

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE NINE HUNDRED AND FOURTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 6 June 2002, at 10.25 a.m.

President: Mr. Hubert de la Fortelle (France)

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I call to order the 904th plenary session of the Conference on Disarmament. To the best of my knowledge, there are no speakers on the list for today. I would like to ask if any delegation wishes to take the floor? I see none.

In that event, I would like briefly to review the situation reached by the Conference during the current presidency. As we approach the end of the second week of our presidency, I would like today, in the interests of transparency, to take stock of the situation, as I undertook to do in my introductory statement at last week's plenary, on 30 May 2002.

I have continued with my programme of bilateral consultations with delegations. To date, I have been able to meet some 30 delegations and I will meet a number more this afternoon. They have conveyed to me their concerns, their ideas and their assessments of the situation in which we find ourselves today. These contacts have been very useful and very informative and I have been able to learn a great deal.

While all delegations agree in regretting that the Conference is caught in an impasse of a more or less structural nature, I have yet to detect any sufficiently extensive common ground between us which would enable us to reach consensus on the best way of relaunching the work of the Conference on Disarmament. I sense a difference in sensitivity between, on the one hand, those who wish our Conference to remain faithful to its vocation as a negotiating forum and not to depart from it, lest it become nothing more than a talking shop and, on the other hand, those whose priority is to get the Conference back to work as soon as possible in a spirit of pragmatism and creativity, by devising reasonably flexible forms of dialogue. That view, I would say, is one shared by a considerable majority of the delegations to whom I have spoken thus far. Accordingly, I am continuing to explore all possible avenues that might lead to the opening of such dialogue.

I have taken note, with interest, of the proposal made by the delegation of India during the informal consultations conducted last week by the Ambassador of Sri Lanka.

In order to avoid any hiatus between the French presidency and the German presidency, which will follow it in the last week of the second half of the 2002 session and will then continue during the last three weeks of August, I have decided to keep Ambassador Heinsberg closely informed about the state of my consultations. This initiative, albeit modest, should mean that the work of our presidency will not be interrupted and, I hope, that the incoming German presidency will not have to start from scratch.

That therefrom is the situation today, 6 June 2002, and I would like to conclude by saying that in these difficult times - times which remain difficult - we should heed the urgings of Antonio Gramsci and endeavour to reconcile the pessimism of the intellect with the optimism of the will.

(The President)

Does any delegation wish to respond to my statement or to take the floor at this stage? I see none and that, accordingly, concludes our work for today.

Before I adjourn the meeting, however, I would like to remind you that the special coordinator on the review of the agenda of the Conference, Ambassador Chung of the Republic of Korea, will be holding informal consultations on the issue under his responsibility immediately after this plenary and that these consultations will of course be open to you all.

The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Thursday, 13 June 2002, at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 10.30 a.m.