

Conference on Disarmament

English

Final record of the one thousand four hundred and ninety-fifth plenary meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Thursday, 14 March 2019, at 10.05 a.m.


President: Mr. Aidan Liddle.....(United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)

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The President: I call to order the 1495th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. Distinguished colleagues, as announced, today I intend to take action on the revised draft decision contained in document CD/WP.619/Rev.2, which was circulated by the secretariat on 11 March and discussed on Tuesday. Once again, I would like to place on record my appreciation for the constructive approach taken by delegations in support of our efforts to put in place a framework for deepening our work on the substantive agenda items of the Conference and for moving us back towards negotiating mandates.

This proposal is a finely balanced compromise. There is much in it which is uncomfortable for several delegations on all sides of the chamber. To them, I would say that nothing in this draft decision predetermines or prejudices any outcome of our discussions on any topic; nor does it touch on the vital national security concerns of any delegation. But there is also much more in it, I believe, which should be important to delegations, both for our substantive work and for demonstrating the continued significance and relevance of this body to the important cause of multilateral disarmament. Our decision today is about whether we collectively wish to use 2019 to build on and deepen the work we did last year.

At our last meeting on Tuesday, I asked delegations who had proposed further clarifications or corrections to the text to share their proposals in writing with me, and I am grateful to those delegations that have done so. On the basis of those clarifications, I wish to introduce orally some technical clarificatory amendments to the text of document CD/WP.619/Rev.2 before asking the Conference to take action on it. As a courtesy to delegations, yesterday I circulated through the secretariat a copy of document CD/WP.619/Rev.2 showing the oral amendments as track changes, in order to facilitate our discussion today. I will now set out those amendments orally.

The first amendment is as follows: in the ninth preambular paragraph, the word “multiculturalism” is replaced by the word “multilateralism”. In paragraph 1 (c), the spelling of the name of the distinguished Ambassador of Brazil is corrected. In paragraph 2, the first sentence is corrected to read as follows: “The aim of the subsidiary bodies established under this decision will be to identify and consider legally binding instruments for negotiations and effective measures, and their scope.”

In paragraph 5, in the first sentence, the words “by consensus” are introduced after the words “each subsidiary body”, and the words “by consensus” are deleted after “report”. So the first sentence would read as follows: “At its final formal meeting, each subsidiary body, by consensus, shall adopt a report on its work and any commonalities and recommendations which may have been reached.” The final sentence of paragraph 5 is amended to read: “The reports of the subsidiary bodies shall be presented to the Conference”, etc.

Paragraph 7 is amended to read: “In discharging their duties and functions, the special coordinators shall hold consultations with delegations, including in formal and informal meetings open to all member States of the Conference and to those non-member States that the Conference has invited to participate in its work during the 2019 session in accordance with rule 35 of the rules of procedure, taking into consideration all relevant views and proposals, past, present and future.”

In paragraph 8, the words “in their personal capacities” are introduced after the word “reports” in the first sentence. So the first sentence reads: “The special coordinators shall make their reports in their personal capacities in a statement at a formal meeting of the Conference no later than the final week of the second part of the 2019 session.” In the second sentence, the order of clauses is reversed so the sentence reads: “Any action pursuant to any proposals or recommendations that may be presented by the special coordinators shall be decided by consensus.”

Finally, in the footnote to the timetable annexed to the decision, a second sentence is introduced, to read as follows: “Other scheduled meetings may be held in formal rather than informal settings if more delegations wish to make statements in a formal setting than may be accommodated in the meetings designated as such here.”

Distinguished colleagues, may I take it that the draft decision contained in document CD/WP.619/Rev.2 can be adopted as orally amended? I recognize the distinguished Ambassador of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Aala (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): Thank you Mr. President. I would like to begin by expressing my thanks to the presidency for the efforts made and the extensive consultations undertaken in order to arrive at the text you are presenting for adoption today. However, before proceeding with the adoption, I would like to raise a procedural point, which concerns the fact that the amendments you have indicated are, in fact, core amendments that go beyond the concept of oral changes to the text. We received those amendments yesterday afternoon so we still need more time to obtain instructions from our capital, something we have not yet been able to do, given the limited time available.

With regard to the content of the proposed text, we note that core enhancements clarifying the work of the subsidiary bodies have been introduced into the rapporteur's draft; and the part of the proposed text that concerns the substantive work of the Conference enjoys our support. However, there are other aspects that still need more work in order for consensus to be reached before proceeding to adoption.

The choice of coordinators for the subsidiary bodies must be made on the basis of rules that will ensure adherence to standards of neutrality and independence. As you are aware, we have reservations, which we conveyed to the presidency during the consultations, regarding one of the candidates for coordinator of a subsidiary body. Moreover, our position – which we have repeatedly expressed during meetings – concerning the Special Coordinator on the improved and effective functioning of the Conference is to reject any hasty move towards establishing an open mandate, one that lacks complete clarity as to what the mandate is to cover and what proposals the Coordinator is to make. As we understand, this position is shared by other members of the Conference, and we have noted that the proposed text does not take account of these concerns. We have learned that the text indicates that the special coordinators will make their reports in their personal capacities at a formal meeting of the Conference. However, given the extreme politicization we have seen in the Conference, and its internal polarization, we need confirmation from our capital as to whether the enhancements that have been introduced into the text are sufficient to respond to our concerns and to enable us to subscribe to the consensus on the rapporteur's draft as proposed by the President of the Conference.

At the moment, we are not in that position. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of the Syrian Arab Republic for his statement. I give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador of Venezuela.

Mr. Valero (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): We wish, once again, to express our thanks for the efforts made by the President of the Conference, Ambassador Aidan Liddle of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland who, in our opinion, has fulfilled his responsibilities in a constructive and professional spirit and in line with the rules of procedure.

We recognize that Ambassador Aidan Liddle has made great efforts to take the opinions of members into account in the revised draft decision, which was distributed yesterday. However, as has already been said, a new draft containing amendments that do not appear to be substantive was circulated yesterday evening or yesterday afternoon, for which reason I understand that no delegation, at least not my own, has yet had the opportunity to consult with its capital.

Therefore, without repeating the arguments presented by the Ambassador of Syria, we share his concern, in that we are not yet ready to take a decision.

The President: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of Venezuela for his statement.

The amendments that I have proposed this morning were all put forward from the floor by delegations on Tuesday. I circulated them as a courtesy to delegations and to the interpreters to facilitate our work this morning. I do not believe there are substantive

changes; most of them concern either corrections, changes of order within a sentence or the introduction of concepts mentioned elsewhere in the text for purposes of clarification.

That said, I know that the custom is to allow 24 hours for new proposals to be considered. The email from the secretariat came out at 3.08 p.m. yesterday afternoon, so I shall suspend this meeting and we will resume at 3.10 p.m. this afternoon to take action.

The meeting is adjourned.

The meeting rose at 10.25 a.m.