

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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FINAL RECORD OF THE NINE-HUNDRED AND THIRTY-EIGHTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 2 September 2003, at 10.20 a.m.

President: Ms. Kuniko INOBUCHI (Japan)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 938th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

At the outset I would like to extend a warm welcome, on behalf of the Conference, to Mr. Kim Traavik, State Secretary at the Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway. His presence in our midst bears witness to the interest of his Government in the work of the Conference. I am certain that his statement will be followed with keen interest.

Furthermore, I welcome the participants in the 2003 United Nations Programme of Fellowships on Disarmament who are observing the proceedings of this plenary. I am sure they will benefit from exposure to our forum, and especially from the presentations that will be made to them on the various aspects of the work of the Conference. I wish them a fruitful stay in Geneva.

I also have on my list of speakers for today the representative of Pakistan, Ambassador Shaukat Umer, speaking after Mr. Traavik.

I now invite the State Secretary at the Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway, Mr. Kim Traavik, to address the Conference.

Mr. TRAAVIK (Norway): Madam President, it is a privilege to be addressing this Conference under your presidency. You are serving the cause of arms control and non-proliferation with dedication and distinction. The skilful manner in which you guided to a successful conclusion the First Biennial Meeting on the status of the implementation of the Programme of Action on small arms and light weapons was particularly impressive.

It is a commonplace observation, but nonetheless true that the security environment has changed profoundly in recent years. International terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction are major threats to international peace and security. We know that certain States are seeking to obtain these deadly weapons.

There is also evidence that certain terrorist groups are actively working to acquire weapons of mass destruction. No pains must be spared to prevent this from happening. The recent tragedies and attacks against civilian targets in various parts of the world have clearly proved that terrorists are prepared to go to extreme lengths to cause maximum damage and inflict maximum suffering.

Fighting international terrorism and pursuing even more vigorously the goal of non-proliferation are therefore essential to our common security. Much has already been done through the United Nations Security Council and the broad-based coalition against terrorism. Norway is actively contributing to this coalition and we will continue to do so.

Existing multilateral instruments on disarmament and non-proliferation are vital to meet the new threats to our security. Universal adherence to these instruments is crucial if we are to succeed. Multilateralism must remain a core principle, and we must continue to ensure that these instruments function well.

(Mr. Traavik, Norway)

The Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) is a cornerstone of these efforts. We are concerned that the Treaty is facing serious challenges.

We deeply deplore the announcement by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea that it is withdrawing from the Treaty. We reiterate our call to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to reverse its course of action, to comply with its obligations under the NPT and to cooperate fully and unconditionally with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

We welcome the initiative that led to the recent six-country meeting in Beijing. Although the meeting was not as productive as we would have hoped, this process should and must continue. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea has a special responsibility in this regard. The Korean peninsula needs a new start leading towards stability, reconciliation and a lasting settlement on all aspects of nuclear issues. A solution must be found through dialogue.

All allegations of non-compliance with the NPT regime must be dealt with in a transparent manner. In any well-documented case IAEA must be given access to investigate, draw conclusions and decide on necessary action in accordance with its mandate.

It is in the self-interest, it seems to us, of any country suspected of non-compliance to cooperate fully with IAEA. This also applies to Iran. The Agency must be allowed to continue and finalize its work as tasked by the Board of Governors.

The urgent and unconditional conclusion, entry into force and implementation of an IAEA additional protocol to its safeguards agreements is of the greatest importance. We would regard this as an important sign of Iran's commitment to non-proliferation and of its desire to restore international confidence in its peaceful intentions.

The recent visits to Iran by IAEA's Director General, Mr. ElBaradei, and his talks with Iranian officials are steps in the right direction. We have taken due note of IAEA's latest report to the Board of Governors and are particularly pleased that Iran seems to be prepared to work more closely with IAEA. Norway looks forward to the further strengthening of this positive development. At the same time there is an urgent need for continued investigations to fully verify the Iranian nuclear programme.

Our aim should be to preserve and strengthen the integrity and authority of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. The 2005 Review Conference will be decisive for the future of the Treaty.

Prior to the Review Conference we will have to negotiate common recommendations. Next year we will reach a critical stage in this regard. We must all contribute in a positive spirit and make the necessary compromises.

(Mr. Traavik, Norway)

To Norway it is of the utmost importance that the 2005 Conference results in a strengthened non-proliferation regime. This should primarily be achieved through improved IAEA safeguards. These must be applied universally. The norm should be that any country seeking nuclear technology for a peaceful programme must fully implement the comprehensive IAEA safeguards and the additional protocol. This should be a major message from the 2005 Conference.

The NPT contains clear disarmament obligations. Disarmament and non-proliferation must mutually reinforce each other.

Significant progress in nuclear disarmament has been achieved since the end of the cold war. The 2000 NPT Review Conference adopted a practical road map for further nuclear disarmament. Norway attaches great importance to the implementation of these decisions in the run-up to the 2005 Conference.

Norway welcomes the recent ratification of the Moscow agreement between the United States and Russia on further reductions in strategic nuclear warheads. We consider these reductions to be an important contribution to the implementation of the decisions of the 2000 Review Conference. It is important that these reductions are carried out in a verifiable, transparent and irreversible manner.

We also see a need for further reductions in tactical nuclear weapons. The NATO allies have come a long way in this respect.

Irreversibility, it seems to us, is important for achieving the long-term objective of eliminating nuclear weapons. This principle is also the best guarantee that decommissioned nuclear weapons do not end up in the hands of terrorist groups.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is essential for the promotion of both nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament. It is crucial that all the nuclear powers ratify the Treaty.

Pending the Treaty's entry into force, self-imposed moratoria on nuclear testing are very welcome. Yet moratoria cannot replace the legally binding commitment represented by the signing and ratification of the CTBT.

The verification system is at the core of the Treaty. Financial and diplomatic support for the Preparatory Commission of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization must therefore continue unabated. Norway will continue to make an active contribution in this regard.

It is of the greatest importance that the integrity of the norms set by the CTBT is respected. We are worried that the development of new weapons may result in the resumption of tests. Likewise it is vital to retain the current nuclear threshold.

(Mr. Traavik, Norway)

We consider the fissile material cut-off treaty to be the next logical step in nuclear disarmament. Such a treaty would also be an essential instrument for preventing the proliferation of such weapons. We deplore the fact that it has not been possible to move forward in this priority area.

Nuclear safety has become an integral part of the fight against terrorism and the spread of weapons of mass destruction. It is vitally important to prevent fissile materials and nuclear waste from falling into the hands of terrorists or other criminals.

Since 1995, Norway has spent more than US\$ 100 million on nuclear safety measures in cooperation with Russia. At the outset, back in 1995, we regarded the nuclear safety challenges in north-western Russia primarily in an environmental perspective. But in the current security landscape nuclear safety has taken on a new measure of urgency.

Through our long-standing cooperation with Russia on nuclear safety we have accumulated extensive experience. Norway's primary focus will remain on support for cooperative projects in north-western Russia. The sinking of a decommissioned Russian submarine off the Kola Peninsula over the weekend was a tragic reminder of the urgency of the task. Our thoughts are with the bereaved families.

The Global Partnership launched by the G-8 countries in 2002 will be crucial for building a broad international coalition against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. This partnership will renew and intensify the goals of sustained nuclear safety and security.

The Proliferation Security Initiative that is now being developed is yet another valuable measure for halting the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and fighting terrorism. Norway would like to take part actively in this initiative.

The Hague Code of Conduct is also essential in our overall efforts to halt the spread of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. We must seek to secure universal adherence to the Code. Norway's long-term objective is that the Code should be translated into a legally binding and globally accepted agreement.

In the history of multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation, the Chemical Weapons Convention is a major achievement.

The recent Review Conference was encouraging. We are particularly pleased that it set the stage for a further strengthening of the Convention's verification regime, including inspections. The Conference also allowed substantive discussions on matters related to compliance. We hope these deliberations will yield concrete results.

Having said this, more efforts are clearly needed to further strengthen the Convention. We have to achieve full universalization and further progress in the destruction and eventual elimination of existing stockpiles of chemical weapons.

(Mr. Traavik, Norway)

There is also an urgent need to deal with biological weapons. Fortunately, at the last Review Conference of the Biological Weapons Convention, we were able to reach a compromise that allows us to continue strengthening the Convention. Together we must seize this opportunity to promote robust and effective national measures for the full implementation of the Convention.

With respect to multilateral cooperation on conventional weapons, there are encouraging trends. Small arms, landmines and munitions are technically not weapons of mass destruction. Yet they kill or seriously injure more than half a million people every year. In terms of the number of lives they take, then, small arms are clearly weapons of mass destruction. This represents a challenge to human security. Norway will continue to play its part in meeting this challenge.

We attach great importance to the ongoing negotiations on Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) under the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. We consider it essential to arrive at a legally binding protocol that addresses the humanitarian concerns in a credible manner.

A new ERW protocol must make a real difference in this field. We also strongly advocate a legally binding protocol mitigating the humanitarian risks of anti-vehicle mines.

Norway is convinced that multilateral approaches to non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament are essential for our collective security.

Multilateral, legally binding, verifiable arms control treaties are important means of enhancing our security. The impasse in this Conference is therefore contrary to our common security interests.

Norway's position on the Conference's programme of work is well known. Over the last few years we have supported a number of proposals that could have put the Conference on a more constructive track. We have also signalled our readiness to discuss other important topics in the context of the Conference.

Norway has furthermore supported efforts to improve the functioning of the Conference. While we acknowledge that the reasons for the current impasse are to be found outside the Conference, it is obvious that the Conference needs reform. Since the new threats are of a global nature, any country seeking to contribute to the Conference should be allowed to do so.

This touches on a broader issue as well. Reform of the international negotiating bodies is essential if multilateralism is to serve our needs in a changing security environment. The international community must work better together, quite simply, to meet the new threats.

(Mr. Traavik, Norway)

We agree with those who call for a critical look at the functioning of the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly. The current format of the First Committee's general debate prevents us from exchanging views and forming common perspectives on how to deal with new security challenges. It does not serve our security interests to adopt over 50 resolutions and decisions in a way that is often mechanical and repetitive.

We welcome therefore the United States' ideas on making multilateral cooperation in disarmament and non-proliferation more effective. These suggestions are a solid point of departure for discussing reform of the First Committee, the Conference on Disarmament and the Disarmament Commission. While many would agree with the diagnosis, the much harder task now at hand is to come up with specific answers in terms of what is to be done. We for our part wish to contribute to that process.

I have just stated at the outset of my remarks that, from our perspective, multilateralism is a core principle. But multilateralism must adapt and respond to new security threats. Over the last 50 years multilateralism has delivered results. It can continue to do so by being more efficient, targeted and solution-oriented.

The challenges are there. They are significant challenges. It is up to us, the member States of the Conference on Disarmament, to make full use of the Conference to contribute to resolving them.

Continued failure to do so will mean that we turn our backs on important opportunities for creating a safer and more secure future.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the State Secretary, Mr. Traavik, for his important statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair as well. I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Pakistan, Ambassador Umer.

Mr. UMER (Pakistan): Madam President, since I am taking the floor for the first time in an official meeting of the Conference, let me congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and to convey to you our boundless admiration for the energy and the enthusiasm which you have brought to our deliberations. We are confident that your dedication and the collective desire of all of us sitting here will result in good conclusions.

I am speaking on the issue of conventional arms control and disarmament.

In 1978, the first special session of the United Nations General Assembly devoted to disarmament undertook to work towards general and complete disarmament with a view to promoting international peace and security. After 25 years, the world, unfortunately, is as unstable as ever, notwithstanding some remarkable achievements in the sphere of disarmament, especially relating to weapons of mass destruction.

(Mr. Umer, Pakistan)

Reasons for the continuing threats to international peace are many. One important factor that significantly contributes to instability at all levels is the accumulation of conventional weapons by States far in excess of their legitimate security requirements, and in total disregard for the principle of undiminished security at the lowest possible level of armaments and military forces. This is resulting in spiralling arms races, particularly in tension-ridden regions, such as the Middle East and South Asia, aggravating conflicts and making peaceful settlement of disputes ever more difficult.

According to the SIPRI Yearbook 2002, the world spent US\$ 839 billion on defence in 2001. This is indeed alarming, particularly when millions of people across the globe are living, or rather struggling to survive, below the poverty line. Security is indivisible. The international community cannot realistically expect to build a stable security structure on the foundations of poverty, hunger, disease and illiteracy.

Several factors are contributing to the conventional arms race, including:

Unresolved disputes: According to the United Nations Secretary-General, as many as 46 disputes, old and new, are a source of concern to the international community and pose a threat to international peace and security.

States locked in territorial and other disputes with their neighbours, with a history of active hostilities, continue to spend exorbitantly on their defence, injecting more instability into their security milieus and putting a constant drag on their socio-economic development. This is particularly true in the case of developing countries. For instance, in South Asia, because of the unresolved long-standing Kashmir dispute, both India and Pakistan have been obliged to divert scarce resources for military purposes, resulting in dismal socio-economic indicators. A just and durable solution of this dispute, which requires the active involvement of the international community, would release significant resources for the socio-economic betterment of all the people of South Asia. Ironically, even States which are sincere in resolving their disputes peacefully find it extremely difficult to extricate themselves from the Sisyphean arms race dilemma. For instance, Pakistan, despite meagre resources, is forced to spend about \$3 billion annually on its defence against India's massive military spending, which reached \$15.6 billion last year. According to one estimate, India plans to purchase weapons worth \$100 billion during the present decade.

Secondly, ambitions to dominate. Certain States are engaged in exorbitant military spending to maintain, or attain, big-power status in the global or regional contexts. Whatever their short-term and long-term objectives, the domino effect of arms-building becomes difficult to curtail. This is especially so in respect of volatile subregions. Hegemonistic ambitions confront smaller regional countries with the unenviable choice of high military spending, despite resource constraints, to protect their independence and territorial integrity.

(Mr. Umer, Pakistan)

Thirdly, the military industrial complex. With the end of the cold war, the industries of the major arms producers witnessed a steep production decline. These industries, however, managed to survive by shifting their focus abroad, expanding and diversifying their arms exports, even to countries that openly defy international law and are a cause of continuing instability in their regions. Concurrently, cutting-edge military technologies have acted as a tempting factor to States to acquire such technologies, even if they are disproportionate to their threat perceptions or security needs.

During 1996-2001, conventional weapons worth US\$ 121 billion were exported. The token developing countries' share in these exports never exceeded 4 per cent.

Fourthly, the ongoing revolution in military affairs is resulting in greater complications, blurring the distinction between conventional weapons and weapons of mass destruction. States are being dragged into arms build-ups with a view to maintaining strategic balance. Can this revolution in military affairs be managed more prudently with a view to avoiding the further compounding of the security situation, especially in regions mired in deep mistrust and tension?

Lastly, the new threat perceptions emanating from terrorism and extremism have further encouraged the arms lobbies to make their case for enhanced military acquisitions by States. According to Jane's Defence Weekly, "if the current approach of reliance on military means to combat terrorism becomes a standard, it is likely that there will be a further rise in military expenditures in the coming years".

It goes without saying that countering terrorism is a fundamental global objective necessitating international cooperation, in which Pakistan has been fully involved. However, it would be more cost-effective to mobilize the international community to address the root causes of terrorism rather than expending resources on procuring ever more sophisticated weapons and technologies, which in any case are open to misuse by those wedded to unjust policies and determined to pursue them in the garb of countering terrorism. A serious debate needs to be conducted on the wisdom of overwhelming reliance on military measures, necessitating exaggerated arms build-ups, in countering terrorism, to the exclusion of the very causes which trigger such reprehensible actions.

This is not to assert that the international community is totally oblivious to the dangers inherent in the conventional arms race. The United Nations Disarmament Commission deliberated intensively on the subject and, in 1999, finalized guidelines on conventional arms control. Two global transparency instruments in conventional armaments, namely the Register of Conventional Arms and the Instrument for Reporting Military Expenditures, have been set up with results still far below original expectations.

Nevertheless, broad guidelines, or measures towards transparency, though useful in their own right, cannot be considered enough. Unlike the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces Reduction in Europe, these steps do not bind States to reduce conventional armaments, nor do they oblige them to forswear the excessive and destabilizing accumulation of conventional weapons.

(Mr. Umer, Pakistan)

Disputes among States should be resolved peacefully and quickly so that the relevant regions and subregions could usher in an era of cooperation and development. This is, however, unlikely to happen any time soon. States which are spending billions of dollars to dominate their respective regions are showing no signs of accommodation and compromise. They want to dominate and settle disputes from a position of strength alone. If the excessive accumulation of conventional weapons continues unchecked, especially in volatile regions, peace and security will remain elusive. Military asymmetries will erode regional balance and perpetuate instability, in addition to marginalizing the overarching necessity of resolving outstanding disputes peacefully.

Operative paragraph 2 of General Assembly resolution 57/77 reads as follows: "Requests the Conference on Disarmament to consider the formulation of principles that can serve as a framework for regional agreements on conventional arms control, and looks forward to a report of the Conference on this subject."

The international community is required to urgently develop binding norms with a view to achieving conventional arms control at the lowest possible level, through proportional reduction in military expenditures, non-discriminatory and judicious regulation of arms transfers, uninfluenced by political and commercial considerations, non-development and non-deployment of sophisticated conventional weapons, and development of regional confidence-building measures in the field of arms control and disarmament.

We believe that the Conference on Disarmament should address this issue on a priority basis, as envisaged under the resolution of the United Nations General Assembly to which I have just referred. It is our expectation that you will include this question in your consultations during the intersessional period for developing an agreed programme of work for the year 2004.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of Pakistan, Mr. Umer, for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair.

This concludes my list of speakers for today. Does any delegation wish to take the floor? The distinguished representative of Iran has the floor.

Mr. SALSABILI (Islamic Republic of Iran): Madam President, as this is the first time that I am taking the floor, allow me at the outset to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency. With your talent and knowledge, I fully trust that our work at the Conference will be guided in the right direction for an effective performance.

I have a comment. My comment is on part of Mr. Traavik's speech today. This is the first time that the misunderstanding between my country and IAEA has been brought up at the Conference. Therefore, some comments and correction might be necessary.

(Mr. Salsabili, Islamic Republic of Iran)

While I do not believe that at this stage this is the right place to address the question of my country's nuclear technology and recent problems between IAEA and Iran, regarding allowing IAEA to continue and finalize its work, while there is no obligation, but as a step forward to enhanced transparency and confidence-building measures between the Agency and my country, it has already been allowed to have full and complete access to all facilities and other points of concern - which sometimes included a chocolate factory - to see whatever they want to see.

It is not a secret that Iran is vigorously pursuing a full-fledged nuclear programme for peaceful purposes. Iran has an inalienable right to do so, as many others did. Our programme, however, has a clear limit. Unlike some others, we consider the development and use of weapons of mass destruction illegal, inhuman and against our basic principles. As they have no place in our defence doctrine, Iran has close cooperation with IAEA on its nuclear programme and spares no effort to respond to any questions concerning this issue raised by IAEA in a transparent manner.

Let me reassure the distinguished speaker that Iran is a bona fide member of the NPT, which means that it knows its obligation and its right, too, on the peaceful use of nuclear energy. Under discriminatory foreign constraints, we have learned to rely only on our own indigenous scientific capabilities and resources. But we would never seek nuclear weapons, and this is true, we assure the Conference on Disarmament as well.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of Iran for his intervention, and I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Mr. JANG (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Madam President, since this is the first time for me to take the floor under your presidency, I, on behalf of my delegation, congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference.

I have asked for the floor to make a brief comment on what the State Secretary of the Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs said with regard to the DPRK. Before commenting, I should like to remind you once again that the Conference on Disarmament, which is a multilateral negotiating forum, is not the right place to discuss issues like the issue of the Korean peninsula. I think that you, Madam President, and other colleagues in this chamber shared the same feelings when I made a statement earlier this year.

It is too unfair to call upon the DPRK, which is not a member of the NPT now, to comply with its obligations under the NPT, while ignoring the main cause for which we withdrew from the NPT. It is not my intention to elaborate further on this issue because it is well known to others in this room.

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

As for the six-way talks held last week in Beijing, we made clear our position on these talks. The DPRK participated in the talks in the hope of peacefully resolving the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula. From this we made a concrete proposal along with various actions to resolve the nuclear issue as soon as possible. But it became clear in the talks that the policy of one of the main parties in these talks remains unchanged. So we have come to the conclusion that such talks without change in its policy towards my country are unnecessary and usually harmful in all aspects.

The key to the solution of the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula depends on the attitude of the main party in the talks towards the DPRK.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of the DPRK for his intervention. I think we all believe that exchanges of views and interaction do help the cause of peace, and that is why we exchange views in the hope that this is in the service of peace. I hope that the talk will continue. I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of India, Ambassador Sood.

Mr. SOOD (India): Madam President, as this is the first time that I take floor under your presidency, let me take this opportunity to convey to you the good wishes of my delegation and my personal good wishes at seeing you in this position, and also assure you of our fullest cooperation in the discharge of your responsibilities.

I was not planning to ask for the floor today, but I have been obliged to do so because of some statements made by my colleague, the distinguished Ambassador of Pakistan. India does not engage in an arms race, either conventional or non-conventional, with any country. We have our own legitimate security concerns, and we try to meet them at the lowest possible expenditure that we can afford. But clearly, as a large country with a population which is 7 times that of say, Pakistan, or 5 times its boundary, or 15 times its coastline, not counting the fact that India has 600 island territories, some of which are more than 1,000 kilometres away from the mainland, with a GDP which is more than 10 times that of Pakistan - in fact, last time I remember there were companies whose capitalization on one of the stock exchanges accounted for the entire GDP of the State of Pakistan - I think that we have tried to keep our defence expenditure at the lowest possible. I regret the fact that Pakistan feels compelled to spend as much as it does on its defence budget. I think the best way to get out of this cycle that has been referred to in Pakistan's perception of an arms race is through meaningful and productive dialogue. But then unfortunately the Conference is not the forum for bilateral issues. But I do hope that Pakistan, through engaging in productive dialogue, will be able to bring down its defence expenditure to what it considers to be appropriate and adequate.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of India, Ambassador Sood, for his intervention. Are there any other delegations wishing to take the floor at this point? That does not seem to be the case.

(The President)

I would like to inform the Conference that the secretariat has received a note verbale from the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Kazakhstan, dated 29 August 2003, informing it that the delegation of Kazakhstan, upon instructions from the capital, will not assume the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament for the period from 1 January to 15 February 2004.

This concludes our business for today. However, as I announced last week, we will convene in an informal plenary meeting in 10 minutes' time to continue the consideration of the draft annual report. As usual, this meeting will be open only to the member States of the Conference as well as to observer States.

The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Thursday, 4 September 2003 at 10 a.m., and during that plenary meeting, the Conference will be addressed by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, H.E. Mrs. Yoriko Kawaguchi.

The meeting rose at 11.05 a.m.