

# Conference on Disarmament

English

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## Final record of the one thousand five hundred and twenty-second plenary meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 3 September 2019, at 10.10 a.m.

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


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**The President:** I call to order the 1522nd meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen, following the provisional adoption of the draft final report during the last informal meeting on 30 August 2019, I have asked the secretariat to circulate document CD/WP.623/Rev.2, which is in line with the amendments and proposals provisionally adopted at that plenary meeting. I believe that today we can proceed with the adoption of the report of the Conference, in accordance with its rules of procedure.

I suggest that we proceed as follows. Firstly, I will bring some editorial issues to the attention of member States. Then, if any delegation still has any issue to raise about the report, they can do so. Then we will proceed with the consideration and adoption of our annual report, in accordance with rule 46 of the rules of procedure. Once the report is adopted, those delegations who wish to take the floor to make any other comments will have the opportunity to do so. I take it that there is agreement with my proposal. Thank you very much.

As of this morning, the following editorial observations have been brought to the attention of the President.

In paragraph 13, the Group of 21 has requested the secretariat to cite the document CD/2167, submitted by the Group of 21 and entitled "General Statement".

In paragraph 28 (f), I was reminded that the symbol of the document mentioned should be CD/2161 and not CD/5161.

One delegation suggested that, to maintain consistency throughout the report, the documents listed in paragraph 16 should be presented in the same way as similar paragraphs, such as paragraph 28. In other words, the documents cited in paragraph 16 will be presented in separate subparagraphs, in English alphabetical order from (a) to (g).

Since the secretariat did not receive any instructions from member States to cite documents in paragraphs 40, 43 and 46, I propose that these paragraphs are redundant and should be removed from the report.

Those are the editorial observations that we have. Does any delegation have any further editorial observations? Thank you very much. I don't know if any delegation has any further issues to raise about the report. Viet Nam, you have the floor.

**Ms. Nguyen Phuong Anh (Viet Nam):** Thank you, Mr. President. First of all, I would like to express our appreciation for your efforts in concluding the final report of 2019. My delegation believes that your wisdom and professionalism will bring about a comprehensive and balanced report that reflects all the facts and the activities and discussions held throughout the year.

Mr. President, distinguished colleagues, in the new version of the draft, we can see that paragraph 6 has been separated into two new paragraphs, numbered 6 and 7, at the suggestion of the delegation of Netherlands and other delegations at the previous plenary meeting. These paragraphs clearly show the diversity of the representatives that we have invited to address the Conference this year. Not only did we receive representatives of member States, but also those of regional and international organizations, notably at the invitation of the Vietnamese presidency and the delegations of member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) present in Geneva. The Secretary-General of ASEAN for the first time participated in and addressed the Conference, opening a new era of dialogue and cooperation between the Conference and regional organizations.

This was a joint effort by the Vietnamese presidency and ASEAN member States to bring a high-level representative of the region to this important multilateral disarmament forum. Therefore, our position is that paragraph 7 is not consistent with paragraph 6 in terms of how it mentions the host or inviter. We believe that the report must show balance and respect for all and extend the same treatment to invitees from member States and international organizations. This paragraph is also where the Conference recognizes the Presidents' devotion of effort, time and energy to the Conference and their contribution to keeping it alive in the absence of a programme of work. Although the Conference has faced

some difficulties in the past year, the final text should not ignore the fact that all dignitaries attending the Conference during the year were invited by the respective Presidents. Such invitations are clearly reflected in the reports of previous years, including those of 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018. The countries which assumed the presidency worked hard to achieve consensus on the draft programme of work, to organize discussions on key thematic issues and to invite high-level dignitaries from countries and international organizations to address the Conference. Their contributions merit recognition from the Conference.

Therefore, we would like to suggest the modification of the new paragraph 7, so that it reads as follows: “The following dignitaries from international organizations also addressed the Conference on Disarmament: Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs (CD/PV.1479) and – upon the invitation of the fifth president of the Conference, the Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Viet Nam, Mr. Duong Chi Dung – Mr. Lim Jock Hoi, the Secretary-General of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (CD/PV.1510) and Mr. Lassina Zerbo, the Executive Secretary of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CD/PV. 1512).”

Mr. President, my delegation would like to take this opportunity to thank you again for all your efforts and for taking a professional and balanced approach to the conclusion of the 2019 report. We also wish to assure you of our delegation’s constructive spirit and full support. I thank you, Mr. President.

**The President:** I thank the representative of Viet Nam for her statement and proposal. The floor is open for any comments on that proposal from Viet Nam. I recognize the Ambassador of the United States of America. You have the floor.

**Mr. Wood** (United States of America): Thank you, Mr. President. I apologize for taking the floor. I greatly appreciate the suggestion made by the representative of Viet Nam, but I would submit that this report has been carefully negotiated. My delegation wishes to keep paragraphs 6 and 7 as they are in your latest draft, Mr. President.

**The President:** I thank the Ambassador of the United States of America for his statement. Do any other delegations wish to speak? I now give the floor to the Ambassador of the Netherlands.

**Mr. Gabriëlse** (Netherlands): Thank you Mr. President. I have sympathy for both interventions. While it is true that we have reached a kind of compromise, I don’t have a problem with the proposal because it will bring the report into line with what we did in 2018. I am looking to the secretariat for some guidance on this. I don’t know whether it would be acceptable for Viet Nam, but perhaps we could follow our practice of previous years, with the exception that we do not mention the President by name, instead referring to the fifth President of the session. For example, the 2017 report reads as follows: “Upon the invitation of the sixth President of the Conference, Mr. Julio Herráiz España, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Spain to the Conference on Disarmament, Mr. Ahmed Üzümcü, Director-General of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons ... addressed the Conference.” So, we could adopt the same approach as in previous years, but without mentioning the name of the President, in a spirit of compromise. I hope that would satisfy both delegations who made interventions.

**The President:** I thank the Ambassador of the Netherlands for his suggestion. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of the United States of America.

**Mr. Wood** (United States of America): Thank you Mr. President, I apologize for taking the floor. I greatly appreciate the proposal made by the distinguished Ambassador of the Netherlands. Again, my delegation would prefer to leave the report as it is.

**The President:** I thank the Ambassador of the United States of America for his statement. I now give the floor to the representative of Australia.

**Ms. Wood** (Australia): Thank you Mr. President. Although we very much welcomed the presentation by the Secretary-General of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, I think at this point it would be better to leave the text unchanged. However, I wonder if, as a compromise, we might include the invitation letter somewhere among the listed documents. We would not change the text of the paragraph. I do not know exactly

where in the document the invitation letter would be listed, as I haven't gone through the report in detail with that in mind. Maybe the secretariat could provide advice in that regard.

**The President:** I thank the representative of Australia for her statement. Colleagues, I thought we had approved some consensual language on Thursday last week and in the course of my consultations. I have been getting the sense that this kind of formulation will pass, but in order to accommodate our colleagues I suggest that we suspend this meeting for 10 to 15 minutes to hold closer consultations with the interested delegations. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of the United States of America.

**Mr. Wood** (United States of America): Thank you Mr. President. I apologize for taking the floor once again, but I am not sure that I see the need for a suspension in order to address this issue. You have put forward some compromise language that I think all delegations were prepared to accept. Of course, the language of the report doesn't satisfy everyone, but I am not sure there is any way forward other than to accept the language that you have included in this final draft. Obviously, we are in your hands if you want to call a brief suspension, but I am not sure how we can reach closure on this matter.

**The President:** I thank the Ambassador of the United States of America for his contribution. I thought I needed some time to consult on this particular issue, because I don't know whether we can appeal to the representative of Viet Nam to accept the compromise language that is already in the document. The appeal to Viet Nam is to please go along with the consensus that has already been reached, in the spirit of compromise.

**Ms. Nguyen Phuong Anh** (Viet Nam): Mr. President, dear colleagues, we received instructions from our capital to make the intervention. We hope that the delegations will understand and consider our position because we believe that what was agreed last year is worthy of consideration this year, and does not create any new difficulty for the Conference. We still call on the delegations to consider our position.

**The President:** I thank the representative of Viet Nam for her statement. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of China.

**Mr. Li Song** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Thank you, Mr. President. Our delegation too hopes that we can smoothly adopt this report at today's meeting. In the light of what other delegations have said just now, the delegation of Viet Nam needs some time to contact their Ambassador, the distinguished colleague who holds one of the rotating presidencies for the Conference this year, for further instructions, and you yourself also need to move forward in consultations with the Vietnamese Ambassador. I therefore think that we should suspend today's plenary for 15 minutes to make some further efforts. I think we can have 15 minutes of patience if it helps us to smoothly adopt the report. I support your suggestion to take a 15-minute suspension.

**The President:** I thank the Ambassador of China for his statement. I now give the floor to the representative of Cuba.

**Mr. Delgado Sánchez** (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Just very briefly, Mr. President, our delegation would like to support your proposal, as expressed by the Ambassador of China, since we appreciate that we must be patient and must most assuredly adopt a constructive approach. I believe that dialogue could be of help in that regard. I perfectly understand the positions that are on the table and, if the six Presidents of this session were perhaps unable to hold more informal consultations because not everyone was present, then a suspension of 15 minutes or so would help us to at least reflect a little on our positions.

**The President:** I thank the representative of Cuba for his statement. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Venezuela.

**Mr. Valero** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, we would like to acknowledge your efforts to achieve a consensus that includes all countries. Specifically, we wish to support the proposal by Viet Nam for its Ambassador to be mentioned as the promoter of a formal initiative of this forum. We believe that this is the way it always should be: the dignity of all countries and of their ambassadors should always be respected; nobody should be excluded under any circumstances. For these reasons, we would recommend that the President and others participating in the consultations, including

the Vietnamese delegation, should accept the proposal of the distinguished delegation of Viet Nam: it is a just one and simply asserts the country's right to be recognized and that of its Ambassador to be mentioned.

I hope that these consultations serve to ensure that the Vietnamese delegation is heard and that its dignity is respected. I repeat: we fully and unequivocally support the request made by the distinguished delegation of Viet Nam.

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

**Mr. Berkat** (Algeria) (*spoke in Arabic*): Thank you, Mr. President. Allow me to express my delegation's appreciation for your efforts to find a definitive solution for this last remaining point. We also appreciate your efforts to hold additional consultations. We believe this to be the best possible solution. We feel that we are on the verge of achieving consensus on the proposal and that we understand the positions of all delegations concerned. We therefore support your proposal to hold additional consultations, which we hope will lead to a final solution that will enable us to approve the report.

**The President:** I thank the representative of Algeria for his statement. Does the representative of Viet Nam wish to speak? I give the floor to the representative of Viet Nam.

**Ms. Nguyen Phuong Anh** (Viet Nam): Mr. President, I would like to join previous speakers in agreeing to suspend the meeting for further consultation.

**The President:** I thank the representative of Viet Nam for her statement. Seeing as there has not been any strong objection, I will proceed to call a 15-minute suspension.

*The meeting was suspended at 10.40 a.m. and resumed at 11.25 a.m.*

**The President:** Distinguished colleagues, our consultations took slightly longer than expected. On paragraph 7, which is the only paragraph in question, I propose the following formulation: "In letters dated 10 May 2019 and 1 July 2019, the following leaders of regional and international organizations were invited to address the Conference on Disarmament: Mr. Lim Jock Hoi, the Secretary-General of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (CD/PV.1510) and Mr. Lassina Zerbo, the Executive Secretary of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CD/PV.1512)." A new paragraph 8 would be created and would read as follows: "Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs of the United Nations, also addressed the Conference on Disarmament (CD/PV.1479)."

So, colleagues, so this is the new formulation. Although we can finesse it, the idea will not be changed in terms of the flow of the language. May I take it that this new formulation is provisionally adopted? Thank you very much.

Noting that the paragraphs provisionally adopted in the plenary meetings of 27 August and 29 August were incorporated into the text before you in document CD/WP.623/Rev.2, I would like to table that document, with the editorial amendments I mentioned just now, for adoption by the Conference.

Distinguished colleagues, we will now proceed to the formal adoption of the report of the Conference on Disarmament to the General Assembly. Would any delegation like to take the floor? I recognize the Ambassador of Venezuela.

**Mr. Valero** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, my delegation would like to congratulate you on the progress made during your presidency in the search for consensus on the report to be submitted to the General Assembly. We welcome the constructive, inclusive and transparent manner in which you have guided our deliberations. The competent diplomatic style of the Zimbabwean presidency serves to highlight the contribution that African diplomacy makes to reinforcing the validity of multilateralism.

Mr. President, my delegation would like to reiterate its call for the spirit of respect and cooperation that has prevailed in the Conference on Disarmament over the past few weeks to continue in the negotiations on the programme of work during the 2020 session. Like the majority of the States represented here, we wish to respect and preserve the rules

of procedure in their entirety. Our delegation reiterates that overcoming the deadlock in the Conference requires, first and foremost, the political will of States. In that sense, the political manipulation of its work and the negative procedures that affect its proper functioning must be avoided. Our plenary meetings would be more beneficial to member States if we made better use of the tools available and prevented the rules of procedure and good practices from being eroded by political diatribes.

For more than 20 years, the reports of the Conference have reflected the results of its deliberations in a largely transparent manner. We are adopting a procedural rather than a substantive report that could help to launch negotiations on legally binding instruments on disarmament. One delegation has attempted to change the course of the Conference and terminate its mandate.

Mr. President, we recall that my delegation proposed that, in paragraph 4 of the report, the six States that had assumed the presidency during the year should be specifically mentioned. This continues to be our preference. However, for the sake of consensus, we can accept the formulation proposed by the President on the understanding that this is a compromise solution. However, we are adamant that this should not in any way be seen as setting a precedent.

Any initiative that seeks to alter the rules of procedure in order to prevent any member from holding the presidency of this body under conditions of equality must be repudiated. All States are equal in the light of international law and no one State can claim itself as the master of the world by trying to impose its own political will on other countries in blithe disregard of multilateralism. The attempt to ignore the sovereign equality of all States is reprehensible. In this respect, we wish, once again, to recall article 3 of the rules of procedure, which establishes that, and I quote: "All member States of the Conference shall take part in its work in conditions of full equality as independent States, in accordance with the principle of sovereign equality enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations."

Mr. President, we recommend that the Presidents for the 2020 session take full advantage of the informal coordination mechanisms available to them. Meetings of the Presidents and the regional groups are useful tools for stimulating dialogue and understanding. We hope that all six Presidents will participate in that important coordination mechanism in 2020 and that there is no repetition of this year's experience, when a delegation excluded itself from consultations at that level, owing solely and exclusively to bilateral disagreements.

Mr. President, allow me to reiterate my delegation's commitment to continue working constructively with you and with all member States in an effort to conclude the work of the 2019 session. We wish to express our support for the draft report that you have submitted to us, Mr. President, since it is the fruit of extensive consultations, for which purpose you managed to achieve the delicate balance required. Thus, my delegation hopes that your draft report is accepted by all delegations.

Mr. President, we commend you on your excellent diplomatic work and on the consensus outcomes that we are achieving.

**The President:** I thank the Ambassador of Venezuela for his statement. At this stage, if there is no contrary view on the report, I would like us to proceed to adopt it. I note the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran. You have the floor.

**Mr. Azarsa** (Islamic Republic of Iran): Thank you, Mr. President. Just before the formal adoption of the report, my delegation would like to state that the inclusion and adoption of paragraph 10 shall not in any way imply or be interpreted as recognition of Israel.

**The President:** I thank the representative of Iran for his statement. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor? That does not seem to be the case. May I take it then that this report is adopted?

*It was so decided.*

Thank you very much, colleagues. Would any other delegation like to take the floor now on any other matter? I give the floor to the representative of the Russian Federation.

**Ms. Kuznetsova** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I would like to draw the attention of delegations to an event that the Russian delegation will hold in this room at 10 a.m. on Friday, 6 September. We intend to inform delegations about the draft resolutions of the General Assembly of the United Nations that we are planning to introduce during the work of the First Committee. We will request the Secretariat to send a reminder to this effect, as well as the texts of the resolutions, as is usually done in such cases.

**The President:** I thank the representative of the Russian Federation for her statement. Would any other delegation like to take the floor? If not, I would like to remind all delegations that only documents received by the secretariat by 13 September 2019 can be issued as official documents of the 2019 session of the Conference on Disarmament. Before closing, I would like to make a few remarks.

Distinguished colleagues, it gives me much pleasure – indeed, it is an honour – to preside over our last plenary meeting of the 2019 session. I wish to pay well-deserved tribute to you all for the support and cooperation that you have extended to me personally and to my delegation as I presided over the preparation of the 2019 annual report.

The report that we have just adopted represents a delicate compromise. This outcome is not one that some, including my own delegation, would have preferred, but the circumstances that we faced made us adopt a realistic approach. As we all appreciate, in the final analysis there is no such thing as a perfect report. Only a consensus report is possible, and a consensus report is what we have adopted. I want to sincerely thank all members for the compromises they have made, including today, and for the flexibility and the restraint that they have demonstrated.

As we conclude the 2019 session, I have mixed emotions, reflecting both the challenges that we experienced this year and the missed opportunities that remain on the horizon like an ever-receding mirage. I feel a sense of frustration about the year that was, but I also detect in the Chamber an atmosphere of hope for the future of this Conference. The consensual spirit that characterized the negotiations on the annual report is instructive. My appeal to members is not to spoil this conducive atmosphere, but to carry it forward to the 2020 session.

Distinguished colleagues, although we were not able to agree on a programme of work during the 2019 session, I must applaud the commendable efforts of my predecessors. I do believe that their sterling work and their efforts were not in vain, and that the presidencies of the next session, especially the first presidency of 2020, that of Algeria, will draw lessons from the experience. After all, the last programme of work to garner consensus in this Conference was agreed under the presidency of Algeria, back on 29 May 2009. That must surely be a good sign.

Earlier this year, I submitted a proposal to inject some continuity into the work of the Conference. This initiative by Zimbabwe was born of our frustration with the short-termism associated with the limited horizon and four-week focus of individual presidencies. We listened to other delegations' ideas about this issue of continuity and we think that the ensuing debate was rich and quite enlightening. We are pleased to have ignited the useful debate on the possibility and utility of rolling over an agreed programme of work to subsequent sessions, especially if consensus on a programme of work is achieved towards the end of a session.

As we look to the future, with a view to resuming substantive work, one important issue that comes to mind is that of determining which discussions have reached maturity for negotiations, while at the same time respecting the established principle of balance in the treatment of all core items of the agenda of the Conference. My sense is that this highly contentious issue cannot be postponed forever. The fact is that, because we hold different views and positions, we must start negotiations. The Conference is a forum for negotiations and we should not be afraid to discuss our differences and to negotiate. What we cannot afford is the postponement ad infinitum of difficult discussions to resolve our differences.

Finally, Zimbabwe firmly believes that we should collectively take decisive measures to address the institutional drift and mandate creep which is affecting the Conference and to bring the Conference back on track. We call on member States to refrain

from politicizing the Conference, because that has the negative effect of further undermining the credibility of this institution.

Once again, thank you all for the cooperation that you extended to my presidency, including during the preparation of the draft report to the General Assembly. Thanks also to our interpreters, the conference officers and of course the secretariat for their work. We could not have achieved this without their sterling efforts.

I notice that the representative of India has raised her flag. You have the floor.

**Ms. Bhandari** (India): Mr. President, I wanted to take the floor very briefly to express our appreciation to you for having presided over the Conference on Disarmament so ably and to congratulate you on the adoption of its annual report. Thank you very much.

**The President:** I thank the representative of India. I now give the floor to the Russian Federation.

**Ms. Kuznetsova** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. President, I would like to apologize for taking the floor for a second time. My delegation has a question. Could you explain how you intend to organize consultations on the draft resolution on the report of the Conference on Disarmament?

**The President:** The details of the consultations to consider the draft resolution were not communicated previously because they depended on the outcome of the present meeting. Those consultations will be held next week and the details will be communicated once the rooms and interpreting services had been booked. I now give the floor to the representative of Iraq.

**Mr. Al-Haidari** (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): Thank you, Mr. President. As we approach the end of the 2019 session of the Conference, and following the adoption of the final report, I wish to express my thanks for your efforts to achieve consensus on the report by holding broad consultations, both bilaterally and with regional groups. This enabled us to adopt the report earlier than expected.

I also wish to express my appreciation for the efforts made by the other Presidents in 2019 to return to the substantive work of the Conference and to overcome the impasse that we have been experiencing. I hope that, in 2020, the Conference will make tangible progress in its work and will return to its negotiating role, and my delegation will support all efforts to that end made by Conference Presidents in 2020.

**The President:** I thank the representative of Iraq for his statement. Colleagues, Excellencies, I do not see any other requests for the floor, so that concludes our business for today and also the 2019 session of the Conference on Disarmament. I thank you very much. The meeting is adjourned.

*The meeting rose at 11.50 a.m.*