personnel mines, in that illegal armed groups have promoted and continued to promote the use of these devices, which affect the civilian population and delay the economic and social development of the affected communities. In the midst of this complex scenario, the international community can be fully assured that Colombia will continue to respond as well as possible to the challenge of implementing the Ottawa Convention.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Colombia for her statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair.

There are no more speakers on my list. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor at this time? That does not seem to be the case.

(The President)

This concludes our business for today.

I wish to draw your attention to the fact that, in accordance with the schedule contained in CD/WP.549/Add.2, the Conference will convene this afternoon for an informal debate on agenda item 3 and on Thursday, 7 August, in the morning and afternoon, on agenda items 4 and 5, respectively. Debates on agenda items 6 and 7 are scheduled for next week on Tuesday, 12 August, and the next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Thursday, 14 August, at 10 a.m. in this chamber.

The meeting rose at 10.25 a.m.