

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE ONE THOUSAND ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-SEVENTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 26 February 2009, at 10.15 a.m.

President: Mr. Chitsaka CHIPAZIWA (Zimbabwe)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 1127th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. May I commence by the welcoming of a new colleague, the representative of the Government of Romania to the Conference on Disarmament, Ambassador Ciobanu. Let me take this opportunity to assure her of our full cooperation and support during her assignment.

On the list of speakers, I have just one person inscribed and that is Ambassador Maria Ciobanu.

Ms. CIOBANU (Romania): Mr. President, allow me first of all to congratulate you most sincerely on your assumption of the important office of President of the Conference on Disarmament and to wish you every success in your endeavours. I myself am new here in Geneva and I need encouragement and that is why I appreciate very much your kind words. I would also like to express my delegation's deep appreciation to your predecessor, Ambassador Le Hoai Trung, for the intense efforts made for moving the Conference forward towards substantive work.

While it is not my intention on this occasion to enter into an analysis of the present stalemate of the Conference, I would like to express some considerations on the need and opportunity to change the present situation within the CD. It is well known that the Conference on Disarmament is a fine-tuned barometer, very sensitive to international security evolutions and to the political climate between key actors on the global stage. During the last 11 years, the Conference has not lived up to its main task and the continuation of the present state of affairs will only further diminish the credibility of this unique multilateral body of negotiation.

In 2008, member States were closer than ever than for years to building consensus in this forum, but unfortunately failed to seize this opportunity and failed to take advantage of the new flavour of high-level interests shared by many countries last spring. Although we are all aware of the several attempts made under the successive CD presidencies, we are still unable to start real work and genuine negotiations. Many delegations have asked to make room for creativity in our work. My delegation shares the view that such a call is not at all restricted to the Presidents of the CD, but to its entire membership. During the last years, the Presidents of the Conference have done their best and it is also high time for members to do the same.

This year's annual session has only just begun, and we are still at the anticipatory stage, waiting for the arrival of a critical turning point. I hope this moment will come soon and that it will really mark the reinvigoration of multilateral disarmament. My delegation considers that the current P6 have creatively assumed last year's experience by proposing the draft organizational framework, as well as by requesting the seven coordinators to organize informal debates on each item on the CD agenda, which are still under way. Needless to say that the Romanian delegation is a strong supporter of these plans and it will act accordingly.

(Ms. Ciobanu, Romania)

Romania, like many other members of the Conference on Disarmament, is approaching the current annual session with great expectations for positive developments aimed at moving this body away from its already too long-standing stalemate. I would like to recall that my delegation has worked over the years with a sincere desire to contribute to reactivating the substantive work of this Conference - hence, the support of my country for L.1 and CD/1840.

In concluding, I would like to reiterate my readiness to work closely with you and my fellow colleagues. It is a privilege for me to be part of the diplomatic elite in Geneva and to participate actively in the deliberations of the Conference on Disarmament.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of Romania, Ambassador Ciobanu, for her statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair.

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

With respect to the work of the Conference for the remainder of this week, I would like to remind you that this afternoon we will hold the debate on agenda item 4. On Friday, 27 February, the informal debate on agenda item 6 will take place in the morning and the informal debate on agenda item 3 in the afternoon.

Could I also outline our work for next week, in particular on Tuesday, 3 March. We shall have the pleasure to welcome a number of high-level representatives. In the morning, it is proposed that we commence our work at 9.40 a.m. and we will listen to dignitaries from Chile, Iran and Italy. This formal plenary meeting will be followed by the second round of informal debates on agenda item 6. In the afternoon of 3 March, commencing at 3.20 p.m., we shall listen to the dignitary from Japan, who will address the Conference. The planned informal debate on agenda item 7 scheduled on that date will be postponed to the morning of Thursday, 5 March, following the plenary meeting on that day.

In light of the tight schedule of dignitaries on 3 March in the morning, could I kindly appeal to delegations to make every effort to arrive on time so that we can listen to the dignitaries. May I also ask the Secretariat to circulate information regarding next week's activities to all delegations.

Before adjourning our meeting this morning, may I take this opportunity to bid farewell to the Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, Mr. Tim Caughley. He, we are informed, has reached the mandatory United Nations retirement age. Personally I have not been as involved in matters of disarmament as I should have been, but it has been my luck, pleasure and honour to have learned a lot about how business is done here by Mr. Caughley. I knew him three years ago, before he left our midst as an Ambassador to the United Nations to come here to the Conference on Disarmament. In finding him here, I thought perhaps we would keep his company longer, but I was not privy to his birth certificate.

(The President)

Dear colleagues, I think I speak on behalf of all of us - the entire membership of the Conference - in appreciation for his expertise, his professionalism, his friendship, his collegiality to all of us. Mr. Caughley, may I wish you and your spouse the best in the future, but we are also privy to a little bit of information about your future, which is that perhaps you will remain around Geneva, so some members of this family of yours will be able to commune with you, to have contact with you in the future. I think this Chamber of ours is not given to expressions of emotion and appreciation of things in a physical way. (Applause.) I think I will give Tim the floor. Mr. Caughley, you have the floor.

Mr. CAUGHLEY (Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference): Thank you very much indeed, Mr. President, particularly for your own words and for the words on behalf of all colleagues. And if I may thank you very much for that and also to colleagues for breaking what I think is a long-held tradition in this chamber not to burst into a round of applause. So I am particularly moved by that, as indeed I was by your own words, and I thank you for the courtesy and consideration that you have shown me and my colleagues and indeed, I thank the P6 of this year, and the P6 in each of the three previous years in which it has been my privilege to fulfil this role.

I have many people to thank, and this is not the Oscars, so I am not going to read a long list, but I must thank the Secretary of the Conference, Jerzy Zaleski, who is the repository of all wisdom and knowledge about the CD and has provided me with fantastic support in my time here. And my team, Valère Mantels and Tom Kono and others sitting to my left, and of course, the interpreters, translators, précis-writers, press officers, conference officers - the whole team that make our work possible.

I was alerted by Jerzy Zaleski to some comments made by a predecessor of mine, Abdelkader Bensmail of Algeria, who said that the members of the Secretariat should be seen and not heard - and I believe in this maxim - but he went on to say some very wise things in his farewell statement to the CD. I can do no more than simply recommend that colleagues read CD/PV.861 of September 2000 in which his comments made then - admittedly, quite some time ago - for better or worse, still hold true eight, nine years later.

I leave at a point at which I think that perhaps, not so much necessarily yet on the floor of the Conference but certainly in the margins of it, there are some real stirrings, and I feel that there is spring in the air in this body, even if we are not seeing much of it outside yet. I feel a sense of disappointment leaving at this point when this inclination to perhaps talk less about the phrase "programme of work" and more about the word "work" is growing, because I sense that there is a real wish now to lay some firm foundations for negotiations that will inevitably follow.

I do not mean by commenting on the programme of work to diminish the procedural framework in which this Conference necessarily must operate, but I mention it because I think that one needs to keep the procedure in context, given the very serious, indeed grave and important issues that are on this body's agenda.

(Mr. Caughley, Deputy Secretary-General
of the Conference)

Mr. President, as you noted, I will certainly still be in Geneva. I hope that I will be sitting in the gallery when a programme of work is adopted and negotiations begin and I can help members celebrate that fact. But once again, thank you very much indeed for your kind comments.

The PRESIDENT: Does any delegation wish to take the floor? That does not seem to be the case. Mr. Caughley, thank you very much for your statement. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Japan.

Mr. TARUI (Japan): Mr. President, yes, I would like to say a word to Mr. Tim Caughley. I should like to express deep appreciation to you for your endeavours and great contributions to disarmament here in Geneva. Thanks to your tireless efforts, we have enjoyed very good cooperation with the Secretariat. There are many things to say at this moment to express my appreciation to you. But time is not enough to fully express our appreciation for your contributions to disarmament and to the work of the CD and the very seamless cooperation with diplomats here in Geneva.

Well, anyway, I am very much delighted to hear you will stay in Geneva after retirement and I am very happy about that, as I shall have a chance to see you again many times. But in any case, I wish you and your family all the best, best wishes. Thank you very much, Tim Caughley.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you, Ambassador for that statement. Is there anyone else who wishes to take the floor? That does not seem to be the case.

This concludes our business for today. As indicated, the next formal plenary meeting will be on Tuesday, 3 March, at 9.40 a.m. in this Chamber.

The meeting rose at 10.35 a.m.