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# Conference on Disarmament

26 March 2009

English

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## Final record of the one thousand one hundred and thirty-fourth plenary meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Thursday, 26 March 2009, at 10.10 a.m.

*President:* Mr. Idriss Jazairy ..... (Algeria)

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I call to order the 1134th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

Before giving the floor to the speakers on the list for today, I would like, on behalf of the Conference and on my own behalf, to take this opportunity to bid farewell to our distinguished colleague, Ambassador Petko Draganov, who, as you know, has recently been appointed Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. We are all grateful to Ambassador Draganov, who did not hesitate to take on the tasks of Permanent Representative in Geneva on two occasions, first between 1998 and 2000 and secondly from 2005 to the present. During his time in Geneva, Ambassador Draganov has represented his country with distinction and worked effectively in fields of disarmament and non-proliferation. He has occupied many posts, including those of President of the Conference and Special Coordinator. We are specially grateful to him for agreeing to serve as coordinator for agenda item 5 during the 2009 session, a role he discharged with the wisdom and professionalism we have long known him to possess. On behalf of the Conference on Disarmament and on my own behalf, I would like to convey to our colleague and his family all our best wishes for success in his new duties.

The following representatives are on the speakers' list for today: Ambassador Jürg Streuli of Switzerland, Ambassador Petko Draganov of Bulgaria and Ambassador Marius Grinius of Canada. If other delegations wish to take the floor on this occasion, I would be grateful if they would so inform the secretariat. Meanwhile I would like to give the floor to Ambassador Streuli.

**Mr. Streuli** (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, as I am taking the floor for the first time since you took the Chair, I would like first of all to congratulate you on your appointment as one of the Presidents for 2009 and thank your predecessors from Viet Nam and Zimbabwe for their hard work. I can also assure you and the other members of the P-6 of my delegations's full and wholehearted support.

I would also like to thank your Foreign Minister for the excellent speech he gave in this chamber on 17 March. The timing of this speech and the timing of your term more generally are very significant and very important. Switzerland supports your endeavour to ensure that this Conference moves towards a decisive phase.

I am addressing you as the President of the Conference of the Parties to the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of Anti-Personnel Mines, and I am particularly happy to do this while Algeria is in the Chair, as Algeria is a country fully engaged and very active in the implementation of this Convention.

The Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction entered into force on 1 March 1999.

Just three weeks ago, on 1 March, the 156 States parties to the Convention celebrated the tenth anniversary of its entry into force. Next week, 4 April, will be the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action. These two occasions provide us with an opportunity to take stock and assess progress in fulfilling our promise of a mine-free world.

Over the past 10 years, this Convention has helped to free the world of the suffering caused by anti-personnel mines. Considerable and measurable progress has been made with regard to stockpile destruction, mine clearance and victim assistance: States parties have destroyed more than 41 million stockpiled anti-personnel mines. They have made great progress to ensure that this type of weapon will never be used again; vast areas have been cleared and returned to communities; the annual number of victims has fallen from 20,000 in 1997 to 6,000 in 2007; a remarkable learning process has been initiated with regard to victim assistance. Today it is widely recognized that assisting victims goes beyond first aid.

It must be an inclusive and non-discriminatory process which includes the socio-economic reintegration of victims.

Thanks to the extraordinary support they have received from civil society, the parties to the Convention have made remarkable progress. But much still needs to be done before we fulfil our promise to put an end to the suffering caused by these indiscriminate weapons.

One of the ongoing challenges is clearing mines. A number of States have yet to complete demining within the Convention's 10-year time frame. In some places in the world, clearance might even take longer than expected, and last November we saw that justified extension requests were on the agenda at the meeting of the High Contracting Parties.

Another challenge is stockpile destruction. Compliance with the Convention's deadlines for stockpile destruction remains crucial and, as in the case of mine clearance, a joint effort between affected States and donor States is needed to fulfil the ambitious goals of the Convention.

A third challenge awaits us, that of universalization. Today, 156 States have acceded to the Convention, and 39 States have not yet signed this instrument. Working towards the universalization of the Convention continues to be a top priority for all States, and in particular for the President.

The adoption of the Convention on the Prohibition of Anti-Personnel Mines marks a shift in the international community's approach to human security and arms control. Governments worked side by side with civil society, far from traditional forums, and finally agreed to ban an entire class of weapon. The Convention has succeeded in promoting global norms. The use of anti-personnel mines is now stigmatized. The majority of States, even those remaining outside the Convention, have ceased production.

The treaty on the Prohibition of Anti-Personnel Mines has indeed proved to have moral authority beyond the Convention. Many States which still prefer not to accede to the Convention share the humanitarian conviction that no one should live under the threat of anti-personnel mines, which are inhumane and indiscriminate in their effects.

2009 is the year of the Second Review Conference and the Cartagena Summit on a Mine Free World. The Summit will be hosted by Colombia in Cartagena from 30 November to 4 December 2009 and will be chaired by Norway. This summit is an important milestone in the life of the Convention. We will review the last five years and check whether mine action and the Convention remain relevant for the future.

In conclusion, I would like to express three wishes. I am looking forward to even better results than last year at the United Nations General Assembly's First Committee in October, when the time comes to vote on the resolution on the implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of Anti-Personnel Mines. My dream and my aim is to reach consensus. Through a positive vote, governments can demonstrate their agreement with the moral principles and the humanitarian goals of the Convention.

Secondly, I hope that non-parties will embark on the road to Cartagena and attend the Cartagena Summit as observers.

Third, my last wish is that more countries will sign and ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Anti-Personnel Mines. This would send a strong signal to the Cartagena summit and prove that we are on the path to universalization and hence to our ultimate goal of a mine-free world.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I thank the Ambassador of Switzerland for his statement. I would like in particular to convey my appreciation to him for the support he expressed to the members of the team of six Presidents for this year, and to myself in

particular. If we are to deserve your congratulations, Mr. Ambassador, it is not enough for us to occupy this post in accordance with the principle of alphabetical order – we must also attain our goal of being the collegiate catalyst of a consensus on the programme of work this year. I also thank you for your positive evaluation of the statement made by the Algerian Minister for Foreign Affairs in the Conference on Disarmament on 17 March, and for your positive assessment of the contribution being made by Algeria to the application of the Ottawa Convention. Lastly, as the Permanent Representative of Algeria, I wholly endorse the three wishes you expressed at the end of your statement. I would now like to give the floor to Ambassador Petko Draganov of Bulgaria.

**Mr. Draganov** (Bulgaria) (*spoke in French*): I thank you for your kind words, Mr. President, which touched me very much.

(*spoke in English*)

Mr. President, as this is the first time I am making a statement under your presidency, let me congratulate you for taking the helm of the Conference on Disarmament. I have no doubt that member countries will benefit greatly from your refined negotiating skills and proven diplomatic authority. Rest assured of my delegation's continued support and great appreciation of the work done by you and the other members of the P-6. Upon completing my term of office, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all colleagues for the advice, cooperation and goodwill that I have enjoyed during my tour of duty. A special word of acknowledgment goes to the custodian of our proceedings, the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, Mr. Sergei Ordzhonikidze, and his staff. I would like to commend all the members of the secretariat for their energy and competence. Last but not least, I would like to thank the interpreters for their expertise and patience.

Farewell statements in our august body are normally a good occasion to take stock of the participation and evolution of positions of one's country, as well as to establish the record of one's own achievements. Well, in my case neither should be too difficult. My country has been a consistently constructive voice in this Conference, as it has lent support to all the major initiatives designed to overcome the predicament that we are in. Without preconditions Bulgaria has endeavoured to put this Conference back on the track of substantive work. As to what I have been able to achieve, the answer is easy, too: from the point of view of the goals before us, not as much as I would have liked. Nevertheless, I have had the privilege of being able to contribute to our efforts by facilitating and coordinating informal consultations on behalf of the Presidents of the Conference. Let me put on record how grateful and honoured I am by the trust and the positive cooperative attitude of all delegations present here. And let me also put on record that the last three years of our common undertaking have been a source of encouragement and a sign of hope for a better future, despite the difficult political context. The facts of life are quite straightforward and speak for themselves: according to available estimates, military expenditure worldwide is constantly growing at a rate higher than global economic growth, standing today at some 1.3 trillion United States dollars per year. If 10 per cent of world military expenditure were set aside each year, the Millennium Development Goals that we all seem to care so much about could be fully funded. It is no secret that the basic problems we face cannot be resolved here, as they are political by nature and touch upon the complex interaction of our individual concepts and perceptions of national and global security. And so, no matter how inventive or imaginative we get in the exercise of devising the perfectly balanced programme of work, at the end of the day we are not the big decision makers in this chamber.

In all likelihood, this is also my last statement to the Conference on Disarmament. And I am only saying "in all likelihood" as it happens to be, as you said yourself, my second farewell statement to the Conference on Disarmament. In that same vein and with all due respect, please allow me to quote from my previous farewell statement in 2001.

“Looking back, I recall my first appearance in this solemn hall and my first statement here. It was on the very day when the Conference was able to adopt, after prolonged negotiation, the decision to establish an Ad Hoc Committee on FMCT. I remember it well. Delegations expressed great satisfaction. Colleagues came up to me and congratulated me for bringing good luck to the Conference.

“I wonder. Probably because I was still new to this Conference, I did not quite grasp why this decision had been given so much importance that day. I figured the really important time would be when the Conference got down to real negotiations on an agreement per se. But, like I said, it was back then, and I was still a green hand. I know better now.

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“But three years seem so short now. And I still find myself involved in pre-negotiating intensive consultations on possible agreements on eventual substance. It sounds frustrating and, often enough, it is frustrating.

“Yet, I do not feel my time here has been wasted. On the contrary, I feel immensely enriched by the experience. I have discovered first-hand just how much hard work international arms control, peace and security require. I have made many friends and I have lots of unfinished business left. So, I will be back.”

It is part of our job description to be optimists. So, I do hope that the economic crises we are facing today will be seized as an opportunity for sober reflection to avoid a similar situation to what followed the last Great Depression. And I do believe there is no need for me to come back again in 10 years' time to make it “third time lucky”. I have witnessed the growing readiness for compromise and I have seen the vast potential for a breakthrough, based on our shared interests and common goals. I do feel more confident now that, sooner rather than later, the Conference on Disarmament will be able to resume its core purposeful activity, and I am looking forward to hearing about your imminent success.

Thank you, Mr. President, and good luck, dear colleagues, to you all.

**The President:** I thank the distinguished Ambassador of Bulgaria for his statement, his optimism and the way he referred to the crisis. I was told that in Chinese, crisis translates as a challenge and an opportunity. The Ambassador confirms that this is the case, so you certainly have a Chinese outlook on crisis, Mr. Ambassador. We congratulate you for it. You also expressed some concern about military expenditure, which was growing at a higher rate than global economic growth. So, perhaps now that economic growth is going in the other direction, military expenditure will be reduced at a higher rate than the reduction in economic growth, so that we could say that for every cloud there is a silver lining.

I now have the pleasure to give the floor to the distinguished representative of Canada, Ambassador Grinius.

**Mr. Grinius** (Canada) (*spoke in French*): As Canada is taking the floor for the first time during Algeria's term of office, Mr. President, please be assured that Canada will extend full support to your work and that of the other members of the P-6.

In November 2000, Canada supported a UNIDIR conference and a report entitled “Breaking the CD deadlock”. Those efforts took place almost nine years ago, and though much has been written since then, there was clearly more work yet to be done on this subject. This year, following the same spirit as Ambassador Draganov, our delegation took inspiration from various colleagues in this room to sponsor a variation on the same theme, once again with UNIDIR. The aim would be to reflect upon and identify options for getting

the Conference back to work. To that end, UNIDIR chaired a series of informal meetings held last month under the Chatham House rule, with a diverse group of persons representing countries from various regions of the world, in the Conference on Disarmament and representatives of civil society.

It is my pleasure today to present a 12-page working paper entitled "Getting the Conference on Disarmament back to substantive work: Food for thought". By circulating advance copies today at the end of the first part of our session, our aim is to offer delegations the opportunity to reflect on the issue over the spring recess.

I would like to thank all those who participated in the meetings, and of course UNIDIR for this work. We do not seek to offer the Conference a single solution with this paper. Rather, we hope that it will help to enhance understanding and dialogue among the members of the Conference and help it to find a path which leads to a progressive and positive exit from the current impasse and a resumption of substantive work.

At the end of today's plenary meeting the secretariat will circulate the original English version of the document and the unofficial French version, pending its formal distribution by the secretariat as a Conference document in due course.

*(spoke in English)*

During the PAROS informal discussions held a few weeks ago, Canada spoke about a working paper entitled "The merits of certain draft transparency and confidence-building measures and treaty proposals for space security". We would like to take the opportunity formally to table this working paper in the Conference on Disarmament.

The paper advances the case that strong transparency and confidence-building measures can serve as important instruments in their own right, as well as elements towards an eventual treaty. The paper argues that the Conference on Disarmament should consider security guarantees, such as a declaration of legal principles, a code of conduct, or a treaty, which would (a) ban the placement of weapons in space; (b) prohibit the test or use of weapons on satellites so as to damage or destroy them; and (c) prohibit the test or use of satellites themselves as weapons. Agreement on robust security guarantees as a first step could help in laying the foundation and building the momentum for future legal protection.

We hope that this paper will contribute to the debate and discussions on how the Conference can soon address the security challenges in outer space, in the context of a programme of work.

The secretariat will circulate the working paper in English and French after this formal plenary, pending its formal distribution by the secretariat as an official document of the Conference on Disarmament.

**The President:** I thank the Ambassador of Canada for the kind words addressed to the Chair and for his statement.

Are there any other speakers who would like to take the floor at this juncture? That does not seem to be the case.

It looks as if we have now completed our formal deliberations for today. This formal session will be followed immediately after its conclusion by an informal session, which will be open only to member States and observer States. The next formal session of the Conference will take place on Tuesday, 19 May, at 10 a.m. in this room.

I will therefore end this meeting now, and resume it in an informal session.

*The meeting rose at 10.40 a.m.*