

Conference on Disarmament

27 May 2014

English

Final record of the one thousand three hundred and seventeenth plenary meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 27 May 2014, at 10.10 a.m.

President: Mr. Mukhtar Tileuberdi.....(Kazakhstan)



The President: I call to order the 1317th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

It is an honour for me and for my country, the Republic of Kazakhstan, to preside over the Conference on Disarmament for the next four weeks. I take this opportunity to thank you all in advance for your support, which will, without a doubt, ease the task at hand. I also take this opportunity to thank my predecessors, the Ambassadors of Israel, Italy and Japan, for the important efforts they have each invested in carrying forward the work of the Conference.

The re-establishment of the informal working group and the beginning of informal meetings under the schedule of activities are laudable results of these efforts. During my tenure, I will do all I can to consolidate these two processes and also explore additional avenues that would enhance the work of the Conference.

I would like to note that the Republic of Kazakhstan considers the Conference on Disarmament as the single standing multilateral forum in the area of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control.

From the extensive agenda of the Conference, the key issues for our country are: universal nuclear disarmament through a legally binding, non-discriminatory and universal instrument; the drafting and signing of a treaty banning the production of fissile material for weapons purposes; prevention of an arms race in outer space; and negative security assurances to the non-nuclear countries.

All these key issues are interrelated. Ignoring one issue will cause difficulty in solving the others.

We supported the establishment and welcome the activity of the Group of Governmental Experts on the elaboration of recommendations for a fissile material cut-off treaty. We welcome the report delivered last week on the work of this Group.

It is absolutely a must that we intensify further discussions on the draft treaty on the prevention of an arms race in outer space by engaging other international bodies dealing with space exploration.

As a country hosting the Baikonur cosmodrome and dynamically developing its space programme on a multilateral basis, as a participant in international space cooperation, Kazakhstan believes that safety and compliance with the principle of peaceful activities in outer space should continue to be one of the central issues of the Conference.

We also supported the establishment of the Open-ended Working Group to develop proposals for the promotion of multilateral negotiations on nuclear disarmament with the understanding that this Group, not being an independent platform for the development and adoption of international treaties in the field of disarmament, will present documents to the Conference on Disarmament. In this regard, we welcome the report delivered last week on the work of the Group.

Having set up with neighbouring countries a zone free of nuclear weapons in Central Asia, Kazakhstan warmly welcomes the signing in New York of the Protocol to the Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia on 6 May 2014. This signifies a major positive development in global non-proliferation efforts to produce security assurances by nuclear Powers to countries without nuclear weapons. Such assurances can be the only way to effectively counter the aspirations of certain non-nuclear States to acquire nuclear weapons, which they view as a guarantee of their own security.

Kazakhstan, as a consistent advocate of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, has always attached great importance to the institutionalization of the Treaty and has been making practical efforts to achieve these results. Since 2012, as Chair of the Treaty, Kazakhstan has led the negotiations with the “nuclear five” on behalf of its Central Asian neighbours. The signing of the Protocol is seen as a significant achievement of multilateral diplomacy.

Central Asian States expect that the recently signed Protocol to the Treaty will be ratified by nuclear-weapon States in the near future, which will complete the process of

institutionalization of the area and will be a significant contribution to the overall strengthening of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) regime and regional and international security.

Dear colleagues, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons remains a cornerstone of international security. Real work on the part of all States parties to the Treaty is needed to ensure responsible and effective implementation of the Final Document and action plan of the 2010 NPT Review Conference.

Unfortunately, the problem of proliferation of nuclear weapons and emergence of de facto nuclear States in the world has not been overcome yet. Therefore, there is a need to develop clear mechanisms to exert influence on those States that act outside the NPT. There is also a separate issue of how to prevent States from withdrawing from the Treaty and develop mechanisms against that. What is needed is to achieve unconditional implementation by the parties of their obligations embodied in the trinity of its fundamental components: disarmament, non-proliferation and peaceful use of nuclear energy.

It is vital today to overcome stagnation in the global disarmament process. It is extremely important to come to the 2015 Review Conference with tangible results.

It is our deep belief that the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is one of the necessary and important conditions towards nuclear disarmament. The moratorium declared by some States possessing nuclear weapons to carry out tests of nuclear devices on a voluntary basis is a positive step, but it is not an alternative to a legally binding document.

Fully consistent with the objectives of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is the resolution adopted in December 2009 by the United Nations General Assembly under the initiative of Kazakhstan proclaiming 29 August as International Day against Nuclear Tests.

In support of our joint efforts, Kazakhstan has launched the Abolish Testing: Our Mission (ATOM) project. The ATOM project aims at informing world public opinion about the documented catastrophic humanitarian effects of nuclear weapons tests. Its mission is to mobilize support at the global level for the ultimate goal of a nuclear test ban and the complete elimination of nuclear weapons by all countries. Kazakhstan has already made a contribution to building the three main pillars of the United Nations through its initiatives related to international peace and security, human well-being and humanitarian action and sustainable development.

The preamble to the world organization's Charter spells out that the United Nations was founded to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war. For this reason, Kazakhstan is a country uniquely positioned for a non-permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council for the period 2017-2018, and because of this direct experience in nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, protecting economic and social rights for people-centred development and stability. I am pleased to share with you today the presentation materials on our candidature for the Council.

Also, 2017 will be a major landmark for Kazakhstan as it celebrates its twenty-fifth anniversary as a United Nations Member State, and we would like to count on the support of the United Nations international family for our candidature.

Only by building mutual trust between the members of the international community and mobilizing political will it be possible not only to find keys to the common understanding of security issues but also to crystallize new ways to minimize risks and threats created by the presence of weapons of mass destruction or the desire to acquire them. Kazakhstan is convinced that greater involvement of the international community and civil society in the disarmament process will allow us to carry out our work effectively, in accordance with the objectives and spirit of the United Nations.

The work of the informal working group and that of the schedule of activities are under way. We need to figure out what our normal plenary meetings will be focusing on, and I have therefore initiated a series of consultations with a number of you and also with the other Presidents of the 2014 session to determine what we should do at the plenary

meetings. There seems to be merit in our exploring in depth the series of proposals which the Acting Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, Mr. Michael Møller, delivered in his statement last week. The six Presidents will discuss these proposals further so that we can have a consolidated approach.

As well, it is my intention to devote the next plenary meeting to the proposals made by the Acting Secretary-General, Mr. Michael Møller, and I invite all delegations to exchange views and comments about these proposals.

Now I would like to turn to the list of speakers for today. The following delegations have requested to take the floor: Pakistan and Switzerland. I now give the floor to the representative of Pakistan, Ambassador Zamir Akram.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): Mr. President, allow me to begin by congratulating you on assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and to express to you the full support and cooperation of my delegation.

At the last plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament, on 20 May, we heard briefings from four delegations regarding the work of various bodies that they were chairing. On that occasion, I expressed the position of my delegation on the Group of Governmental Experts on a fissile material cut-off treaty established pursuant to United Nations General Assembly resolution 67/53.

I take this opportunity today to comment on the other three issues.

First, on the Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-building Measures (TCBMs) in Outer Space Activities, we welcome the report presented by the representative of the Russian Federation, who chaired the Group in 2012 and 2013. The Group was able to produce a useful and substantive outcome which was endorsed by the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session by consensus. We appreciate the contributions made by Russia and China in particular for advancing this issue at the multilateral forums.

We agree with the Group's conclusions that there are gaps in the existing legal regime on outer space and, the utility of TCBMs notwithstanding, TCBMs cannot serve as a substitute for legally binding arrangements. The same holds true for non-legally-binding codes of conduct.

It is imperative to ensure that the use of outer space is limited to peaceful purposes and that it remains the common heritage of humanity. That is why Pakistan has consistently opposed the weaponization of outer space and has called for negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. The draft treaty text tabled jointly by the Russian Federation and China in 2008 provides a useful basis for commencing negotiations on this issue in the Conference. We therefore reiterate our call to start negotiations on the prevention of an arms race in the Conference on Disarmament at the earliest.

As regards the informal meeting of experts on lethal autonomous weapons systems held within the framework of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, we thank the Permanent Representative of France for his statement last week and for organizing and chairing this important meeting. It did some seminal work as a springboard for the further consideration of this issue in the Convention framework. It helped in enhancing our collective understanding of the issues and the dire consequences of the introduction of lethal autonomous weapons systems. In our view, the introduction of such systems would be illegal, unethical, inhumane and unaccountable, as well as destabilizing for international peace and security. Therefore, their further development and use must be pre-emptively banned. Pending the negotiation and conclusion of a legally binding protocol, the States currently developing such weapons should place an immediate moratorium on their production and use.

We will be addressing this issue in more detail during the informal discussions envisaged in the schedule-of-activities cluster on agenda items 5 to 7 under the coordination of Belarus. We also intend to continue highlighting this issue in future in the First Committee of the General Assembly and in the framework of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons.

Finally, I would like to speak about the Open-ended Working Group on taking forward multilateral disarmament negotiations. We welcome the statement delivered by the Ambassador of Costa Rica last week. We participated in the Group and endorsed its report by voting in favour of General Assembly resolution 68/46. We note that the Open-ended Working Group's report was a compilation of the different views expressed by the participants during its deliberations. It reflected the rich and vibrant debate conducted on this issue in the Working Group, but unfortunately it failed to reach a common approach for taking forward multilateral disarmament negotiations. It was also hamstrung by the absence of the major stakeholders.

Pakistan has a principled and long-standing position in support of a nuclear-weapon-free world through the conclusion of a universal, non-discriminatory and verifiable nuclear weapons convention. At the same time, we strongly believe in the role of the Conference on Disarmament as the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum.

Nuclear disarmament is the highest priority of the international community and the *raison d'être* of the Conference on Disarmament. We hope that negotiations on a nuclear disarmament convention will be conducted in the Conference on a priority basis, with the participation of all stakeholders.

The President: I thank the Ambassador for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. Now I give the floor to the representative of Switzerland, Ambassador Urs Schmid.

Mr. Schmid (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, in taking the floor for the first time under your presidency, I would like to express my pleasure at seeing you assume this role. I am confident that, under your expert guidance, we will be able to build on the encouraging dynamism with which the Conference on Disarmament began this 2014 session.

Last week, the Acting Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, Mr. Michael Møller, made a number of suggestions concerning the Conference. Today I would like to thank him for his important contribution and to respond briefly to the various proposals submitted for our consideration. In that regard, I welcome your intention to devote a meeting of the Conference to those proposals in the near future.

First, the Acting Secretary-General invited us to explore the possibility of negotiating framework conventions to which protocols could subsequently be negotiated and added. This suggestion was interesting because of the latitude that it provides, which would enable us to establish a clear common goal and then to proceed in a flexible, measured manner towards achieving it. It is also particularly relevant in the light of the informal discussions that we held last week on nuclear disarmament. These discussions highlighted the concerns of many States over the absence of a clear vision in the nuclear disarmament process, a gap that some would like to see filled by a convention on nuclear weapons. Others believe that such an approach would be excessively rigid and have argued that we should move forward by developing various components or building blocks.

The approach suggested by the Acting Secretary-General could provide a balance between the need to set a clear purpose and the need for flexibility in achieving this goal. It would be a compromise between an approach based on a comprehensive instrument and one based on components. The Conference would have a central role to play in establishing such a compromise, specifically by negotiating a framework convention establishing the general direction to be taken. We note that this approach shares parts of the approach to nuclear disarmament set out in the five-point proposal drawn up by the Secretary-General of the United Nations a few years ago.

The Acting Secretary-General also invited us to explore the possibility of initiating negotiations not only on legally binding instruments but also on politically binding documents. While the Conference has, in the past, adopted mandates to negotiate binding treaties — and that approach should continue to be favoured — it should be noted that nothing in the Conference's rules of procedures prevents other types of instrument from being negotiated. Therefore, initiating negotiations on instruments of a different nature, particularly in relation to specific subjects and as a means of generating positive momentum

when an issue is first broached, could produce added value. The Conference should not refrain from considering such an option, which it might be appropriate to explore within the framework of the informal working group, particularly in conjunction with the proposal to start negotiations on a subject matter other than one of the four core issues on the agenda.

Thirdly, the Acting Secretary-General reminded us of the proposal made by the outgoing Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, to establish a subsidiary body on the Conference's working methods. It was suggested that discussions on this topic should be held during the times set aside for plenary meetings. As already indicated, we remain convinced that the impasse in which the Conference on Disarmament finds itself results primarily from a lack of political will and that all the ills affecting the Conference will not be resolved merely by addressing its working methods.

The foregoing notwithstanding, the Conference's working methods should facilitate the building of consensus rather than make it harder. Furthermore, we should not underestimate the practical and political value of enhancing our working methods. Concrete measures that strengthen the functioning of the Conference could be politically significant as they would demonstrate the members' collective desire to find a way out of the current impasse and could also boost confidence. It should also be noted that the exercise under discussion does not constitute a precedent. For some time now, the improvement and efficacy of the Conference's methods of work have formed part of its agenda and been a subject of discussion.

Lastly, the Acting Secretary-General invited us to reassess and enhance our interaction with civil society. This is a development that many members of the Conference have requested for many years. The current procedures governing our interaction with civil society, which give non-governmental organizations the chance to address the Conference, confine such interaction to a single period in the year and remain particularly conservative. They neither permit any genuine interaction to take place nor allow the Conference to benefit from the expertise that civil society has built up in a considerable number of areas.

We appreciate that, in some stages of negotiations, it is necessary to limit the participation of actors who are not Conference members. For the sake of its own momentum, however, the Conference would benefit from the involvement of civil society in other stages of its work, particularly when it holds informal exploratory discussions. In this regard, enhancing our interaction with civil society by establishing a forum that brings together the Conference and civil society, as suggested by the Acting Secretary-General, or by some other means, appears to be urgently necessary.

To sum up and conclude, I would like to thank the Acting Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament for the various suggestions that he made with regard to the Conference. They are particularly sound and offer new prospects that I hope we will not fail to explore as fully as possible.

The President: I thank Ambassador Schmid for his statement and the kind words addressed to the Chair.

There are no delegations on the list of speakers, so I would like to ask if any other delegation wishes to take the floor. That does not seem to be the case.

The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held next Tuesday, 3 June 2014, at 10 a.m. The meeting is adjourned.

The meeting rose at 10.35 a.m.