

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE NINE HUNDRED AND FORTY-NINTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 4 March 2004, at 10.15 a.m.

President: Ms. RAJMAH Hussain (Malaysia)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 949th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

At the outset, I would like to thank Ambassador Pablo Macedo of Mexico for temporarily presiding over the proceedings of the Conference on Disarmament during my absence last week to attend the G-15 Summit in Caracas, Venezuela.

I would also like, at the outset, to extend a very cordial welcome to a new colleague of ours, Ambassador Jayant Prasad, who has just assumed the responsibilities of the Permanent Representative of India to the Conference on Disarmament. I would like to take this opportunity to assure Ambassador Prasad of our cooperation and support in his new assignment. Welcome, Ambassador.

I have only one speaker inscribed on the list today, and that is the Ambassador of the United States of America. Madam Ambassador, I would like to give you the floor.

Ms. SANDERS (United States of America): Madam President, since this is the first time I have addressed the CD with you in the Chair, I wish to offer my support for you in your presidency of the CD.

I would like to speak today about the new United States policy on landmines which was announced last Friday, 27 February. Specifically, the new United States landmine policy provides, among other things, that:

After 2010, the United States will not use persistent anti-personnel or anti-vehicle landmines on any battlefield, for any purpose, anywhere in the world.

Within one year, the United States will no longer use any non-detectable mine of any type.

The United States will seek a worldwide ban on the sale or export of all persistent landmines to prevent the spread of technology that kills and maims civilians. No decision has yet been made on a possible venue.

Funding for the State Department's portion of the United States humanitarian mine action programmes will be increased by 50 per cent over fiscal year 2003 baseline levels, to \$70 million.

The United States will continue to work hard for universal membership in the CCW and for the negotiation of a new protocol on anti-vehicle mines.

The United States, as noted in the fact sheet I have asked the secretariat to circulate, is committed to eliminating the humanitarian risks posed by landmines. We believe the new policy is right for us, and we do not want to force it on anyone else. This policy directly addresses the central humanitarian problem caused by most landmines in the world today: their longevity. We are the first major military Power to commit to giving up all non-detectable landmines and all persistent landmines.

(Ms. Sanders, United States of America)

While the Canadian Ambassador in Washington noted last Friday “our different approaches on the question of the Ottawa Treaty”, we appreciate that he “welcomed the announcement of the United States Government’s strong and demonstrated commitment to continue addressing the humanitarian crisis presented by landmines”. He “also welcomed the announcement concerning persistent landmines and their detectability and the increase in United States funding for demining activities”.

I wish to emphasize the appreciation we have for the efforts supporters of the Ottawa Convention and others have taken to address the humanitarian problem caused by landmines, and we look forward to working together toward our common goal.

I would also note that our new policy complements the anti-vehicle mine proposed protocol sponsored by 30 nations in the CCW. We look forward to working with everyone engaged when the CCW meets in Geneva next week.

I request that the fact sheet on the new United States landmine policy be entered as an official document of the Conference on Disarmament.

The PRESIDENT: I would like to thank the Ambassador of the United States for her statement on landmines. Are there any more speakers for today? The new Ambassador of India would like to take the floor.

Mr. PRASAD (India): Madam President, thank you for your warm words of welcome. As the new head of the Indian delegation, I want to assure you of our continued support to the Chair and our willingness to work closely with all the members and observers of the Conference on Disarmament.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you, Mr. Ambassador. We certainly look forward to working closely with you.

Before proceeding with the rest of the work for today, I would like to make the following announcement, which I actually conveyed to the Group Coordinators yesterday morning for their advance information. The announcement is as follows: It is my intention, as current President of the Conference on Disarmament, to invite all delegations to the CD for informal open-ended consultations on a work programme for the CD. I will hold these consultations, to which all of you are invited, on Tuesday, 9 March 2004, at 10 a.m. in this Council Chamber. I would very much appreciate it if those attending can come prepared. These informal consultations will provide for a lively interaction between interested delegations on the way forward in the CD.

There is one additional item for us to consider today. As you will recall, at the plenary meeting on 12 February 2004 the Conference adopted a decision on the enhancement of the engagement of civil society in the work of the Conference on Disarmament. Paragraph 5 of this decision refers, inter alia, to a formal selection process that will be put in place to consider requests from non-governmental organizations to address the Conference. In this connection, I requested the secretariat to prepare a background paper on a selection process. In accordance with this request, the secretariat prepared the background paper which is now being distributed to

(The President)

you. I hope it will provide you with some ideas, and facilitate the process of elaborating the appropriate selection procedure for considering requests from non-governmental organizations to address the Conference. I would like to emphasize that, as provided for in the decision itself, this procedure will be applied only after the adoption of the CD's programme of work. I would like to give the floor to the secretariat, if they have additional comments to make on the paper.

Mr. Román-Morey, have you any additional comments? You have the floor.

Mr. ROMÁN-MOREY (Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament): This is just to inform the Conference that the document which is going to be distributed right now is an information background paper prepared by the secretariat which contains elements that could be useful for the future review of this mandate by the Conference.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you, Mr. Román-Morey, for that brief explanation. I hope delegates will take time to read the paper.

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

This concludes our business for today.

With regard to the schedule of meetings next week, I would just like to remind you that we will hold open-ended informal consultations on a work programme for the CD on Tuesday, 9 March 2004 at 10 a.m. in this Council Chamber, so please, as I reminded you earlier, come prepared.

The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Thursday, 11 March 2004, at 10 a.m., also in this conference room, and I would like to remind you here that on 11 March 2004 we will be commemorating International Women's Day. So I hope that everybody will be able to be present, given the very important role that women play in our lives. So as a lady President I will expect to see all of you here.

Before I adjourn this meeting, I give the floor to the secretariat for an announcement.

Mr. ROMÁN-MOREY (Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament): The Coordinator of the Group of 21 has requested the secretariat to announce that there will be a meeting of the Group of 21 in this conference room, immediately after the adjournment of this plenary meeting of the Conference.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the secretariat for that announcement. So G-21 members, please take note. If there are no other requests for the floor, I propose to adjourn this meeting.

The meeting rose at 10.25 a.m.