

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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FINAL RECORD OF THE NINE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-SECOND PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 6 March 2003, at 10.15 a.m.

President:

Mr. Djismun KASRI

(Indonesia)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 922nd plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

At the outset, I would like to extend a warm welcome to the representatives of the women's non-governmental organizations who are with us today. As you know, International Women's Day will be celebrated on Saturday and, to mark this event, in accordance with established practice, the participants in the annual International Women's Day Disarmament Seminar have addressed a message to the Conference.

I should now like to call on the Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Enrique Román-Morey, to read out the message of the International Women's Day Disarmament Seminar to the Conference.

Mr. ROMÁN-MOREY: (Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament): Mr. President, on behalf of the secretariat of the Conference on Disarmament, we would like to congratulate all the women engaged in disarmament issues on this occasion.

I now have the honour to read the message delivered to the Conference today.

“Distinguished members of the Conference on Disarmament,

“Every year since 1984, International Women's Day has been marked by women's organizations in Geneva with a seminar on disarmament issues and with a statement to the Conference on Disarmament. The statements and reports from these seminars on gender and small arms, missiles, the militarization of space, nuclear deterrence, war and the media and feminist approaches to security have been widely distributed to inform women's organizations about disarmament issues, and to inform peace and disarmament organizations about women's perspectives on these matters. This year the seminar is examining the economic consequences of war and how women's rights are undermined by ineffective disarmament and their systematic exclusion from decision-making.

“In October 2000, the Security Council emphasized the relevance of gender issues to its work. Since then, it has celebrated the passage of resolution 1325 on women, peace and security each October. The Council acknowledged in resolution 1325 that women deserve a place at the negotiating table, not only because women and men are affected by war in different ways, but because it is women's human right to participate in society. Women have a right to participate in decisions on peace and security, but internationally and in the vast majority of the world's national capitals - and in this room - women are systematically barred from enjoying this democratic right. It is impossible to lay the groundwork for a culture of peace without giving due consideration to women.

“While non-governmental organizations try to make the best possible use of the symbolic importance of International Women's Day and 31 October women are not satisfied with flowery congratulations for two days of the year. Women would rather that

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of the Conference on Disarmament)

the Conference on Disarmament and the Security Council demonstrate a genuine understanding of gender issues through the routine consideration of women's experiences and perspectives, rather than a superficial annual gesture. Gender issues are relevant every day. A gender perspective on disarmament challenges the existing analysis and solutions for disarmament and demands that people are put in the centre of the picture: women and men, as victims, survivors and perpetrators of weapons-related violence. This is human security in action and women commend those Governments that have committed themselves to advancing this concept and practice.

“Decisions and experiences in relation to weapons involve human beings operating in their social and political environment and therefore have clear gender dimensions. Women and men alike have concerns about the impact of weapons - from small arms to weapons of mass destruction. Women applaud the Department for Disarmament Affairs for recognizing this fact and undertaking a gender action plan to be launched at the Disarmament Commission. This move forward should also provide guidance to Member States on how to integrate gender perspectives into your work in the Conference on Disarmament.

“Disarmament has become a household word, with the largest global demonstration for peace in history occurring on 15 February in over 700 cities, illustrating ordinary people's belief that disarmament is an alternative to, and the best way of preventing, war. Women played a major part in these demonstrations, and have articulated positions and ideas on disarmament. Women recognize that there are risks involved in forging new agreements, and in discussing and negotiating sensitive issues of national security, but world public opinion is supportive right now, and this strengthens the hand of those States that are willing to take the risk of placing their national security interests in the context of international security. A failure to act at this time would not be easily forgiven, and women urge you to seize this moment by placing the stated popular will of the world's people above process and procedure.

“Fifty-seven years ago, Article 26 of the United Nations Charter tasked the Security Council with responsibility for generating a plan for the regulation of armaments with the least diversion of the world's human and economic resources. This recognizes the timely and crucial need for a long-term and broad-based vision for peace. Women are still waiting for the plan. Women hope that the Conference on Disarmament is not going to follow this example. How many more years can the Conference justify hovering in this limbo of indecision when the agenda that faces it is getting ever larger?

“Some of you may see non-governmental organizations as mere “focus groups” with critical voices that are never satisfied, but the Conference on Disarmament would be wrong to dismiss women so lightly. Women are at the intersection of international bodies, such as the Conference on Disarmament and the constituencies that we represent. Women's non-governmental organizations receive multitudes of phone calls and letters on a daily basis from ever more desperate and angry people who want to know what the

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member States of the Conference on Disarmament are doing and why nothing is happening. As members of non-governmental organizations which defend the United Nations and its central commitment to disarmament, it is becoming increasingly difficult for women to explain the role of the Conference, because it is not dealing with nuclear disarmament as it has committed itself to do so, often and in so many forums. The Conference on Disarmament is not advancing international commitment to the prevention of an arms race in outer space, and it is not negotiating a fissile material cut-off treaty, and it is clearly not dealing with any of the other pressing disarmament priorities. The most practical way forward would be for all States to agree immediately to the proposal by the five former Conference presidents, Ambassador Dembri, Ambassador Lint, Ambassador Reyes, Ambassador Salander and Ambassador Vega (CD/1693).

“One of the salient issues of today is terrorism, which is manifesting itself in more sinister and varied ways than ever before. Terrorism, facilitated by weapons of every kind, is a pressing disarmament issue whose complexity stems from the fact that the physical weapons of terrorists are secondary to their methods of operation. Because they will stop at nothing to achieve their means, greater investment in disarmament and in the safeguarding of toxic materials, rather than unilateral policies and doctrines of war, must be considered in long-term solutions to the dangers posed by terrorism. The Conference on Disarmament has a profoundly important role to play in this monumental task.

“For centuries there has been a reaction to take up the banner of militarism in the face of threat. Evaluation of this paradigm, so contagious and so destructive to the frustrated victims of the injustices of our society, should begin here - because it is what happens here that breeds justification for the resort to violence. Eleanor Roosevelt, well-remembered for her work in the creation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, once said: “No one won the last war and no one will win the next.” Every time there is a public reinforcement of the notion that military strength and the willingness to use it are key elements of security, every time disarmament or choosing not to rely on threat or use of force for security are dismissed as weak or womanly options, the power of the terrorist is reinforced.

“The issue of transparency in armaments was added to your agenda in 1992, and reduction in military spending is part of the so-called “decatalogue”. Increased accumulation of armaments and increased military spending have not increased world security. For nearly a hundred years, women’s organizations have been at the forefront of researching, exposing and protesting against the enormous resources devoted to weapons and war. Women’s research demonstrates that the ability of military violence to achieve its stated aims is routinely overestimated, while the extent of its costs are overlooked. Women’s studies show that just one quarter of the world’s approximately \$839 billion in military spending would allow countries to provide decent housing, health

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and education to their citizens. It would also allow Governments to provide energy, to clean up the environment, to ameliorate the AIDS pandemic, to stop global warming, to ease the debt burden, to disarm nuclear weapons, to collect and destroy hundreds of millions of small arms and to demine the world. Perhaps most importantly at this fragile moment, the careful redistribution of resources that are currently absorbed by the global killing machine might convince the most desperate and angry of the world's people that they do not need to resort to terrorism to achieve their goals.

“Even in times of grave uncertainty a comprehensive strategy can and must be guided by the rule of law and true respect for human rights. We endorse the statement by the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Sergio Vieira de Mello: “The security of States ... flows from the security of the human being.”

“Women urge the Conference on Disarmament to agree to a programme of work in this first part of the 2003 session. While the proposal outlined by the former presidents does not meet women's expectations of the Conference on Disarmament, the deadlock of the last six years has considerably altered women's expectation of this body. The programme outlined would at least see the negotiation of a fissile material cut-off treaty. This is more urgent than ever, owing to the increased dangers posed by toxic materials of the nuclear age, which should immediately stop being produced. The proposal should also include discussion on arrangements towards a binding agreement on negative security assurances and an exchange of information on nuclear disarmament toward potential future work of a multilateral character.

“It would be women's hope that the elaboration of a regime capable of preventing an arms race in outer space might be achieved as soon as possible, given the investment, research and development by one member State in this field, which are significant enough to trigger an arms race should other members States join that race.

“Because it is unacceptable for a handful of member States of the Conference to hold the time and concerns of the majority in contempt, a coalition of willing States should begin informal deliberations on the above five areas, thereby making constructive use of the time and expertise available in Geneva and generating draft documents and draft treaties as food for thought for when political will finally reaches a critical mass.

“Women also urge the Conference to conduct a serious review with the aim of developing new mechanisms for a more inclusive role of non-governmental organizations in the life and work of the Conference on Disarmament. This review should consider the modality for participation and assistance with the important partnership role that non-governmental organizations can play and the essential opinion-forming role of civil society, vital for the success of its work. Non-governmental organizations stand ready to work with you in the conduct of this review and the development of appropriate mechanisms.

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

“Thank you for taking the time to hear women’s perspectives on disarmament. The Conference’s commitment to doing so each year on this day should not, however, be marked with statements thanking women for their interest, which implies that our work on disarmament issues is invisible for the other 364 days of the year. For women, International Women’s Day is more than symbolic. It is an opportunity to remind the Conference on Disarmament that its ongoing and serious engagement with issues of global security requires the systematic integration of gender in its work, when that work actually begins anew. As the world’s sole multilateral disarmament negotiating body, the Conference on Disarmament can only be said to represent all of us - and remember, women constitute at least 50 per cent of those whom you represent - if you engage with and reflect our perspectives in your work.”

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference for reading the message of the seminar. Before proceeding further, I would like to make a statement on the occasion of International Women’s Day.

I have the honour, on behalf of the members of the Conference on Disarmament, to address this distinguished audience on the occasion of International Women’s Day, which will be celebrated on Saturday, 8 March 2003, and I would like to take this opportunity to express our very best wishes to the women engaged in the cause of disarmament.

There are very explicit intergovernmental mandates on gender mainstreaming or bringing gender perspectives to the centre of attention in disarmament, dating back to the United Nations world conference on women, held in Mexico City in 1975, the year that was proclaimed International Women’s Year by the United Nations General Assembly. The 1975 Declaration on the Equality of Women and their Contribution to Development and Peace urged that women as well as men should promote real, general and complete disarmament under effective international control, starting with nuclear disarmament.

The Beijing Platform for Action, adopted in 1995, and its follow-up at the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly in June 2000, also emphasized the importance of better understanding and addressing the linkages between gender issues and disarmament.

More recently, Security Council resolution 1325 of October 2000 continues to inspire Member States to address the issues related to women, peace and security on several fronts: to protect women from the impact of armed conflict, but also to strengthen their role in peace-building and reconstruction.

Gender and disarmament linkages are not immediately apparent. Nor has there been much specific research on the gender perspectives of disarmament. In a first attempt at making these important connections, the United Nations Department for Disarmament Affairs, in close collaboration with the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, has composed a package of notes

(The President)

related to gender issues and disarmament questions. It represents a different angle on the traditionally complex and politically sensitive fields of security, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control.

It is also important to highlight the recent action plan for gender mainstreaming, developed by the Department for Disarmament Affairs for the period April 2003-December 2005. The starting point for the action plan is that the incorporation of gender perspectives into the continuing work of the Department will strengthen disarmament work. The plan thus sets the stage for the future consideration of gender issues in the work of the Department

We believe that women have a powerful and effective voice for disarmament. We remain convinced that our joint endeavours both within the Conference on Disarmament and beyond its confines will enable us to ensure that the world in which we live is a safer and more tranquil place for the benefit of all humankind.

I now have the following speakers on my list for today's plenary meeting: the Netherlands, Norway, Egypt and China. I give the floor to the representative of the Netherlands, Ambassador Chris Sanders.

Mr. SANDERS (Netherlands): Mr. President, before I take up the topic of my statement, I would like to welcome the statement by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and the NGO Committee on the Status of Women. Looking at the substance of that statement, I believe that the Netherlands Government would have no problem whatsoever in associating itself with the recommendations of this statement.

Last Friday, 28 February 2003, the Netherlands organized a third open-ended informal meeting in the framework of the Netherlands' FMCT exercise.

The total number of participants at this meeting was well over 100. Over 40 countries attended this meeting as well as representatives from the Department for Disarmament Affairs, non-governmental organizations, some international organizations and IAEA. Mr. President, I highly appreciate the fact that you found the time - your precious time - to attend this meeting as well. I thank you for that.

This meeting addressed the relationship between the IAEA safeguards system and an FMCT. Presentations were given by Mr. Andrew Barlow and Mr. Bill McCarthy of the United Kingdom, and by Dr. Geoffrey Shaw of the Australian Permanent Mission to the Conference. After the presentations, a lively discussion followed.

As with the previous meetings organized by my delegation in this framework, a summary report of the meeting will be forwarded to the secretariat of this Conference, to be circulated as a document of the Conference on Disarmament to all member States and observer States. The presentations will be attached to this summary report.

(Mr. Sanders, Netherlands)

Let me conclude by announcing that the next meeting of the Netherlands' FMCT exercise will be organized on 4 April 2003 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. in room XII of the Palais. The topic of that meeting will be the issue of stocks. Issues for consideration at that meeting will include the options on how to deal with this issue. These options include whether the issue of stocks is more properly dealt with, first, within the scope of the treaty; second, through separate but supporting mechanisms (such as the Trilateral Initiative); third, through a baseline model (as has been suggested by South Africa in document CD/1671), or, fourth, should not be dealt with at all within the framework of an FMCT. Furthermore, this meeting will consider experiences under the European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM) as well as other supportive measures such as transparency and accountability, disposition of excess fissile material and voluntary measures.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador Sanders for his statement. I now give the floor to the representative of Norway.

Mr. PAULSEN (Norway): Mr. President, allow me first to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. For several years now, the Conference on Disarmament has been without substantive content. Very little has been achieved, not even agreement on a programme of work. We are all paying a political price for this impasse. And I may add also, a financial price since the Conference on Disarmament is financed from the United Nations regular budget, competing with other noble causes.

It is evident that we cannot draft ourselves out of the impasse. There is no linguistic fix and there is no procedural fix.

The responsibility for this sad state of affairs is not a collective one. The overwhelming majority of Governments have expressed support for the draft programme of work, as tabled by the five cross-regional representatives.

The key to progress lies in a very limited number of capitals - and bilateral consultations among these capitals. Action at this level is a prerequisite for progress in the Conference on Disarmament.

For my Government, it is rather ironic to see how certain fundamentally important dimensions of disarmament are held hostage by one another. It hardly needs repeating that, for humankind, non-proliferation, nuclear disarmament, the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, and prevention of an arms race in outer space are all of the utmost importance and should be addressed. Most dimensions of disarmament boil down to the issue of fissile material. I agree with the Malaysian Ambassador, who, last week, reported from the recent Non-Aligned Summit in Kuala Lumpur and stated that the immediate commencement of FMCT negotiations constitutes the next essential step in nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

(Mr. Paulsen, Norway)

Pending revitalization of the Conference on Disarmament it is heartening to note that the international community is able to move forwards, outside this house, in the field of specific disarmament. Four years ago the Ottawa Convention entered into force. It has become a truly global and effective humanitarian instrument for action that really matters. More than 130 States are now Parties to the Convention. Fifty-five of these have destroyed almost 30 million mines. The international norms contained in the Convention are also being observed by many States not party to the Convention.

The Norwegian Government was among the initiators instrumental in establishing the Ottawa Convention and, as the President of the Fourth Meeting of the States Parties did here last week, would urge the States that have not done so yet to join the Convention.

Disarmament is also about conventional weapons. Small arms and light weapons cause massive humanitarian suffering all around the world every day. Outside the Conference on Disarmament a constructive process is progressing well in the United Nations context, both with regard to the follow-up of the Programme of Action and the United Nations Firearms Protocol. It is also important to emphasize the regional processes in this field, in Europe, Africa and the Americas. The main focus should be on implementing effective measures to control the export, trade, brokering, marking and tracing of small arms and light weapons. This summer the international community will take stock of the progress achieved within the framework of the United Nations Programme of Action. My delegation looks forward to this event in New York and welcomes the energetic leadership of our Japanese colleague in the preparatory process.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Norway for his statement. I now give the floor to the representative of Egypt, Ambassador Naéla Gabr.

Ms. GABR (Egypt) (translated from Arabic): Mr. President, allow me at the outset to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency and to assure you and your country of my delegation's willingness to cooperate fully with you. I wish you every success in your difficult work. I would also like to express my sincere appreciation to Mr. Sergei Ordzhonikidze, the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, for having spoken today on the occasion of International Women's Day, since this is a subject of particular importance to Egypt, and to me as an independent expert of the United Nations on women's rights.

As highlighted in the message from the Secretary-General of the United Nations at the opening of our annual session, this year marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. We share the Secretary-General's hopes regarding the need to inject a new sense of purpose into the disarmament process.

The continued stalemate at the Conference is particularly worrying at a time when the regional and international security challenges facing the international community are increasing in magnitude and gravity. In spite of the profound changes that have occurred in the regional

(Ms. Gaber, Egypt)

and international security environment, the hopes that many countries - including Egypt - have vested in the multilateral disarmament framework remain unchanged. Thus, we continue to rely on this framework as a strategic option - I repeat a strategic option - in view of the fundamental contribution it makes to the maintenance of international peace and security.

Recently, a series of initiatives in a number of areas relating to disarmament have been taken outside the multilateral framework. We are fully convinced that it is only within the established multilateral framework, in which States participate on an equal footing, that results which will enjoy international support and legitimacy can be achieved.

We therefore welcome the recent adoption of resolution 57/63 on the promotion of multilateralism in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation, and fully endorse the objectives embodied therein. We also reaffirm the importance of the decisions adopted at the Kuala Lumpur Summit of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries relating to disarmament and international security in general and the commitment of the Non-Aligned Movement to multilateral disarmament in particular.

Nuclear disarmament remains a priority for Egypt in the field of regional and international disarmament. This stems from our firm belief that, as long as nuclear weapons exist, true regional and international security and stability will remain elusive. In this context, we are disappointed that the Conference has failed to respond to the pleas addressed to it by the 2000 NPT Review Conference, which asked it to set up an appropriate subsidiary body with a mandate to deal with nuclear disarmament and to begin negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty, including stockpiles, taking into consideration both nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation objectives.

We should like to reaffirm the high importance that we attach to the outcomes of the 2000 NPT Review Conference and our commitment to pursuing the objectives set forth in its final document. We look forward to participating in the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2005 NPT Review Conference, to be held at Geneva in the near future.

While Egypt accords high priority to the goal of international nuclear disarmament, it continues to be alarmed by the current situation in the Middle East. Egypt has consistently stressed the need to tackle the issue of weapons of mass destruction in the region, particularly nuclear weapons, in a comprehensive and non-discriminatory manner. I repeat, in a comprehensive and non-discriminatory manner.

We should like to refer to its 1974 initiative concerning the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East and to the initiative launched by President Hosni Mubarak in 1990 for the creation of a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction in the region. These initiatives have received overwhelming support from the international community, as reflected in a large number of resolutions adopted in international and regional forums.

(Ms. Gaber, Egypt)

At the international level, General Assembly resolution 57/97 on the risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East was adopted by an overwhelming majority of countries, while resolution 57/55 on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East was adopted by consensus.

The final document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference clearly reaffirmed: “the importance of Israeli’s accession to the NPT and the placement of all its nuclear facilities under comprehensive IAEA safeguards, in realizing the goal of universal adherence to the Treaty in the Middle East”.

In accordance with the final document of that Conference, Egypt has submitted its report to the Preparatory Committee for the 2005 NPT Review Conference, at its first session, on the steps that Egypt has taken at the national, regional and international levels to promote the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East and to realize the goals and objectives embodied in the resolution on the Middle East adopted by the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference.

At the Arab Summit hosted by Egypt in Sharm El Sheikh on 1 March, President Hosni Mubarak explained the need for the international community to realize that the legitimacy and credibility of energetic efforts to destroy weapons of mass destruction in Iraq would not be complete unless two key conditions were satisfied, namely: first, if those efforts form part of a more comprehensive international drive to rid the entire region of such weapons and prohibit their possession, production and development in all countries of the region; and, second, if Governments and the relevant international institutions show a similar willingness to pursue by all means the implementation of Security Council resolutions relating to other pertinent issues in the region, particularly the Middle East peace process.

The final communiqué issued by the recent Arab Summit affirmed that the issue of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq cannot be divorced from that of ridding the entire region, including Israel, of such weapons in accordance with paragraph 14 of Security Council resolution 687 (1991). The final communiqué issued by the Organization of the Islamic Conference at its emergency session, held at Doha yesterday also called for an end to the policy of double standards.

My delegation would like to reiterate its request through this Conference to the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) that it prepare a study on the practical steps required for the immediate establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. This report should supplement the study prepared by the Institute in 1996 on the creation of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the region.

We should like to thank UNIDIR for the seminar on the same subject that it held in Cairo on 24 and 25 February 2003, in cooperation with the League of Arab States. Many international experts and officials from Arab States and the United Nations attended.

(Ms. Gaber, Egypt)

The international community has asked the Conference to address other matters of concern. I refer to that of the prevention of an arms race in outer space. Egypt tabled last year's General Assembly resolution on this subject. Resolution 57/57 received wide support, as in previous years, and it invites the Conference to complete the examination and updating of the mandate of the ad hoc committee on PAROS and to establish it as early as possible during its 2003 session. This is clearly with a view to conducting negotiations for the conclusion of a multilateral agreement or agreements on PAROS.

I would like to conclude by expressing our appreciation for the efforts that have been made in past years, and so far this year, to reach agreement on the Conference's programme of work. I would also like to stress the importance of proceeding in accordance with the items on the agenda that we adopted on 21 January, so as to ensure that the priorities of all members are addressed in a balanced and comprehensive manner and that issues are dealt with on the basis of equality.

I would also like to say that informal sessions can offer practical help in enhancing dialogue and mutual understanding among the members of the Conference, as well as optimizing the available resources. Informal sessions can touch upon the different items on this year's agenda by imbuing the Conference with the constructive spirit which has informed seminars and workshops held elsewhere and helping to revitalize our work so that we can pursue our joint efforts to reach agreement on a programme of work.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador Naéla Gabr for her statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of China, Ambassador Hu Xiaodi.

Mr. HU (China) (translated from Chinese): Mr. President, my delegation would like to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. You may be assured of the full cooperation of the Chinese delegation. I would like to avail myself of this opportunity to register our gratitude to your predecessor, Ambassador Rakesh Sood, for his unremitting efforts. I must also thank Mr. Sergei Ordzhonikidze, Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Román-Morey, Deputy Secretary-General, and all the secretariat staff for their enormous help throughout our work.

Peace and development remain the issues of our times. The growing trends of world multipolarization and economic globalization have brought with them opportunities and favourable conditions for world peace and development. The old international political and economic order, which is unfair and irrational, has yet to be properly transformed, however. Uncertainties affecting peace and development are on the rise. Elements of traditional and non-traditional threats to security are intertwined and the scourge of terrorism is gaining strength. Local conflicts triggered by ethnic or religious contradictions and border or territorial disputes continue to flare up. The North-South gap is widening. The world is far from being tranquil and mankind is faced with many grave challenges.

(Mr. Hu, China)

The thrust of China's independent foreign policy is to maintain world peace and promote the common development of all. We are ready to work with the international community to boost world multipolarization, promote the democratization of international relations and maintain stability in the international community. We will endeavour to ensure that economic globalization evolves in a direction leading to common prosperity, and to draw on its advantages and avoid its downsides so that all countries, particularly developing countries, can benefit from the process.

We advocate putting in place a new international political and economic order that is fair and rational. Politically, all countries should respect and consult one another. Economically, they should complement one another and pursue common development. Culturally, they should learn from each other and work for common prosperity. In the area of security, countries should trust one another and work together to maintain security, foster a new perception of security based on mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and coordination, and settle their disputes through dialogue and cooperation and not resort to use or the threat of force at the slightest provocation.

In today's world, it is our essential and urgent responsibility to promote multilateralism and to suppress unilateralism. Last year the United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution 57/63, in which, for the first time, it promulgated the basic principle of multilateralism to be observed in the field of disarmament and arms control. We are ready to join hands with all countries in opposing the use of force in international relations and in preserving and promoting multilateralism.

The worldwide campaign against terrorism has now entered a new phase and it is essential that it be viewed and promoted in a historical light and from the broadest possible perspective. China believes that the essential element of the campaign to counter terrorism is the maintenance of the peace and security of humankind; that the campaign must be based on universal development and common prosperity; that its success can only be ensured by the closer integration and bonding together of civilizations; and that the key to the campaign is more extensive and deeper international cooperation. As a responsible country which cherishes and strives to uphold peace, China firmly supports and actively participates in the international efforts to combat terrorism and advocates that the United Nations play a leading role in those efforts.

Recent developments have ushered in changes in the global strategic and security situation. Determining how to preserve global strategic stability is now an urgent task facing the international community. In China's view, paramount importance attaches to strict observance of the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and the norms of international law and to safeguarding the arms control and disarmament legal regime, which has become an essential component of the global collective security structure. In second place, the role played by nuclear weapons should be in international security doctrines constantly scaled down, while the nuclear disarmament process should be further promoted, including the earliest possible entry into force and implementation of the CTBT and the negotiation and conclusion of an FMCT.

(Mr. Hu, China)

Third, strategic dialogue and cooperation among all countries should be strengthened. Current moves towards the weaponization of outer space both pose a serious threat to strategic stability and hamper arms control and disarmament efforts. Preventing the emplacement of weapons and the development of an arms race in outer space must be high on the agenda of the international community.

Last year, China, together with Russia and certain other countries, submitted a working paper to the Conference on Disarmament on possible elements for a future international legal agreement on the prevention of the deployment of weapons in outer space, and the threat or use of force against outer space objects, contained in document CD/1679. It is our hope, that, through the multilateral framework of the Conference on Disarmament, to prevent the weaponization of outer space once and for all and in a legally binding manner. To date, the delegations of China and the Russian Federation have held several rounds of open-ended consultations and briefings. The process is being joined by more and more delegations, which have come forward with substantial and valuable suggestions. We hope that, along with these suggestions, CD/1679 can provide food for thought for future substantive work on the issue of PAROS in the Conference on Disarmament, leading to the negotiation of a treaty preventing the weaponization of outer space. Henceforth we stand ready to draw further, in a flexible and open-minded spirit, on the reasonable views and suggestions put forward by all sides and encourage more delegations to play an active part in this process.

Disarmament and non-proliferation have always been mutually complementary and reinforcing processes. In current circumstances, it is of critical importance for nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament that the authority, integrity and universality of the NPT be safeguarded. China is firmly committed to preserving the NPT. In this connection, it welcomes Cuba's accession to the NPT and appeals to those countries that have not yet joined the NPT to do so at an early date. China supports, as a prerequisite for the maintenance of global strategic stability and undiminished security for all countries, the full implementation of the 13 nuclear disarmament steps as contained in the final document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference. China will continue to play an active part in the preparatory process for the 2005 NPT Review Conference.

China supports efforts by ASEAN countries to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone. We have reached agreement with ASEAN on all the issues involved and hope to sign the Protocol to the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty in the very near future. We also hope that ASEAN will soon be able to sort out the remaining issues with the other four nuclear-weapon States.

China supports the efforts of the five Central Asian States to establish a Central Asian nuclear-weapon-free zone. We have no substantive problems with the text of the treaty and its protocol as currently worded. Any amendments to the text should not run counter to the purposes and principles of the treaty and should be agreed on by all the parties involved. We are ready, at the earliest opportunity, to sign the protocol as long as all parties reach consensus on the text of the treaty and its protocol.

(Mr. Hu, China)

China firmly supports the treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga and Pelindaba and honours its own obligations in respect of those instruments. We respect the nuclear-weapon-free status of Mongolia.

China continues to urge all the nuclear-weapon States to undertake on no occasion and in no circumstances, ever to be the first to use nuclear weapons and to commit themselves unconditionally not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States or nuclear-weapon-free zones.

If the issue of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is to be solved, both the symptoms and the root causes of the problem must be attacked. The solution lies essentially in improving the international and regional security environment, so as to remove the incentives for acquiring and developing weapons of mass destruction. China has always actively participated in international non-proliferation efforts, so as to help maintain and strengthen the international non-proliferation regime, and has put in place export control systems covering nuclear, biological, chemical, missile and other fields. Thus, in the latter half of 2002, China promulgated regulations controlling the export of missiles and missile-related items and technology, regulations controlling the export of dual-use biological agents and related equipment and technology, administrative rules controlling the export of certain relevant chemicals and related equipment and technology, and other new instruments which have further strengthened the legal system governing the export of these items. We hope, through strengthened exchanges and cooperation with all other countries and also with international and multilateral export control regimes, to be able to learn from the successes achieved by others and continuously to improve our own export control system.

In 2002, the resumed Fifth Review Conference of BWC adopted minimum follow-up measures. Although falling far short of our expectations, these follow-up measures could still help strengthen the BWC and sustain the multilateral process. China will continue to implement the BWC in a strict and comprehensive manner and endeavour to strengthen the Convention's effectiveness in all its aspects. At the same time, we will actively participate in the discussion of all five issues covered by the follow-up process. The broad participation of all sides and the promotion of this multilateral process are essential if future work in this area is ultimately to succeed.

China is pleased to see the progress achieved under the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons in the fields of conventional arms control and the promotion of humanitarianism. Taken as a whole, the recommendation on follow-up actions on the issue of explosive remnants of war is realistic and workable. China will work towards the conclusion, at the earliest possible date, of an instrument on explosive remnants of war that is acceptable to all. It has always been our view that the issue of anti-vehicle landmines has already been solved in amended Protocol II and that there is therefore no need for the issue to be revisited by the Group of Government Experts under the Convention on Conventional Weapons. As for the

(Mr. Hu, China)

recommendation on follow-up actions on the anti-vehicle landmines, this does not meet our satisfaction. In view of the positions of some countries in this matter, however, we are willing to show flexibility and continue to discuss the issue.

China has always attached importance to ensuring proper oversight over the production and trade of small arms and, at the domestic level, has enacted a number of laws and regulations in this area, which are strictly enforced. We support and actively participate in all international efforts to address the issue of small arms. On 9 December 2002, China signed the Firearms Protocol supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, which has further strengthened and standardized the country's system for overseeing the legality and standardization of the manufacture, storage, use and transfer of firearms and small arms. China will actively participate in the biennial meeting on small arms this coming July in New York, as part of its endeavours to ensure the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

With its law-making functions in the field of multilateral arms control and disarmament, the Conference on Disarmament is a highly representative body in terms of its military and security significance and constitutes an invaluable pool of political and technical expertise. China attaches great importance to the role of the Conference on Disarmament and very much looks forward to the early commencement of substantive work in the Conference as a prerequisite for addressing the security concerns of all. China appreciates the positive efforts made by all parties and expresses its hope that the wording: "with a view to negotiating relevant international legal instruments" can be included in the mandate on PAROS of the five ambassadors' proposal. In that event, China will be able to accept the proposal.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador Hu Xiaodi for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair.

Does any other delegation wish to take the floor? That does not seem to be the case.

Distinguished delegates, I should now like to invite you to take a decision on the request of Uruguay to participate as an observer in the work of the Conference during this session. This request is contained in document CD/WP.530/Add.4, which is before you.

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

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: Distinguished delegates, I would now like to report to you briefly on the outcome of my consultations on how to facilitate the commencement of the substantive work of the Conference. I have already consulted a number of delegations on this subject, and I have also contacted some of the authors of the "five ambassadors' initiative", to discuss a possible follow-up to the proposal introduced by them to the Conference. At this stage, I cannot report to

(The President)

you any considerable developments that could bring us closer to agreement on the programme of work. I can only conclude that the latest proposal in this regard submitted by the five former presidents of the Conference and issued as document CD/1693 is still under consideration by member States.

It is encouraging that a number of delegations have already supported this proposal. It is equally inspiring that some delegations have already expressed their readiness to accept the proposed programme of work in its present form. From statements at plenary meetings, as well as from my consultations, it seems that there is an agreement, in principle, on the ways and means of dealing with the various agenda items. At the same time, however, there are still differences of view with regard to the mandates of some of the proposed subsidiary bodies.

I am also very grateful that my appeal to you to engage in substantive debate has resulted in a noticeable invigoration of our plenary meetings. Undoubtedly, the constructive exchange of views and opinions on issues on the Conference's agenda will facilitate our search for agreement on the programme of work. It is my sincere hope that this trend will continue.

Does any delegation wish to take the floor at this stage? 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, 13 March 2003, at 10 a.m. in this conference room.

The meeting rose at 11.20 a.m.