

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE NINE HUNDRED AND FIFTEENTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 21 January 2003 at 10.20 a.m.

President:

Mr. Rakesh Sood

(India)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 915th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament and the first part of its 2003 session.

At the outset of this new session, I would like to bid a belated farewell to those of our colleagues who have left the Conference since we adjourned last September: Ambassador András Szabó of Hungary, Ambassador Hatem Ben Salem of Tunisia, Ambassador Emin Murat Sungar of Turkey, Ambassador Binh Nguyen Quy of Viet Nam and Ambassador Boniface Guwa Chidy Ausiku of Zimbabwe. I am confident that you will join me in requesting their delegations to convey to them our deep appreciation for their many valuable contributions to our endeavours during their tenure, as well as our sincere wishes for their continued success and happiness in their new assignments.

Allow me also to extend a cordial welcome to our new colleagues who have assumed their responsibilities as representatives of their Governments in the Conference, namely, Ambassador Sergei Aleinik of Belarus, Ambassador Jean Simplicie Njemba Endezoumou of Cameroon, Ambassador Ousmane Camara of Senegal, Ambassador Habib Mansour of Tunisia, Ambassador Türkekul Kurttekin of Turkey and Ambassador Ngo Quang Xuan of Viet Nam. I would like to take this opportunity to assure them of our full cooperation and support in their new assignments.

I turn now to my opening statement as President of the Conference. I should like to convey my appreciation for the efforts made by my predecessors last year on many of the issues that still confront us. In particular, I would like to thank Ambassador András Szabó of Hungary, with whom I had the pleasure of participating in intersessional consultations in New York and Geneva before his departure for his new assignment. I am also grateful for the support and insights provided by the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Sergei Ordzhonikidze, the Deputy Secretary-General, Mr. Enrique Román-Morey and by all other members of the secretariat staff.

In its report to the General Assembly for the 2002 session, contained in document CD/1685, the Conference requested that my predecessor and I should undertake appropriate consultations and, if possible, make recommendations taking into account all existing proposals and views presented and discussions held during the 2002 session. I would, therefore, like to report briefly on the outcome of these consultations. Naturally, this process will continue during the remaining part of my tenure as president.

Based on my consultations with delegations, I discern a growing consensus that the problem facing the Conference on Disarmament is a political problem. In the past, efforts have been made through drafting suggestions to overcome the political impasse. These have not succeeded, however. For a number of years, we have also appointed special coordinators, who have taken a hard look at the composition of the Conference, its agenda and its rules of procedure. This approach, too, has not yielded results. All this strengthens my conviction that procedural fixes or word play cannot resolve the present impasse.

(The President)

At the same time, I also discern a growing frustration among delegations. The international security environment is changing. New challenges and threats are emerging. Yet, the Conference on Disarmament remains unable to deal with these in a substantive manner as it was designed to do.

Should we wait, therefore, until we see the emergence of the requisite political will or should we attempt to think outside the box and get the Conference to begin working? The debate about a negotiating versus a non-negotiating mandate that has afflicted the Conference on Disarmament for many years now has only been successful in preventing it from getting down to work. Looking back into the Conference's short history, we find that there were politically troubled times in the past, but the Conference was able to continue to work, on some issues with a negotiating mandate and on others with a less than negotiating mandate. Interestingly, some of the non-negotiating mandates became transformed into full-fledged negotiating mandates, leading to a successful conclusion, as in the case of the Chemical Weapons Convention, but some negotiating mandates have yet to yield a positive outcome.

I would, therefore, urge that we step back to gain perspective on this institution, which symbolizes multilateralism, and thereby find a way to make it work. I hope to continue my consultations with you with this objective. I count on your support and your cooperation in this task.

I should now like to invite the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Sergei Ordzhonikidze, to read to us a message addressed to the Conference by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan. Mr. Secretary-General, you have the floor.

Mr. ORDZHONIKIDZE (Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations): It is my honour to read to you the following message from the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan:

“This year marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, and the twenty-fifth session of the Conference on Disarmament. This is a significant milestone, but it is not an excuse for complacency. International peace and security continue to face profound challenges in the form of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery vehicles, rising military expenditures, the prospect of an arms race in outer space, and the continual development of new weapons systems. I hope, therefore, that 2003 will mark a turning point in the history of the Conference, a time to reinvigorate the sense of purpose in arms limitation and disarmament efforts that were shaped 25 years ago.

“For years, the protracted lack of agreement on a programme of work has blocked the substantive work of the Conference on all issues on its agenda - even those on which agreement to start negotiations existed, such as a ban on the production of fissile material

(Mr. Ordzhonikidze, Secretary-General of the Conference
on Disarmament and Personal Representative of the
Secretary-General of the United Nations)

for weapon purposes. It may be argued that this standstill is a reflection of broader problems in multilateral diplomacy. Yet this is precisely why the Conference must adapt itself to that environment and develop a capacity to address emerging challenges.

“New threats to international peace and security have generated active and open discussions and underlined the need for additional efforts to bridge existing divergences over key issues on the disarmament agenda. In this connection, I welcome any proposals aimed at fostering consensus on the programme of work, such as those presented during the 2002 session especially the unprecedented cross-group initiative of five former presidents of the Conference. These efforts have given rise to new hopes for dealing with the issues of nuclear disarmament and the prevention of an arms race in outer space. I also note the Conference’s recent efforts to engage in an informal debate on radiological weapons, a discussion that reflects heightened security concerns following the events of 11 September 2001. Together, these achievements are valuable assets as you start the 2003 session, and should facilitate the launching of the substantive work of the Conference.

“Revitalizing the Conference requires, first and foremost, renewed political will and determination among its member States. It calls for imaginative concepts developed and endorsed at high political levels, with the participation of the main players in the international political arena. It can also benefit from the accumulated expertise and good offices of eminent personalities, whether in politics or academia.

“New arms control and disarmament agreements are needed not only to enhance strategic stability in the world. They are also needed to halt and eventually reverse a disturbing increase in global military expenditures, and re-direct such funds into much needed development projects.

“Recent challenges to the existing non-proliferation regimes - in particular the announcement by the Government of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea of its withdrawal from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty - raise serious concerns. I regret this development and I strongly urge, once again, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea to reconsider its decision. The only viable solution to this latest setback for disarmament and non-proliferation is through peaceful means, dialogue and a spirit of mutual interest.

“The Conference should also focus on advocating compliance with existing disarmament and non-proliferation agreements. Such compliance is vital in ensuring the faithful implementation of existing treaties and in laying the foundation for their progress toward universal membership.

“The Conference on Disarmament offers invaluable opportunities for multilateral dialogue and negotiations on arms limitation and disarmament. It should therefore redouble its efforts to overcome its current impasse, so as to enable it to discharge

(Mr. Ordzhonikidze, Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations)

faithfully and effectively its mandate as the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum. Your efforts have enormous potential both to promote the achievement of disarmament goals and to strengthen the rule of law by consolidating the gains already made in this field. In that spirit, I wish you a most productive session.”

The PRESIDENT: I thank Mr. Ordzhonikidze for delivering the message from the Secretary-General of the United Nations. I would ask Mr. Ordzhonikidze to convey to the Secretary-General of the United Nations our appreciation for his message and also for the importance that he attaches to our work.

I would now like to give the floor to the Deputy Secretary-General, Mr. Enrique Roman-Morey, to convey to us information on the organization of the 2003 session of the Conference.

Mr. ROMÁN-MOREY (Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament): Mr. President, I would like to make some remarks on some organizational issues concerning the 2003 session of the Conference on Disarmament.

As in previous years, the Conference has at its disposal 10 meetings per week. Accordingly, throughout the session, the Conference can hold two meetings daily, with full services. In this connection, I would like to appeal to you to make the best use of these resources. In particular, it is important that meetings start punctually and that they are not extended beyond the allocated time. Furthermore, I would like to emphasize that meetings with full services cannot be held in the evenings or during weekends.

With regard to meeting facilities, the Conference will have at its disposal the Council Chamber, Room I, Room C-108 and the secretariat conference room on the sixth floor. If required, an additional conference room may also be provided upon request. In such cases, delegations are kindly requested to make reservations in advance through the secretariat.

There is a pressing need for the strict observance of measures concerning the rational and economical issuance and the use of documentation. In particular, all documents should be submitted to the secretariat well in advance and duplication of documentation should be avoided. The secretariat would also appreciate it if documents submitted for processing were provided both in hard copies and in electronic versions. Furthermore, in order to avoid translating the same document twice, delegations are kindly requested to inform the secretariat of the submission of the same document for issuance both to the Conference on Disarmament and to the General Assembly. Last but not least, I would also like to emphasize that United Nations regulations do not permit the publication of statements delivered by delegations in plenary meetings as separate documents of the Conference. Such statements are always reproduced in the verbatim records and are, ipso facto, part of the official documentation of the Conference on Disarmament. I am sure that I can count on your full cooperation in this regard.

(Mr. Román-Morey, Deputy Secretary-General
of the Conference on Disarmament)

I would also like to recall that, as part of the secretariat's efforts to reduce operating costs, only documents containing draft proposals which require action will be circulated in meeting rooms. Pre-session and reference documents will continue to be supplied to the permanent missions of member States and of observer States. Therefore, delegations are kindly requested to keep the copies they receive throughout the annual session and use them during the meetings. Nevertheless, a limited number of copies will be available from the document distribution counter in room C-111, just opposite the Council Chamber.

Documents of the Conference on Disarmament are also available at the Conference's re-designed web site, the address of which is <http://disarmament.un.org/cd/>.

Finally, I would like to remind delegations to send to the secretariat of the Conference their respective letters of accreditation as soon as possible, in order to expedite the publication of the list of participants. For security reasons, delegations are kindly requested to carry with them their identification badges provided by the United Nations Office at Geneva.

The PRESIDENT: In these times of shrinking resources it is good to know that we have 10 meetings available to us, with full services, per week, and I hope that delegations will take note that they have been urged to make use of those resources.

Does any delegation wish to take the floor at this stage? The distinguished Ambassador of Turkey has the floor.

Mr. KURTTEKIN (Turkey): Mr. President, I take the floor to express my thanks to you for the kind words about my distinguished predecessor and to tell colleagues here that their feelings about Murat Sungar will be conveyed to him.

I also want to take this opportunity to express my personal thanks to you for your words of welcome. This is my first meeting in the Conference and I think I have much to benefit from the discussions of very experienced colleagues on this very important topic.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of Turkey for his statement, and, on behalf of us all, assure him of our full cooperation.

Is there any other delegation that would like to take the floor at this stage? That does not appear to be the case.

It would therefore be my intention now to suspend the plenary meeting and invite the Conference to consider in an informal plenary setting, which will follow immediately, the draft agenda for the 2003 session, as contained in document CD/WP.529, as well as requests received from States not members of the Conference to participate in our work during this session, as

(The President)

contained in document CD/WP.530. Both of these documents have been circulated by the secretariat. Thereafter, we shall resume the plenary meeting in order to formalize the agreements reached at the formal plenary.

I would like to remind you that the informal plenary meeting is open to the members of the Conference only.

The meeting was suspended at 10.45 a.m. and resumed at 11.10 a.m.

The PRESIDENT: I would now like to resume the 915th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

In accordance with the agreement reached earlier at the informal plenary meeting, may I take it that the Conference decides to adopt for its 2003 session the agenda contained in document CD/WP.529, which is before you?

It was so decided.

This agenda will be issued as an official document of the Conference by the secretariat.

In connection with the adoption of the agenda, I, as the President of the Conference, should like to state that it is my understanding that if there is a consensus in the Conference to deal with any issues, these could be dealt with within this agenda.

I should now like to invite the Conference to take a decision on the requests for participation in our work from States not members of the Conference. These requests are contained in document CD/WP.529 and were received from the following States: Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Georgia, Greece, Holy See, Jordan, Kuwait, Latvia, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Oman, Philippines, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Moldova, San Marino, Singapore, Sudan, Thailand and Yemen.

May I take it that the Conference decides to invite these States to participate in our work in accordance with its rules of procedure?

It was so decided.

This concludes our business for today. Does any delegation wish to take the floor at this stage? That does not appear to be the case. The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Thursday, 23 January 2003, at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 11.15 a.m.