

CD/PV.23
29 March 1979
ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE TWENTY-THIRD MEETING

held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 29 March 1979, at 10.30 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. L.D. THOMSON (Australia)

PRESENT AT THE TABLE

<u>Algeria:</u>	Mr. A. BENSMAIL
<u>Argentina:</u>	Mr. F.J. DÁVILA
<u>Australia:</u>	Mr. L.D. THOMSON Mr. A.J. BEHM
<u>Belgium:</u>	Mr. P. BERG Mr. G. VAN DUYSE
<u>Brazil:</u>	Mr. A. CELSO DE OURO PRETO
<u>Bulgaria:</u>	Mr. P. VOUTOV Mr. I. SOTIROV
<u>Burma:</u>	U SAW HLAING U THEIN AUNG U THAUNG HTUN
<u>Canada:</u>	Mr. R. HARRY JAY Mr. J.T. SIMARD
<u>Cuba:</u>	Mr. L. SOLA VILA
<u>Czechoslovakia:</u>	Mr. V. TYLNER Mr. L. STAVINCHA
<u>Egypt:</u>	Mr. N. FAHMY
<u>Ethiopia:</u>	
<u>France:</u>	Mr. F. DE LA GORCE Mr. BENOIT D'ABOVILLE
<u>German Democratic Republic:</u>	Mr. G. HERDER Mr. S. KHAN Mr. M. GRACZYNSKI

<u>Germany, Federal Republic of:</u>	Mr. J. PÖHLMANN Mr. H. MÜLLER
<u>Hungary:</u>	Mr. C. GYÖRFFY
<u>India:</u>	Mr. C.R. GHAREKHAN Mr. S.T. DEVARE
<u>Indonesia:</u>	Mr. M. SIDIK Mr. I. DAMANIK
<u>Iran:</u>	Mr. H. FARTASH Mr. D. CHILATY
<u>Italy:</u>	Mr. M. ALESSI Mr. M. MORENO
<u>Japan:</u>	Mr. M. OGISO Mr. T. NONOYAMA Mr. R. ISHII
<u>Kenya:</u>	
<u>Mexico:</u>	Mr. A. GARCÍA ROBLES
<u>Mongolia:</u>	Mr. D. ERDEMBILEG Mr. L. BAYART
<u>Morocco:</u>	Mr. M. RAHHALI
<u>Netherlands:</u>	Mr. A.J. MEERBURG
<u>Nigeria:</u>	Mr. T. OLUMOKO
<u>Pakistan:</u>	Mr. H. KHAN Mr. M. AKRAM
<u>Peru:</u>	Mr. J. AURICH MONTERO
<u>Poland:</u>	Mr. H. PAC

Romania:

Mr. C. ENE
Mr. V. TUDOR
Mr. T. NELESCANU

Sri Lanka:

Mr. B. FONSEKA

Sweden:

Mr. C. LIDGARD
Mr. L. NORBERG
Mr. S. STRÖMBÄCK

Union of Soviet Socialist
Republics:

Mr. V.L. ISSRAELYAN
Mr. Y.K. NAZARKIN
Mr. A.M. VAVILOV
Mr. A.I. TIOURENKOV
Mr. Yu.V. KOSTENKO
Mr. N.G. ANTIUKHIN

United Kingdom:

Mr. D.M. SUTHERHAYES
Mr. P.M.W. FRANCIS

United States of America:

Mr. A.S. FISHER
Mr. C. FLOWERREE
Mr. A. AKALOVSKY
Mr. M. DALEY

Venezuela:

Mr. A.R. TAYLHARDAT

Yugoslavia:

Mr. D. DJOKIĆ

Zaire:

Mr. E. IULONGANDUSU

Assistant-Secretary-General
for Disarmament:

Mr. R. BJÖRNERSTEDT

Mr. HARRY JAY (Canada): For a number of years Canada has held steadfastly to the view that in any consideration of arms control and disarmament issues, particularly in the main international negotiating forum, high priority should be given to the matter of chemical weapons. Consonant with the importance it attaches to moving away from the danger that this mass destruction weapon might some day be employed, Canada has publicly renounced the first use of chemical weapons and has completed destruction of the stocks of mustard gas accumulated during the Second World War. Two years ago, when we informed the CCD about these policies on 29 March 1977, we also suggested that it would be useful for those countries which had not yet done so to put on record their national policies with respect to chemical weapons. We renew this suggestion today. We continue to hope that it will attract a favourable response from all members of the Committee and not the least from those newer members whose participation is so much to be welcomed.

The Final Document of the special session devoted to disarmament stated that "the complete and effective prohibition of the development, production and stockpiling of all chemical weapons and their destruction represent one of the most urgent measures of disarmament. Consequently, conclusion of a convention to this end, on which negotiations have been going on for several years, is one of the most urgent tasks of multilateral negotiations". Nor did this exhaust the concern of the General Assembly. In its resolution A/RES/33/59A, the Assembly specifically requested our Committee to undertake, at the beginning of this 1979 session, negotiations with a view to elaborating an agreement on the prohibition and destruction of all chemical weapons. The priority that does and should, attach to this urgent matter is, therefore, beyond dispute.

My delegation shares with many others a sense of disappointment that effective consideration of chemical weapons in the main international negotiating forum remains stalled. We have a right to look to the United States and the USSR with increasing impatience for their assistance in opening the way to the assumption by this Committee of its responsibilities with respect to chemical weapons. That is why their bilateral discussions are important and desirable. That is also why we are expecting them to make the necessary effort to resolve the outstanding issues still dividing them in those discussions.

(Mr. Harry Jay, Canada)

A great deal of detailed work in this Committee will have to be devoted to all important aspects of an agreement, including the crucial question of verification, before the desired broad measures of support in the international community can be assured. We think it is long past the time for this Committee to address that task in order: (a) to improve our common understanding of difficulties and potential solutions; (b) to do what we can to help the Powers engaged in bilateral negotiations to resolve their remaining differences with the least possible further delay; and (c) to hasten and facilitate the process of multinational negotiation of a comprehensive convention.

Two recent papers, CD/5 and CD/6, tabled respectively by the delegations of Italy and the Netherlands, are constructive contributions to the consideration of chemical weapons. We thank those delegations for, and support their initiatives. We endorse their determination to see the Committee give priority to getting into this very important substantive area as quickly as possible.

We have long believed that there was much that an ad hoc group on chemical weapons could usefully accomplish, whether or not the bilateral negotiating Powers had reached full agreement. CD/5 and CD/6 confirm us in our conviction that the Committee ought not to put off setting up such an ad hoc group. Certainly we would wish to see it at work no later than during the summer session this year, so that at the very least some suitable section on chemical weapons could be included in the Committee's first annual report to the General Assembly.

As we see it, the initial mandate of an ad hoc group would be to determine where we are in respect of chemical weapons issues at this juncture; where we think we should seek to go; and what is the best means of marshalling our efforts in that direction. A useful first focus of attention in the ad hoc group would be a review on the areas of common ground that have emerged so far in the bilateral discussions. The group could then turn its attention to such possibilities as may exist for assisting the negotiating Powers to resolve their remaining differences.

(Mr. Harry Jay, Canada)

That process would not be productive without the co-operation of the two Powers engaged in the bilateral discussions. We have always thought that a sense of shared interest was the characteristic that has distinguished the main international negotiating forum from other related bodies, and has enabled the efforts of the principal nuclear Powers and of the rest of the members to be harnessed together in a mutually helpful partnership. We believe the USSR and the United States should take an early opportunity to inform us, much more thoroughly than in the recent past, about the areas of common ground they have found between them and, so far as possible, about the difficulties they may be encountering. It would be presumptuous to attempt to tell our American and Soviet friends in what form to provide the purposeful briefing we seek. However, it would be especially helpful to us if they could bring us up to date by means of one or more jointly tabled working papers. In one they might wish to discuss the problems in defining which chemical weapons agents need to be covered by an international agreement. In other papers the two Powers might prepare the way for a useful discussion on the relative advantages of various approaches, on the scope of a convention, etc.

The compendium prepared by the Secretariat in 1977 could be useful in helping the ad hoc group to sift through proposals that have already been put forward. This would assist in the task of finding common multilateral ground. The ad hoc group could then move on to seek specific views on questions that may lie on the periphery of the defined common ground identified in the bilateral discussions.

All members will have a part to play in the detailed, arduous and often highly technical work that cannot be avoided if we are to make progress. The quality of our commitment to the necessary tasks will be decisive in determining how well this Committee discharges its responsibilities in the priority area of chemical weapons.

The many problems associated with appropriate verification, for example, will require from all of us all that we are able to contribute in terms of industry, imagination and technical competence. Not only procedural modalities, but also

(Mr. Harry Jay, Canada)

the effectiveness of a variety of technical devices will need to be assessed with care and objectivity. We might find that the study of verification problems will help to identify technical requirements and to suggest how technological resources could be developed to meet them.

The recent workshop in the Federal Republic of Germany and the subsequent visit to the United Kingdom have helped us to see more clearly many of the practical problems and possibilities with regard to verification. We are grateful to the authorities and industries in those two countries for having given a Canadian expert, for one, an opportunity to participate. We will continue to take advantage of all opportunities to improve our insight, experience and capacities in all that concerns chemical weapons, since we are ready and anxious, now, to set to work in an ad hoc group or in any other constructive way to hasten international agreement.

It is a matter of record that Canada is strongly in favour of an international treaty on chemical weapons that will be comprehensive. It should cover research and development, production, stockpiling and destruction of weapons and facilities, so as to give effect to an eventual total ban on all lethal chemical agents and munitions. It will have to incorporate verification procedures that will satisfy the parties to the convention that their security interests were not being put in jeopardy by their agreement to renounce the right to possess, acquire or use chemical weapons. As we understand it, it would seem that the best hope of early progress would be to go in the direction of an agreement based on the concept of "excluded activities" rather than of "excluded agents". Although comprehensive in all respects, the treaty should provide for its own gradual implementation by successive stages, each subject to appropriate control. In this way confidence would be enhanced and wide acceptance of the comprehensive obligations of the agreement would be encouraged. The first stage would be to ban production, the second stage would see to the destruction of production facilities and stockpiles. As I say, each stage would be linked with carefully designed and acceptable verification techniques.

(Mr. Harry Jay, Canada)

The long and arduous work we are urging the Committee to take up as soon as possible would have as its essential objective development of an effective global instrument, widely acceptable to the international community as a whole. At the same time, we should not overlook that regional agreements might well prove to be useful supplements to the main convention. By taking into account regional differences and specific sectional concerns not easily catered for in a global treaty, these supplementary instruments could increase the prospect that the international community can be brought in one way or another, to accepting the obligations of a ban on chemical weapons. Presumably any such regional agreement that might emerge would derive its impetus from within the region concerned and should include the major military Powers of the area. Other States would be asked to undertake to respect the regional arrangement. Finally, under the regional arrangement, as under the global treaty itself, it will be necessary to ensure that no military advantage could accrue to any State as a result of the agreement.

There are so many aspects to the concerns evoked for us by chemical weapons, that it is impossible today to do more than underscore the importance and the urgency this subject has for Canada. In conclusion, therefore, let me repeat that my delegation is convinced that the Committee should not delay coming to grips with this priority area. We would have no plausible excuse in the CD if, at the end of our year's work, we were not in a position to report to the General Assembly that we had, at least, made a good start in discharging our clear responsibilities with regard to chemical weapons. To that end we believe an ad hoc group with an appropriate mandate should be at work no later than during our summer session. We would support its creation at the earliest opportunity.

Mr. ENE (Romania) (translated from French): At the stage now reached by our Committee in its work, namely, the establishment of its agenda and programme of work, I would like to refer in my statement today to one of the proposals before us concerning the start of negotiations on ending the production of all types of nuclear weapons and reducing their stockpiles until they have been completely destroyed.

Thanks to the constructive efforts of all member States in the new spirit of the special session of the United Nations on disarmament, and to the devotion, the remarkable contribution and the perseverance of those whom we have had the honour to see preside over our work -- I refer to you, Mr. Chairman, and to your distinguished predecessor -- the Committee was able to bring its first organizational task -- the adoption of its rules of procedure -- to a successful conclusion.

The Committee then took up the question of preparing its agenda. We hope that this stage, which has already lasted for a month, will not be prolonged unnecessarily, and that the preparation of the agenda and programme of work will not become an end in itself. The Committee will then be free to turn, with all due energy, to the substantive tasks for which it was set up, namely, the negotiation of genuine measures of disarmament to halt and reverse the arms race and, above all, the nuclear arms race.

The Romanian delegation, for its part, will do all it can in this respect.

The Romanian delegation has had many opportunities in the course of our working discussions to explain its position on the nature and scope of the agenda and programme of work of the Committee. We consider that both the agenda and the programme of work should direct the Committee towards concrete action and concentrate the efforts of all on the achievement of results in the light of the present priorities for disarmament set out in the Final Document of the special session and the resolutions of the General Assembly.

We attach special importance to all contributions aimed at guiding the work of our Committee towards the substantive questions posed by the arms race and in particular the nuclear arms race. It is in this context that we should like to refer to the proposal made in working paper CD/4 of 1 February 1979, submitted by the USSR and a number of other socialist States, concerning negotiations on ending the production of all types of nuclear weapons and gradually reducing their stockpiles until they have been completely destroyed.

(Mr. Ene, Romania)

Together with the sponsoring States and the other States which have given it their support, Romania considers that this proposal to open negotiations to that end can open up new and long-awaited possibilities for disarmament negotiations in the high priority area of ending the nuclear arms race and achieving nuclear disarmament. The Final Document of the special session emphasized that:

"Nuclear weapons pose the greatest danger to mankind and to the survival of civilization. It is essential to halt and reverse the nuclear arms race in all its aspects in order to avert the danger of war involving nuclear weapons. The ultimate goal in this context is the complete elimination of nuclear weapons" (para. 47).

The Committee has, of course, other important topics before it relating to nuclear disarmament, namely, the cessation of all nuclear-weapon testing. The reconsideration of this question in the Committee will no doubt have a positive effect. We also have in mind security guarantees for non-nuclear-weapon States. However, Romania has always considered that partial measures of that kind are truly meaningful only if associated with other measures of nuclear disarmament within the over-all perspective of ending the production of nuclear weapons, banning their use and, finally, eliminating nuclear weapons from military arsenals.

In our opinion, the proposal in question offers this very perspective and completes the context in which the Committee will be considering the problems of nuclear disarmament as a whole.

At this juncture, when the Committee has to take a decision on its agenda, the Romanian delegation wishes to express its support for the inclusion of the proposal made in document CD/4 in the agenda of the Committee for 1979 as well as in its programme of work, and associates itself with the proposal as a sponsor.

In the opinion of my delegation, the Committee on Disarmament, which counts among its members both nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon States, is the most appropriate setting in which to conduct the proposed negotiations.

The difficulties visualized by certain delegations do not constitute, in our view, a sufficiently strong reason for us to cast doubt on the very idea of embarking upon such an urgent and important task as that of ending the nuclear arms race. Romania, for its part, has always considered that all international problems, however difficult, can and must be settled through discussion and negotiation, and is convinced that in the nuclear era there is no other alternative.

(Mr. Ene, Romania)

A number of problems which will have to be taken into account in the organization and conduct of the negotiations are referred to in document CD/4. Others have been drawn to our attention in the statements made. Yet others may emerge upon subsequent examination. Romania is concerned, for instance, that, in the framework of the negotiations, and concurrently with measures aimed at ending the production of nuclear arms and gradually reducing their stockpiles until they have been completely destroyed, steps should be taken to achieve the goal of a definitive ban on the use of nuclear arms and the renunciation by States of the use of force or the threat to use force in their relations.

We are confident that the difficulties inherent in such an enterprise, on which the future and indeed the survival of mankind depend, can be surmounted provided that the negotiations are properly organized and conducted in a constructive spirit, and perseverance is shown in devising solutions that take into account existing problems and the interests of all States and peoples who, for the last few decades, have repeatedly called for nuclear disarmament as a priority objective.

At the present stage, what is needed is a demonstration of the political will to negotiate. Consequently we wish to state that the Romanian delegation would find it very difficult to understand any opposition or even reservations of principle to the exploration of ways and means that could lead to negotiations on ending the nuclear arms race and moving towards nuclear disarmament.

We would like to see consultations initiated on the organization of the proposed negotiations during this very part of the Committee's session. The programme of work could provide for a limited number of official meetings to be devoted to an exchange of views on the subject, after which consultations could take place on a non-official basis in the Committee on Disarmament at the same time as other activities but without interfering with them; on the contrary they would help to create a climate of work that would be propitious for the activities of the Committee as a whole. The consultations should culminate, we believe, in the preparation of a "plan of negotiation" that would be acceptable to all States and cover: (a) the framework of the negotiations and participation; (b) the guiding principles for the negotiations; and (c) the scope of the problems to be negotiated.

(Mr. Lne, Romania)

The Romanian delegation will no doubt have an opportunity to revert to these questions in greater detail. We nevertheless thought it useful to refer to them at this preliminary stage in the belief that acceptance by the Committee of the proposal to engage in negotiations on the subject of ending the nuclear arms race would constitute a substantive contribution that would give an impetus to negotiations in the priority area of nuclear disarmament and open up new horizons for our work.

Mr. FISHER (United States of America): At the outset I would like to identify the United States delegation with the expressions of appreciation given by my distinguished colleague from Canada to you for your tireless and, in effect, effective work as Chairman. We would also like to welcome our two new colleagues, the Ambassador from the United Kingdom, Ambassador Summerhayes, whom I look forward to working with and also our new Ambassador from Zaire, Ambassador Kamanda Wa Kamanda, and request that his colleague extends to him our warmest regards.

The purpose of my intervention this morning is to state the views of the United States on the proposal made by a group of delegations and entitled "Negotiations on ending the production of all types of nuclear weapons and gradually reducing their stockpiles until they have been completely destroyed,"— that is, the proposal which has been given the designation CD/4. On 13 March, the distinguished representative of Bulgaria, in addressing himself to this proposal, noted that no delegation had spoken against it. I would like to remind the Committee that so far only one State possessing nuclear weapons has spoken in favour of it. The United States cannot accept this proposal and I will give the reasons why.

Let me first say that CD/4 does have some superficial attractions. Every Government represented in this room is on record as favouring elimination of nuclear weapons. The President of the United States, as noted by our Bulgarian colleague, is among those favouring a massive reduction of nuclear weapons. United Nations General Assembly resolution A/RES/33/910 includes a verbatim quotation of this statement by President Carter:

"The United States is willing to go as far as possible, consistent with our security interests, in limiting and reducing our nuclear weapons. On a reciprocal basis we are willing now to reduce them by 10 per cent, 20 per cent or even 50 per cent. Then we will work for further reductions with a view to a world truly free of nuclear weapons."

It is not, then, the objective of CD/4 with which we disagree, but the method by which it seeks to eliminate nuclear weapons. Is it realistic to expect that a

(Mr. Fisher, United States)

blueprint can now be agreed upon and a negotiating forum established for the eradication of all nuclear weapons from the face of the earth, when we have not yet agreed how to get rid of the delivery vehicles whose destruction can be most easily verified? In effect, this proposal starts at the end instead of the beginning. Whether we like it or not, the prevention of a nuclear holocaust has depended on the confidence of the States possessing nuclear weapons that their own and their allies' security would not be threatened in such a way as to compel them to resort to these terrible weapons in their defence. A rough equilibrium now exists and has formed the basis for the negotiation of limitations on strategic arms between the two major nuclear-weapon Powers in the form of the SALT II agreement, which we now fervently hope is about to emerge.

The experience of the SALT II negotiations demonstrates vividly the difficulty and the delicacy of the process of devising arms control agreements that will preserve the equilibrium in nuclear power while bringing the build-up in nuclear armaments under control. What is true for strategic nuclear arms limitation is equally true for efforts to limit any other types of nuclear armaments. For nuclear arsenals cannot be separated from the integrated defence posture of the nuclear-weapon States and those who depend on them for their security. Any changes in the structure of one element of that posture will have an impact on the entire defence structure. And this impact must be taken into account when judging whether a particular measure of nuclear disarmament will contribute to a more stable structure for peace or will, in fact, have a destabilizing effect. The necessity to preserve the security of all nations when devising disarmament measures has been specifically recognized by the international disarmament community. In this regard, let me quote from the Final Document of the tenth special session. Paragraph 29 states:

"The adoption of disarmament measures should take place in such an equitable and balanced manner as to ensure the right of each State to security and to ensure that no individual State or group of States may obtain advantages over others at any stage. At each stage the objective should be undiminished security at the lowest possible level of armaments and military forces."

Another element of disarmament agreements which has been universally recognized is the need to proceed in careful stages toward the ultimate goal of general and complete disarmament.

A third is that disarmament measures must be accompanied by effective verification arrangements.

The proposal put forward in CD/4 is deficient in each of these respects.

(Mr. Fisher, United States)

It addresses the problem of nuclear disarmament with no evident consideration given to what effect the elimination of this class of weapons alone would have on the security of States. General and complete disarmament would require elimination of all kinds of weapons— nuclear, other weapons of mass destruction and conventional. Elimination of one class alone, as CD/4 envisages, cannot take place without compensating reductions in other classes; otherwise, it will give considerable advantage to States that possess large arsenals of other classes of weapons, and thereby seriously jeopardize the security of those States that do not.

CD/4, although it speaks of carrying out the reduction and destruction of nuclear weapons in agreed stages, takes no account of the stages that have already been recognized-- SALT II, SALT III, CIB and subsequent appropriate measures. Indeed, it seems to envisage the development of a timetable for complete nuclear disarmament without reference to the consequences of earlier steps. The need for a review of the implementation of measures in preceding stages before moving to subsequent stages was clearly set forth in the joint statement of agreed principles for disarmament negotiations made by the United States and the USSR in the General Assembly on 20 September 1961. Here I will quote the relevant portions of that statement:

"The disarmament programme should be implemented in an agreed sequence, by stages until it is completed, with each measure and stage carried out within specified time-limits. Transition to a subsequent stage in the process of disarmament should take place upon a review of the implementation of measures included in the preceding stage and upon a decision that all such measures have been implemented and verified and that any additional verification arrangements required for measures in the next stage are, when appropriate, ready to operate.

"All measures of general and complete disarmament should be balanced so that at no stage of the implementation of the treaty could any State or group of States gain military advantage and that security is ensured equally for all."

The United States finds that statement as valid today as it was then. The sponsors of CD/4 evidently do not.

Finally, there is little evidence that the sponsors of CD/4 have given much thought to the verifiability of their proposal. The cessation of production and the elimination of even the smallest nuclear weapons implies a pervasive verification mechanism which would far surpass anything contemplated so far in arms control agreements. Experience thus far does not lead us to believe that

(Mr. Fisher, United States)

the world community would be ready to accept the kind of verification régime that full nuclear disarmament would entail unless the ground had been carefully prepared by the implementation of a series of agreements for staged reductions with appropriate verification régimes applied at each stage.

There is yet another major flaw in the proposal in CD/4. The sponsors have contradicted themselves in regard to the necessity for Chinese participation in the proposed negotiations on the cessation of production and elimination of nuclear weapons. On the one hand, the sponsors state that nuclear disarmament cannot take place without the co-operation of all the nuclear-weapon States. On the other, they say that we should now make plans for negotiations on such disarmament without the participation of China. Even if the other nuclear-weapon States participating in this body were able to agree on some conceptual framework for initiating new nuclear disarmament negotiations, they would hardly embark on such a radical restructuring of the international security system -- and the Soviet proposal involves just that -- if one nuclear-weapon State were not participating in the plan. It is clear that, to safeguard the security of all States the full implementation of such a plan would require participation of all nuclear-weapon States. It is equally clear that drawing up a scenario to begin negotiations designed to produce such a radical restructuring without the participation of a nuclear-weapon State is not the appropriate way to bring that State into the negotiations.

The process of reducing reliance on nuclear weapons is a long, difficult and serious task. A staged process has begun with SALT II, to be followed soon, we hope, by a comprehensive test ban treaty, SALT III and then by other appropriate measures that will ensure a stable and verifiable nuclear arms control régime at all stages. Such a programme was delineated in paragraphs 50, 51 and 52 of the Final Document of the tenth special session devoted to disarmament. Why, then, should we turn away from this serious approach to halting and then reversing the build-up of nuclear weapons which was included in the consensus document adopted by the tenth special session, in favour of a proposal whose concept is too diffuse to be workable.

In short, the United States finds CD/4 an unrealistic proposal having as its objective something other than actual progress in disarmament. Inclusion of this item in the Committee's agenda would turn this negotiating body into a forum for political polemics. Would such a development be consistent with the serious task this Committee is to perform? Clearly it would not, and the United States will oppose any steps leading in that direction.

The CHAIRMAN: I intend to convene, immediately after the plenary meeting, the Working Group established to consider questions relating to the provisional agenda and programme of work of the Committee, in order to submit a brief report on the consultations being held by the Chair. Since those consultations are still proceeding, I would like to suggest to the Committee that the next plenary meeting should be held on Tuesday, 3 April, at 10.30 a.m., on the understanding that I would convene a plenary meeting tomorrow afternoon, at a time to be confirmed, just in case that I might be in a position to submit the final report of the Working Group which is considering questions relating to the provisional agenda and programme of work of the Committee. If this is not the case, then the Committee would meet next Tuesday, as I proposed previously.

Does any delegation wish to speak?

Mr. BERG (Belgium) (translated from French): Allow me to say first of all that my delegation associates itself with those that have already taken the floor in this forum not only to congratulate you but also to thank you for the way in which you discharged your functions as Chairman during your term of office.

You unhesitatingly assumed your share of the work displaying both patience and courtesy. Your efforts were and continue to be praiseworthy, and my delegation is happy to take this opportunity to pay tribute to you for your work.

Time moves on, and it will fall to my country to succeed you next Sunday. It need hardly be said that my delegation, like those which have preceded us, will spare no effort to direct our work effectively, in the light of the example you and others have set for us.

In referring to the impending Belgian chairmanship I should inform the members of our Committee that Ambassador Paul Noterdaeme, the Permanent Representative of Belgium at Geneva, will unfortunately be unable to participate in our work between 1 and 7 April. A number of delegations present are aware that Ambassador Noterdaeme was specifically invited to act as Chairman of the Western Caucus in the Economic Commission for Europe, which has been meeting for the last week and will go on meeting for another seven days.

In view of his functions, and the personal involvement of the Chairman of the Caucus in the negotiations, he will be unable to detach himself.

(Mr. Berg, Belgium)

In the circumstances, the head of the Belgian delegation during the first week of April will be Ambassador Racul Shoumaker, Director-General for Policy at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs at Brussels, who will therefore act as Chairman of our Committee, the opening of which he attended with Mr. Simonet, our Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Ambassador Noterdaeme will, of course, reassume the leadership of the Belgian delegation when his chairmanship of the Western Caucus has ended.

The Committee secretariat has been officially notified of this.

The meeting rose at 11.40 a.m.