

# Conference on Disarmament

English

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## Final record of the one thousand three hundred and fifty-second plenary meeting


Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 24 March 2015, at 10.10 a.m.

*President:* Mr. Mohamed Auajjar.....(Morocco)

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**The President** (*spoke in French*): I declare open the 1352nd meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. This morning's meeting will be devoted to an informal discussion on the three proposals contained in the documents circulated yesterday by the secretariat. I would like to begin by sharing with you the main conclusions drawn from my consultations on the subject.

Before doing so, however, I would like, on behalf of the Conference and on my own behalf, to welcome the Ambassador of Ethiopia, Mr. Negash Kebret Botor, and at the same time bid farewell to the Ambassador of Colombia, Mr. Juan José Quintana Aranguren, who is leaving us to take up a new post in the Netherlands. I take this opportunity to express to our two colleagues, on behalf of the Conference and on my own behalf, our warmest congratulations and our wishes for success in their new posts.

Allow me to take this opportunity as well to congratulate the Acting Secretary-General, Mr. Michael Møller, on the successful and well-organized informal civil society forum held last week. The discussions that took place there were fruitful and helped to initiate interaction between member States of the Conference and civil society on issues that are of concern to us all. We cannot but welcome and support this initiative.

As I said in my opening statement to the Conference on 17 March 2015, the Kingdom of Morocco continues to believe that dialogue and consultation will help us to overcome our differences and find common ground that will make it possible for this body to take up its work. It is from this perspective that, for more than 10 days, I have held consultations with a number of member States on the three draft texts that were circulated to you via the regional coordinators. Those consultations took place in a friendly atmosphere and were transparent, largely positive and constructive.

The conclusion that I have reached is that most of the States consulted are firmly committed to getting the Conference back to work. Although these three draft texts do not meet all the expectations of the Conference as a whole, it was deemed useful to explore all avenues that might help to break the deadlock in this forum. Proposing these drafts is in line with that approach, as it will enable delegations to have more in-depth discussions and to draw their best conclusions with regard to both the real challenges facing the Conference and the positive elements that could serve as common ground for the establishment of a programme of work.

I have taken into account the constructive proposals that were made during the consultations with the aim of improving the drafts. This approach is based on a spirit of openness, as these drafts do not belong to the presidency but rather are a product of the Conference as a whole. My mission is limited to, *inter alia*, facilitating discussions with the hope of reaching consensus on these drafts. It is in this context that I have undertaken a series of consultations and will convene an informal meeting this morning to provide delegations with a further opportunity to exchange views on the drafts. This exercise will allow me to gain a better understanding of the views held by different members and to draw the necessary conclusions that will help me to plan the next phase. As President, I will listen carefully and with a sympathetic ear to your comments, your advice and your suggestions.

Before I conclude, I would like to say that I have not had sufficient time to undertake consultations on the nomination of the Coordinators, the Co-Chair and the Vice-Co-Chair. I will do so shortly. I would also like to say that this week I am continuing my consultations with other member States of the Conference with whom I have not yet had the opportunity to meet. In closing, allow me to say that I look forward to having your valuable cooperation and support.

I will now open the floor to any delegations wishing to address the Conference. I recognize the Ambassador of Pakistan, His Excellency Mr. Zamir Akram.

**Mr. Akram** (Pakistan): I congratulate you, Mr. President, on assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and assure you of my delegation's full support for your efforts to start constructive work in the Conference.

I have requested the floor today to share our views on the Conference on Disarmament/civil society forum held on 19 March. We congratulate Mr. Michael Møller, the Acting Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, and his team, as well as the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), for the successful organization and conduct of the forum. We fully endorse Mr. Møller's advocacy for a greater role for civil society in the work of the Conference that could bring fresh ideas and new thinking. Therefore, this forum was a timely and laudable initiative that provided some important and valuable lessons for the Conference.

The first lesson was that it reaffirmed the highest priority attached by civil society to nuclear disarmament: the *raison d'être* of the Conference on Disarmament. Their frustration with the lack of progress on nuclear disarmament by the Conference was clearly evident. The civil society representatives were not convinced by the subterfuge of the step-by-step approach and were not willing to delay action on comprehensive nuclear disarmament any longer by diversionary tactics of completing other, so-called logical, steps first. In keeping with the vast majority of the Conference members and the broader United Nations membership, they wanted decisive action on nuclear disarmament now.

Second, civil society participants correctly questioned the value of so-called unilateral and bilateral disarmament measures by some major nuclear-weapon States as not amounting to disarmament, especially in view of their vertical nuclear proliferation and modernization programmes.

Third, the rich debate demonstrated the valuable contributions that civil society can make to the Conference's work. It comes as no surprise that the most strident opposition to civil society's participation in the Conference comes from those nuclear-weapon States that cannot stand up to their scrutiny, because these States have failed to fulfil their obligations and commitments. Indeed, it is ironic that many of the same States that are ardent supporters of civil society's engagement with other multilateral forums, such as the Human Rights Council, where it suits their interests and agenda, block their participation in the Conference on a similar footing.

Fourth, the ongoing deadlock of the Conference on Disarmament, mainly arising from the lack of progress on nuclear disarmament for more than 35 years and discriminatory practices for the profit of certain Powers, has unfortunately put into question the relevance of the Conference. Civil society, in its eagerness to see swift and effective action on nuclear disarmament, feels that the Conference has become irrelevant and needs to be replaced. This does not bode well for the Conference and should serve as a wake-up call for all of us. Rather than continuing to hold the Conference hostage to one issue of marginal non-proliferation value, we need to give serious consideration to reviving the Conference by undertaking substantive work on nuclear disarmament. Concurrently, we should also begin substantive work on other issues on the Conference's agenda: negative security assurances, prevention of an arms race in outer space and a fissile material treaty with the inclusion of fissile material stocks. If consensus eludes us on the commencement of negotiations, as is the case presently, we should fall back to the next best alternative of holding substantive discussions on all agenda items which are of great value in making incremental progress. We should not allow the best to be the enemy of the good.

The lack of progress on the Conference's agenda cannot be attributed to its rules of procedure or working methods. The Conference does not operate in a vacuum. The deadlock in the Conference is a result of strategic realities which need to be overcome to unblock it. The Conference on Disarmament remains the sole multilateral negotiating

forum for disarmament and its role should be preserved as such. This is the collective responsibility of member States. Those that are meant to service the Conference, i.e., the secretariat, should also play their part in upholding and protecting its unique role.

During the Conference on Disarmament/civil society forum we heard some nuclear-weapon States affirm their strong support for the Conference and express caution against its criticism, as well as against any moves to replace or undermine it. This we find to be in stark contrast with their own eagerness to establish and join a group of governmental experts on a fissile material cut-off treaty outside the Conference on Disarmament, which has only served to undermine the Conference. This group of governmental experts has also opened up the possibility to follow a similar course for other issues on the Conference's agenda, including nuclear disarmament. It has also contributed to initiatives such as the humanitarian consequences movement and the open-ended working group on nuclear disarmament, which can no longer be ignored by the major nuclear-weapon States.

We note the Acting Secretary-General's desire to hold regular Conference on Disarmament/civil society forums on an annual basis. We welcome this move until such time as the Conference decides to accept greater participation from civil society in its work. We hope that the lessons learned and the feedback from the forum held last week will feed into an even better organization of the next forum. One area that certainly requires greater attention is the time available for the interactive discussions and the possibility for all interested participants to contribute to the forum. It was ironic that a forum that was organized to facilitate inclusiveness and broader participation in the Conference could not itself accommodate all those who were interested in making such a contribution.

We deeply regret that the stalemate in the Conference has reached the point that even the indefatigable Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, and its constituent member, Reaching Critical Will, decided to end their engagement with the Conference. We encourage them to review their decision and return to the Conference soon, since their contribution has always been extremely valuable.

Based on our firm conviction that civil society enriches the debates and substantive work of the Conference on Disarmament, my delegation welcomed and supported the draft decision tabled by the first President of the Conference's 2015 session, Ambassador Lomónaco of Mexico, regarding enhanced civil society participation. It was regrettable that the decision could not be adopted due to the objections of some member States. We strongly urge you, Mr. President, to revive efforts for a new Conference decision to enable civil society to engage meaningfully with the Conference.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): Thank you, Mr. Ambassador. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Colombia.

**Mr. Quintana Aranguren** (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): As I am taking the floor for the first time under your presidency, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, and wish you every success in your efforts to advance the work of this Conference. Allow me also to thank the delegation of Mongolia for preparing the three draft decisions on the Conference's schedule of activities, on re-establishing the informal working group to produce a programme of work robust in substance and progressive over time in implementation and on the establishment of a group to define the Conference's methods of work.

The presidency of the Conference can always count on the substantive engagement, support and constructive spirit that have been a hallmark of the Colombian delegation for as long as Colombia has been a member of this body.

Mr. President, in a few days I will finish my duties as Permanent Representative of Colombia to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva,

including the Conference on Disarmament, as I have been transferred to another post in the Colombian foreign service. I feel it is an appropriate time to offer an assessment of the work done and to express my sincere appreciation to our colleagues in the Conference for their support and friendship. There is probably no other forum that has been given such a difficult task as the one entrusted to the Conference on Disarmament. This explains in part the extreme complexity of the negotiation process within the Conference. At the end of the day, its task is none other than to save humanity from itself through agreements on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

I fully share the views recently expressed by the Secretary-General of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean, Ambassador Luiz Filipe de Macedo Soares, when he said that blaming the Conference for its deadlock does not get us anywhere and merely diverts discussions away from the key issues. For this reason, Colombia does not rule out any means of moving forward towards disarmament and non-proliferation, whether it be through a step-by-step approach or through building blocks, or even through other forums operating in parallel with the Conference. What is important for my country is achieving concrete results that will enable us to live up to the responsibility and common objectives that inspired the establishment of the United Nations. In this context, we welcome the in-depth reflection on key issues and the diverse points of view that we, the members of the Conference, recently considered on the occasion of the informal civil society forum that was sponsored and organized by the Acting Secretary-General, Mr. Michael Møller. His initiative and commendable efforts to make this forum a reality, as well as the substantive contributions that resulted from it, deserve special recognition. We are confident that continuing to thoroughly review both substantive and procedural issues will allow the Conference to overcome its long-standing impasse within a short time frame.

A few days ago, the Permanent Representative of Belgium, Ambassador Bertrand de Crombrughe de Picquendaele, addressed this Conference in his capacity as President of the Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction in order to inform us about the progress achieved in the implementation of that instrument. In the same vein, I would like to share with you that a few days ago, as part of the effort to de-escalate the conflict in Colombia and to move forward with building trust, the Government and Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) reached an agreement on mine clearance and decommissioning involving the removal of anti-personnel mines, improvised explosive devices and unexploded ordnance or explosive remnants of war. Under the agreement, the Government of Colombia and FARC asked Norwegian People's Aid, a civil society organization for humanitarian demining, to lead and coordinate a comprehensive clearance and decommissioning project with the aim of formally handing over the cleared areas to local authorities and local communities.

For us, the renewed support of the international community, and especially of civil society organizations for humanitarian demining, is essential to achieving the targets established in the area of mine action. I therefore cannot leave Geneva without expressing my gratitude to those countries and organizations that are supporting the efforts to build and consolidate peace in my country. I ask them to continue to offer my successor the support and constructive dialogue that they have offered me thus far.

Mr. President, it is my sincere hope that my successor will have the satisfaction of participating in a meeting of this Conference at which multilateral disarmament instruments are once again negotiated.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): Your Excellency, I thank you for your kind words. Once again, on my own behalf and on behalf of the Conference on Disarmament, we wish

you all the success that you deserve in your next assignment. I now give the floor to the delegation of South Africa.

**Ms. Mancotywa-Kumsha** (South Africa): At the outset, Mr. President, my delegation would like to commend you for your efforts in getting this Conference on Disarmament back to work and would like to assure you of the support and cooperation of South Africa for a successful conclusion of your presidency.

In this regard, South Africa would like to express its strong support for the proposal on the establishment of a working group to look at the working methods of the Conference. My delegation would, however, like to raise some concerns on issues related to the proposals on the schedule of activities and early establishment of the informal working group.

Regarding the draft schedule of activities, South Africa has always supported all efforts aimed at the resumption of substantive work in the Conference. Like others, we believe that, first and foremost, each Conference session should adopt a programme of work with a view to commencing substantive work. The Conference was established for the purpose of conducting multilateral disarmament negotiations and anything short of this means that this forum is not discharging its mandate.

South Africa recognizes that a schedule of activities has been used in the past and we have supported such discussions in the hope that they will pave the way to negotiations. We continue to be concerned, however, that these discussions have been used as a repetitive exercise. This may give the impression that some Conference members are using such mechanisms simply to create an illusion that there is progress in the Conference.

Regarding the possible establishment of the informal working group, South Africa is concerned about the utility of such an effort based on our experience during the last two years. The informal working group has clearly not been used to explore alternative options in getting the Conference to work; instead, it has seemingly become an opportunity for those who oppose progress on one or more of the Conference's agenda items to keep false hopes alive by creating the impression that the Conference is doing something about the impasse. Such approaches have not helped us to move beyond the 18-year stalemate, and while South Africa would not block consensus on these methods, it is rather suggested that our efforts should aim at reconciling positions in order to begin substantive work in the Conference.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): Thank you very much. I now give the floor to the representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

**Mr. Pollard** (United Kingdom): Mr. President, I would like to commend you and your team for your efforts to find a compromise on taking this Conference forward. The documents and decision you have put before us is a comprehensive plan for the remaining sessions of the Conference on Disarmament this year. As it stands, we can accept this decision to establish three tracks of work and would urge you to put it for adoption this week, so that we can fully prepare during the intersessional period for the substantial discussions on the core issues, the programme of work and the working methods on our return.

I would just like to have a short reaction to what our colleague from Pakistan said on nuclear disarmament. I would like to reiterate that the United Kingdom is committed to nuclear disarmament and has not waited for a multilateral process on nuclear disarmament to begin. Instead, it has taken unilateral disarmament measures to reduce its nuclear arsenal. This is more than can be said of others who appear to have hidden behind the lack of a multilateral process on nuclear disarmament to increase their arsenals and continue producing fissile material. In short, we look forward to a future discussion on these as

provided in the schedule of activities, and look forward to the swift adoption of your decision.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): Thank you, Excellency. I now give the floor to the representative of the United States of America.

**Mr. Buck** (United States of America): Mr. President, as this is the first time that I take the floor under your presidency, I wish to congratulate you on this important role and thank you for your leadership, and assure you of my delegation's full support.

I also wish, on behalf of my delegation, to respond briefly to the statement by the Ambassador of Pakistan, simply to say that we do not agree with or accept the characterization of the step-by-step disarmament process. From our perspective, the history of nuclear disarmament shows that each step we have taken has helped to create the conditions and build momentum for subsequent steps. The United States has disclosed details on our nuclear weapon stockpiles as a demonstration of good faith and transparency about our nuclear weapons programmes, and — as we reported at the 2014 session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2015 Review Conference on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty — the total number of nuclear warheads in our stockpile has fallen by more than 80 per cent from when the Treaty entered into force.

As another concrete example of a step-by-step disarmament process, more than 1,200 nuclear warheads have been dismantled since 2009. The process is working and continues every day.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): Thank you. Would any other delegation like to speak before I suspend the formal meeting? I give the floor to the representative of Pakistan.

**Mr. Akram** (Pakistan): I would like to thank my colleagues the representatives of the United States and the United Kingdom for responding to some of the issues that I had raised in my statement this morning.

I think the first thing that we need to recognize is that, in my statement, I was reflecting the views of a number of representatives of civil society, which are views that we definitely share. So, it is not just the views of Pakistan that I was reflecting. Those who attended the Conference on Disarmament/civil society forum will recall that a number of civil society representatives referred to the kind of issues that I highlighted in my statement. That is a reflection of the opinion of the people at large, outside this room, which we should take into consideration very seriously. It is not a question of convincing me or of convincing my delegation of my views; these are the views of people out there — not just in my country but in their own countries — that feel very strongly about the need for nuclear disarmament. I need not emphasize that a number of leading representatives of Governments and various administrations have joined together to call for “global zero”, and these are responsible people.

So, we have to recognize the reality that:

Number one: international public opinion is in favour of nuclear disarmament.

Number two: it is not convinced of the measures — the so-called step-by-step measures — that rarely have contributed to such nuclear disarmament or made the world any safer.

And number three: that while there has been a reduction of weapons and delivery systems for sure, there has also been a concurrent vertical proliferation. So the end result is the same.

Regarding the other point that was made by our British colleague, which I presume was an indirect reference to the development of fissile materials by Pakistan, we are ready,

as I have always said, to engage in negotiations on fissile materials that will not only end future production but will address existing stocks, because with the existence of thousands of tons of fissile material, ending future production of this material is meaningless unless we also bring into account the existing stocks of fissile material.

We are not hiding behind the stalemate in the Conference, or creating a stalemate in the Conference. We are actually ready to negotiate a fissile material treaty that brings all fissile material — future production and existing stocks — into the purview of the Conference on Disarmament negotiations. If we have that assurance that we can negotiate such a treaty, we are ready to join such a treaty today.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I give the floor to the representative of the Russian Federation.

**Mr. Deyneko** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I will be brief. The position of the Russian Federation on the issues of nuclear disarmament, negative security assurances and a fissile material cut-off treaty is well known. I will not repeat it in detail here. I think that it is unnecessary to do so.

I have a question for the President. Could you please indicate whether you plan to set aside time in a formal or informal setting to review the outcomes of the meeting of the Conference on Disarmament with civil society representatives?

**The President** (*spoke in French*): If there are no requests for the floor, I hereby suspend this formal meeting so that we can continue in an informal meeting with an exchange of views on the documents that have been submitted to you.

*The meeting was suspended at 10.40 a.m. and resumed at 12.25 p.m.*

**The President** (*spoke in French*): The plenary meeting is resumed. The Moroccan delegation, acting in its capacity as President, will resume its consultations with all States and would like to reiterate its urgent request to all delegations to make comments and observations to improve the drafts, as there is always room for improvement with any human endeavour. I hope that we will all ready ourselves during the intersessional period to reach a consensus that will enable us, during the second part of the Moroccan presidency, to return with proposals that take into account all the concerns and comments of member States.

Before I adjourn the meeting, does any delegation wish to take the floor? That does not seem to be the case. The meeting is adjourned.

*The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.*