
Conference on Disarmament

12 August 2009

English

Final record of the one thousand one hundred and fifty-first plenary meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Wednesday, 12 August 2009, at 10.05 a.m.

President: Ms. Caroline Millar.....(Australia)

The President: I declare open the 1151st plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

Allow me to extend a very warm welcome to our distinguished speaker of today, Mr. Yang Jiechi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of China. We know the importance his country attaches to the work of the Conference on Disarmament. I have the great pleasure and honour to invite Mr. Yang to take the floor.

Mr. Yang Jiechi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Thank you, Madam President. Mr. Secretary-General, representatives, ladies and gentlemen, it gives me great pleasure to address the Conference on Disarmament. As the single multilateral disarmament negotiation forum, the Conference has produced important legal instruments on arms control and contributed its share to world peace and security. Thanks to the concerted efforts of all parties, the Conference recently adopted its programme of work and will soon proceed to substantive work on the core issues. I wish to offer my congratulations on the progress. I believe that with your diligence and wisdom the Conference will press ahead with its work on various fronts and deliver new results, living up to the expectations of all parties.

Madam President, the international security situation is currently undergoing the most profound changes since the end of the cold war. Countries are more interdependent, and their destinies more closely linked, than at any time in history. Peace and development remain the main theme of our time. Multilateralism and the idea of pursuing security through cooperation have taken firm root in the hearts of the people, and security dialogue and cooperation among countries have further deepened. All this has offered important opportunities for progress in the international arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation process.

At the same time, however, the international community is confronted by an increasing number of security challenges. Terrorism is rampant, regional hotspot issues remain stubbornly intractable, the non-proliferation situation is still grim, and there are growing uncertainties as a result of the negative social impact of the international financial crisis and economic recession. Maintaining international strategic stability and promoting world peace and security remain arduous long-term tasks.

Madam President, China is committed to peace, development and cooperation in international affairs. As President Hu Jintao has stated, China unswervingly follows the path of peaceful development and the mutually beneficial win-win strategy of opening up, and maintains that the people of all countries should join hands to build a harmonious world of enduring peace and common prosperity. The Chinese Government attaches great importance to arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation, and has made due contribution to advancing the international process in these areas.

The Conference on Disarmament encapsulates the multilateral efforts on arms control and disarmament. It has made many proud achievements in the past, but has also fallen into a long period of stagnation. Today, at a time when the Conference is about to open a new page in its history, we should seriously review the lessons of past experience, and consider ways to ensure comprehensive and healthy progress on multilateral arms control and disarmament. To this end, China believes that we should first embrace a new security concept, featuring mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and coordination, and work for a harmonious and stable international and regional security environment.

Second, we should uphold multilateralism, bringing into full play the role of the United Nations and other multilateral mechanisms, while continuing to consolidate and reinforce existing multilateral arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation regimes.

Third, we should maintain international strategic balance and stability, and achieve security for all based on mutual respect and equal treatment of the legitimate security interests of all parties.

Fourth, we should intensify dialogue and cooperation, and commit to peaceful settlement of international disputes.

Ever since nuclear weapons came into being, mankind has been living under the enormous shadow of the threat of nuclear war. To achieve a world free of nuclear weapons through the complete prohibition and thorough destruction of such weapons is the common aspiration of all peace-loving people. It is also a goal that China has consistently been advocating and pursuing with unremitting effort.

As far back as the early 1960s, the Chinese Government issued a solemn statement calling for the convening of a summit of world leaders to discuss the issue of complete prohibition and thorough destruction of nuclear weapons. As a nuclear-weapon State, China has never evaded its responsibilities in the area of nuclear disarmament. The limited nuclear capabilities that China has developed are solely for the purpose of self-defence. We have faithfully abided by our commitment not to be the first to use nuclear weapons at any time or under any circumstances, and unconditionally not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States or nuclear-weapon-free zones. In fact, we are the only nuclear-weapon State that has undertaken such a commitment, and this policy will not change in the future.

China has always exercised the utmost restraint in the development of nuclear weapons. We have never deployed such weapons in other countries. We have never participated in any form of nuclear arms race, nor will we ever do so. This, in itself, is our unique contribution to the cause of nuclear disarmament.

China was among the first countries to sign the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). The Chinese Government is dedicated to promoting early ratification of the Treaty, and will continue to make active efforts towards this end. We are ready to work with the international community for the early entry into force of the treaty.

China supports the Conference launching negotiations on the fissile material cut-off treaty as early as possible, and will take an active part in the negotiations.

China opposes the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and their means of delivery. We have joined all related international treaties and mechanisms, put in place a comprehensive system of laws and regulations compatible with the relevant international legal regime, and strictly enforced United Nations Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) and other non-proliferation resolutions. We have continuously broadened the scope of our export controls, and have conducted multilateral and bilateral exchanges and cooperation on non-proliferation.

China has consistently called for the peaceful resolution of the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula and the Iranian nuclear issue through dialogue and negotiation, and has made unremitting efforts towards this goal. We are ready to work with other relevant parties in continuing actively to promote the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and proper settlement of the Iranian nuclear issue, with a view to safeguarding the international non-proliferation regime and maintaining regional peace and stability.

Madam President, international nuclear disarmament is now facing unprecedented opportunities. The complete prohibition and thorough destruction of nuclear weapons and bringing about a nuclear-weapon-free world have become widely embraced goals, and nuclear disarmament initiatives of all kinds are being proposed. We welcome these developments.

We believe that in order to achieve the complete prohibition and thorough destruction of nuclear weapons for a nuclear-weapon-free world, the process of nuclear disarmament must be advanced in real earnest.

- As countries with the largest nuclear arsenals in the world, the United States and Russia bear special and primary responsibilities in nuclear disarmament. The two countries should continue drastically to reduce their nuclear arsenals so as to create the conditions necessary for eventual complete and thorough nuclear disarmament. We welcome the ongoing nuclear disarmament negotiations between the two countries and hope they will reach a substantive agreement as scheduled.
- Nuclear-weapon States should reduce the role of nuclear weapons in their national security and commit as early as possible to renouncing first use of such weapons. As early as 1994, China put forward a draft treaty on mutual no-first-use of nuclear weapons and we hope that under the new circumstances, the parties concerned will take this proposal into serious consideration.
- Having given up their option to develop nuclear weapons, non-nuclear-weapon States are entitled to freedom from the threat of nuclear weapons. The international community should negotiate and conclude an international legal instrument on security assurances for non-nuclear-weapon States at an early date.
- The establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones is positive significance for the advancing nuclear disarmament and preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Nuclear-weapon States should support countries in the relevant regions in establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones or WMD-free zones and fulfil due obligations.
- The international community should work together for the early entry into force of the CTBT. The Conference on Disarmament should advance its substantive work in a balanced manner, and negotiate and conclude the fissile material cut-off treaty as soon as possible.
- The practice of seeking absolute strategic advantage should be abandoned. Countries should neither develop missile defence systems that undermine global strategic stability nor deploy weapons in outer space.
- As a long-term goal, the international community should also conclude a convention on the complete prohibition of nuclear weapons so as to achieve eventual complete and thorough nuclear disarmament under effective international supervision.

We believe that to achieve complete prohibition and thorough destruction of nuclear weapons for a nuclear-weapon-free world, the risk of nuclear-weapon proliferation must be eliminated.

- It is important to enhance the universality, authority and effectiveness of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and ensure strict compliance with the Treaty
- It is important to further strengthen the function of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in safeguards and promote effective implementation of and universal adherence to the Safeguards Agreement and its Additional Protocol
- It is important to resolve proliferation issues through a political and diplomatic means and eradicate the root causes of nuclear-weapon proliferation
- It is important to strengthen the safety and security of nuclear facilities and materials, combat nuclear terrorism, improve the nuclear export control regimes and carry out related international cooperation

- And it is important to reject any practise of double standards

We believe that to achieve the complete prohibition and thorough destruction of nuclear weapons for a nuclear-weapon-free world, peaceful use of nuclear energy and international cooperation thereon must be promoted.

- The right of NPT signatories to peaceful use of nuclear energy must be truly respected and upheld, and this right should not be compromised under the excuse of non-proliferation
- The IAEA should play a bigger role in promoting the peaceful use of nuclear energy
- Countries should engage in multilateral consultations and actively discuss appropriate ways to reduce proliferation risks while promoting the peaceful use of nuclear energy, including the possibility of establishing a multilateral nuclear fuel supply mechanism

The NPT Review Conference scheduled for next May is highly significant. All States parties should seize this opportunity to advance the three major objectives of nuclear non-proliferation, nuclear disarmament and the peaceful use of nuclear energy in a comprehensive and balanced manner, so that the Review Conference could produce substantive outcomes.

Madam President, outer space is a common asset of all mankind, and maintaining security in outer space and ensuring its peaceful use serve the common interests of all countries. Outer space is now facing the looming danger of weaponization. Credible and effective multilateral measures must be taken to forestall the weaponization of an arms race in outer space. This is of high strategic significance and is also the common mission and responsibility of the international community. The Conference should play a key role in this regard.

In February last year, China and Russia jointly presented to the Conference a draft treaty on the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space and of the threat or use of force against outer space objects. We hope that the Conference on Disarmament will soon start substantive discussions on the draft so as to contribute to improving the legal system concerning outer space and maintaining its security.

Madam President, as the ancient Chinese philosopher Xun Zi said, “Unless you pile up little steps, you can never journey a thousand miles; unless you pile up tiny streams, you can never make a river or a sea.” Likewise, to advance the process of international arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation, we should also start from concrete steps and not waver in our conviction when faced with difficulties and setbacks. I am confident that with the concerted efforts of all peace-loving people in the world, we will make steady progress in the field of international arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation, making due contribution to the building of a harmonious world of enduring peace and common prosperity.

Thank you.

The President: I warmly thank Foreign Minister Yang for his strong and encouraging statement on nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament and for his presence at the Conference on Disarmament today. I share his hope that we can indeed pile up little steps to take our important work forward.

I would now like to suspend the meeting for a brief period to escort the Foreign Minister out of the room.

The meeting was suspended at 10.25 a.m. and resumed at 10.30 a.m.

The President: The plenary is resumed. Are there any delegations that would like to take the floor at this stage? I see none.

This then concludes our business for today. We have no further plenary meetings scheduled at this stage for this week, but if it appears that we are in a position to take a decision on our forward agenda, then I will ask the secretariat to schedule such a meeting.

The meeting rose at 10.35 a.m.