

Conference on Disarmament

English

Final record of the one thousand five hundred and twentieth plenary meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 27 August 2019, at 10.10 a.m.

President: Mr. Taonga Mushayavanhu..... (Zimbabwe)

The President: I call to order the 1520th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. Let me start by welcoming His Excellency Ambassador Cleopa Mailu of Kenya, who is in the Conference on Disarmament for the first time. Welcome, Ambassador.

Distinguished delegates, I would also like to welcome the participants in the United Nations Disarmament Fellowship, Training and Advisory Services Programme from 25 countries all over the world. On behalf of my delegation and on behalf of all of us in this room, I congratulate you – the fellows – warmly and welcome you to the disarmament community.

As previously announced, the plenary meeting today will be held as the first consultation on the draft annual report of the Conference, document CD/WP.623, which has been circulated in the room and placed on your tables. I will briefly open the floor for delegations that may wish to speak in the formal setting and will then move into an informal setting for us to have a freer discussion of the report. After that general discussion, if it is possible, we will, as I indicated last week, start the paragraph-by-paragraph reading of the report. Once our informal discussion concludes, I will then resume the formal setting and open the floor for any other delegations that may want to raise any issues. I would like first to provide a brief introduction to the first draft of the annual report before I open the floor to delegations that may want to speak in the formal session before we move into the informal session.

Colleagues, during my last plenary meeting last week, I laid out the programme for the Zimbabwean presidency of the Conference on Disarmament, as well as the time frame for the consultations on and consideration of the draft annual report of the Conference. I also undertook to circulate the zero draft of that report. In that regard, we were able to circulate the zero draft of the annual report to all members exactly a week ago. We hope that delegations have had adequate time to consult capitals, as well as exchange views among themselves.

Since I assumed the presidency of this Conference last week, I have also intensified consultations with all regional groups and with individual members, and these consultations continue, and all with a view to soliciting views on the zero draft, which, as I have already indicated, has been circulated and is before you.

As I said last week, in preparing the report I was guided by the precedents that we set in the 2018 report, the most recent report, and by other annual reports. I was also guided by rule 45 of the rules of procedure, which states that the reports of the Conference “shall be factual and reflect the negotiations and work of the Conference”. Following the consultations that I have held, I am convinced that what is on the table represents a good basis for us to arrive at a consensus. What is before the Conference is a factual but concise Conference report. Indeed, a factual report can be expansive and detailed, but it can also be concise and still remain factual. My consultations have indicated general support for, and convergence on, a more concise report along the lines of the 2018 annual report.

Colleagues, another consideration that has exercised my mind is to preserve the constructive spirit which dominated this chamber at the end of the Vietnamese presidency, and I think that the document we have placed on the table has the best chance of doing that. In that regard, as we begin to negotiate the annual report on the 2019 session, I wish to appeal to colleagues to exercise restraint and moderation, so that we do not push any one party to a point where it finds it difficult to compromise.

At this stage, I wish to draw the attention of the Conference to a number of important technical updates which have a bearing on the structure of the document. The technical and factual updates are a result of my engagements with you – the membership – and the secretariat.

The first technical change relates to the first sentence of paragraph 6 regarding invitations extended to dignitaries. The factual position is that the invitation to all dignitaries for the entire 2019 session was jointly extended to our Governments by Ambassador Yuriy Klymenko of Ukraine, in his capacity as the first President of the Conference, and by Mr. Michael Møller, the former Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and Personal Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General. I

have consulted the secretariat, Ambassador Klymenko and Ambassador Liddle, and this fact has been confirmed by all parties. As a result, that technical change has been effected to the zero draft.

This technical change to paragraph 6 has a bearing on paragraphs 7 and 8. The dignitaries listed in paragraphs 7 and 8 will therefore now appear under paragraph 6, because all of them were invited under the first presidency of the 2019 session. As a result of these changes, the previous paragraphs 7 and 8 fell away.

It has also come to my attention that there are minor editorial changes required in terms of correcting the titles of dignitaries and that there were some spelling errors. Some of these have been corrected, but I still invite members to bring any editorial changes to the attention of the secretariat. As for substantive input, I want to be as clear and as honest with you as possible: my sense is that there is no appetite for a more expansive report. Nevertheless, as we all appreciate, the presidency is in the hands of the members – your hands. If we have time and the energy and the resources to go through the motions of debating a more substantive report, the presidency will go along, as it should. However, I would fail in my duty and responsibility as President if I did not advise, as I should, that after consulting a broad spectrum of the members of the Conference, the sense that I get is that there is no appetite for a more expansive report.

It is now my intention to begin with a general exchange of views on the draft annual report. If we exhaust the list of speakers for the general exchange of views, I will invite colleagues to begin a paragraph-by-paragraph reading of the report today. As a practical way forward, I want to suggest that members with specific elements to add to the report should orally introduce these elements and specific language in the Chamber and submit these proposals in writing to the secretariat, so that they are circulated. The written proposals will be put to the test in a plenary meeting. If these proposals garner consensus, they will of course be included in the report. However, if the new elements do not garner consensus, my appeal to colleagues is for us to allow the Conference to move on, because the Conference operates on the basis of consensus. With that, I submit the report for consideration. But before we proceed with the consideration of the report and before we move into an informal session, I first of all want to open the floor for any statements that colleagues may want to make in the formal segment of the Conference.

Belarus, you have the floor.

Mr. Ambrazevich (Belarus): Thank you, Mr. President.

(spoke in Russian)

Mr. President, allow me to congratulate you on your appointment to the presidency and assure you of the full support of the delegation of the Republic of Belarus.

We express our appreciation for the submission of the finalized draft report and the series of consultations with members of the Conference on Disarmament. We look forward to contributing constructively to both the draft report and the General Assembly resolution.

Summing up the results of our work in 2019, we would like to draw attention to a number of proposals made by Belarus during the high-level segment.

In addition to the justified wish to end the practice of dividing the agenda of the Conference into “core” and other issues, Belarus proposed a number of practical steps to prevent the use of scientific and technological achievements for malicious purposes.

In particular, we proposed that the Conference request the Secretary-General of the United Nations to prepare a comprehensive report on the risks and challenges to international security and non-proliferation posed by new technologies and technological progress.

We believe that this will enable the Conference to gain a better understanding of potentially hazardous technologies and the risks associated with them. The preparation of such a report would also be in line with the goals and actions set forth in part III of the Agenda for Disarmament of the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Second, we proposed that the Conference review examples of the national experience gained by various States with regard to potential consideration of the risks and challenges to international security and non-proliferation posed by new technologies.

In our view, it is important to explore whether such examples are effective, make them part of a system and determine whether they can be made universal. The outcome of this process may be the formulation of rules or principles of conduct to prevent the use of scientific and technological achievements for malicious purposes. We are of the view that, in the longer term, this could lead to negotiations on legally binding instruments.

Third, we proposed that national measures to counter the desires and attempts of non-State actors to obtain weapons of mass destruction be analysed and made systematic. The elaboration of harmonized principles, or effective best practices, seems to be entirely within the mandate of the Conference and would be a fitting contribution to the non-proliferation and counter-terrorism activities of the United Nations.

We believe that these proposals will contribute to revitalizing the substantive work of the Conference, and we invite members of the Conference to explore the possibility of incorporating them into the final report and the relevant draft resolution of the General Assembly.

Belarus is ready to engage constructively in those efforts with all the States members of the Conference.

The President: I thank the representative of Belarus for his statement. Thank you, Ambassador. I now give the floor to the representative of Turkey.

Mr. Ağacikoğlu (Turkey): Mr. President, as this is the first time that my delegation is taking the floor under your presidency, I would like to join others and congratulate you on your assumption of the last presidency of the 2019 session of the Conference on Disarmament. I assure you of Turkey's full support and cooperation in your endeavours to prepare this year's annual report.

As Turkey assumed the last presidency of 2018, we are cognizant of the challenges that you may face during your tenure. Nevertheless, we are also aware that when the members of the Conference are flexible enough, it is always easier to reach consensus.

That being said, Mr. President, taking this opportunity and in order not to take more of the time of this distinguished forum, we would like document CD/2154 to be reintroduced in the relevant part of the annual report, as has been the common practice in previous years. Obviously, last year it was not kept in the text because of the last-minute shift from a substantial to a procedural report. If needed, we will provide you with information in detail after the meeting.

As an editorial point, we would also like our minister's last name to be duly corrected in paragraph 6.

Once again, we wish you success in your endeavours and a smooth way towards the approval of the annual report of the Conference. We would like to repeat our best wishes for the resolution for the First Committee as well, which is definitely not an easy task, either.

I thank you, Mr. President.

The President: I thank the representative of Turkey. I now give the floor to the representative of the United States of America. Ambassador, you have the floor.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): Thank you, Mr. President. Since this is the first time I am taking the floor under your presidency, let me first congratulate you on assuming the role as President and pledge to you my delegation's full support as you go about conducting your duties as President of the Conference on Disarmament.

Mr. President, I have listened to your introduction to the report and based on the proposals that you have made, I think, frankly, that this is a really very sincere effort on your part to try to produce a document that can garner consensus in this body. My delegation has taken your proposals into account. We can support your text with the

additions that you have proposed. My delegation is not prepared at this point to accept further edits beyond a very slight technical change or grammatical fix. We are not in any way prepared to accept further additions to this report. We think it is the best opportunity for reaching consensus in this body and we believe it is time, once this is gavelled, to move directly to discussion of the resolution for the First Committee. Again, then, Mr. President, let me commend you for your and your team's efforts to produce this draft document. I think it is the only document that can garner consensus here. Again, my Government is not prepared to move beyond what you have in this text, other than for some slight technical updates. Thank you very much.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of the United States of America for his statement. I now give the floor to the representative of Kenya. Ambassador, you have the floor.

Mr. Mailu (Kenya): Mr. President, Madam Director-General, distinguished delegates, I would like to begin by congratulating you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament during this third and final part of the 2019 session of the Conference. I assure you of the support and cooperation of my delegation and look forward to constructive deliberations under your presidency on the Conference's draft report on its 2019 session, which we are discussing now.

As this is my first time taking the floor in this august body, allow me to also commend the Ambassadors of Ukraine, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Venezuela and Viet Nam for their outstanding efforts, as Presidents, to take the work of the Conference forward.

Let me, Mr. President, make a general statement on behalf of my country. Kenya is committed to nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and a world free of nuclear weapons in the present and in the past. At the global level, Kenya voted for the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. We are convinced that this treaty is a crucial milestone in efforts to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons. This is why its full implementation and that of other international conventions and treaties banning nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction remain an imperative for member States.

Additionally, Kenya, a party to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty since 1970, supports the peaceful research and development of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes in accordance with the provisions of the Treaty and in line with the framework and protocols of the International Atomic Energy Agency. As provided in article VI of the Treaty, all countries should promote and cooperate in the peaceful exploitation of nuclear energy, while at the same time working towards complete nuclear disarmament. In this regard, we look forward to the 2020 Review Conference, which we truly hope will pave the way to a world without the threat of nuclear weapons.

Kenya is also a party to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty of 1996, which calls for banning the testing of nuclear weapons. We call on all the remaining countries to make the Treaty a reality by ensuring its entry into force. In order to achieve this, we member States must relentlessly work to achieve the political will to build trust at the regional and international levels.

At the regional level, Kenya signed the Treaty of Pelindaba declaring Africa a nuclear-weapon-free zone in 1996 and ratified it in 2001. In this regard, we reaffirm the importance of the contribution of this regional disarmament instrument to global disarmament efforts.

Mr. President, it is regrettable that we are witnessing deterioration of the international security environment. We are meeting against the backdrop of crumbling arms control architecture affecting parties to major treaties, with the heightened tensions reminiscent of the cold war period. Modernization of defence systems and increased spending on sophisticated weaponry attest to a new-age arms race, posing a real threat to international peace and security.

Despite the grim international security situation that we are confronted with, the relevance and importance of multilateralism in addressing international security threats remain as vital today as they were in the cold war era. In this regard, the Conference

remains the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, as was acknowledged 40 years ago during the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament in 1979.

It is therefore regrettable that despite its important negotiating mandate, the Conference has not made progress on achieving consensus on its programme of work. For over 20 years, this august body has not made progress on its mandate. The 2019 session was no different. Many reasons have been put forth for the impasse in the Conference. Nonetheless, it is incumbent upon us to renew our resolve to end this stalemate, so that we can begin work on substantive issues, possibly in 2020. We must see beyond our diverse interests and work collectively for the good of humanity, given that disarmament continues to be an imperative and undoubtedly one of the most urgent tasks facing the international community.

Mr. President, turning to the Conference's draft annual report for the 2019 session, allow me to express my delegation's appreciation to the presidency and to the secretariat for generating and circulating this draft. My delegation has taken note of the draft report and believes that, in accordance with rule 45 of the rules of procedure, it is factual and reflects the work of the Conference.

In conclusion, Mr. President, it is said that life begins at 40. The Conference turned 40 this year. While we may not have achieved much this year in terms of substantive negotiations, we must remember that this Conference has the foremost responsibility to ensure international peace and security for all mankind. I urge us to be guided, as we look forward to the 2020 session, by a renewed spirit of constructive engagement and of seeking consensus, so that we may collectively take the work of the Conference on Disarmament forward. Only then will we clearly demonstrate our commitment to maintaining international peace and security for all humanity.

I thank you for your attention.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Kenya for his statement. I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Azarsa (Islamic Republic of Iran): Good morning, dear colleagues. Mr. President, since this is the first time I am taking the floor under your presidency, I would like to warmly congratulate you on your assumption of the Conference on Disarmament's last presidency in 2019. Rest assured of my delegation's full support and coordination. I would also like to thank your predecessor, the Ambassador of Viet Nam, for his able leadership and wisdom during his presidency.

Mr. President, my delegation welcomes your pragmatic approach involving concentrating on finalizing the Conference's 2019 report in order to submit it to the United Nations General Assembly on time. We also support your logic and wisdom in concluding the report through transparent consultations with member countries as well as different groupings. We thank you for the advance copy of the draft report and would like to share some preliminary comments pending receipt of instructions from our capital.

The report should reflect our shared view of the Conference as the single multilateral negotiating forum, a consensus-based institution which is mandated to negotiate legally binding instruments on disarmament and the four core issues on its agenda. In this line, in the report, we would like to propose adding to the report the important part of the statement by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, which stresses the importance of total disarmament.

Any attempt to politicize the institution of the Conference is unacceptable. Therefore, there is no room for politically motivated issues to appear in the final report. We need to revive the long-standing reporting tradition in the Conference, which was interrupted last year only due to the obsessive approach taken by one delegation. We should not let that single precedent be repeated this year.

No discriminatory treatment with respect to the Conference's Presidents is acceptable, as Conference member States enjoy sovereign equality and shall be treated accordingly, in accordance with the rules of procedure. We deplore any attempt to debase

rule 9 of the rules of procedure regarding the alphabetical rotation of the presidency of the Conference. We commend all the Conference Presidents in 2019 who conducted their work in a professional manner by trying to come up with a consensual programme of work.

On working methods, we have yet to receive a convincing argument for the necessity of reviewing them. We still have unanswered questions on the modality, dimensions, content and final purpose of the proposed review. Therefore, it is premature to address an issue with this amount of ambiguity at this juncture.

We firmly believe the stalemate in the Conference is caused not by the limitation in the number of its member States but simply by a lack of political will on the part of a few. With this in mind, we have no difficulty with membership issues if they focus only on expanding membership.

I thank you very much, Mr. President.

The President: I thank the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran for his statement. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Mr. Valero (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, my delegation would like to take this opportunity to thank you for preparing the zero draft of the report and for the revised version that you have presented to us.

We appreciate your hard work in finding common ground in the context of today's challenges. We would like to stress how vital it is for the report of the Conference on Disarmament to reflect the views of all delegations, so that a consensus can be reached. The version presented is a good basis for reaching an understanding.

Mr President, the wording of the 2018 report was a compromise solution. The Conference adopted a factual, and therefore procedural, report. This year, we are following the same path. The zero draft – and now the revised version being presented – has been made as factual as possible. We must acknowledge the President's efforts to prevent the negotiating process from being traumatic and ensure compliance with rule 45 of the rules of procedure.

During our presidency, our delegation made extensive formal and informal enquiries, including through regional groups, and we held an informal consultation on the programme of work, as reflected in paragraph 16 of the draft annual report of the Conference. We would therefore like the names of the member States that held the presidency to be mentioned in paragraph 4, as was the practice until 2017.

Excluding certain delegations is not constructive. No country should be treated differently from others. All States have the same rights. None should be left out.

Paragraphs 7 and 8, which mentioned the persons who addressed the Conference, have been removed from the latest version of the draft, with those persons now listed chronologically in paragraph 6. We thank you for making the changes necessary to ensuring that the report accurately reflects events in relation to the invitation that the Ukrainian presidency issued for the high-level segment. We are also very grateful for paragraphs 26, 29, 32, 35, 38, 41 and 44, which cover the thematic discussions on items on the Conference agenda.

Mr. President, allow me to reiterate my delegation's commitment to working constructively with you and with all member States on reaching a consensus on adoption of the report that the Conference will present to the General Assembly.

Thank you very much, Mr. President.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela for his statement. I now give the floor to the representative of Algeria.

Mr. Berkat (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): Thank you, Mr. President. My delegation wishes to acknowledge your pragmatic, transparent and inclusive approach to finalizing the draft report of the Conference on Disarmament. We believe that the new version of your draft will serve the Conference as a good basis for arriving quickly at a consensus and thus consolidating the prevailing positive spirit. I would like to take this opportunity to assure

you, once again, that my delegation is prepared to support your efforts to ensure the adoption of your draft report. Thank you.

The President: I thank the representative of Algeria for his statement. I now give the floor to the representative of Nigeria.

Mr. Oriaku (Nigeria): Mr. President, let me join other distinguished colleagues in congratulating you on your assumption of office as the President of the Conference on Disarmament. We have no misgivings about your capacity for chairing the meetings successfully. My delegation also appreciates your presentation of the 2019 annual report of the Conference on Disarmament. In this regard, we wish to urge all member States to exercise restraint in their interventions to enable the Conference to adopt the annual report.

We have transmitted the report to our capital for guidance and direction; nevertheless, we have no substantive corrections to make to the report, which we view as being adequate, concise and in the interest of most members of the Conference. I thank you.

The President: I thank the representative of Nigeria for his statement. I now give the floor to the representative of South Africa.

Mr. September (South Africa): Thank you, Mr. President. We would like to thank you for circulating the draft report. We also want to thank you for the transparent way in which you have conducted consultations on the draft. It provides a good basis for further engagement. We have forwarded the report to our capital and are awaiting further instructions. We would also like to reserve the right to comment more substantially once we receive these instructions from our head office, but for now, we would like to limit ourselves to drawing your attention to page 2, on the third line from the bottom. We would like to propose the insertion of the title of our deputy minister, as well as his first name. I thank you, Mr. President.

The President: I thank the representative of South Africa for his statement. Colleagues, I have no more speakers on my list for the formal meeting. I will now suspend the meeting to move to an informal session.

The meeting was suspended at 10.45 a.m. and resumed at noon.

The President: Would any other delegation like to take the floor on any other matter in the formal session? That does not seem to be the case.

Distinguished delegates, I would like to thank you very much for sharing your constructive remarks today. All your valuable thoughts and suggestions have been well noted. Our final reminder to all delegates is to submit specific amendments or comments to the secretariat in writing for future revised drafts of the report if these suggestions are seen to be acceptable and if they garner consensus in the room. I would also like to assure you of my continued availability for bilateral consultations and, indeed, for consulting all interested delegations on the outstanding paragraphs. With that, I would like to thank you very much for your cooperation.

The next plenary meeting will take place on Thursday, 29 August, at 10 a.m. I thank you very much.

The meeting rose at noon.