
Conference on Disarmament

English

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

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Thursday, 28 February 2019, at 3 p.m.

President: Mr. Aidan Liddle..... (United Kingdom)



The President: I call to order the 1490th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. Distinguished colleagues, thank you very much for returning this afternoon to continue our discussion on the draft decision that we started this morning, first in a formal session and then informally. I have some speakers inscribed on the list from this morning who wish to continue in an informal setting. Before we switch however, I would like to give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador of India.

Mr. Sharma (India): Mr. President, at the outset, I would like to join other delegations in commending you for having so ably chaired the high-level segment of the Conference. My delegation thanks you for your sustained efforts to advance our substantive work and the draft decision contained in document CD/WP.619. Your proposal lays a good foundation for further discussions with the eventual objective of agreeing on a programme of work.

While our capital is examining the draft decision, I would like to offer some preliminary comments. Your proposal builds upon the substantive work carried out last year under the framework of subsidiary bodies. While we would have preferred negotiating mandates for legally binding instruments, it is our understanding that the discussions undertaken under the proposed framework would lead to the commencement of negotiations on legally binding instruments on all four core issues of the Conference on Disarmament. This necessitates that we retain the format of subsidiary bodies for different issues, and not merge them into one subsidiary body, which would deprive us of the opportunity of having focused discussions on various issues.

In this context, I would also like to recall that several speakers at the high-level segment, including myself, highlighted the importance of commencing negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty and noted that this was the most mature issue ready for negotiations. Therefore, we welcome and support your proposal for the establishment of subsidiary body II on fissile material for nuclear weapons and other explosive devices.

We would prefer to retain the subsidiary body as proposed by you, rather than the subsidiary body of last year on agenda item 2 with a general focus on fissile material. We consider that this is one area in which the Conference can make concrete progress. Like other delegations, we would prefer not to limit the scope of discussions of the subsidiary bodies to the elements listed on your proposal; perhaps we could find a fix by including the words "inter alia" or "including".

As to the issue of formal and informal meetings, we consider that they should be scheduled in a way to provide a fair chance to all the delegations to express their views and put their statements on record. To set the first and the last meetings as the only formal sessions might appear restrictive; we could, for instance, decide that 3 out of the 10 – or as many as required – could be formal in nature. That would impart an element of formality, while giving the coordinators the requisite flexibility. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of India for his statement and his proposals and indeed the kind words addressed to the Chair. Before I switch to an informal setting to continue our discussion from this morning, is there anybody else who would like to take the floor in a formal setting at this time? That does not seem to be the case. I shall therefore suspend the meeting momentarily while we switch to an informal setting. The meeting is suspended.

The meeting was suspended at 3.10 p.m. and resumed at 3.50 p.m.

The President: I would to thank delegations very much indeed for their comments, views and proposals, made both in this morning's meeting and this afternoon. We have done our best to consult as widely as possible, and today's meetings have helped us greatly in that regard. Some delegations have suggested that another draft may be on its way and that is indeed the case. We know that this was only our first proposal and your comments and suggestions will greatly improve the second draft. I intend to spend the next few days consulting delegations bilaterally, in whatever format they wish; as ever, we remain at the disposal of delegations. I would welcome, in particular, any written proposals that delegations may have for improving the text of the decision, but of course we are ready to meet bilaterally with any delegation as well.

I have heard a lot of general support for the proposal that we have made. I have also heard various proposals to improve the structure of what we proposed and the draft. In particular, we will need to look again at the mandates for the subsidiary bodies, their links to the agenda items and the balance between them. As ever, a balance will need to be struck between delegations' wish to provide a focus and a direction for the work of the subsidiary bodies, building on last year's work, and their wish to proceed in balanced and flexible way; we will reflect on the best way of doing that. I have also heard different views on how we should proceed with regard to the special coordinators that we have proposed and, particularly, on how their work should be directed. I note that many delegations have drawn attention to the fact that the special coordinators would be tasked with dealing with cross-cutting issues; that is very much the proposal and the intent behind it. But I hear clearly the views expressed that we need more precision in the directions given to them and the arrangements for their work. I also very much appreciate the views of delegations on how to refine further the reporting procedures that we have suggested in our draft and again we will reflect on how best to do that.

The next plenary session of the Conference on Disarmament will take place at 10 a.m. on Tuesday, 5 March, when I propose to give more detail on the way forward, taking into account what we have listened carefully to today, and also on the basis of consultations and proposals received in the meantime. I look forward to seeing all delegations then. Thank you for your time today. The meeting is adjourned.

The meeting rose at 3.55 p.m.