

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE NINE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-SIXTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 3 March 2005, at 10.15 a.m.

President:

Mr. Tim CAUGHLEY

(New Zealand)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 976th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

I should like at the outset to extend a cordial welcome to Ambassador Barnabé Carrero Cuberos, who has recently assumed his responsibilities as the representative of Venezuela to the Conference on Disarmament. I wish to take this opportunity to assure him of our cooperation and support in his new assignment.

I have quite a long list of speakers for today's plenary, and I shall read them out now. You will find there are some slight changes in the list that you have in front of you. I shall go through the list just to give you an idea as it stands at the moment. I would have Austria first, followed by Canada, Kenya, Algeria, Australia, Switzerland, Argentina, Belgium and Croatia.

I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Austria.

Mr. PETRITSCH (Austria): Mr. President, at the outset, allow me to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. I would like to convey my best wishes to you in this difficult task. I would also like to express my gratitude to your predecessor, my friend Ambassador Chris Sanders, who has spared no effort to advance our common cause to bring the Conference on Disarmament back to work.

On Tuesday 1 March, the world celebrated the sixth anniversary of the entry into force of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction.

From 29 November to 3 December 2004, I had the privilege of presiding over the Convention's first Review Conference, the Nairobi Summit on a Mine-free World.

At the Nairobi Summit, whose host country, Kenya, already addressed the CD a few weeks ago and will do so again today, the international community gathered at a high political level to examine the humanitarian problems caused by anti-personnel mines and what was being done to address them. The Nairobi Summit accomplished two objectives: first, it took stock of what has been achieved so far, and second, it defined a forward-looking action plan.

Indeed, we can celebrate considerable progress. The use of anti-personnel mines has been markedly reduced in recent years. Fewer anti-personnel mines are being produced, and trade in this perilous weapon has almost completely ceased. One hundred and forty-four States have ratified the Convention since 1997, including the majority of those States that are most heavily affected by landmines, such as Afghanistan, Angola, Cambodia, Mozambique and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Convention has established an international standard, which is also respected by the majority of those States that have not yet joined this important humanitarian instrument. In addition, the States parties to the Convention have destroyed more than 37 million stockpiled anti-personnel mines and cleared vast tracts of mined land. The annual number of new mine victims is now significantly lower than it once was, and many landmine survivors are now receiving better care and assistance.

(Mr. Petritsch, Austria)

However, much still needs to be done. To overcome the remaining challenges, the States parties to the Convention adopted what was the centrepiece of the Nairobi Summit, the Nairobi Action Plan 2005-2009. We agreed on 70 concrete actions, including the following:

- We concluded that universal adherence to the Convention will remain an important priority during the period 2005-2009: 50 States, including 22 members of the CD, have not yet formally joined the Convention, and I call upon these States to join the Convention as soon as possible;
- We acknowledged that the most significant challenge for the next five years will be to make sure that States parties meet the 10-year mine clearance deadlines for clearing mined areas. This will require intensive efforts by mine-affected States parties and those in a position to assist them;
- We recommitted ourselves to provide for the care, rehabilitation and reintegration of mine victims;
- We agreed that the destruction of stockpiled anti-personnel mines - one of the Convention's true success stories - will remain a key priority. While only 15 States parties must still destroy stockpiles, some of them still have substantial stocks;
- Finally, we accepted that fulfilling our obligations during the period 2005-2009 will require substantial political, financial and material commitments. While over US\$ 2.7 billion have been generated since 1997 for efforts that are consistent with the Convention's aims, considerable additional resources are still required to finish the job.

In many instances, mine action needs to be identified as a priority in development plans, poverty reduction strategy papers and United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks. And mine action needs to be made more efficient and effective.

In sum, the Nairobi Action Plan lays out a comprehensive framework to achieve our goal of conclusively ending the suffering caused by anti-personnel mines - for all peoples for all time.

The remarkable success of the anti-personnel-mine Convention shows that multilateralism can yield results if it is done with a clear focus and in a cooperative spirit. The Ottawa Convention presents solutions to the landmine problem that are relevant for all States, including those with great means and those with few. And the Convention provides a forum that it is open to all States.

In conclusion, let me also express my hope that the Conference on Disarmament, which has been in abeyance for too long now, will soon start to profit also from such a cooperative spirit in order to move forward the important work that needs to be done on the issues of the FMCT, nuclear disarmament, PAROS and negative security assurances.

(Mr. Petritsch, Austria)

With that understanding, let me assure you, Mr. President, of Austria's full support in assisting you to carry out your duties.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of Austria, Ambassador Wolfgang Petritsch, for his statement, and I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Canada.

Mr. MEYER (Canada): Mr. President, let me first congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the CD and offer you my delegation's full support in carrying out your important responsibilities.

(continued in French)

1 March will mark the sixth anniversary of the entry into force of the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. This anniversary will be celebrated throughout Canada during Landmine Awareness Week and includes a number of events across the country recognizing ordinary people who have made an extraordinary contribution to the anti-mine campaign. It also represents an ideal opportunity to emphasize the tremendous success and accomplishments of this Convention following the first Review Conference which was held last December in Nairobi and, as we enter a new phase in the life of the Ottawa Convention, an occasion to reassert our firm commitment to overcome all remaining challenges.

Only six years have elapsed since the Convention entered into force, and remarkable progress has been made towards achieving a truly global ban on the use of these indiscriminate weapons and redressing the human and socio-economic harm they have caused. Almost three quarters of the world's States - 144 of them - have joined the Convention, and many of its norms enjoy even broader de facto observance throughout the international community. Once deployed widely around the world, anti-personnel mines are now rarely used, even by States which have not signed the Convention. According to the authoritative Landmine Monitor, there are only two countries which have continued to use them over the past six years. The production of these weapons has decreased considerably, and trade has been eliminated. The stigma attached to these horrific devices has had a strong impact on the behaviour of States. States parties have destroyed over 37 million stockpiled mines and have contributed over US\$ 2 billion to the anti-mine campaign, which has been extensively harnessed since the Convention entered into force, clearly demonstrating its value as the only definitive international framework for ensuring that the human tragedy caused by anti-personnel landmines is ended.

Canada has done its part by renewing the Canadian Landmine Fund through to 2008, bringing our financial commitment to more than \$200 million since the signing ceremony in Ottawa.

(continued in English)

As I mentioned, the world gathered last December in Kenya to celebrate the Nairobi Summit on a Mine-free World. Of the 135 States that participated, 25 were States not yet party,

(Mr. Meyer, Canada)

the majority of which expressed their overwhelming support of the principles and objectives behind this Convention, many stating publicly their intention to eventually join. The goal remains universality, and Canada, as the Chair of the Universalization Contact Group, will continue to work towards this objective. Based on the high-level statements in Nairobi and efforts by a number of States parties, there is good reason to believe that continued momentum towards universalization will achieve impressive results in the near future.

In the interim, States who feel they are still not yet in a position to join the Convention should take steps to further emphasize their commitment to its humanitarian objectives, through issuing on a national basis moratoriums not to produce or transfer anti-personnel landmines, initiating stockpile destruction programmes, funding mine action initiatives, or by submitting voluntary transparency reports. These efforts would reflect and support the important international norm established by the Convention.

The significant impact of the Ottawa Convention is in no small part due to the spirit of shared responsibility and genuine partnership that has characterized the global campaign against anti-personnel landmines from the very beginning. Governments, regional and international organizations and civil society, all increasingly aware of the dangers posed by landmines, are actively working together to universalize the Convention, to provide further assistance to victims, to clear mined land and destroy stockpiles with specific deadlines, and to inform the general public of the considerable humanitarian and developmental costs of using anti-personnel mines. Future progress will clearly require that we sustain and strengthen these partnerships and forge new ones, within a coherent framework consistent with the comprehensive Action Plan endorsed in Nairobi.

At a time when the Conference on Disarmament continues to be unable to agree upon a programme of work to address pressing issues affecting collective and national security, it is reassuring that so many members of the international community - including most members of this body - are addressing a vital issue of human security, which is making a real improvement in the lives of so many people, communities and nations. It is my hope that this positive spirit may also inspire the CD to meet the challenges we are facing together.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of Canada, Ambassador Paul Meyer, for his statement, and I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Kenya.

Mr. OWADE (Kenya): Mr. President, allow me to take this opportunity on behalf of the Kenya delegation to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament for the month of February. We have every confidence in your ability to steer the work of the Conference to success. It is our hope that under your presidency we shall be able to actualize some of the very bold steps initiated by your predecessor, Ambassador Chris Sanders of the Netherlands, so that the Conference can embark on the substantive negotiations that have eluded it for eight years.

On 27 January, I made a statement on behalf of Ambassador Amina Mohamed in which I gave a report on the outcome of the Nairobi Summit on a Mine-free World, which we had the

(Mr. Owade, Kenya)

privilege to host from 29 November to 3 December 2004. Today I wish to join other speakers to mark the sixth anniversary of the entry into force of the Convention on 1 March as we look forward to overcoming the challenges that remain.

Kenya is one of 49 African States with a dual responsibility on the question of the eradication of landmines. Accordingly, we must implement the Nairobi Action Plan, which was adopted by the Convention's States parties in Nairobi on 3 December 2004, and we must persistently apply the common African position on anti-personnel mines, which was adopted by African Ministers of Foreign Affairs on 23 September 2004.

The Nairobi Action Plan to implement the Convention and the African common position are complementary, given that the latter is an African manifestation of the pursuit of the aims of the Ottawa Convention. The African common position clearly highlights our continent's challenges to ending, for all people and for all time, the suffering caused by anti-personnel mines.

A number of concrete steps need to be taken to: universalize the Ottawa Convention in Africa and elsewhere; assist the African States parties in fulfilling their obligations to destroy stockpiles within their four-year deadlines, and to develop and implement national demining programmes with a view to meeting their 10-year mine clearance deadlines; enhance the assistance provided to mine victims and provide for their social and economic reintegration; promote and develop inter-African cooperation and Africa's capacity in the field of mine clearance and mine victim assistance; and mobilize the international community in support of the continent's efforts.

Seven African States are still in the process of destroying stockpiled mines. Nine African States have deadlines for clearance that will become due in 2009, approximately coinciding with the Convention's second Review Conference. And 11 States parties on the African continent have responsibility for significant numbers - indeed, hundreds of thousands - of landmine survivors. Kenya is confident that, in the context of both the Nairobi Action Plan and the common African position, African States will seize their responsibilities to develop national implementation plans and identify internal measures to implement these plans. We hope that all other States in a position to do so will respond to the African initiative by providing the necessary support and in a manner consistent with identified national priorities.

It is important that we share with the Conference on Disarmament this sense of commitment on the part of African States parties to the Ottawa Convention, considering that many of the affected African States are not members of this august body.

Let us not forget that conventional weapons can affect all peoples in all countries. Therefore it is essential that all interested States have the opportunity to assemble as equal partners to discuss the solutions to the problems caused by landmines and other conventional weapons. And it is equally essential that the solutions developed - like those contained in the Ottawa Convention - are meaningful to all States, irrespective of the means they have at their disposal.

(Mr. Owade, Kenya)

I cannot conclude this statement without a word on the important question of the universalization of the Convention, which we have addressed ourselves to on a number of occasions in this Conference. As we mark the sixth anniversary of the Convention, let us seize this opportunity to remind those States that are still outside the Convention that their concerns can be addressed within the framework of the Convention. We appeal to non-States parties not only to embrace its noble principles - which many of them seem to share - but also to take the courage to join the Convention. With the necessary good will and in the spirit of multilateralism, we are convinced that their concerns can be addressed without sacrificing the fundamental principles that the States parties have agreed upon. We owe it to humanity to rid every corner of the globe of the menace of anti-personnel landmines. In this regard, allow me to recall the words of President Mwai Kibaki of Kenya in his address at the opening session of the high-level segment of the Review Conference in Nairobi on 2 December 2004: "Certainly, if small States can eliminate these weapons from their arsenals, there is no justification for the mighty and powerful States and those with sophisticated weapons to continue clinging to them." It is our hope that this clear and powerful message from Nairobi will elicit positive responses.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of Kenya, Mr. Philip Owade, for his statement, and I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Algeria.

Mr. JAZAIRY (Algeria) (translated from Arabic): At the outset, Sir, I should like to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. I should also like to associate myself with my colleagues who have expressed our full confidence in your ability to guide us skilfully in our deliberations. You will find, Sir, that the delegation of Algeria is willing and ready to assist you in efforts to reach a consensus between the different parties. I should also like to express our profound gratitude to your predecessor, Ambassador Chris Sanders of the Netherlands, for all the efforts that he made during his term as President of this Conference.

Two days ago, we celebrated the sixth anniversary of the entry into force of the Ottawa Convention. This is the first anniversary since the Convention's first Review Conference, which was graciously hosted by Kenya, in the capital, Nairobi, in November/December 2004. Allow me, then, to focus my comments on the importance of this anniversary, something which all my other colleagues have done today and which I heartily welcome.

The Ottawa Convention is important because it laid the groundwork for the prohibition of all anti-personnel mines internationally. It represents a great step forward for those who wish to banish the use of this inhuman weapon, which endangers the safety of civilians and hampers sustainable development. The Convention also provides us with a framework for fruitful international cooperation and for ensuring the economic and social rehabilitation of the victims of those weapons. The Ottawa Convention remains, in our view, the main point of reference for dealing with the problem of anti-personnel mines in a comprehensive and conclusive manner. The Convention also plays an extremely important part in strengthening the rules of international humanitarian law.

The Nairobi Conference focused attention on the gains that had been made during five years since the Convention's entry into force. Many States have now acceded to the

(Mr. Jazairy, Algeria)

Convention; the total number of States parties now stands at 144. More than 37 million mines have been cleared and destroyed, and efforts to boost international cooperation and assist mine victims have gathered considerable momentum. In addition, a number of States which are not parties to the Convention have expressed respect for the provisions of this Convention and some have even agreed to be bound by the rules and norms set forth therein. If these gains call for some degree of optimism, much remains to be done.

In this context, the Nairobi Action Plan 2005-2009, which was adopted at the first Review Conference, outlines the steps that need to be taken to eliminate mines and to protect mankind from the dangers which they pose. We hope that the States parties will do everything in their power to implement the recommendations set out in the Action Plan and that they will commit themselves to the timetables established for the destruction of stockpiles and clearance of minefields. We also hope that there will be stronger international cooperation and that developing member States will receive the necessary material and human resources to enable them to fulfil their commitments.

The noble aim of this Convention is to create a world free of these weapons. Unfortunately, however, there are a number of States which have yet to accede to the Convention. This limits the effectiveness of the Convention. We join the distinguished representative of Kenya in encouraging those States that have not already done so to accede to the Convention as soon as possible in order to achieve the universality of this Convention.

In accordance with its belief in the need for general and complete disarmament and its faith in the aims of the Ottawa Convention, Algeria ratified the Convention in 2001 and is determined to meet all its obligations within the set time frame. In that connection, it destroyed 3,030 anti-personnel mines in November 2004, in accordance with article 4 of the Convention, as a first step in the destruction of all its stockpiles. The process will continue until 2006, but will exclude a limited number of mines which we will retain under the terms of article 3 of the Convention. The fact that His Excellency Mr. Abdelaziz Bouteflika, the President of Algeria, presided over this process is evidence of the importance and priority which Algeria accords to the lofty aims of the Convention. Indeed, in an effort to preserve and protect the lives and safety of civilians, Algeria began clearing many of the minefields which it inherited from colonial times as soon as it regained its national sovereignty in 1962, i.e. years before the Convention was adopted.

I should like to conclude by saying the Ottawa Convention was drafted outside the framework of the Conference on Disarmament and in spite of the positive results which the Conference has secured. This should remind us of our shortcomings and impel us to make efforts to stop the erosion of this Conference's mandate.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of Algeria, Mr. Idriss Jazaïry, for his statement, and I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Australia.

Mr. SMITH (Australia): Mr. President, can I begin by saying what an enormous pleasure it is to see you up there on the podium? I say that for two reasons: first of all, because it is always good to have a fellow Antipodean in charge, but perhaps more importantly, I do not think

(Mr. Smith, Australia)

there is any country represented in this room that has put as much effort and commitment over the last decade or more into the goals of disarmament and arms control as New Zealand. And therefore, if there is anyone who can possibly find a way out of the problems that we have in this body, then I think it is as likely to be a New Zealander as anyone else. But at the same time, Mr. President, I would not beat yourself up too much if at the end of the month we have not broken the deadlock, because as Chris Sanders discovered last month, the powers of the President are extremely circumscribed, and the problems, and therefore the solutions, to our dilemma here lie in capitals outside of Geneva.

Happily today I am speaking about another topic, the one that others have spoken about, notably a positive topic, and I should like to say that we, Australia, welcome the opportunity to mark the anniversary of the entry into force of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, also known as the Ottawa Convention.

As celebrated at the first Review Conference, held in Nairobi last year, this treaty has been an overwhelming success, both as an arms control and as a humanitarian treaty. Austria, a leading contributor to the Ottawa process from the beginning, and in particular, Ambassador Wolfgang Petritsch, sitting next to me, should be congratulated for their excellent work as President of the Review Conference.

In five years, the Ottawa Treaty has produced significant results. One hundred and forty-four States parties have ratified the treaty. Some 62 million stockpiled mines have been destroyed. More than 1,100 square kilometres of land have been cleared. Only two countries have regularly used mines over the past five years. There has been no reported legal trade in anti-personnel landmines. Despite these evident achievements, the Ottawa Treaty still faces challenges in bringing on board key target States and in engaging non-State actors responsible for ongoing landmine use.

For its part, Australia has worked hard to implement the treaty in full and assist regional partners to clear mines, destroy stocks and assist mine victims. Australia will spend \$16 million on mine action in the next 18 months, exceeding by some \$10 million the Government's commitment to spend \$100 million in the decade ending 2005. In the last 10 years, Australia has undertaken projects in Cambodia, Laos, Viet Nam, Burma and Sri Lanka in our region, and further afield in Afghanistan, Angola, Iraq and Mozambique.

We have also taken an active role in the intersessional work programme, most recently chairing the Standing Committee on Victim Assistance and Socio-Economic Reintegration, together with Croatia. As a State party we have recommitted ourselves to continue to work on the implementation of the Action Plan adopted at the Review Conference. We will work together with others over the next five years to expand the universalization of the treaty and continue the task of clearing the world of mines and assisting victims.

One of the striking features of the Ottawa Treaty is how it was negotiated, outside of the United Nations system and in partnership with civil society. Governments, organizations and individuals of good will took direct action to remedy what was revealing itself as a horrific

(Mr. Smith, Australia)

humanitarian tragedy. This negotiation on landmines had to be taken out of the CD in order to produce real results that have impacted positively on millions of people's lives. And, frankly, the situation here has not really improved since that happened six years or so ago. Here we seem to have lost the ability to react and respond to new challenges in the arms control/disarmament field, or indeed to the old challenges.

Drawing this comparison serves to highlight the serious problems facing the CD. CD members should be clear that the status quo cannot continue.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of Australia, Ambassador Mike Smith, for his statement, and I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Switzerland.

Mr. HUNGER (Switzerland): Because this is the first time Switzerland is taking the floor under your presidency, let me congratulate you and your team on your great leadership and your future-looking work. You can count on my delegation's full cooperation, and we wish you good luck.

(continued in French)

First of all, on behalf of the Swiss delegation I would like to congratulate His Excellency Ambassador Petritsch for his excellent report and for all the work he has done to improve the situation worldwide in efforts to combat anti-personnel mines.

"No new victims" - that announcement which we all hope to hear one day was not so long ago just a dream. Six years after the entry into force of the Ottawa Convention, that dream has become the realistic goal of 144 countries, many non-governmental organizations and major frontline international organizations such as ICRC and the United Nations. A goal which we have certainly got a bit closer to over the last few years, but one which is nevertheless a long way off. As long as there are still mines in villages, on roads, around waterholes, schools and hospitals, in fields, there will continue to be new victims. That is why the Swiss Government is committed to sustaining its efforts in the coming years and will continue to help affected countries to prevent accidents and relieve suffering.

This humanitarian aim will place heavy demands on Governments. First of all, we will have to give sufficient attention to efforts to universalize the Convention. Switzerland considers universalization to be the key to our success. Secondly, following the Review Conference, we will have to allocate sufficient resources and use those resources in a coordinated and targeted way. We will have to comply with deadlines not just for the destruction of stockpiles, but also for minefield clearance. Thirdly, assistance to victims: they and their families must be guaranteed a future, despite the tragic accident they suffered, they must be given medical and psychosocial assistance, their social and economic integration into the community will have to be ensured. Help to victims has always been a priority for Switzerland. That is why we are going to commit all our efforts to participating in the Committee on Victim Assistance as Co-Rapporteur this year and Co-Chair next year.

(Mr. Hunger, Switzerland)

I would like to remind you of the work done by the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining in the context of the Ottawa Convention. The Centre, founded by Switzerland, makes a valuable contribution to the development of the Ottawa process and the implementation of the Convention. The fact that 18 countries now help to fund the Centre is testimony to the quality of its work. Switzerland will continue to support the Centre as well as the international support unit in political and financial terms.

Lastly, I would like to extend our sincere congratulations to the Austrian Chair of the Review Conference, Ambassador Petritsch, and his team. Without their efforts, conviction and foresight we would not be where we are today. On behalf of my country I thank them for all that they have done, and I can assure them of my country's support for this year.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of Switzerland, Mr. Roman Hunger, for his statement, and I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Argentina.

Mr. VALLE FONROUGE (Argentina) (translated from Spanish): Mr. President, allow me to congratulate you on your appointment as President of this Conference, to express our satisfaction at seeing you presiding over our meetings and to reiterate to you our support for your efforts to start substantive negotiations in this forum. Our thanks also go to the outgoing President, Ambassador Sanders, for his committed work.

Like other delegations, we have asked for the floor to associate ourselves with the commemoration of the sixth anniversary of the entry into force of the Convention on the Prohibition of Anti-Personnel Mines and Their Destruction. Firstly, I wish to convey to Ambassador Wolfgang Petritsch, the representative of Austria, on behalf of the Government of Argentina, our most sincere congratulations for the excellent work he has accomplished as President of this Convention. In addition, Argentina welcomes the convergence that has been achieved between governments and civil society in pursuit of a joint objective within the framework of this Convention, and we hope that this continuity of interests with the non-governmental organizations will continue to be strengthened.

At the meeting of Ministers of Defence of the Americas which was held in Quito, Ecuador, on 25 and 26 November 2004, emphasis was placed on a very important confidence-building measure, namely cooperation among countries in the region in the area of humanitarian demining. In this way, the Ottawa Convention is an additional instrument for addressing differences, in both the civilian and military fields, as it sets out a higher humanitarian goal and a framework for joint work. The declaration of a zone of peace in the Mercosur area covering Paraguay, Uruguay, Brazil and Argentina and Bolivia and Chile, is a tangible example in support of the strengthening of the Convention on the Prohibition of Anti-Personnel Mines and Their Destruction. Latin American experience shows how action against mines helped our region to make progress towards the consolidation of peace and regional security. Argentina hopes that this regional experience will reinforce the perception of this Convention as a guarantee of security for other regions with a view to facilitating coordinated and effective action by the international community on the path towards a world free of anti-personnel mines.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of Argentina, Mr. Marcelo Valle Fonrouge, for his statement, and I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Belgium.

Mr. VAN GUCHT (Belgium) (translated from French): Sir, as this is my delegation's first statement since you took the Chair, I would like to congratulate you on taking up this post and assure you of my full cooperation and Belgium's unequivocal support. I will be very brief. We are celebrating the sixth anniversary of the entry into force of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. My country's position is well known to everyone. From the very outset, Belgium has fought for a mine-free world, one of the main thrusts of its foreign policy, and we remain firmly resolved to make an active contribution to achieving that goal. It is in that spirit that my delegation echoes the statements just made, in particular the statement made by the delegation of Austria.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of Belgium, Mr. Alain Van Gucht, for his statement, and I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Croatia.

Mr. MARKOTIĆ (Croatia): Mr. President, at the outset allow me to congratulate you and to express the sincere satisfaction of my delegation at seeing you preside over the work of this august body. I would also like to commend your predecessor, Ambassador Sanders of the Netherlands, on all his efforts to move the work of this Conference forward.

I wish to congratulate the 144 States parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, better known as the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, on the sixth anniversary of the entry into force of this important international agreement. To date, this Convention has proved to be extraordinary. It has gathered 144 States around its noble goals, that is, some 75 per cent of all States, and undoubtedly marks an important point on the road to universalization. We strongly urge anyone currently using anti-personnel mines to immediately cease because of their devastating humanitarian consequences, which far outweigh any limited military value.

It is worthwhile mentioning that according to the provisions of this Convention, more than 37 million anti-personnel mines held in stockpiles have been destroyed by States parties thus far, and stockpile destruction in the States parties is proceeding in accordance with the deadlines set by the Convention. Moreover, it is no exaggeration to note that a new international norm banning the production, use, stockpiling and transfer of anti-personnel mines is emerging as a result of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Treaty.

Keeping this in mind, we strongly believe that this Convention represents the only comprehensive and effective solution to dealing with the issue of anti-personnel mines and their disastrous humanitarian and socio-economic effects.

Nevertheless, we still have to put a lot of effort into our striving towards the achievement of the final goals of this Convention. Before us is a task which will require strong political will, enormous efforts and unprecedented cooperation between the donor and the mine-affected

(Mr. Markotić, Croatia)

countries if we are to rid ourselves of this contemporary scourge within the deadlines set by the Convention. We, as States parties, will focus in the coming five years on achieving concrete and practical results on the ground, making a life-saving difference in dozens of mine-affected countries. The important role of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, as partners in the "Ottawa process", as it is called, and in our cooperative efforts to fully implement the Convention and the Nairobi Action Plan, cannot be overstated.

No less important is the care and socio-economic reintegration of mine victims into society, which in our view, represents the most important long-term goal of this Convention. On this occasion, we would like to reiterate our deep conviction, strengthened during the last year while co-chairing with Australia the Committee on Victim Assistance, Rehabilitation and Reintegration, that without increased funding for the reintegration of mine victims and without re-examining the approach taken by donors and recipients regarding the use of the funds available, we will not be able to accomplish this most important task. Let us not forget that the *raison d'être* of this Convention is, after all, to reduce "the suffering and casualties caused by anti-personnel mines" and to work for the full reintegration of mine victims into everyday life.

Finally, at the Review Conference held in Nairobi last year, under the capable leadership of Ambassador Petritsch of Austria, States parties entrusted Croatia with the honour and responsibility of hosting the Sixth Meeting of States Parties. The meeting itself will take place from 28 November to 2 December, with a field visit on the 26th and opening ceremony on 27 November. We look forward to this meeting as an enhanced opportunity to contribute to the realization of the goals of the Convention. For Croatia, this meeting offers a chance to serve in a unique role - both as a donor and a recipient country - in the continuing effort to build a solid bridge between mine-affected States and those in a position to provide the help most needed.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of Croatia, Ambassador Gordan Markotić, for his statement, and I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Norway.

Mr. PAULSEN (Norway): Needless to say, Norway continues to be strongly committed to the Landmine Convention. In today's context, I would like to recall that more than a decade ago, numerous efforts were made to bring the landmine issue to the Conference on Disarmament for negotiation, but these efforts failed. The landmine problem nevertheless was ripe for negotiation, and the issue took its own course outside the CD. And the process succeeded in very many respects, unlike any process in the CD during the last eight years.

Can something like this happen again in relation to other problems or issues which are ripe for negotiation? I limit myself to asking the question, but we should bear this in mind in our never-ending and so far fruitless consultations on a programme of work for this Conference.

Thank you, and of course, Mr. President, I will not fail to congratulate you on assuming the presidency. You can certainly count on our unconditional cooperation in your efforts, but you will probably need a little more than that.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of Norway, Mr. Kjetil Paulsen, for his statement, and I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of the United States.

Mr. CYNKIN (United States of America): Mr. President, I had not intended to take the floor, but I was gratified by the attention that this body is paying to the discussion of the important issue of landmines, and I felt that the seriousness and sincerity of a number of the statements of those who have gone before also deserved a few comments and wanted to express a sense that I share some of the sentiments expressed by Ambassador Meyer, for example, who noted that States that are not in a position to join the Convention should take steps to emphasize their commitment to its humanitarian objectives. I think that that is a very valid point. He also said that it was his hope that this positive spirit might inspire the CD to meet the challenges we are facing together. Similarly, I wanted to pick up the points by Ambassador Smith and also by Mr. Paulsen, who expressed concern about the CD's seeming inability to take up serious work on landmines, among other things. For these reasons, the United States was prompted in this body to propose a ban on the sale or export of persistent landmines. This is an initiative that is meant to be complementary to, and not competitive with, those undertaken in the CCW, and it is our hope that the CD will give serious attention to our proposal.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of the United States, Mr. Thomas Cynkin, for his statement, and I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Italy.

Mr. TREZZA (Italy): Mr. President, this is the first time I am taking the floor under your presidency, so this is the moment to express our best wishes for your important task and assure you that you can count on our full support.

This is a session which is ending up being dedicated to the question of landmines, and rightly so, since we are celebrating the sixth anniversary of the entry into force of the Ottawa Convention. Let me say that Italy is of course fully committed to the Ottawa Convention. We are the country which has destroyed the largest number of landmines in accordance with the Convention. We also co-chaired the Standing Committee on Mine Destruction last year.

I want to take this opportunity to pay tribute to Ambassador Petritsch for brilliantly presiding over the Nairobi Review Conference. I had the privilege of being his Vice-President during that Conference. I thank Kenya, not only for the organization of this Summit, but also for the substantial statement that the representative of Kenya made during this session, highlighting in particular the African common position on this issue, a document that we have studied with great interest. Our best wishes to Croatia, which will host the next meeting of States parties. We are ready to give our support and cooperation to Croatia in that endeavour.

We share what has been said during the session so far. We pursue in particular the goal of the universalization of the Convention, which is not an easy goal to achieve and which, in our view, has to be achieved gradually. Clearly the major challenge ahead is the international demining and mine clearance process, and we are all committed to that.

(Mr. Trezza, Italy)

I heard the statement made by the Ambassador of Australia lamenting the lack of progress which we are witnessing in the context of the CD. Let me say that in a constructive spirit and in a sense of openness and of flexibility, Italy, as I already stated here at the CD on 15 February, would have no objection in principle to discussing conventional disarmament at the CD, including wider limitations on landmines, provided that these are consistent with the Ottawa Convention.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of Italy, Ambassador Carlo Trezza, for his statement, and I think that brings me almost to the end of the list of speakers, particularly on the subject that has been the matter to which delegations have been addressing their remarks in the first part of this meeting. I thank delegates who have spoken to commemorate the sixth anniversary of the entry into force of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, and I would just like to take advantage of this live microphone to associate my own delegation with the commemoration of this important anniversary. I would also like to thank those delegations who have spoken so far for their warm words and support that they have addressed to the Chair, and in the case of Ambassador Smith, to my country as well. I appreciate it.

I think on my list I have the distinguished representative of Venezuela. If that is the case, Ambassador, you have the floor.

Mr. CARRERO CUBEROS (Venezuela) (translated from Spanish): Mr. President, I am pleased to introduce myself to you and to join the work of the Conference on Disarmament of the United Nations. First of all I would like to express my thanks to Ambassador Caughley for the cordial welcome I received and at the same time to commend him on the honourable and important work he is doing as President of the Conference on Disarmament. To all those present I would like to express my readiness to work towards achieving substantive and necessary agreements.

Venezuela, which is historically a peaceful and peace-loving nation, has had the good fortune of not having participated in an international conflict on its territory since the terrible 300 years of conquest, genocide and independence war which terminated in 1823. The State that I represent is a party to the Treaty of Tlatelolco, through which the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean took an unprecedented step in declaring themselves the first nuclear-weapon-free zone in the world. We fully support the creation of new nuclear-weapon-free zones, as has already happened in South-East Asia, the South Pacific and Mongolia, and the efforts being made in Africa and the Middle East. Also, together with the other members of the Andean Community (Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru), the territory of Venezuela forms part of a zone of peace, free of chemical, biological and nuclear weapons, as laid down in the Quito Declaration of 12 July 2004, adopted by the 15th Presidential Council of the Andean Group, which recognized that peace and security are essential conditions to achieve higher levels of political, economic, social and cultural development in the Andean subregion.

Venezuela is a State party to most of the major disarmament agreements prohibiting the use of asphyxiating and poisonous gases, nuclear proliferation, bacteriological and toxin

(Mr. Carrero Cuberos, Venezuela)

weapons, chemical weapons, nuclear tests and anti-personnel mines. I would like to take this opportunity to join those who spoke before me and welcome a further anniversary of the Ottawa Convention. In compliance with the deadlines stipulated in the Convention, my Government has so far destroyed 47,189 anti-personnel mines, reserving a small number for training purposes as provided for in the Convention. Venezuela is one of the frontline countries in technical assistance in the area of humanitarian demining in Latin America, working very closely with the Organization of American States, especially in Central America. Venezuela's pacifist tradition is one of its strong points as it presents itself here in this Conference, the only multilateral negotiating forum in the field of disarmament.

We believe that with a little more flexibility and good will we will be able to arrive at the much-awaited consensus on a comprehensive and balanced plan of work. My country, as it has reiterated many times in this room and through the spokespersons of the Group of 21, considers that the five Ambassadors' proposal offers a solid basis for beginning substantive work in this Conference. I therefore take this opportunity to urge delegations which have not yet spoken in favour of this proposal to do so, and those who still harbour certain doubts about it to put them on the table, so that we can seek a negotiated solution. I would like to say, Mr. President, that you can count on me and the Government I represent, in the task that you have been entrusted with and that you have accepted. I am fully confident that this year, which began with the bold presidency of Ambassador Sanders, of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, with his leadership and hard-working approach, we will be able to take further steps forward towards our main objective.

Mr. PRESIDENT: I would like to thank the distinguished representative of Venezuela, Ambassador Barnabé Carrero Cuberos, for his statement and for the kind words he addressed to the Chair.

Are there any other delegations that would like to take the floor at this stage of our meeting? If not, I would just like to share with you a progress report on where I have got to in my consultations.

As foreshadowed in my opening statement to this Conference last week, I am conducting a series of bilateral consultations with members. I am meeting with all countries that are willing to see me. DDA is making these appointments on my behalf, and every member of this Conference is on DDA's list.

As I indicated, the focus of my consultations remains the "food for thought" non-paper put forward by the previous President, Ambassador Chris Sanders, in his personal capacity. As members know, this paper has no other status - for instance, it does not, simply by virtue of my using it as a consultation tool, supersede previous formal proposals tabled in the CD. But it is serving to provide me with a convenient and useful vehicle for testing the level of flexibility in the Conference.

As of this morning, I have met with representatives of 22 countries, or about one third of the membership. Yesterday afternoon, the Regional Coordinators also reported back to me informing me of the outcome of, or progress in, group discussions, and I am grateful for their ongoing efforts.

(The President)

Obviously, it is too early for me to draw any conclusions. I have, however, formed some initial impressions. Based only on my bilateral consultations, these are as follows:

- Not surprisingly, there is an overwhelming concern to get down to real work;
- There is also an overwhelming concern to get down to work on one or more of the four core topics, coupled with a widespread readiness to be flexible; flexible, that is, on a mutually reciprocal basis. That flexibility has been registered in several ways - through a willingness to contemplate further development of the five Ambassadors' proposal, or through the approach taken in the "food for thought" non-paper. As I have just noted, the readiness to be flexible depends on the readiness of every member of the Conference to be flexible. In this regard, I have received widespread support for my quest that opposing positions be coupled not only with explanations, but also with alternative, workable solutions;
- There is overwhelming support for my approach to Presidential continuity, and I will be making a point of briefing my successors as President as fully as possible;
- There is widespread regret that it was not possible to appoint the four Special Coordinators as identified by the previous President;
- There is widespread support for my efforts to enhance transparency, including the presentation of a forthright report on the prospects for progress on agreeing a work programme;
- There is widespread recognition that progress in the CD will have a bearing on the NPT Review Conference.

As a result, and although I am very mindful that I have two thirds of the membership still to consult, I am greatly encouraged by the level of support for the directions pursued by the previous President and now by me, in the interests of breaking the impasse on the work programme as soon as possible this year. I am indebted to those colleagues I have consulted to date for their readiness to respond to the fairly direct questions I have put to them.

I plan to complete my bilateral discussions next Friday, not tomorrow but the following week. In the meantime, I continue to encourage the Regional Coordinators to consult their groups as they think appropriate.

Copies of these comments are available from the secretariat.

If there are no further speakers for this morning's session, this concludes our business for today. The next plenary meeting will be held on Thursday, 10 March, at 10 o'clock.

The meeting rose at 11.25 a.m.