

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE NINE HUNDRED AND TWENTIETH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 20 February 2003, at 10.15 a.m.

President: Mr. Djismun KASRI (Indonesia)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 920th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

We have just learned about the two tragic aircraft disasters that happened yesterday. In Pakistan, an air force plane crashed with 17 people aboard, including the country's air force chief, Mushaf Ali Mir, and several other top-ranking officials. In the Islamic Republic of Iran, in the country's worst-ever air disaster, 302 people were killed aboard a military aircraft. I would like to take this opportunity to express, on behalf of all delegations to the Conference on Disarmament, our profound sorrow and sympathy at the tragic loss of so many lives. At the same time, I would like to convey, on behalf of the Conference on Disarmament, our condolences to the families of the victims and the Governments of Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

I would like to inform you that, last Friday afternoon, the secretariat of the Conference received a note verbale from the Chargé d'affaires of Iraq informing it that Iraq would not be assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. Copies of this note verbale were forwarded to group coordinators on Monday, 17 February 2003. Accordingly, following the presidency of Indonesia, the presidency of the Conference will be assumed by Ireland.

I have two speakers for today's plenary meeting, namely, Ambassador Jorge Iván Mora Godoy of Cuba and Ambassador Kuniko Inoguchi of Japan. Before giving them the floor, however, I would like to make some opening remarks as Indonesia assumes the presidency of the Conference.

Distinguished colleagues, at the very outset, I would like to express our gratitude to the outgoing President, Ambassador Rakesh Sood, for his tireless efforts aimed at launching the substantive work of the Conference on Disarmament. We also appreciate his very comprehensive assessment of the results of his consultations, which was presented to us at the plenary meeting last Thursday.

It is my intention to continue his efforts, taking his findings as a starting point for my own consultations with the members of the Conference. In doing so, I will also consider the thorough analyses, conclusions and recommendations of my distinguished predecessor in this office, as well as all the proposals submitted by delegations and groups of delegations.

Although over the years the Conference has accumulated a great number of proposals and ideas on how to advance its substantive work, an agreement on the programme of work still eludes us. My predecessors have frequently pointed out that the main problems facing the Conference are of a political nature. I share this assessment and, therefore, I hope that, while carefully examining various proposals and suggestions and seeking compromise solutions, the Conference will focus its attention first and foremost on the political framework of the problems and that it will always be guided by the spirit of collective responsibility for international peace and security.

(The President)

The Conference has not agreed on its programme of work yet; this should not prevent us, however, from advancing the substantive work using the means still available to us. It is essential that the Conference maintains its negotiating capacity and engages in a substantive debate. After all, the Conference has adopted its agenda and, as rule 19 of the rules of procedure stipulates, "The work of the Conference shall be conducted in plenary meetings, as well as under any additional arrangements agreed by the Conference, such as informal meetings with or without experts." Accordingly, I would like to appeal to you to make full use of this mechanism, perhaps the most important one available to us at this stage, which can be used immediately to engage the Conference in substantive work. As the history of the Conference teaches us, an active in-depth exchange of views on the issues on the agenda during plenary meetings is an indispensable stage, which precedes any negotiations.

The current stalemate in the Conference is of concern to us all. We should therefore all redouble our efforts to overcome it, demonstrating our good will and the necessary degree of flexibility and accommodation to find a compromise solution that would allow us to get back to business. I sincerely hope that the Conference will use this opportunity to reaffirm its role as the world's only multilateral negotiating disarmament forum capable of delivering new legal instruments in the field of arms limitation and disarmament for the benefit of the whole of humankind.

I now give the floor to the representative of Cuba, Ambassador Jorge Iván Mora Godoy.

Mr. MORA GODOY (Cuba) (translated from Spanish): Mr. President, first allow me to associate Cuba with the condolences that you have just conveyed to the peoples and Governments of Pakistan and Iran on the tragic loss of life in those sad accidents.

Since this is the first time that I take the floor under your presidency, let me begin by congratulating you. It gives my delegation special satisfaction to see Indonesia presiding over the Conference on Disarmament and you may count on Cuba's full cooperation in that endeavour.

I also congratulate Ambassador Rakesh Sood of India for all the energy and acumen that he displayed during his presidency and for his contributions to our work.

May I add at the outset that Cuba endorses all the remarks made, at the beginning of our 2003 session, by the distinguished Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Group of 21.

On 23 October 2002, Cuba ratified the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean, better known as the Treaty of Tlatelolco. The first inhabited region of the world free of nuclear weapons and bound by the commitment that such weapons would never be used against the States parties thus became a full reality. Similarly, on 4 November 2002, Cuba became the 188th State party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

(Mr. Mora Godoy, Cuba)

The world community has welcomed those steps, especially because they took place in difficult international circumstances in the field of disarmament and arms control, when support for multilateralism, international law and the United Nations as a whole has become more important than ever. Cuba's decision is all the more significant as it was made in the face of the permanent hostility of the main nuclear Power - the only one in our hemisphere - against our country.

We have already explained on previous occasions that our adherence to the NPT should not be interpreted as a change in Cuba's well-known position regarding the inadequacies of that treaty and its discriminatory character. We confirm that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the definitive solution to the danger that they represent. That is the only guarantee that such weapons will not be used by the States who possess them and that there will be no threat of using them as a means of pressure in inter-State relations.

Cuba is ready to undertake and fulfil its obligations and exercise its rights as a party to both the above-mentioned treaties. In that context, my country has already started negotiating the relevant safeguard agreements with IAEA. Cuba will also work actively in the framework of the preparatory process for the next NPT Review Conference, together with those States that share our concerns about the limitations of the Treaty and the lack of compliance by the nuclear Powers with their commitments under it.

These times are not the most propitious for the attainment of the objectives for which the Conference on Disarmament was created.

After the tragic events of 11 September 2001, the fight against terrorism, instead of rallying an internationally concerted response on the basis of international law and the principles of the United Nations Charter, has served as a new pretext to impose unilateral policies and doctrines of war such as the new notion of a "preventive war", which is quite unacceptable as it is illegal and contrary to the principles of international law and the United Nations Charter. Double standards govern the assessment of the international behaviour of States, and some of them, intoxicated by their power, feel entitled to make up lists of good and evil States, judge their crimes and mete out the punishments.

Cuba shares the rejection by the Non-Aligned Movement of groundless allegations of non-compliance with international instruments on weapons of mass destruction and its view that States parties must present evidence to substantiate such accusations, as well as apply the procedures established in those instruments to clarify their doubts.

The campaign against terrorism cannot be allowed to create a bigger threat to international peace and security than the scourge it purports to combat. I make this statement on behalf of the Cuban people, which has painfully experienced the atrocities of terrorism as a result of the hostile policies of the United States of America. The double standards applied by the United States are also manifested in the unjust imprisonment in that country of five young Cubans who were fighting to prevent acts of terrorism, not only against Cuba, but also against the United States itself. The Cuban people are currently campaigning for their release.

(Mr. Mora Godoy, Cuba)

War is on the point of breaking out. It has not yet started and yet its effects may already be felt on all sides. Tensions and uncertainties are mounting, causing oil prices to shoot up and shaking the global economy. Should aggression ultimately be waged against Iraq, all countries without exception will be affected. The world will be subjected to enormous economic risks and political tensions in the midst of the profound crisis through which it is passing. In every region, without exception, people are mobilizing to voice their most resolute opposition to the war and calling for peace. The vast majority of the international community says no to war, does not accept the unilateral decision taken by the United States, which is flouting the norms of international law and the United Nations Charter, and ignoring the responsibility of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace and international security. This will be an unnecessary war, waged on pretexts that are neither credible nor proved.

We share the concerns of those who see in the deadlock of this Conference a lost opportunity to strengthen multilateralism and to address the current security problems faced by the world. That is reason enough for us to keep tirelessly searching for a way out from the situation, which is - let us not deceive ourselves - the result of the lack of political will and commitment on the part of some States, and not of a lack of formulas and proposals of every kind.

It is difficult to understand why there is so much resistance to the idea of working multilaterally and launching negotiations on nuclear disarmament and the prevention of an arms race in outer space, when both questions are closely linked with current tensions, even if the problems of today's world are only to be seen through the prism of the campaign against international terrorism.

The continued insistence on non-proliferation as the only means of solving the problem posed by nuclear weapons will keep us on the path to failure. Insisting that privileges be granted to a few States to the detriment of others will lead only to frustration and stagnation, above all, in an international system where, for more than 50 years, due regard for the principle of the sovereign equality of States has been one of the fundamental guarantees of international peace and security.

In the new international context, it is becoming increasingly evident that the multilateral approach is the only viable option for solving problems related to peace and security. It is our collective responsibility to prevent the advance of unilateralism and its continued undermining of the role of the United Nations. The international community gave its strong support for multilateralism when, at its fifty-seventh session, the United Nations General Assembly by a large majority adopted resolution 57/63 of 22 November 2002, entitled "Promotion of multilateralism in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation".

Cuba considers it offensive to talk in this forum about the importance of multilateralism while at the same time ignoring the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and blocking negotiations on the protocol to strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention, notwithstanding the support for the conclusion of such a protocol given by virtually all the

(Mr. Mora Godoy, Cuba)

States parties to the Convention. Furthermore, for this Conference, it is unacceptable that there should be continued threats of the unilateral use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear countries, while multilateral discussions of nuclear disarmament and the prevention of an arms race in outer space are rejected.

It is likewise contradictory on the one hand to profess strong multilateralist policies and, on the other, to reject international cooperation, to reject the peaceful settlement of disputes and to reject dialogue and confidence-building measures, all of which are vital to the creation of multilateral and bilateral friendly relations among peoples and nations, as affirmed by the above-mentioned resolution of the United Nations General Assembly.

The solutions to the current problems lie in international cooperation, in refraining from imposing ideas by force, in recourse to participatory and inclusive formulas for the settlement of conflicts, in an effective commitment to specific disarmament and non-proliferation actions and in addressing the root causes of humankind's conflicts and problems, which are almost always a consequence of the underdevelopment of peoples and its sequel of hunger, disease, lack of education and poverty.

Cuba honours the principles of international cooperation in the medical work which it carries out with many friendly countries, helping to save lives and trying to alleviate the sufferings of so many human beings, for whom diseases are weapons that kill every day.

In the current international situation, all of us have the responsibility not to slacken our efforts to preserve the international legal system of disarmament and arms control. Notwithstanding its flaws, this system has served as an important, irreplaceable pillar of the international peace and security structure. Strengthening and further developing that system must be the constant goal of the international community and in that task the Conference on Disarmament plays the key role. Cuba will continue working in this forum in favour of formulas that contribute to that end, in particular the start of multilateral negotiations towards a convention on nuclear disarmament.

In conclusion, Mr. President, I request that this statement be circulated as an official document of the Conference on Disarmament.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Ambassador of Cuba for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Japan, Ambassador Kuniko Inoguchi.

Ms. INOBUCHI (Japan): Mr. President, as you have mentioned, I have heard of very sad, tragic incidents in three countries. On this occasion, allow me to express my deepest sympathy and condolences to the Governments and the people of the Republic of Korea, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan, who have lost so many lives in these tragic accidents.

(Ms. Inoguchi, Japan)

Mr. President, at the outset, allow me to express my warmest congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. As the Conference is facing a more than six-year stalemate, your task will be challenging. I would like to assure you of the full support of my delegation in your efforts to take us a step forward in the resolution of the current problem. I would also like to express my sincere appreciation to your predecessor, Ambassador Rakesh Sood of India, for having enabled the Conference to commence its annual session smoothly and engage in very important discussions at this difficult juncture.

My special appreciation also goes to Mr. Sergei Ordzhonikidze, Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Enrique Román-Morey, Deputy Secretary-General, and all the capable members of the secretariat for the professional support and assistance they are providing.

My statement today will focus on the issue of a fissile material cut-off treaty.

According to the report of the Tokyo Forum for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament issued in 2000, "About 3,000 tons of plutonium and highly-enriched uranium exist in the world, of which less than 1 per cent is under the safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency. Two-thirds of the world's plutonium and highly-enriched uranium was produced specifically for military purposes, and two thirds of this - about 1,300 tons - is now considered surplus to military requirements." Obviously, there is a pressing need to control and manage such nuclear fissile material in order to maintain international peace and security, as we are faced with even greater dangers from nuclear proliferation to States and non-State-actors, including terrorists.

To tackle this imminent problem, at their summit meeting in Kananaskis, the G8 agreed on the Global partnership against the Spread of Weapons and Material of Mass Destruction. This initiative is a robust cooperative programme to support specific projects. Those projects include the disposition of weapons-grade plutonium, the dismantling of nuclear submarines, ensuring the secure management and storage of sensitive material, and others. The G8 countries are committed to raising up to \$20 billion over the next 10 years for the implementation of this initiative.

The two largest nuclear-weapon States, the Russian Federation and the United States, announced in June 2000 that each State would dispose of 34 tons of weapon-grade plutonium, no longer required for their defence purposes. It is considered that this step will ensure the irreversibility of nuclear disarmament by both States. It is also significant in terms of nuclear non-proliferation, because the disposition of weapons-grade plutonium will be subject to monitoring and inspections. I hope that both States will conclude agreements as early as possible with IAEA to allow the speedy implementation of verification measures.

France, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States are all observing the moratorium on their production of fissile material for nuclear weapons. Japan strongly hopes that these four countries will continue along this course, and that the remaining nuclear-weapon State and nuclear-weapons-capable States which have not yet declared such a moratorium will follow suit as early as possible.

(Ms. Inoguchi, Japan)

The legitimacy of calls for the immediate commencement of FMCT negotiations derives from various multilateral documents, and I would like to review some of these here today.

First, the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference agreed on principles and objectives for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, which called for the immediate commencement and early conclusion of negotiations on an FMCT. This was part of a political bargaining process between nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States, when the latter abandoned the nuclear option forever as a means of ensuring national security. The main reason for the long impasse in the Conference on Disarmament is considered to be the result of different views among nuclear-weapon States. It is essential to reconfirm, however, that the immediate commencement of negotiations on an FMCT was the commitment given by the nuclear-weapon States to the non-nuclear-weapon States at this very important Conference.

Second, the 2000 NPT Review Conference adopted its final document, urging the Conference on Disarmament to agree on a programme of work that included the immediate commencement of negotiations on an FMCT. This document also called for the conclusion of negotiations within five years.

Third, the United Nations General Assembly has adopted an annual consensus resolution on an FMCT since 2000.

Finally, and above all, the Conference on Disarmament agreed on the negotiating mandate on an FMCT and commenced negotiations in March 1995. The Conference also commenced negotiations in 1998. Both times, however, negotiations were too short-lived to yield any tangible result.

The international community cannot afford to waste another year, as weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons, continue to spread to States and terrorists. An FMCT is also important as a multilateral nuclear disarmament step that will be mutually complementary with the significant unilateral and bilateral steps that have been taken over the past years. The international community's tolerance towards the unproductive Conference on Disarmament is starting to wane. It is also feared that the Conference's long-lasting inactivity may undermine negotiating capability in Geneva. The Conference on Disarmament must prove its viability as the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating body by commencing work immediately on the most relevant instrument to international security, an FMCT.

Japan supports the Amorim proposal (CD/1624) and the five ambassadors' proposal (CD/1693), both of which contain the FMCT negotiating mandate based on the Shannon report (CD/1299). We believe that both proposals represent the most realistic option, as a framework enabling the Conference on Disarmament to engage in exercises on different issues that are of priority for different countries. We also believe that such a flexible position on a programme of work is shared by a majority of member States. I call upon those few States which have not yet been able to support the majority view, including China and the United States, to make the utmost effort to settle their differences.

(Ms. Inoguchi, Japan)

Pending agreement on a programme of work and, as a country placing the highest priority on an FMCT, Japan is interested in working on two tracks. One is to keep the momentum and maintain technical expertise by encouraging education and public awareness on this issue outside the Conference on Disarmament. With this in view Japan will co-organize, with Australia and UNIDIR, a workshop on promoting verification in multilateral arms control treaties, which will include a panel discussion focusing on the FMCT, on 28 March. This will be the second time that our two Governments will have co-organized such a seminar in Geneva.

The other is to activate substantive discussions on an FMCT in the Conference's plenary meetings. These discussions will not of course constitute negotiations; they will, however, prepare delegations to begin negotiations rapidly once a programme of work is agreed upon.

Let me now turn to substantive discussion.

I would now like to draw the attention of the Conference to some important issues related to an FMCT that must be dealt with in negotiations. Over the past few years, a variety of seminars and workshops on an FMCT have been organized, and we have learned, through these informal meetings, a possible range of basic issues, some of which enjoy a general convergence of views, others of which do not.

First of all, negotiations will inevitably have to deal with the issue of the conceptual framework of an FMCT - namely, its scope. It is clear that the basic objective of an FMCT is to ban the future production of fissile material for nuclear weapons. There is one aspect, however, that needs to be considered in defining the scope of the Treaty: "existing stocks".

There exists an enormous difference between those who believe that "existing stocks" should be included in the FMCT and those who do not. The Shannon mandate calls for a ban on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons, without prejudging this question. Many countries interpret this mandate as focusing on a ban on "future production", while others advocate that the FMCT should be a nuclear disarmament treaty in its true sense.

Theoretically, there are options that stocks will either be excluded from or included in the FMCT in several ways, or taken up under another agreement, or agreements, negotiated sequentially or in parallel with the FMCT. South Africa presented its empirical view (CD/1671) that, in respect of the past production of weapons materials, it is not believed to be feasible to verify the completeness of its declaration, and this opinion deserves to be heeded. In past seminars and workshops, suggestions have been made on how to relate the FMCT to the issue of stocks. One of them is to deal with the stock issue in the preamble of the FMCT, so as to open the way for future negotiations. It may also be worthwhile discussing stock issues as a voluntary confidence-building measure.

Some argue that fissile material for the peaceful use of nuclear energy should be included in the scope of FMCT negotiations. Japan cannot accept such an argument because it is crystal-clear in the negotiating mandate that the aim of the negotiations will be a ban on the

(Ms. Inoguchi, Japan)

production of fissile material for nuclear weapons. Safeguarded peaceful uses do no harm to the purpose of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. More importantly, FMCT negotiations will not start if questions already settled in the mandate are to be reopened.

The second issue relates to technical deliberations. Apart from the issue of existing stock, the basic objective of the FMCT is to ban the future production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons. Substantial technical deliberations will be required to achieve this objective without affecting the right to the peaceful use of nuclear energy. Through such deliberations, we need to define the scope of materials to be placed under monitoring, as well as elaborating an international verification system to ensure sufficient credibility of the treaty.

There is a general consensus that plutonium and highly enriched uranium can be directly used for nuclear weapons and other explosive devices. In the case of highly enriched uranium, the situation is rather straightforward. The U-235 isotope of uranium enriched beyond 20 per cent at an enrichment facility can be used directly for making nuclear weapons, as adopted in the IAEA safeguards. Accordingly, enrichment facilities, including those for highly enriched uranium, if any, should be placed under monitoring so that the materials may not be used for nuclear weapons.

In the case of plutonium, there are generally two different views. One is the understanding that, once plutonium is produced by irradiation in the reactor core, such plutonium needs to be subject to monitoring. The other view is that plutonium needs to be monitored only when it is separated from irradiated reactor fuel at a reprocessing facility. The latter view is mainly based on the assumption that the plutonium contained in irradiated fuel cannot be used directly for the production of nuclear weapons - it must undergo the separation process to become material directly usable for weapons.

In addition to plutonium and highly enriched uranium, sensitive materials, such as alternative nuclear material and thorium, may also need to be discussed. In addition, other activities, such as the recovery of fissile material from waste and the separation of other capable materials, also deserve serious attention in the negotiations.

Japan believes that the FMCT verification regime should comprise three elements: the declaration of fissile material and facilities by member States, the verification of declared material, and the verification of undeclared material and activities. In order to establish a framework for deliberations, it is useful to draw generic parameters from the arms control verification regimes already in existence. In our view, such parameters are as follows, and I name six: first, how to ensure the correctness and completeness of the initial declaration; second, how to guarantee sufficient assurance from routine inspections; third, how to detect undeclared activities and ensure the effectiveness of inspections; fourth, how to protect sensitive, namely, confidential information in the framework of verification; fifth, how to ensure cost-effectiveness and cost-efficiency; and sixth, how to create a verification system that can respond flexibly to technological progress. An optimum of these interrelated parameters must be found to elaborate an FMCT verification mechanism.

(Ms. Inoguchi, Japan)

Informal discussions have been dealing with two contrasting concepts, a “focused approach” and a “comprehensive or extended approach”. The comprehensive approach will guarantee maximum assurance but may involve huge costs for jobs which are not essential. In view of the vast nuclear fuel cycle facilities and power reactors in nuclear-weapon States, the necessary costs for verification would be very significant. This approach should therefore be examined carefully in terms of its cost-effectiveness.

The focused approach may be reasonable in terms of efficiency, but will have to be carefully examined in terms of sufficiency. This would entail different approaches toward fissile material in nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States. The only point I would like to make at this stage is that the non-nuclear-weapon States, which have accepted both the IAEA full-scope safeguards and the additional protocol, are considered to meet FMCT verification requirements.

Other technical issues to be resolved include that of naval reactor fuel. This has a non-explosive, military purpose and should therefore not be banned by the FMCT. Many naval reactors, however, are designed to use highly enriched uranium fuel, which is relatively simple to divert to nuclear weapon use. This issue also requires careful technical examination.

The third issue relates to organizational and legal aspects. It is essential that the FMCT include a verification organization. IAEA will certainly be able to play a significant role in this regard, provided that the necessary financial resources are offered to the Agency. Its reorganization, however, as we all know, is as much a political issue as a financial one.

Finally, legal issues, such as the entry-into-force clause, will also need to be addressed.

International security is multifaceted, and political interests and priorities are diverse. While Japan places the highest priority on FMCT negotiations, it is willing to accept an appropriate comprehensive programme of work, in which exercises on other issues will be conducted in parallel with FMCT negotiations.

At the same time, I have to stress, no unique argument should jeopardize a meaningful, multilateral step forward that is paramount to achieving global security. No tactical linkage is viable unless it represents a substantial part of the differing security interests of the international community.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Ambassador of Japan for her statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I would also like to convey, on behalf of the Conference on Disarmament, our condolences to the families of the victims of the tragic events in the Republic of Korea.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Russian Federation.

Mr. VASILIEV (Russian Federation) (translated from Russian): Mr. President, first of all and above all, I should also like to express on behalf of the Russian Federation our deepest sympathy towards the Government, people and families of those who lost their lives in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Pakistan and the Republic of Korea in consequence of the three tragic events which took place in recent days.

Mr. President, may I congratulate you on your election as President of the Conference on Disarmament and, in so doing, I should like to wish you every success in this undertaking. You can count on the full cooperation of the delegation of the Russian Federation. Mr. President, when I asked for the floor it was to remind us all that, on 25 February, Russia will hold an unofficial meeting to consider a working document, CD/1679, concerning the prevention of the emplacement of weapons in outer space and also on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. That meeting is an open-ended meeting. We invite heads of delegations, members of the Conference on Disarmament and also those States which have observer status with the Conference on Disarmament. Dear colleagues, we are counting on your active participation in this unofficial meeting. It will be held on Tuesday, 25 February, at 3.30 p.m. here in the Palais des Nations, in room 11.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of the Russian Federation for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Pakistan.

Mr. BASIT (Pakistan): Mr. President, allow me first to congratulate you on assumption of the presidency of this august body and to assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation.

Mr. President, on behalf of the Government of Pakistan, I would like to thank you and, through you, the Conference on Disarmament for expressing condolences on the tragic air crash that killed our air force chief and other air force officials. This message of condolence will be conveyed to all those concerned in Pakistan, including the bereaved families.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Pakistan for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. ESLAMIZAD (Islamic Republic of Iran): Mr. President, first and before all, may I also congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation with you during your performance of this arduous task. I would also like to convey my gratitude and commendation for the purposeful endeavours of your predecessor, Ambassador Rakesh Sood.

I would very much like briefly to thank you and other speakers here who expressed their condolences and I assure you that these messages of condolence will be transmitted to my capital and will be highly appreciated.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran for his statements and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I recognize the representative of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. SHIN (Republic of Korea): Mr. President, like the representatives of Iran and Pakistan, on behalf of my delegation, the Republic of Korea, I too would like to congratulate you on your presidency and also express our deepest thanks and appreciation for your remarks of condolence and sympathy shown to the people of Korea. We shall duly convey your message to our Government, as well as to the bereaved families of the deceased.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of the Republic of Korea for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. Does any delegation wish to take the floor?

I should now like to invite you to take a decision on the requests of Madagascar and Slovenia to participate as observers in the work of the Conference during this session without first having considered them in an informal plenary. These requests are contained in document CD/WP.530/Add.2, which is before you.

May I take it that the Conference decides to invite Madagascar and Slovenia to participate in our work in accordance with the rules of procedure?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: Does any delegation wish to take the floor at this stage? I give the floor to the distinguished representative of Senegal.

Mr. CAMARA (Senegal) (translated from French): Mr. President, as I am taking the floor for the first time in the Conference on Disarmament, I would like to congratulate you on your assumption of the post of President of that Conference and, at the same time, wish you and the other members of your delegation every success. I would like to assure you that our delegation will spare no effort in giving you its backing and assistance in your important tasks.

I would also like to congratulate and thank Ambassador Rakesh Sood of India for the excellent work that he performed during his term of office, in his endeavours to bring the Conference out of the impasse in which it currently finds itself. I would also like to assure all delegations of the utmost willingness of the delegation of Senegal to cooperate with others in the important work of reaching consensus so that the Conference can embark on its substantive work.

I would also like at this stage to declare our support for the proposals and initiatives that have been put forward in an endeavour to move our Conference out of its impasse. I would like to note in particular the relevant initiative by Ambassador Amorim and that of the five ambassadors.

(Mr. Camara, Senegal)

Before concluding, I would also like to say that we have listened with great interest to the statements by the representatives of Cuba and Japan and, finally, that we believe that our Conference must now get down to the substantive work which it has been assigned. Up to now we have been in a state of deadlock and it is high time that we finally got back to work. Accordingly, I would like to support the initiatives which have already been mounted and to pledge our full support for the process which lies ahead.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Senegal for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. Does any delegation wish to take the floor? That does not seem to be the case.

This concludes our business for today. The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Thursday, 27 February 2003, at 10 a.m. in this conference room.

The meeting rose at 11.10 a.m.