
Conference on Disarmament

English

Final record of the one thousand four hundred and seventieth plenary meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Wednesday, 5 September 2018, at 3.10 p.m.

President: Ms. Beliz Celasin Rende(Turkey)



The President: I call to order the 1470th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

Excellencies, dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, at yesterday's plenary meeting, we announced that our intention was to take action on adopting the subsidiary body reports. As underlined yesterday, we believe that, among other things, the adoption of the reports will constitute a major step forward in finalizing the annual report of the Conference on Disarmament.

We will return to the issue of the adoption of the reports. However, before we proceed to that, would any delegation wish to take the floor to raise any other matter now? That seems not to be the case.

The Conference has the responsibility to adopt the subsidiary body reports. However, it is not clear from the decision contained in document CD/2119 how to proceed with the adoption process. Yesterday, therefore, as procedure precedes substance, we asked the Conference for guidance about the adoption process. Delegations expressed their concerns and their expectations in an informal setting, and then we switched back to the plenary. One delegation – the delegation of the Russian Federation – made a proposal to adopt the reports of the subsidiary bodies one by one. However, another delegation said that it needed time. The proposal made by the Russian Federation is still on the table. Are there any delegations wishing to take the floor at this stage?

I give the floor to the representative of Canada.

Mr. Davison (Canada): Madam President, we have gone overnight on this issue. It remains the case that we have differences with the Russian delegation on the procedure for the decision contained in document CD/2119. We still consider, ultimately, that all the reports should be adopted together as one, not individually.

The President: I thank the representative of Canada for his statement. Now I give the floor to the Ambassador of the United States.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): Madam President, as we saw yesterday, it has been extremely difficult to reach any kind of a consensus on how to adopt the reports. My recommendation would be to resume in informal meetings and have a discussion of this issue, but, given the information that a number of us have received about a particular State's concerns about one of the proposals, this new information makes it a bit more murky in terms of how to proceed. So, in my judgment, we need to have a little bit more discussion in informal meetings to see if there is a way to move forward. I am not sure that we can do so at this particular point in the formal plenary.

The President: Thank you, Ambassador. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Liddle (United Kingdom): Madam President, I concur with what the Ambassador of the United States just said. I think this probably is a moment when it would be best to discuss further in informal session to see if anything else has changed overnight. But, in general, I would agree with our distinguished Canadian colleague. The position, as we set it out in the plenary yesterday, was that we would look at these reports, one by one, in informal session and adopt them provisionally and then we would come back to the formal plenary and adopt them as a whole and I see no reason to change that procedure now.

The President: Thank you, Ambassador. I now give the floor to the representative of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Deyneko (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Madam President, dear colleagues, this is not the first time that the Conference has run up against a new and interesting phenomenon, whereby a decision is first taken and then is given interpretations that are generally mutually exclusive.

First, we do not agree with our Western colleagues' interpretation of the essence of the agreements reached yesterday. We stated that the Russian delegation reserved the right to revert to any of the subsidiary body reports in the plenary meeting.

Secondly, we proposed that delegations that had concerns regarding a particular report should express their opinion, either before the introduction of the corresponding draft for adoption, or after the fact.

Thirdly, and most importantly, as demonstrated by yesterday's informal discussions, the Conference, despite the best of intentions, will not be able to consider the reports as a package. We must therefore wait for a mutually acceptable solution to be reached by a number of delegations concerning one of the five subsidiary body reports and, indeed, halt our work at this time since, given the depth of the differences of opinion, a mutually acceptable outcome is anything but guaranteed.

In this regard, the Russian delegation has proposed the only possible way out of this situation. Essentially, it consists in not letting the Conference be held hostage to the dissenting views of certain delegations. We must do what we can, here and now.

The President: I thank you. I now give the floor to the representative of Australia.

Ms. Wood (Australia): Madam President, I would just like to support my Canadian colleague's comments and also those of the United Kingdom and the United States. I think the most sensible way forward is to go back into informal session and see where we can get there. I think, for Australia, all of the reports need to be adopted.

The President: Thank you. I now give the floor to the representative of France.

Mr. Riquet (France) (*spoke in French*): Thank you, Madam President. More or less along the same lines as the previous speakers, I think there is no doubt that a common understanding was reached yesterday on accommodating differing interpretations of the methods and procedures for the adoption of these reports.

Yesterday, we agreed to consider the reports one by one in informal meetings so that the five reports could then be adopted in one go.

I do not believe there is any dissent on this matter, but it was, in any event, on the basis of that understanding that my delegation agreed to take part in proceedings yesterday afternoon.

I believe it is thus on this basis that we must continue to work. I strongly support the approach put forward specifically by Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia and the United States, consisting in resuming discussions in informal meetings, as we did yesterday, with a view to reaching an agreement and adopting all five reports in one go at the end of these negotiations. That is, at least, what we are hoping for.

Thank you, Madam President.

The President: I thank the representative of France and now I give the floor to the Ambassador of Germany.

Mr. Beerwerth (Germany): Madam President, I concur with most of the other speakers that it is useful to revert to an informal session. My understanding from the informal session yesterday is that no delegation raised a substantive point against any of the reports, with the exception of the report of subsidiary body 4, so I would hope that, in principle, there would not be a problem in adopting at least all the other reports as a whole. That to me would seem to be the simplest, most efficient and swiftest way to get our business done here.

The President: Thank you, Ambassador. Any other delegations wishing to take the floor? Hungary?

Ms. Kroll (Hungary): Madam President, just very shortly, our agreement from yesterday is still valid, so we should continue along those lines in informal meetings and, if we sort the problem out, then go to a formal meeting and adopt the package as a whole.

The President: Thank you. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of the Netherlands.

Mr. Gabriëlse (Netherlands): Madam President, we take the same position that has been taken by the United Kingdom and France with respect to the interpretation of what has

been decided, namely, that we have to agree informally on five reports. We have already informally agreed on the content of four reports, so one remains. I agree with those who argue that we should have an informal meeting to try to reach a consensus on the fifth, and then we can agree on the five reports in a formal plenary meeting.

The President: Thank you, Ambassador. I now give the floor to the representative of India.

Ms. Bhandari (India): Madam President, there is much merit in what has just been said by the distinguished Ambassador of Germany. Just to clarify our own position, the delegation of India has no problem whatsoever with the adoption of four subsidiary body reports, excluding the report of subsidiary body 4. Should our concerns on the report of subsidiary body 4 be addressed, then we would be more than willing to join a consensus on that report as well.

The President: I thank you. Any other delegations wishing to take the floor? I see none. The Russian Federation.

Mr. Deyneko (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian Federation reiterates its proposal to proceed with the adoption of the reports of the subsidiary bodies one by one, in other words to do what the Conference can and must do here and now. In this way, we will give delegations more time to agree on the report of subsidiary body 4, where there are indeed deep differences of opinion.

The President: I thank you. I think there are no other delegations. Russian Federation.

Mr. Deyneko (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Distinguished colleagues, I would like to remind everyone that the Conference on Disarmament works on the basis of consensus, and that any reference to a majority view is inapplicable here.

The President: I thank you. I now give the floor to the representative of China.

Mr. Fu Cong (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): We now face a situation where there is agreement on the reports of four of the five subsidiary bodies. We are only missing an agreement on the report of subsidiary body 4. I think what we now must do is reach agreement as quickly as possible on the content of the report for subsidiary body 4 and then, on that basis, discuss whether all the reports should be adopted as a package or individually. I think if we can reach agreement on the substance of all five reports, the second problem will be very simple and easy to solve. So I too support holding informal meetings now, so as to discuss the substance of the report for subsidiary body 4. Thank you.

The President: I thank you. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Indonesia.

Mr. Kleib (Indonesia): Madam President, just briefly, we know that the outcome of all the subsidiary body reports is our common work. I think paragraph 5 of the decision contained in document CD/2119 states clearly that the report on progress should be submitted to the President for adoption. It does not call for consideration of the reports. So it would be appreciated if we could refrain from using new language.

The reports are not legally binding instruments, anyway. They are not a jump-start for negotiations; they are just the reports of the subsidiary bodies. However, since there are still concerns about the report of one of the subsidiary bodies, I agree fully with the delegate of China. Why not have a discussion on that particular subsidiary body's report – the report of subsidiary body 4 – just to make sure that it will clear the way for adoption? Let us address the concerns of certain delegations on the report of subsidiary body 4 and try our best to find common ground for it, so that at least it is ready for adoption, whether it is in a package or not. Most importantly, though, it is my fervent hope that we are going to adopt all the subsidiary body reports. Because, if not, I do not know what kind of signal the Conference on Disarmament will give to people outside the Conference. It is better for the Conference to adopt this non-legally binding instrument.

The President: Thank you, Ambassador. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of the United States.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): Madam President, I would just like to reiterate a point I made yesterday. My delegation has been and is happy to have a discussion on issues in any of the subsidiary body reports. However, my delegation is not prepared to reopen the text of any of these subsidiary body reports. These reports have been closed. It is time now to move forward in terms of how we adopt them.

The President: Thank you, Ambassador. I suggest that we move to an informal meeting now. I suspend the meeting. Let us wait for five minutes to allow the technicians to make the necessary arrangements.

The meeting was suspended at 5.15 p.m. and resumed at 5.45 p.m.

The President: I resume the 1470th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

In the light of our informal meeting, we are now moving to the adoption of the five reports of the subsidiary bodies. I will start with subsidiary body 1, "Cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament". I am moving to the adoption of the report. Any comments? Russian Federation?

Mr. Deyneko (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Madam President, I reserve the right to come back to this issue at a later stage, during consideration of the other reports.

The President: Thank you, Russian Federation. Any other delegations? Ambassador of Brazil?

Mr. De Aguiar Patriota (Brazil): Madam President, could you just read out the number of the document? Thank you.

The President: Document CD/WP.612, subsidiary body 1, "Cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament". If there are no further comments and requests for the floor, the report of subsidiary body 1 is adopted.

It was so decided.

The President: We now move to document CD/WP.613, subsidiary body 2, "Prevention of nuclear war, including all related matters". I am moving to the adoption of this report. Are there any comments?

Mr. Deyneko (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Madam President, before turning to the adoption of the report, I would like to clarify its status. Specifically, is this the report of subsidiary body 2 or the report of the coordinator of subsidiary body 2?

The President: It is this report that has been submitted to the Conference via the President.

Mr. Deyneko (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I apologize. Is this report submitted on behalf of subsidiary body 2, or personally by its coordinator? This is a very important procedural point.

The President: Okay, I will now read out the note verbale: "The Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the Conference on Disarmament presents his compliments to the President of the Conference on Disarmament and encloses herewith the report of subsidiary body 2 in accordance with paragraph 5 of the decision contained in document CD/2119". Just the report of subsidiary body 2.

Mr. Deyneko (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): In that case, the Russian delegation asks that consideration be given to introducing an amendment or footnote, or in any other convenient way making it clear that this report is submitted by the coordinator of subsidiary body 2 in his personal capacity.

I repeat what we said at the informal meeting. The report of subsidiary body 2 was not agreed with the Russian Federation. We have not given our agreement to the final version of the report.

The President: Thank you. The remarks of the Russian Federation have been taken note of for the verbatim records of the Conference. May I take it that we can go forward for adoption?

Mr. Deyneko (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I believe that this circumstance should be reflected in the official documents of the Conference.

If I may, Madam President, I would like to make our position extremely clear to all Conference participants. We have no objection to the content of the report. We have serious concerns regarding the procedure under which this report was agreed and presented to you for transmission to the Conference on Disarmament for adoption.

The President: The remarks and comments of the Russian Federation will be in the verbatim records of the Conference and will be part of the report. So, may I conclude that the report of subsidiary body 2, "Prevention of nuclear war, including all related matters", is adopted?

It was so decided.

The President: Now, we move on to document CD/WP.611, with the report of subsidiary body 3, "Prevention of an arms race in outer space". May I take it that the report is adopted? That seems to be the case.

It was so decided.

The President: Now we move to document CD/WP.614, containing the report of subsidiary body 4, "Effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons (NSA)". India requests the floor. May I give the floor to the representative of India?

Ms. Bhandari (India): Madam President, I would like to place on record the Indian delegation's right to reserve its position on the report of subsidiary body 4, as contained in document CD/WP.614, and on paragraph 50 of the draft annual report of the Conference on Disarmament, as contained in document CD/WP.610.

The President: Any other delegations? Russian Federation.

Mr. Deyneko (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Madam President, we have similar comments on the report of subsidiary body 4, which was not agreed with the Russian delegation. We therefore ask that the official record of our plenary meeting should reflect the Russian delegation's belief that this report is presented to the Conference for adoption by the coordinator of subsidiary body 4 in his personal capacity.

The President: Thank you. I now give the floor to the representative of Mexico.

Mr. Heredia Acosta (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you, Madam President. Simply to reiterate what we said in the informal consultations and meetings, Mexico would be willing to show some flexibility with regard to the report, for the sake of consensus and out of respect for the work put in by the group. At the same time, we regret that our suggestion, which was sent in a timely manner to the coordinators, was not taken into account. As far as I can recall, we were not consulted on the suggestion, and nor did we receive an explanation as to why it was not included. The reason for the suggestion, just for the information of our distinguished colleagues, had to do with the deletion of two lines in the last part of the report. In our view, the last idea in the first paragraph of the second part reflected a supposed consensus about the suggestion that the discussions should take place within a structured process in the Conference. and, I repeat, the wording implied that there was a consensus that the subsidiary bodies would continue. As we all know, this is the prerogative of, and a decision for, the Conference in the coming year. To reiterate, Mexico is willing to show flexibility concerning the adoption of the report. but I wanted to clarify our position.

Thank you, Madam President.

The President: Thank you. Any further comments? So we are parking the report of subsidiary body 4, "Effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons (NSA)", and passing to the next report. The next report before us is contained in document CD/WP.615. It is the report of subsidiary body 5. May I take it that this report is adopted?

It was so decided.

The President: Are there any delegations wishing to take the floor? United Kingdom, Ambassador.

Mr. Liddle (United Kingdom): Thank you very much, Madam President, and I commend you on your work this afternoon. It has been a difficult afternoon, but it is good that we have something to show for our work.

Madam President, with your indulgence, I just wanted to draw the attention of the Conference to a statement made by my Prime Minister to the House of Commons this afternoon relating to the use of a nerve agent in the United Kingdom.

The Conference will recall that, in March this year, three people – two Russian nationals, Sergei and Yulia Skripal, and a British police officer, Detective Sergeant Nick Bailey – were taken seriously ill after being exposed to a nerve agent in the city of Salisbury. The nerve agent that was used was identified by British experts as Novichok, a military-grade nerve agent developed by the Russian Federation. This assessment was subsequently confirmed by the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) following a request for assistance by the United Kingdom under article 8 of the Chemical Weapons Convention. Subsequently, in late June, two further individuals, Dawn Sturgess and Charlie Rowley, were taken seriously ill in the town of Amesbury, near Salisbury, after being exposed to what was later confirmed to be the same nerve agent. Again, this assessment by British experts was confirmed, just a few weeks ago, by OPCW. Dawn Sturgess subsequently died.

The Metropolitan Police and the Crown Prosecution Service announced this morning, after a lengthy and painstaking investigation, that they had amassed sufficient evidence to charge two Russian nationals who travelled to the United Kingdom using Russian passports under the names of Alexander Petrov and Ruslan Boshirov, with conspiracy to murder Sergei Skripal, the attempted murder of Sergei Skripal, Yulia Skripal and Nick Bailey, the use and possession of Novichok, contrary to the Chemical Weapons Convention, and causing grievous bodily harm with intent to Yulia Skripal and Nick Bailey.

The United Kingdom has now issued domestic and European arrest warrants for the two suspects. We are also seeking to circulate INTERPOL red notices.

Based on this police work and on a body of intelligence, the United Kingdom has concluded that the two individuals named by the police and the Crown Prosecution Service are officers of the Russian military intelligence service, also known as the GRU. The GRU is a highly disciplined organization with a well-established chain of command. So this was not a rogue operation. It was almost certainly also approved outside the GRU at a senior level of the Russian State.

The investigation into the attack against Dawn Sturgess and Charlie Rowley is still ongoing. We do not believe that Dawn and Charlie were deliberately targeted. We believe they became victims as a result of the recklessness with which such a toxic nerve agent was disposed of. We know that Novichok was applied to the Skripals' front door, in an area that was accessible to the public, which also endangered the lives of members of the public and emergency service responders. The Metropolitan Police now have no doubt that these two incidents are connected and now form one investigation. Our own analysis and that of OPCW have confirmed that the same type of Novichok was used in both cases. In addition, the nerve agent is one of the rarest chemical warfare agents in the world and its discovery twice in such close proximity is beyond coincidence.

The international community has already demonstrated its outrage at the appalling use of a nerve agent in a quiet corner of England. Twenty-nine countries collectively expelled 153 Russian diplomats in response, and a special session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention in July agreed to a series of measures that would strengthen the Convention and the norm against the use of these appalling weapons that has persisted for almost a century. That the Convention and the norm itself should be under stress, whether in Syria, in Salisbury or anywhere else, should be of grave concern to this Conference, the body that negotiated the Convention in the first place.

I have no doubt that social media will already be buzzing with speculation designed to undermine today's announcement. Others may choose to deal in disinformation. British justice deals in facts, supported by evidence.

The President: Thank you, Ambassador. Are there any delegations wishing to take the floor? The Russian Federation.

Mr. Deyneko (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): In line with diplomatic practice, we must respond to this clearly unfriendly attack on Russia but, realizing that it is already late and all our colleagues are tired, we reserve the right to do so at the next meeting of the Conference.

The President: Thank you. This concludes our business for today. The time and date of the next plenary will be announced at a later stage. This meeting is adjourned.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.