

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE EIGHT HUNDRED AND NINETY-SEVENTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 14 March 2002, at 10.15 a.m.

President:

Mr. Fisseha Yimer

(Ethiopia)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 897th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

At the outset, I would like to extend, on behalf of the Conference and on my own behalf, a warm welcome to the new Permanent Representative of Ecuador, Ambassador Alfredo Pinoargote Cevallos, and to assure him of our cooperation and support in his new assignment.

I have no speakers on my list for today. Does any delegation wish to take the floor at this stage? I see none.

Distinguished colleagues, distinguished delegates, you will recall that, on Thursday, 7 March 2002, I informed you, through your respective coordinators, that I had received a letter dated 6 March 2002 from Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, addressed to me, in my capacity as President of the Conference. In this letter Mr. Dhanapala informed me about the intention of the Secretary-General of the United Nations to appoint Mr. Sergei Ordzhonikidze, Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva, to be the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and to act as his personal representative to the Conference. Mr. Dhanapala also requested me to consult the Conference and to seek its concurrence on this appointment, pursuant to the request contained in rule 13 of the Conference's rules of procedure.

On the basis of my consultations with the coordinators of the regional groups as well as with China, I am now in a position to inform you that, in general, all the members of the groups and China have concurred with the Secretary-General's appointment of Mr. Ordzhonikidze as Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and as his personal representative to the Conference. In this connection, I should also note that the respective statements of the groups on the issue have been nuanced and have also been supplemented with the differently accented references to the relevant rules of the rules of procedure of the Conference on Disarmament which provide guidance on the nomination of the Secretary-General of the Conference.

Accordingly, and with your concurrence, I intend to reply to the letter of the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Dhanapala, to inform him about the outcome of my consultations and, of course, the decision of this Conference.

Does any delegation wish to take the floor at this stage on this issue? I see none.

Accordingly, I shall write to Mr. Dhanapala, informing him of the Conference's concurrence with the Secretary-General's appointment of the new Secretary-General of the Conference.

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: Distinguished colleagues, since the term of my presidency is coming to an end, I would like to make some concluding remarks that complement my report on consultations with coordinators of the groups and with China on various aspects of our work.

(The President)

As you are aware, my first and foremost task after the assumption of the presidency of the Conference was to follow up the agreement reached by my predecessor in the office, Mr. Tawfik of Egypt, on the re-appointment of three special coordinators on the review of the agenda of the Conference, on the expansion of membership, and on its improved and effective functioning.

Accordingly, I proceeded immediately to consultations involving all the regional coordinators and China on the nomination of candidates for these posts. Thanks to the commendable cooperation of all the parties involved, as well as all of you, these consultations have been concluded successfully and the three newly appointed special coordinators have now the necessary time at their disposal for the effective conclusion of their work and to report to the Conference before the end of its 2002 session. This has been an important decision, since it provides the Conference with an opportunity for self-reflection and a thorough review of its working methods. As such, it may contribute significantly to the invigorating of a working dialogue and to the building of a solid basis for the commencement of the substantive work and for the negotiation of disarmament treaties, which is the main task of the Conference.

Although the appointment of the special coordinators at this early stage of the session is encouraging, it should not distract our attention from further efforts aimed at focusing the activities of the Conference on substantive work, which in the end is the *raison d'être* of the Conference on Disarmament. The stalemate in the Conference, which is of concern to us all, reflects the current situation in the field of disarmament and arms limitation. And as this stalemate is becoming protracted, it is ever more imperative for the members of the Conference to demonstrate good will and flexibility in order to find a compromise and finally get back to business.

That is why, from the very beginning of my presidency, I have also undertaken parallel consultations with the regional coordinators and China aimed at facilitating consensus on the programme of work of the Conference. Regrettably, I cannot report to you any considerable developments in the positions of the groups that would bring us closer to an agreement on the programme of work. At this stage, the draft programme of work, as contained in document CD/1624, which was proposed by Ambassador Amorim of Brazil, remains the best option available and is still widely supported as a basis for further consultations. Among positive developments, I would like to emphasize that some delegations expressed their readiness to accept the proposed programme of work in its present form. Moreover, there seems to be an agreement, in principle, on subsidiary bodies for the various agenda items, as proposed in document CD/1624. At the same time, however, we still observe a persistent basic divergence of views on the mandates of the proposed subsidiary bodies on nuclear disarmament and on prevention of an arms race in outer space.

I am greatly encouraged by the commendable invigoration of our plenary meetings, and the open and constructive exchange of views and opinions that have been taking place in our forum during my presidency.

(The President)

During our weekly meetings, many delegations have stressed that the current volatile security environment provides us both with challenges and with opportunities to engage in substantive work. We have heard appeals to intensify our efforts and to break the impasse that has affected the Conference for too long a time.

Time is passing quickly. We should not assume that the window of opportunity which we have today will last forever. We should therefore carefully examine all innovative suggestions that could contribute to agreement on the programme of work of the Conference. It is my sincere hope that we will continue our search for a compromise solution that will allow us to start the substantive work of the Conference and that we will continue to do it with determination and imagination, guided by the spirit of collective responsibility for international peace and security.

During my presidency I have also conducted consultations pursuant to the letter dated 6 March 2002 from Mr. Dhanapala, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, addressed to me in my capacity as President of the Conference. As you will recall, Mr. Dhanapala informed me in his letter of the intention of the Secretary-General to appoint Mr. Sergei Ordzhonikidze, Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva, to be the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and to act as his Personal Representative. Mr. Dhanapala also requested me to consult the Conference and to seek its concurrence on this appointment, pursuant to rule 13 of our rules of procedure. Earlier in this meeting, I reported to the Conference on the outcome of my consultations, namely that the members of the groups and China had concurred with the Secretary-General's appointment.

In conclusion, let me encourage all of you, distinguished delegates, to take advantage of the political capacity of the Conference, which is the sole multilateral negotiating forum for disarmament. I would like to emphasize that it is essential to maintain and to preserve the negotiating capacity of the Conference so that it can embark on substantive work as soon as an agreement on the programme of work is reached. To this end, an active and thorough exchange of views on the relevant issues on our agenda during plenary meetings is an absolutely indispensable mechanism. It has to be emphasized, as an encouraging factor, that the 2002 session of the Conference on Disarmament has been marked by the renewed interest of member States to make full use of this mechanism, perhaps the most important of many mechanisms available to us at this stage to carry forward the work of the Conference. I sincerely hope that this trend continues and that the members of the Conference will put forward their views on how we can make further progress in our endeavours. As one saying goes: "It is always darkest before the dawn". Let us hope that in the middle of our difficulties lies an opportunity for the Conference to reaffirm its role as the world's only multilateral negotiating disarmament forum capable of producing tangible results for the benefit of all humankind.

I would like to take this opportunity to encourage the incoming President, Ambassador Markku Reimaa of Finland, to continue the highly demanding task of consultations on the programme of work with his well-known diplomatic skills and perseverance. I wish him good luck and success in those endeavours. I would also take this opportunity to thank my

(The President)

predecessor, Mr. Mohamed Tawfik of Egypt, for his efforts during his tenure as President of the Conference. I would also like to thank all colleagues and friends for their valuable assistance and support during my presidency.

Allow me also to extend my words of appreciation to the Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Enrique Román-Morey, for his valuable guidance, as well as to Mr. Jerzy Zaleski and to other members of the secretariat for their assistance during my presidency.

Last but not least, I would like to express my thanks to the interpreters and the conference room officers who have facilitated our meetings.

Before adjourning the meeting, I would like to bring to your attention the organization of our work for the next week. Since the secretariat has received requests from delegations to schedule plenary meetings for both Tuesday and Thursday, we shall proceed accordingly. At the plenary meeting on Tuesday, 19 March 2002, the Conference will be addressed by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Canada, the Hon. Mr. Bill Graham, and at the plenary meeting on Thursday, 21 March 2002, the Conference will hear addresses by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan, His Excellency Mr. Tokaev and by the Secretary of State of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland, His Excellency Mr. Satuli.

That concludes our business for today. The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Tuesday, 19 March 2002, at 10 a.m. in this conference room.

The meeting rose at 10.30 a.m.