

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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FINAL RECORD OF THE NINE HUNDRED AND THIRTIETH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 12 June 2003, at 10.15 a.m.

President:

Mr. Yaakov LEVY

(Israel)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 930th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

This morning I have the following speakers on my list for the plenary meeting: Ambassador Amina Mohamed of Kenya, with a general statement; Mr. Kjetil Paulsen of Norway, on small arms and light weapons; Ambassador Mike Smith of Australia, on weapons of mass destruction and terrorism; Ambassador David Boucher of the United Kingdom, on disarmament verification; and Mr. Marcelo Valle Fonrouge of Argentina, with a general statement.

I now give the floor to Ambassador Mohamed of Kenya.

Ms. MOHAMED (Kenya): Mr. President, may I begin by congratulating you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. We take note of the fact that you have assumed the presidency at a difficult time. The Conference has been at a virtual standstill for five years. The issues at stake are extremely intricate. In fact, it has thus far been impossible to resolve them at this forum. We are therefore not overly ambitious and have no illusions about the task that lies ahead of you, but we keep an open mind.

Your diplomatic skills and abilities, as well as your pragmatism, are well known within Geneva diplomatic circles. We are therefore confident that, given your experience, under your presidency, the Conference on Disarmament is indeed in good hands. My delegation would like to assure you of its full support and cooperation.

As is known, the Conference on Disarmament has not been able to agree on a programme of work for the last five years. Several initiatives have been put on the table during this time. Many of these have been interesting but, regrettably, none has commanded a consensus. Your predecessors, too, Mr. President, have worked hard in an attempt to break this deadlock. Unfortunately their efforts have not yielded very much.

I wish to reiterate my delegation's concern at the continued deadlock in the Conference on Disarmament. My delegation and others have on different occasions called for flexibility on the part of all members of the Conference, as a way of helping it overcome the difficulties and the stalemate and move forward. It is for this reason that I should like today to reiterate our support for the latest initiative, the five ambassadors' proposal. The proposal addresses issues on the Conference's agenda in a fairly balanced manner. It is a cross-group initiative, and therefore heralds a new and more creative way of cooperating within this forum. It has an element of flexibility that is dear to us and, since the five ambassadors themselves have invited and demonstrated the will to accommodate comments and proposals, which we hope will further enrich the initiative, we expect those who are not satisfied with it to come up with specific proposals. It is my delegation's hope that you will continue with consultations on this proposal, with the aim of reaching consensus.

(Ms. Mohamed, Kenya)

Last week I noted with keen interest the statement by Ambassador de La Fortelle of France, particularly the paragraph on the adoption of the five texts aimed at improving international security and the paragraph that mentions the commitment of the G-8, under the plan of action for Africa, to closer cooperation in the areas of demining, small arms and light weapons, and the promotion of human security.

The small arms and light weapons area is of particular interest to my delegation, since Kenya was part of the core group that was set up by France and Switzerland on the marking and tracing of small arms. Demining too is of extremely critical importance to Kenya and to the countries in my region. Kenya has been very active in addressing both the issues of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes region and the issue of demining. In fact, we will be hosting the First Review Conference, as you may all well know, next year.

My delegation therefore looks forward to efforts by the G-8 Member States to translate their words into practical action.

In conclusion, we support the participation of civil society in the work of the Conference on Disarmament. We believe, like others, that this would help enhance our work. We request that you continue to build on the progress made by your predecessor, Ambassador Mary Whelan of Ireland, who initiated discussions on the subject. For our part, we stand ready to make our contribution in that regard.

The PRESIDENT: I wish to thank our colleague, the distinguished Ambassador of Kenya, for her pertinent presentation and the especially kind words addressed to the Chair. I would now like to give the floor to Mr. Paulsen of Norway.

Mr. PAULSEN (Norway): Mr. President, since this is the first time that my delegation is taking the floor under your presidency, allow me to congratulate you on assuming this challenging function. My delegation stands ready to support you in all your efforts to break the impasse in the Conference on Disarmament, which will require the application of all your excellent diplomatic skills and perhaps even more.

On this occasion I would like to brief the Conference on the Netherlands-Norwegian initiative on further steps to enhance international cooperation in preventing, combating and eradicating illicit brokering in small arms and light weapons.

Experts from 27 Governments, the United Nations, regional organizations and research institutions met in Oslo from 22 to 24 April this year at the invitation of the Governments of the Netherlands and Norway to discuss possible approaches towards ensuring effective controls on brokering activities involving small arms and light weapons. The aim of the Oslo conference was thus to promote one of the key elements 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.

(Mr. Paulsen, Norway)

The discussions in Oslo were rich and extensive. While it was recognized that brokers have a legitimate role in the legal arms trade, it was noted that illicit brokering constitutes a serious challenge through the diversion of small arms into the illicit trade and in circumventing States' arms transfer controls and Security Council arms embargoes. It was also underlined that common understanding needs to be developed on key elements of effective brokering controls, while retaining the flexibility to accommodate variations in national situations, legal contexts and traditions.

The Conference considered elements of a model regulation on small arms brokering activities, building on exchanges of information and the sharing of national and regional experience, and on emerging best practices. Some of the issues to be considered further are how to integrate the control of arms brokering into broader systems of national control of arms transfers, how to regulate core arms-brokering activities and how to facilitate appropriate access to information about brokers and brokered arms deals, so as to prevent illegal brokering activities.

The Conference also considered key questions, such as the licensing of small arms brokering activities, registration, end-use and documentation, extraterritorial jurisdiction, criminalization, sanctions and enforcement.

The need for enhanced international cooperation to control small arms brokering activities was emphasized, particularly in such fields as the harmonization of brokering control procedures, compliance and law enforcement.

The establishment of national points of contact on brokering was identified as an important means of promoting effective international cooperation. Many participants at the Oslo conference also called for the establishment of international and regional mechanisms for the exchange of information. More extensive use should also be made of existing mechanisms, such as the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) and the World Customs Organisation.

There is a clear need for further steps to enhance international cooperation in preventing, combating and eradicating illicit brokering in small arms. Norway and the Netherlands plan to bring this issue forward, including through the organization of a side event, at the First Biennial Meeting on the Implementation of the Programme of Action, to be held in New York later this summer.

The United Nations Programme of Action has already demonstrated its relevance. The question of small arms and light weapons has been raised in all key international institutions, such as the General Assembly, the Security Council, regional institutions and not least, the G-8.

We all recognize the paramount importance of addressing issues related to nuclear arms and weapons of mass destruction. Most of the armed conflicts since the end of the cold war have nevertheless been fought almost exclusively with small arms and light weapons. Like

(Mr. Paulsen, Norway)

landmines, these weapons cause immense human suffering, every day, in all parts of the world. The world's stock of some 500 million small arms and light weapons continues to grow. Drug dealers, terrorists and insurgent armies gain access to these weapons through illicit trade.

To address this problem is not only a disarmament obligation. It is also a humanitarian obligation and a political imperative if we are to obtain durable peace and security.

I congratulate Ambassador Inoguchi on her tireless efforts to ensure positive conclusions from the upcoming conference in New York. She can rely on the full support of the Norwegian delegation.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Norway for his report on an initiative of prime importance and also for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to Ambassador Mike Smith of Australia.

Mr. SMITH (Australia): Mr. President, I would like to extend to you my congratulations and best wishes on your appointment as President of this Conference. I can assure you of my delegation's full cooperation in seeking progress in the work of the Conference during your term.

I take the floor today briefly to report on the first ASEAN Regional Forum meeting on managing the consequences of a terrorist attack involving chemical, biological or radiological weapons. The workshop, co-hosted by Australia and Singapore, took place in Darwin from 3 to 5 June 2003, and was the result of an initiative launched by the Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Hon. Alexander Downer, at the ASEAN Regional Forum ministerial meeting held in July last year, as part of a package of new counter-terrorism measures.

The workshop focused on identifying strategies for practical cooperation in the event of an attack involving chemical, biological or radiological weapons and drew together experts in emergency response, civil defence and law enforcement, as well as foreign affairs and defence officials, from 18 Asia-Pacific countries - Australia, Brunei, Cambodia, Canada, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, Malaysia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Singapore, Russia, Thailand, the United States and Viet Nam. The United Nations and the Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre were also represented.

The meeting included an address by the Vice-Governor of Bali on the recovery process following the 12 October 2002 terrorist attacks and a demonstration by Darwin hospital of its handling of the subsequent large-scale medical evacuation.

The workshop laid the basis for ongoing regional dialogue and practical steps for regional cooperation in key response areas. In particular, regional capabilities in urban search and rescue, the management of structural collapse and capacities to respond to chemical, biological or radiological attacks were identified. Such capacities included expertise and facilities for medical treatment, decontamination and forensic investigation.

A co-chairs' summary of the outcomes will be presented to ministers at the annual ministerial meeting of the ASEAN Regional Forum, to be held in Phnom Penh on 18 June.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of Australia for his report on a very timely subject, which concerns us all, and also for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of the United Kingdom, Ambassador David Boucher.

Mr. BROUCHER (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland):

Mr. President, let me begin by saying that we are glad to see Israel taking up the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament for the first time. I cannot say I envy you the task of trying to move this body forward in the difficult matters it has been wrestling with for several years. But I can assure you of my delegation's support in your efforts to make progress and to make better use of the forum that the Conference on Disarmament provides.

You have encouraged delegations not to miss the opportunity provided by our plenary meetings to make statements relevant to the issues on our agenda. I would like to take up that invitation today by putting on record in the Conference on Disarmament information about work relating to nuclear disarmament that the United Kingdom has been carrying out. This may be of interest, particularly to those colleagues who were not able to attend the recent second meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the next Review Conference of the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

The United Kingdom has on many occasions expressed its commitment to the ultimate common goal of the global elimination of nuclear weapons. At the 2000 Review Conference of the Non-Proliferation Treaty we identified three areas relevant to nuclear arms control measures and the achievement of this goal. These were: the ability to verify that States are not testing nuclear weapons; that they are not producing fissile material for nuclear weapons; and that they have reduced and dismantled nuclear warheads and disposed properly of the fissile material arising.

The United Kingdom is firmly committed to all three of these, the first two through the CTBT and an FMCT. Although sadly neither of these will come into force in the near future, we assume that the moratorium on testing will continue to be observed, and we urge others to join us in a moratorium on production in order to make it universal.

On the third aspect, the United Kingdom has been conducting work on the verification of future arrangements to reduce and ultimately eliminate stockpiles of nuclear weapons. The programme has thus far focused on the authentication of warheads and their components. The question we have asked ourselves is whether it will be possible to verify the presence of nuclear warheads at a site without revealing sensitive design information in violation of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. The studies have shown that the external detection of fissile material and of warheads is possible. Although close access to the item is often needed, the number of warheads inside containers can be assessed externally. This is good news, since it means that verification is possible. At the same time, care is needed to avoid providing data from which design information could be "reverse-engineered".

The United Kingdom is also considering other aspects of verification. We aim to develop knowledge relevant to the verification of any international arrangement for decommissioning and dismantling nuclear warheads and disposing of resultant surplus fissile material. The work will

(Mr. Broucher, United Kingdom)

continue and we aim to produce another interim report, which we shall share with Conference delegations in 2004. In the meantime I am asking for my country's working paper on this topic to be circulated as an official document of the Conference.

I am very conscious that the work by the United Kingdom on verifying nuclear disarmament is well ahead of progress in the Conference on Disarmament. Had we been able to continue the work begun in 1998 on an FMCT, however, we might by now have taken that essential next step. It is not for want of effort that we have got stuck, and I would like particularly to pay tribute to the five former presidents for their strenuous work. The United Kingdom does not intend to submit any amendments to their proposal. Sadly, I do not think it will ever fall to me to take the chair of the Conference on Disarmament. But I would like to think that other presidents, past and future, will continue to provide the Conference with advice, inspiration and support in the way that Ambassador Dembri, Ambassador Vega, Ambassador Lint, Ambassador Salander and Ambassador Reyes have already done.

In the end, I am confident that the Conference on Disarmament will agree on a work programme. Indeed, for most of us, it has been obvious for many years what this will need to contain. We should not give up the effort to reach consensus simply because it is proving difficult. The key to reaching agreement does not lie here in Geneva but, equally, no impetus will be created to reach that agreement unless someone generates it from here. The United Kingdom cannot lead this work, but we pledge our support to anyone who can. What we need now is a new process.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you, Ambassador Broucher, for a comprehensive and very timely presentation, which also - as you noted in your second paragraph - responds to suggestions that delegations make statements relevant to the issues on our agenda. I would like to continue to encourage delegations to take the floor in the coming weeks to address issues such as those addressed today and last week. At this point it is my pleasure to give the floor to Mr. Marcelo Valle Fonrouge of Argentina.

Mr. VALLE FONROUGE (Argentina) (translated from Spanish): Mr. President, at the outset, may I congratulate you on your appointment as President of the Conference and express our satisfaction at the manner in which you have been conducting our work. Today I shall be addressing the issue of antipersonnel mines.

The day before yesterday, namely, 10 June 2003, in the context of the thirty-third General Assembly of the Organization of American States, in Santiago, Chile, Argentina and the Organization of American States signed an agreement on cooperation and technical assistance to implement a plan to destroy the antipersonnel mines stockpiled in the munitions depots of our armed forces. With the implementation of this agreement and with the assistance of the Organization of American States and Canada, Argentina will be able to meet its commitments under the Ottawa Convention by the agreed deadline of March 2004.

In its article 4, the Convention determines that each State party shall undertake to destroy or ensure the destruction of all stocks of antipersonnel mines in its possession within a period of four years from the date of entry into force of the Convention for that country. Under the

(Mr. Valle Fonrouge, Argentina)

provisions of the Convention the Republic of Argentina is obliged to draw up a plan to destroy its stocks of antipersonnel mines before 1 March 2004. On the same occasion, the Argentine Foreign Minister, Mr. Rafael Bielsa, called for international cooperation to mobilize resources and provide technical assistance to enable States to make progress in the destruction of their stocks of antipersonnel mines and reaffirmed the intention of the Government of Argentina to continue to work for security, confidence-building, arms control, transparency and disarmament.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Argentina for taking up a very important subject and also for the kind words addressed to the Chair.

Does any other delegation wish to take the floor at this stage? That does not seem to be the case. This therefore concludes our business for today.

Our next plenary meeting will be held on Thursday, 19 June 2003, at 10 a.m. in this conference room.

The meeting rose at 10.45 a.m.