

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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FINAL RECORD OF THE NINE HUNDRED AND NINETEENTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 13 February 2003, at 10.20 a.m.

President:

Mr. Rakesh Sood

(India)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 919th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

At the beginning, I would like to take this opportunity to express, on behalf of all delegations to the Conference on Disarmament, our profound grief and sorrow at the tragic event in which the seven crew-members of the space shuttle Columbia lost their lives. And, on behalf of the Conference, I would like to convey our condolences to the bereaved families and the Government of the United States of America and Israel.

I would also like officially to welcome, in our midst, the new Permanent Representative of Hungary, Ambassador Tibor Toth.

Let me take this opportunity also to welcome the Assistant Secretary of State for Arms Control of the United States, Mr. Stephen Rademaker, who will be addressing the Conference today. Prior to joining the State Department, he was Chief Counsel to the Select Committee on Homeland Security of the United States House of Representatives. He has held positions on the staff of the Committee on International Relations of the House of Representatives, including Minority Chief Counsel, Chief Counsel and Deputy Staff Director. During that period he played a key role in developing the Committee's legislative and oversight agenda and advised on issues which are very much the subject of consideration of this Conference. We take his presence amongst us as evidence of the commitment of his Government and the importance that it attaches to the Conference on Disarmament.

I also have on my list of speakers Ambassador Wolfgang Petritsch of Austria.

I now invite the Assistant Secretary, Mr. Stephen Rademaker, to address the Conference.

Mr. RADEMAKER (United States of America): It is a great pleasure for me to appear before the Conference on Disarmament for the first time. Let me begin by extending my best wishes to the President, Ambassador Sood, for a productive term of office.

I also wish to thank you, Mr. President, for your expression of condolences to the families of the astronauts on the space shuttle Columbia. As you know, it was a multinational crew, consisting not only of American citizens, but also a citizen of Israel and a woman originally from your country.

In this, my first speech before this body, I intend to lay out my Government's vision of the role of multilateralism in promoting international peace and security.

No one here needs to be reminded that we live in perilous times, confronting dangers that multilateral institutions such as the Conference on Disarmament are uniquely adapted to address. These dangers are not just on the minds of diplomats here in Geneva, and in New York and Vienna. A casual glance at today's headlines demonstrates that these dangers are the great preoccupation of our age. They include, to name just a few, the development and concealment of weapons of mass destruction programmes in Iraq, nuclear weapons programmes in

(Mr. Rademaker, United States)

North Korea, terrorism such as we witnessed on 11 September 2001 and, perhaps the biggest fear of all, the risk that terrorists may one day soon acquire weapons of mass destruction of their own.

Regrettably, for six years the Conference on Disarmament has failed to agree on how to move forward to address the dangers of weapons of mass destruction - or any other arms control challenges for that matter. It has become fashionable in some circles to criticize the United States for pursuing a policy of what is referred to as "unilateralism". Those who make this charge, of course, counsel my nation to follow instead the path of "multilateralism". Obviously, if they are referring to multilateralism of the kind that we have seen here at the Conference on Disarmament over the past six years, the United States can be forgiven for wanting to try something different. Indeed, I would suggest that if multilateralism of the type we have witnessed here were to persist within the Conference on Disarmament and spread to other multilateral institutions, we would all soon be unilateralists, or at least something other than multilateralists.

On behalf of my Government, however, I reject any suggestion that the United States is not committed to multilateral means of achieving policy goals. On the contrary, properly understood, our policies are profoundly multilateralist. If current United States policy differs at all from United States policy in the past, it is a result of our recognition that, in the post-Cold War era, multilateralism is more important than ever and that, without leadership - without backbone - multilateralism is predictably condemned to failure. In a number of recent instances where we thought it necessary, we have chosen to provide the leadership - the backbone - required for multilateralism to succeed. Our insistence that multilateralism be effective may not always make us popular, but it hardly makes us "unilateralist".

Take, for instance, the matter of Iraq. For almost 12 years, the Iraqi regime has defied the United Nations Security Council. In 1991, the United Nations deployed weapons inspectors to Iraq, and for years the work of the inspectors was obstructed and the mandate of the Security Council defied. Iraq's work on weapons of mass destruction may have been slowed down, but it never stopped. United Nations sanctions were supposed to prevent this from happening, but over time those sanctions, like the inspectors themselves, increasingly came to be viewed in some quarters as part of the problem rather than as part of the solution. Iraq finally ceased all cooperation with inspectors in December 1998, effectively terminating their mission in Iraq.

This is not a record that any true supporter of multilateralism can point to with pride, and certainly it is not a record that can give comfort to anyone concerned about the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. It was not until this past November, after increasing pressure initiated by the United States, that the United Nations finally decided squarely to confront Iraq's defiance of the international community. Almost two months of difficult negotiations - working closely with our Security Council partners - culminated in the unanimous passage of resolution 1441, which declared Iraq in material breach of its obligations, strengthened inspectors' authorities, and warned that Iraq should seize its final opportunity to disarm or risk facing "serious consequences".

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Five days after the passage of resolution 1441, Iraq accepted the return of inspectors and the terms of the resolution. It was not a sudden change of heart or a strategic decision to disarm on the part of Saddam Hussein that prompted Iraq to acquiesce. Rather, it was the unified resolve of the Security Council to confront Iraq and threaten the use of force if Iraq continued to defy its responsibilities.

In spite of the Security Council's will and the resumption of inspections, Iraq continues to evade its disarmament obligations. To date, it has failed both key tests laid out in resolution 1441: namely, to provide a current, accurate and complete declaration of its weapons of mass destruction programmes and to cooperate fully and actively with inspectors. Iraq remain and, indeed, is in further material breach of its international obligations.

The United States has stayed the multilateral course over the last three months even as Iraq has attempted to pick and choose the terms of its compliance and throw sand into the collective eyes of the United Nations. We have provided the inspectors intelligence, analysis, personnel, and logistical support. We have urged them to utilize the full range of their authorities so as to improve the chances of verifiable and peaceful Iraqi disarmament. Regrettably, as the inspectors themselves have stated to the Security Council, "Iraq appears not to have come to a genuine acceptance - not even today - of the disarmament that was demanded of it and which it needs to carry out to win the confidence of the world and to live in peace."

The United States and other like-minded nations were essential in creating the conditions that allowed Iraq a final opportunity to disarm. In its warning of "serious consequences", the Security Council knew precisely that the moment might come to deliver on the threat of force. It was as true in November as it is now that the United States understands the importance of a unified, multilateral approach to Iraq. We want the United Nations process to work, but in order for it to do so, words must be fully backed by concrete action. We want a peaceful solution in Iraq, but we also recognize that Iraq cannot be allowed indefinitely to flout the will of the Council and thus undermine its credibility. Like our Security Council colleagues, we have the responsibility to face up to the challenges set before us and demonstrate the relevance of the United Nations in maintaining international peace and security.

We are well aware of the debate within the Security Council on how to proceed with Iraq. Today we hear many voices arguing that so much progress has been made since last November that we should give the inspections process more time, months or years if necessary. This argument assumes, of course, that the United States can be counted on in the months and years ahead to continue providing the backbone that has finally forced Saddam Hussein to take the United Nations more seriously than he has in years.

The United States appreciates the confidence that others appear to have in our staying power. It is important to remember, however, that the United States is a volunteer in this matter. The United Nations does not usually turn away volunteers. Indeed, the United Nations typically has too few volunteers, not too many - witness the problems the United Nations encounters whenever it considers setting up a new peacekeeping operation. As a volunteer, our patience is

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limited, to say nothing of our resources and the willingness of the American people to sustain the current level of commitment to solving what is only one of many serious problems of this nature. It therefore is time for the United Nations to take a stand, to demonstrate its relevance to the international community's collective security.

Having come this far, the United States will not turn back. But we cannot wait much longer to conclude this matter, and when we conclude it, we expect to be in coalition with a large group of like-minded nations. No doubt words will be found to describe those who remain aloof from this coalition, but one term that most assuredly will not be used to describe them is "multilateralist".

Another example of the commitment of the United States to effective multilateralism is the approach we have taken to the problem of nuclear proliferation on the Korean peninsula. The United States considers the efforts of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to develop nuclear weapons, and its announced intention to withdraw from the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, to be a serious challenge to the non-proliferation regime and a threat to regional and international security. The international community speaks in one voice in calling for a denuclearized Korean peninsula. We are working closely with our friends and allies, including the Republic of Korea, Japan, Australia, the European Union, Russia and China, as well as with IAEA, to find a peaceful resolution to this problem. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea must visibly, verifiably and irreversibly dismantle its nuclear weapons programme.

As Secretary of State Powell told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, resolving this situation is going to be a long and difficult process and will take the entire international community working together. We do not want an incomplete solution that seems to solve the problem but in fact just covers it over so it can surface later on. We will also not provide quid pro quos to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to convince it to live up to its existing obligations.

For this reason, the United States has consistently supported referral of this matter to the United Nations Security Council - the institution vested with "primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security" under Article 24 of the United Nations Charter. Others initially resisted such a referral. They suggested instead that the United States should undertake to solve the problem through a direct dialogue with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Surely this is one of the supreme ironies of our times - the supposedly unilateralist United States seeking to refer a threat to international peace and security to the United Nations Security Council, while others urge that, notwithstanding our reservations, the United States should take it upon itself to solve this problem for the international community.

The premise of those who want the United States to solve this problem unilaterally is that it is primarily our problem and our responsibility. Nothing could be further from the truth. A nuclear-armed Democratic People's Republic of Korea threatens the stability of all of north-east Asia. Given that country's history of marketing the weapons it produces, it also threatens to spread nuclear weapons rapidly to dangerous regimes around the world.

(Mr. Rademaker, United States)

It has been an article of faith within the arms control community for decades that the norms established by the NPT cannot be allowed to unravel, for if they ever do, there may be no logical end to the process. North Korea's nuclear weapons programme challenges the international community to uphold these norms. We all know that other regimes are watching the international response, waiting to decide whether it will profit them to follow the path pioneered by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The international community must make sure that these interested observers decide against following that path.

In order to ensure that the non-proliferation regime remains strong and IAEA remains credible, the IAEA Board of Governors had to make a determination of non-compliance and report this to the United Nations Security Council. The IAEA Board met yesterday in Vienna and lived up to its responsibilities. We are pleased that the IAEA Board took this action.

The commitment of the United States to effective multilateralism can also be seen in our efforts over the past year to strengthen implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. Our decision to seek reinvigorated leadership for the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons was not calculated to make my Government popular. The expedient course for us would have been to look the other way while OPCW slowly atrophied. Indeed, many other Governments urged us to do precisely that - including Governments that are often more outspoken in their support of arms control than the United States.

We judged the dangers associated with chemical weapons to be so great, however, that we were not prepared to allow polite multilateralism to stand in the way of effective multilateralism. Accordingly, we chose to invest significant political capital in a campaign to revitalize OPCW, and we are very pleased with the results that have been achieved. The new Director-General, Rogelio Pfiester, has done an outstanding job during his first months in office, and both he and OPCW have the full support of my Government.

As an indication of our faith in the future of OPCW, Secretary of State Powell decided significantly to upgrade our diplomatic representation by assigning Ambassador Eric Javits to The Hague. This decision was not taken lightly, and it reflects our commitment to support and promote the work of OPCW, an international organization that is successfully promoting international security by combating the spread of weapons of mass destruction. As we have made clear from the moment this decision was announced, we will appoint a replacement representative to the Conference on Disarmament.

When we look at our accomplishments over the past year, I must also highlight the United States-Russian Treaty on Strategic Offensive Reductions, also called the Moscow Treaty, which we signed on 24 May 2002. While not strictly speaking a multilateral arms control matter, the Moscow Treaty does reflect the willingness of my Government to work with other countries to enhance international security. The treaty puts into legal form the respective commitments of the United States and Russia to reduce by approximately two thirds the number of strategic nuclear warheads deployed by each side, to 1,700-2,200 by the end of 2012.

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This major step by the United States and the Russian Federation represents the largest reduction ever in deployed nuclear forces. It reflects our commitment to article VI of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

It is also a step that many predicted would be impossible if the United States proceeded with plans to terminate the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty. Many warned that the ABM Treaty was the cornerstone of strategic stability and that, if the United States exercised its legal right to withdraw from it, the inevitable result would be a new arms race. The conclusion of the Moscow Treaty just five months after President Bush announced his decision to terminate the ABM Treaty proves that such predictions were ill-founded.

Not only have we amicably terminated the ABM Treaty, signed the Moscow Treaty, and established a new strategic framework with Russia, but we have also begun the process of deploying missile defences in cooperation with our traditional allies, as well as Russia. The success of our efforts to date, and the multilateral character of our planning with regard to missile defence, should reassure those who originally questioned our approach to the ABM Treaty.

The United States has also worked hard over the last year to combat the biological weapons threat. The agreed outcome of the Fifth Review Conference of the States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention in November 2002 demonstrated our commitment to pursue innovative strategies to retard the proliferation of biological and toxin weapons. It also reflected our determination not to accept half-measures that would give a pass to rogue States that have in place robust programmes to develop these weapons.

The point that emerges from the cases I have mentioned is that the United States supports multilateralism when it is effective, and in appropriate cases is prepared to provide the leadership required to make multilateralism effective. For the past six years, the Conference on Disarmament has not been an instrument of effective multilateralism. The question before us today is whether it can be made effective.

The United States would like the Conference on Disarmament to transform itself into a more effective multilateral forum. We continue to favour the negotiation here of a fissile material cut-off treaty that effectively and verifiably bans the production of fissile material for use in weapons and advances our national security. So far as we know, no country represented here disagrees with the basic concept of an FMCT. But, so far in the Conference on Disarmament, that has not been sufficient to commence a negotiation.

The Conference on Disarmament operates on the principle of consensus, and for good reason. This principle gives every participant a veto, which helps ensure universal - or near-universal - support for any agreement that might emerge from this forum. The evolution of this principle in the Conference on Disarmament over the last several years clearly demonstrates, however, how even a good principle can be corrupted in practice. Consensus in the Conference

(Mr. Rademaker, United States)

on Disarmament has become synonymous with hostage-taking and obstruction. It has allowed a few States to make demands that are unrealistic and unobtainable - to insist on negotiations on subjects that are not ripe for negotiation as a condition for commencing work on subjects where progress might be possible.

The result has been to cast this, the only standing multilateral arms control negotiating body in the world, into such disrepute that responsible Governments, including mine, are questioning whether it can retain relevance to the security environment we face today. We must all recognize that the Conference on Disarmament as we have known it will not long survive if this malaise continues.

The solution to this problem is obvious: consensus must be preserved, but the States represented here must abandon their tolerance for comprehensive linkages, in which nothing is agreed until everything is agreed. We should negotiate on matters that all agree are ripe for negotiation, while informally exploring other issues until members of the Conference can reach some common ground that could lead to further progress on those issues.

Accordingly, let us agree at this session to approve a "clean" resolution establishing FMCT negotiations. By "clean" I mean a resolution unencumbered by linkages to unrelated proposals about which there is no agreement in this body. The practice in the Conference of holding vital international security initiatives hostage to win approval for dubious, unpopular or outdated proposals must end if this body is to have a future.

If, however, we remain gridlocked on the agenda items that have in the past been the focus of attention in the Conference on Disarmament, we should explore whether consensus exists to take up other items where progress might be possible. Could we not agree, for example, that the dangers posed by the prospect of terrorists getting access to weapons of mass destruction deserve to be addressed seriously? Would it not be possible to agree on restrictions on the export of all non-self-destructing landmines that have caused untold civilian suffering on virtually every continent? Or will ideas like these also fall victim to the hostage-taking that has come to characterize work at the Conference on Disarmament?

The Conference on Disarmament can also contribute to international peace and security by redoubling efforts to ensure compliance with treaties banning weapons of mass destruction once they have entered into force. Too often States seem eager to negotiate such agreements and then lose interest in their implementation. This is understandable: it is easier and more exciting to negotiate new treaties than to work on the tedious details of implementation and compliance. This may be explainable, but it is not acceptable. Too many rogue States have signed such treaties and have covert programmes to build these terrible weapons. We call on all parties to treaties banning weapons of mass destruction to honour their commitments.

(Mr. Rademaker, United States)

Focusing on implementation also gives rise to occasions where some parties to a treaty have to call others to task for non-compliance. Few States like to make such accusations, not least because this can lead to the question of imposing penalties for non-compliance. Nevertheless, if multilateral arms control is to have a future, treaty parties must face up to their responsibilities. They must decide that they will not tolerate non-compliance.

One final matter that I cannot avoid mentioning is Iraq's possible assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament next month. Let me be clear. Iraq's assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament is unacceptable to the United States. It should be unacceptable to all supporters of the Conference on Disarmament, as it threatens to discredit this institution to a much greater degree than even the past six years of inactivity.

In conclusion, Mr. President, the United States hopes that this will be the year in which the Conference on Disarmament re-establishes itself as an effective multilateral institution. We look forward to working with you and the other delegations to achieve this result.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Assistant Secretary, Mr. Rademaker, for his important statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to Ambassador Wolfgang Petritsch of Austria.

Mr. PETRITSCH (Austria): Mr. President, I am a relative newcomer to the Conference on Disarmament, but I have been struck by two phrases that I have heard numerous times in this forum. The first is that the "security environment in which we live is changing" and the second is that "the Conference on Disarmament is the only multilateral disarmament negotiating forum". What do these phrases mean? And, how do they relate to one another as regards the goal of enhancing our collective, and individual - human - security?

The security environment is indeed changing. During the Cold War we perceived major threats to international peace and security as mainly a State-to-State phenomenon. Today we face a more complex and ambiguous reality. The twenty-first century opened with the type of assault that few could have imagined: the use of civilian airliners as missiles against buildings in two of the world's major cities by terrorists with utter disregard for the value of human life.

Nobody can excuse or try to justify the appalling barbarity of the murder of thousands of innocents. Yet terrorism is only one of the threats to the long-term security and well-being of the international community. In some respects, terrorism is a symptom as much as a cause of violence, repression and insecurity. Poverty, natural and human-caused disasters, diseases such as HIV/AIDS, human rights violations, fanaticism and terrorism are all factors in a mutually reinforcing feedback process of inequality, resentment and violence. The endpoint of such a process may be the hitherto unimaginable use of weapons of mass destruction. What agenda could be more pressing than addressing these threats comprehensively?

(Mr. Petritsch, Austria)

Many of this Conference's members have described it as the only multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament. Certainly, it is a forum tasked to produce arms control and disarmament agreements. Strictly speaking, however, the Conference on Disarmament is neither the only multilateral disarmament negotiating body, nor is it universal. Austria's concern, shared by many other countries in this room, is that the body itself needs to avoid becoming an anachronism after having slumbered inactively for five years without any contribution to the resolution of those pressing matters that it is tasked to address.

We need to move on from stale, cyclical exchanges designed - by some - merely to preserve the status quo or to enhance the prestige of individual nations at the expense of real progress. Non-proliferation is only part of the answer. It is simply not enough. We must step up to the task of disarmament if we are serious about making the world safe from weapons of mass destruction.

There is widespread and profound frustration, both within the Conference on Disarmament and in the real world, with this situation. We face multifaceted threats to which multilateral responses are urgently required. We have seen little evidence of the Conference's will to reform itself and engage. But we are fully supportive of all efforts that would help to overcome its current stalemate.

Over the past five years, we have supported a number of very laudable and creative efforts by successive presidents of the Conference on Disarmament to broker agreement on a programme of work. None of these proposals is as ambitious and far-reaching on substance as Austria would like. The programme of work is only the starting point for substantive work, however, and we are ready to accept proposals that set us on a track to move forward.

We strongly support the cross-regional proposal put forward by Ambassador Dembri, Ambassador Lint, Ambassador Reyes, Ambassador Salander and Ambassador Vega. We are urging those very few States that have resisted consensus to have the courage to lend their support to this proposal. An agreement on a programme of work does not, after all, prejudice any outcome. The Conference's consensus rule provides a failsafe safety net for any delegation.

Austria remains committed to promoting the multilateral disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation agenda and we do this in the conviction that the preservation of peace and security is our shared obligation. Collective and national security is ultimately about the security of all people.

Two weeks ago, I took the floor on behalf of the Human Security Network and informed the Conference about an initiative taken by the Network regarding the universalization of the Ottawa Convention. The human security concept derives from an approach that places individuals and their security firmly at the centre of policy considerations. And it is based on the conviction that there should be one prime objective in international relations: the protection of the individual human being. There is a collective responsibility to protect, as demonstrated in recent years in humanitarian interventions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, East Timor and elsewhere.

(Mr. Petritsch, Austria)

If we look at our disarmament agenda from this viewpoint, it becomes clear that there is a great deal that we still have to do to start living up to this responsibility.

Weapons of mass destruction with their potential large-scale destruction and annihilation of human beings are diametrically opposed to a human-centred concept of security.

In April, we will have the next meeting of the preparatory committee for the NPT Review Conference in Geneva. The NPT, in our opinion, is a prime example of the clash of the different approaches of security. The overwhelming number of non-nuclear-weapon States are driven by the conviction that the possession, let alone use, of nuclear weapons is unacceptable, because they are counterproductive to the world's long-term security and stability.

But there are other States that appear to work under the assumption that the long-term retention of nuclear weapons is a valid option, adding to their security and international prestige. How else are we to interpret the apparent lack of implementation of the unequivocal undertaking given by the nuclear-weapon States to move towards nuclear disarmament, three years after it was agreed? This approach is fundamentally flawed and even short-sighted. The failure to move towards nuclear disarmament by nuclear-weapon States will ultimately undermine the norm of the NPT, in our view, unless steps are taken urgently. Such steps include the immediate resumption of negotiations on fissile material. Credible progress must be made by the next Review Conference toward the implementation of all NPT articles, including article 6 and the agreed "thirteen steps".

Moreover, recent examples have clearly demonstrated to us that acquiring nuclear weapons does not improve the strategic security situation, in particular in States where development needs and other human security-related needs are more pressing than ever.

Movement towards nuclear disarmament will be a mark of progress. Besides starting immediately on negotiations on fissile material, however, the international community must now redouble its efforts towards the entry into force of the CTBT.

In this context, I would like to stress the importance that we attach to the work of IAEA, which has a crucial role to play in preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons, particularly at a time when we have become increasingly aware of the threats posed by terrorist groups and their readiness to cross any border of humanity.

It is our collective responsibility to counter threats of biological and chemical weapons. Austria was a strong supporter of the efforts to adopt a verification protocol to the BWC, which came to an abrupt end in the summer of 2001. The draft protocol was less than perfect but, despite the claims of a few, it did have a real security benefit. Moreover, there is an inherent value in multilateral approaches that engage parties, help create confidence and foster cooperation. We therefore believe that a disservice has been done to the integrity of the norm in the last two years and sincerely hope that the follow-up mechanism that we agreed upon at last November's BWC Review Conference will yield results and will reinforce the BWC.

(Mr. Petritsch, Austria)

We are currently faced with the prospect of a major conflict and its potential consequences absorb our minds. To some it might, therefore, seem naive to emphasize the human-centred approach to international relations at this fateful juncture.

But the human dimension should always be at the forefront of our thinking. We must not all be consumed by the military logic and dimension that is unfolding before our eyes. As I stated before, it is our obligation in the disarmament community to address security problems in order to improve the lives of ordinary people. Luckily, there have been some occasions where disarmament and humanitarianism have come together.

Last week States parties, international organizations and civil society again came together to work towards the implementation of the Ottawa Convention, in order to alleviate the inhuman effects of anti-personnel mines. Austria had the honour, together with Peru, of chairing the meetings of the Standing Committee on the General Status and Operation of the Convention during that week.

Although the negotiations of the Ottawa Convention started out as a specifically disarmament-oriented undertaking, the humanitarian outcome in 1997 transcends those bounds and all our expectations. Humanitarianism prevailed over cynical politics. The Ottawa Convention is grounded in a human security-centred approach. In its preamble the States parties declare themselves: "Determined to put an end to the suffering and casualties caused by anti-personnel mines that kill or maim hundreds of people every week, mostly innocent and defenceless civilians and especially children, obstruct economic development and reconstruction, inhibit the repatriation of refugees and internally displaced persons, and have other severe consequences for years after emplacement."

All these points in the preamble are very pertinent to our current situation. If there were to be a conflict, what would the repercussions be on the lives of ordinary people? I do not want to elaborate on this further, as this would go beyond the scope of general statements made in this Conference. In any case, Austria considers that the humanitarian principle that is expressed in the words of the preamble should be respected beyond the scope of the Convention and should guide us in the way in which we approach the disarmament agenda.

In this context, it is our hope that the negotiations about to begin on a prospective Protocol V to the Convention on Conventional Weapons will yield results in dealing comprehensively with the effects caused by explosive remnants of war. Again, we should be motivated by the human suffering caused by unexploded ordnance. We hope to be able to conclude a comprehensive, credible, legally binding instrument at the end of this year.

The same principle should guide our work in the area of small arms and light weapons. Their detrimental effect on the lives of people, in particular in fragile post-conflict situations, has been well documented. Small arms and light weapons are a logical priority topic for a human-centred approach. The 2001 United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects was an important step forward. The programme of action in this area provides us with a road map for focused actions at global, regional and

(Mr. Petritsch, Austria)

national levels to be taken prior to the next Review Meeting in 2006. Austria is committed to this process and we look forward to the Small Arms Meeting of States later this year to assess the progress that has been achieved so far.

Rigid discourse still dominates much of the disarmament world. We are optimistic that the recent approaches, for instance on anti-personnel mines and on small arms, will eventually influence disarmament work in a positive manner. Austria considers the involvement of civil society to be a key element for their success.

The international community has assigned us the responsibility of addressing security concerns. This is a collective undertaking and a collective responsibility, as well as a national prerogative, as we are constantly being reminded by some. Again, Austria will continue to do its utmost to strengthen multilateral approaches to achieve our disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation objectives.

In closing, Mr. President, I would like to express our gratitude for the trust that has been demonstrated in my country by the signatory States to the Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation by appointing Austria as the immediate central contact. It is our hope that the number of subscribing States - which currently stands at 101 - will continue to grow and that the Code will be a valuable contribution to the task of combating ballistic missile proliferation. We thus encourage those who have not yet done so to sign the Code and to notify the immediate central contact in Vienna accordingly.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of Austria for his important statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Mr. So Se Pyong.

Mr. SO (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Mr. President, it was not my intention to take the floor today. However, Mr. Rademaker has kindly asked me to comment on his remarks.

I do not understand whether he has mentioned that in the interests of the progress of the Conference on Disarmament or to promote his aggressive intentions under the signboard of multilateralism in this sacred house. He stressed multilateralism again and again. Then, who is pursuing the unilateralism, at present the main topic of the world? And where did the language of this unilateralism come from? His talk of multilateralism is in my view only lip-service, but not deeds. Because that is not logical. He is only playing a language game.

Second, he has randomly announced in his statement that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is violating its international obligations and doing everything bad to the international community. As my delegation addressed earlier, the United States has pursued its hostile policy towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and imposed economic sanctions for more than half a century. With the advent of the Bush Administration, it labelled my sovereign State as a part of the "axis of evil" and also put my country on the pre-emptive nuclear attack list. Furthermore, it has deliberately violated the agreed framework of 1994,

(Mr. So, Democratic People's Republic of Korea)

totally failing to build the light-water reactors by the year 2003 in my country. Timed to coincide with this, the United States has instigated IAEA to adopt resolutions against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea occasionally.

My Government has made it clear that our nuclear activity at the current stage in my country was aimed for peaceful purposes, mainly, for the generation of electricity, and we also mentioned that we would take separate verification into account between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States, should the latter drop its hostile policy towards the former and conclude a bilateral non-aggression pact on an equal footing. However, the United States is calling our peaceful activities a "threat" and "blackmail" against the international community. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea has strong objections to this assessment, since it is unfair, unilateral and fully distorted.

I would not like to repeat any more, but I have to highlight once again that it is very obvious and very easy to understand that the nuclear issue in the Korean peninsula is due to the hostile policy of the United States towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, especially towards my sovereign State. If the United States changes its attitude right now, the issue will be settled immediately, and all the problems will disappear simultaneously. I do not understand why the United States is running away from us. Do not be scared, Mr. Rademaker.

That is why we call this a "bilateral" matter between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States of America. It is neither "multilateral" nor "international". They are trying to put hurdles before the good relations and progress which are now developing on the Korean peninsula and in the north-east region. That is their main intention. They are so jealous. They seem to be a super-Power. They want to control everything. Is the United States the international judge? The anti-Democratic People's Republic of Korea nuclear role, hit by the United States, is intended to stifle and collapse the sovereign Government of my country, even calling it a "repressive" and "outlaw" regime and even a "terrorist State". We advise you, Mr. Rademaker, not to try to make any more tricks to divert world attention and deceive the international community since the people can see what your true colour is now.

The United States persistently uses IAEA as its tool for the implementation of its hostile policy. As he mentioned, yesterday it was also used for the United States. The regret is, as the international watchdog organization, it has no eyes to see the loss of 260 kg of plutonium. It only has eyes for double standards. That is why we strongly resent the resolution adopted by the Board of IAEA yesterday, even if it is not in a position to do so. So what? We have nothing to do with it anymore. Furthermore, my Government does not care, no matter what discussion takes place in the United Nations Security Council. It is my view, however, that once the United Nations touches the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula, it should be fair and assign the same responsibility and punish the United States for its guilt also, because the United States is the main troublemaker that opened Pandora's box.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Iraq, Mr. Naji Abid.

Mr. ABID (Iraq) (translated from Arabic): Mr. President, allow me at the outset to congratulate you on your presidency of the Conference and your outstanding efforts in steering the work of this session. My delegation is ready to cooperate fully with you in order to achieve our shared aims. I should also like to convey our best wishes to all fraternal Arab delegations and friendly Islamic States on the occasion of the Id Al-Adha holiday. May God bless them all!

According to the rules of procedure, the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament is rotated among all its members. This is one of the advantages of the multilateralist approach. My delegation does not believe that the cause of multilateralism is served by imposing the viewpoint of one party only, as regards the presidency of international bodies. This is a matter to be decided by the bodies in question, in accordance with their rules of procedure. The United States Government has taken a political stance against my country and is using flimsy pretexts in a bid to launch a war of aggression against it, despite opposition from the international community. The United States of America is not pleased at the prospect of my delegation assuming the presidency of the Conference at the current session. However, if that country were allowed to take any steps or to bring pressures to bear in order to deny an important member of the Conference the right to assume the presidency, as guaranteed under the rules of procedure, it would create a very dangerous precedent that would represent a setback for our work, since other States could suffer the same fate in the future.

My delegation would like to respond to the allegations made in the statement by the United States delegation and to the charges levelled at my Government concerning the acquisition of weapons of mass destruction. We would like to make it clear that two international bodies, UNMOVIC and the International Atomic Energy Agency, have been mandated to carry out inspections in Iraq with respect to the alleged presence of weapons of mass destruction there. They have been doing this work for more than two months now and have enjoyed the full cooperation of the Iraqi authorities. Nowhere in their reports to the Security Council has there been any mention of their having found weapons of mass destruction. The international community has seen for itself how the United States has attempted to obstruct the inspections in Iraq in order to leave it free to launch its aggression against Iraq and impose its hegemony on the region and the world. At the same time, the international community has been calling for the inspectors to be given sufficient time to complete their work, in accordance with the relevant international resolutions.

My delegation would like to reaffirm that we have fully implemented and fulfilled our obligations under the relevant Security Council resolutions and we would like to emphasize the importance of implementing paragraph 14 of resolution 687 (1991), which calls for the establishment in the Middle East of a zone free from weapons of mass destruction. In response to the allegations made by the United States of America that Iraq possesses weapons of mass destruction, my delegation would like to reaffirm that it denies these allegations and that Iraq does not possess such weapons. We draw the attention of the international community to the fact that the United States was the first country in the world to use such weapons and that it has deployed munitions containing depleted uranium that have had appalling human and environmental consequences for my country.

(Mr. Abid, Iraq)

Mr. President, before I conclude, I would like to reiterate that the United States is pursuing a policy of double standards and selectivity on international issues in accordance with its strategic interests. Moreover, the viewpoints it expresses on disarmament issues and multilateralism are intransigent.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of Iraq for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair.

That concludes my list of speakers for today. Does any delegation wish to take the floor at this stage?

I would now like to invite you to take a decision on the requests of Denmark, Ghana, Lebanon, Nepal and Saudi Arabia to participate as observers in the work of the Conference during the session, without first having considered them in an informal plenary, on the basis of consultations that groups have had during the course of last week. These requests are contained in document CD/WP.530/Add.1, which is before you.

May I take it that the Conference decides to invite Denmark, Ghana, Lebanon, Nepal and Saudi Arabia to participate in our work in accordance with the rules of procedure?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: Distinguished delegates, as I do not see any further requests for the floor and this will then constitute our last meeting under the presidency of my country, I would like to take this opportunity to make very brief concluding remarks, as this will be the last meeting when I shall be addressing you from this position.

At the beginning of the term of India's presidency, I provided an assessment that there was a curious irony in the fact that, while we were facing new threats and new uncertainties, we were also faced with a growing sense of frustration at the political impasse in which we found ourselves. At the same time, we were in a situation where we had been allocated resources for 10 meetings a week, of which we used but a very small fraction. The Conference on Disarmament adopted an agenda in the early part of 2003, but we have remained unsuccessful in our consultations on the adoption of a programme of work. Accordingly, my efforts to try and encourage the Conference on Disarmament to begin work focused on possible options that were thrown up during my consultations with different delegations.

The first option was the initiative taken by the five ambassadors, which is contained in document CD/1693, with regard to a comprehensive programme of work. I understand that the group of five ambassadors has been continuing its consultations and I, for my part, have actively encouraged them to do so, with a view to helping the Conference get over its procedural impasse.

(The President)

A second option that was put forward was the idea that we could put aside the three difficult subjects that were linked together and focus on other subjects on which we had in the past agreed on mandates to establish ad hoc committees. This approach, too, was opposed by some delegations, however.

A third option was to treat all issues equally by having informal plenary sessions on all the agenda items, but my consultations revealed that this approach also did not enjoy agreement within the Conference.

This therefore brought us back to square one, to the issue of linkage and to the issue of negotiating and non-negotiating mandates.

If we look at the past record of the Conference on Disarmament, we find that there has not been any assurance that negotiating mandates necessarily lead to successful conclusion of negotiations, or that non-negotiating mandates do not evolve into negotiating mandates and successful negotiations. We have ample examples in both categories from the history of this body. It is therefore my assessment that our discussions on negotiating and non-negotiating mandates only succeed in ensuring that we are able to begin substantive work on an agenda that we ourselves have adopted.

I would like therefore to urge us all to take a serious look at this issue and at this dilemma that has prevented us from doing any substantive work over the past six years and more.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all delegations for their encouragement of my efforts and my consultations and the Secretary-General, Mr. Ordzhonikidze, the Deputy Secretary-General, Mr. Enrique Román-Morey, and other members of the secretariat, for their assistance and their efficiency. I would also like to thank Conference Services and, of course, the interpreters, for helping us in our work.

It remains for me to convey my good wishes to Ambassador Kasri of Indonesia, who will be taking over the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament, and to assure him of my commitment to full cooperation. I wish him every success in discharging the responsibility that he will take on.

That concludes our business for today. The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Thursday, 20 February 2003, at 10 a.m. in this conference room.

The meeting rose at 11.40 a.m.