

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE THREE HUNDRED AND SIXTY-EIGHTH PLENARY MEETING

held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 8 July 1986, at 10 a.m.

President:

U Tin Tun

(Burma)

The PRESIDENT: I declare the 368th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament open.

The Conference starts today its consideration of item 3 on its agenda, entitled "Prevention of nuclear war, including all related matters". However, in accordance with rule 30 of the rules of procedure, any member wishing to do so may raise any subject relevant to the work of the Conference.

As agreed at our last plenary meeting, the Conference will continue today, at an informal meeting immediately after the plenary, its discussion of the substance of item 2 on its agenda, entitled "Cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament".

I have on my list of speakers for today the representatives of Belgium and Sri Lanka.

I now give the floor to the representative of Belgium, Ambassador Clerckx.

Mr. CLERCKX (Belgium) (translated from French): Thank you Mr. President. As I take the floor, might I be allowed to express my delegation's great pleasure at seeing you preside over our work and to pledge to you our fullest co-operation in the accomplishment of your task and in the efforts you undertake.

I should likewise wish to pay tribute to the outgoing President, Ambassador Tellalov for the very dynamic way in which he has been able to resume the work of our Conference after the recess in May.

The Conference has now commenced the second half of its session. My delegation would like to take stock of the progress made so far in the light of its concerns and its hopes.

Belgium joined the Conference almost eight years ago in order to contribute to effective disarmament measures and, wherever possible, to the elimination of certain categories of weapons. My country never thought that was an easy task, or that indulging in periodic incantations would suffice to arrive at that goal. On the contrary, my country is well aware that any effective disarmament or arms limitation measure which, in the eyes of the Powers concerned, affects their security, is achievable only in so far as that security is otherwise guaranteed and as long as disarmament treaties and agreements are accompanied by specific provisions to safeguard that security and to ensure the implementation in good faith of the commitments entered into -- provisions relating to balance, transparency and verification.

Quite obviously, these conditions have not yet been met to allow for real negotiations in the paramount areas of nuclear weapons and outer space.

If it does not fall within the purview of this Conference to assess security conditions, to specify the provisions which in future conventions should preserve that security and guarantee the bona fide implementation of the commitments to be entered into is certainly one of our specific tasks. Belgium feels that nothing should delay this task any further. The mandate of the Conference on Disarmament is to negotiate, in the current sense of the

(Mr. Clerckx, Belgium)

word, which entails both negotiations proper as well as preparations for these negotiations. Such preparations have no repercussions on actual conditions or on the security requirements of States. As the goal of such preliminary work is to clear the way for effective negotiations at a time when the necessary conditions make them possible, this work should be conducted in a thorough-going and structured fashion. This can be done effectively only within specific working groups created for that purpose. We believe that as a general rule the mandates would stand to gain from being as simple as possible, drafted in such a way as to avoid preconditions and prejudging the ultimate goal of the work. As the consensus rule is also applicable within working groups, no Power should find itself committed to a greater degree than it intends. We would thus have the certainty that the questions to which we have attached priority because of their importance would be considered in suitable conditions, with the continuity they deserve and the thoroughness they require, without thereby jeopardizing the fundamental political options that either of the Powers might bring itself to accept.

The way in which the Conference has tackled its objective of working for the complete elimination of chemical weapons is a perfect illustration of the approach we advocate. At first, the conditions for real negotiations did not exist, and so an ad hoc working group was set up in 1980 at the thirty-fifth session with a very simple mandate: "to define, through substantive examination, issues to be dealt with in the negotiation on such a Convention". This work was undertaken for two years and it was only at our thirty-seventh session, in 1982, that the Powers primarily concerned finally established amongst themselves the necessary conditions and the working group received a real mandate to draw up a convention. But in the meantime the subject had come to the forefront, which is only proper.

My delegation welcomes the existence of working groups on items 5, 6 and 7 of our agenda. However, we would advocate that the Conference should draw lessons from the past and resolve to review its working methods and take a favourable look at the possibility of resorting to simpler approaches that are more in keeping with its real calling as a multilateral negotiating body.

I mentioned earlier our task of organizing the mutual, complete and verifiable renunciation of chemical weapons. This is a task which was undertaken in this city over 15 years ago and should be completed as soon as possible, or at least as rapidly as the careful drafting of the articles of the future convention allows. That my country attaches paramount interest to this will surprise no one. In Belgium, as has been recalled more than once both in this chamber and elsewhere, we retain a horrified memory of the use of combat gas, a tragic privilege of our people and our statesmen. My country was one of the authors of the Geneva Protocol of 1925 and we have never ceased to call for its respect. We consider this Protocol a starting point. At the second special session devoted to disarmament Belgium made proposals aimed at advancing even further, which led the international community to create at the thirty-seventh session of the United Nations General Assembly a procedure for considering complaints regarding the violation of the Protocol. The United Nations Secretary-General has always been able to count on the unconditional support of my country in the exercise of the duties entrusted to him in this connection.

(Mr. Clerckx, Belgium)

However, the Protocol is threatened. The use of chemical weapons has been increasing in the past few years. The number of countries which are building up an arsenal of chemical weapons is rising, and the moral opposition to chemical weapons is decreasing. We need more complete, more lasting diplomatic instruments. Meanwhile, my country has associated itself with all partial measures aimed at the prevention of the use of chemical weapons, and in particular the international initiatives designed to prevent the acquisition of the weapon and thereby its use. In April 1984 the European Economic Community took measures to control the export of certain key precursors. These measures have since been successfully applied. But all this, in the view of Belgium, cannot validly replace the essential, decisive instrument -- a universal convention establishing the compulsory destruction of chemical weapons and the complete prohibition of its development, production and stockpiling. Nothing, neither non-proliferation arrangements nor chemical-weapon-free zones nor any other partial or interim measures can be a substitute for this. We need a final, global solution. This is all the more imperative in that it can now be envisaged, and we can no longer be satisfied at the slow pace of negotiations to which we have sometimes had to resign ourselves in the past.

Belgium has noted with satisfaction the relatively more pragmatic turn that chemical negotiations have taken since October 1985, during the consultations organized by the Ambassador of Poland, Mr. Turbanski, Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee last year. We welcome the intention expressed in November last year by the President of the United States, Mr. Reagan, and the General Secretary of the USSR Communist Party, Mr. Gorbachev, to step up the negotiations.

The distinguished representative of the United States, Ambassador Lowitz, at our meeting on 26 June, told us that on 5 June last, President Reagan and Vice-President Bush reaffirmed the importance they attach to stepping up efforts to conclude an effective and properly verifiable agreement. On that occasion Ambassador Lowitz shared with us some very pertinent thoughts whose realistic, pragmatic and constructive nature prompts us to hope that a number of fundamental issues currently still in abeyance will be solved.

The Soviet Union for its part recently formulated, through Ambassador Issraelyan, a series of proposals which in our view indicate a desire to advance. But the intentions of the Soviet Union require further clarification, particularly with respect to verification, of which the USSR, unless there is an error of interpretation, seems indeed to recognize the importance now.

Verification should be international and is essential, not only in the area of the elimination of existing chemical-weapon stockpiles, in the area of declaration of production facilities and in the area of the destruction of these facilities, but also and above all as far as non-production is concerned. On this last score the Workshop organized by the Netherlands was very constructive indeed and my delegation wishes to thank here the Netherlands authorities for having so perfectly carried out the excellent initiative they had taken.

(Mr. Clerckx, Belgium)

The negotiations of a Convention for the prohibition of chemical weapons is, in the view of Belgium, an absolute priority for the Conference. My country welcomes the fact that a new will seems to be developing to step up the work. The statements made recently by the distinguished representatives of the United States and the USSR, to which I have referred, are welcome and comforting confirmation of this.

My delegation would like to share some thoughts with you in order to help to clarify some of these ideas.

Firstly, let us agree that in negotiating the elimination of chemical weapons, it is essential to have a precise idea of what we want to eliminate. Drawing up an appropriate definition of such weapons has some influence on the nature of the prohibition measures and their verification, on the legitimate interests of the civilian chemical industry which, as a matter of principle, should not be unduly suspected, controlled or limited in its development, and on scientific research and technological progress in chemistry, where any trend towards the production of chemical weapons should be prohibited and prevented.

So far, our work has essentially focused on the identification of the constituent elements of chemical weapons, particularly the list of toxic chemicals and their key precursors. This work is being conducted in a clear-sighted and substantive manner, and now we already have very advanced lists. Our role, however, is not to negotiate the elimination of lethal, harmful and dangerous chemicals, but chemical weapons, that is, the manufacture of a weapon whose destructive effect is constituted by chemicals. I think that article II as now drafted or proposed, does not reflect, or at least does not sufficiently reflect, the purpose which is decisive for the very concept of a weapon.

We believe that it is time to tackle this question of definition anew, and Belgium intends to contribute in due course to the final drafting of article II. Our work is now happily progressing at a more rapid pace and we should concern ourselves with clearly establishing exactly what is to be the object of the fundamental obligations and prohibitions that the future Convention will set forth in its article I, in other words, we must have a body of definitions appropriate to the ends we are pursuing.

The task that the Conference on Disarmament should carry out with respect to chemical weapons is twofold in nature. Firstly, we should organize chemical disarmament stricto sensu, in other words, the elimination under international control of stockpiles of weapons and direct production facilities. Secondly, we must make sure that the renunciation of the acquisition of chemical weapons, to which the parties will commit themselves, is and remains credible, thanks to appropriate and effective verification measures. Verification is crucial to both of these aspects.

The problems arising in the two types of verification are doubtless very different and hardly comparable: the interests which have to be taken into account are essentially military security in the first case and economic in the second. In the first case, the presence of chemical weapons is certain

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and recognized; in the second, it is simply a theoretical possibility which must be effectively prevented from becoming a reality. I will come back to this later.

I should like first to tackle the first aspect, that is, chemical disarmament stricto sensu, in other words the destruction of chemical-weapon stockpiles and their production facilities, which should take place as early as possible after entry into force. The total elimination period should be fixed in light of the time technically necessary to destroy the largest arsenals of chemical weapons held by a single country.

Belgium does not possess any chemical weapons, nor does it intend to possess them. We periodically find chemical weapons that were abandoned on part of its territory by the armed forces of other countries at the end of the first World War. These outdated chemical munitions are periodically eliminated and will continue to be eliminated as long as they are found. They present a danger only for my compatriots, as was again shown by a recent accident that led to the deaths of four persons. We hope that this problem will be dealt with separately by the Convention or an annex to the Convention, in view of its very specific aspects.

Working Group B is responsible for drawing up arrangements for the destruction of chemical-weapon stockpiles and production facilities. We are particularly pleased that the concern here is to get down to essentials, that is, to establish a complete set of rules. It would indeed be inconceivable for the credibility of the Convention and its chances of universal accession that after its entry into force it should turn out that the destruction of stockpiles is delayed pending the solution of problems relating to the declaration or location of stocks, etc.

An important problem which was the focus of our attention during the Spring session and to which we will have to return, is the order of the destruction of these stockpiles. My delegation hopes that it has contributed to showing, thanks to a proposal submitted by Belgium last April, that the difficulties, serious as they might be, could be surmounted.

We have included a method for the general comparison of stockpiles of weapons of varying composition in a proposed overall scheme for the order of destruction, as these two problems are closely linked. We have developed a proposal made by China, which constituted a conceptual breakthrough in the area of comparability of stockpiles.

As for the elimination of production facilities, we have noted with interest the specific proposals made by the Soviet Union, and we have known since the beginning of this year that it is ready to accept on-site international verification of the process. The distinguished representative of the United States, in his statement in plenary on 26 June last, stated however that it remained to be agreed "exactly what must be destroyed", thus illustrating the interest, it seems to us, of having an appropriate definition of what is to be considered a chemical-weapon production facility. We must be able to draw a distinction between the production facilities that have actually served for production of what could undeniably be called chemical weapons. Here again we come back to the problem of definition which I mentioned earlier.

(Mr. Clerckx, Belgium)

The second essential aspect of the Convention is that of the prevention of the acquisition of chemical weapons. The aim here must be to draw up the most appropriate verification régimes so as to reassure de facto the parties that their commitments not to develop, manufacture, stockpile, or transfer chemical weapons are really respected.

The negotiations of Working Group A, since October 1985 have aimed towards the concrete identification of the physical elements which would be most likely to serve for the clandestine production of chemical weapons, which include, obviously, a number of chemicals which are universally recognized as combat chemical agents, as well as the precursors that necessarily make it possible to obtain them. In the choice of the prohibition and verification régimes to be applied to each of these chemicals, we will first and foremost have to ask whether the substance in question is or is not capable of serving purposes other than armaments. Only chemicals known only to serve, and to serve only for, arms purposes should be totally prohibited, except of course, if, as a result of a scientific discovery, a State party began to produce one of these chemicals for purely peaceful purposes which it would have been able to demonstrate to the international control organization that it will be necessary to set up. In drawing up our rules, we cannot lose sight of the development of science and technology which could lead us either to lift the prohibition on the production of certain chemicals, while keeping them under strict control, or to place them under a stricter régime in the case of chemicals hitherto manufactured for peaceful purposes but subsequently used otherwise, or else to include in the lists annexed to the Convention chemicals previously not recognized as chemical combat agents or new precursors.

It is important to keep in mind here the essential difference which exists between chemicals which present an inherent risk of being used for chemical weapons and those which are actually used for such a purpose. An appropriate definition of chemical weapons would here again have its full significance, and moreover it is verification and control which will enable us, for all dual-purpose chemicals, and I stress, dual-purpose chemicals, to determine whether or not they are on the prohibited side of the alternative.

While the national authorities will have the obligation to ensure that a country's industries co-operate with the international control body, in the provisions concerning non-production it is none the less essential to safeguard the legitimate interests of the chemical industry. The roles should not be reversed. Our philosophy in this connection should be that whatever is not explicitly prohibited is permitted, rather than the contrary. For otherwise we would place an unjustified and unbearable burden on civilian chemical industry and we would be opening the door to excessive, gratuitous or vexatious controls. Neither in the exchange of data nor in on-site verification should the régimes established under article VI have the effect of substituting the international organization for national authorities in respect of the responsibility for compliance with the Convention.

We may and we must expect from States parties that they will respect all the commitments that they will have subscribed to. We see systematic verification as a positive means to strengthen confidence among the parties which becomes necessary wherever the presumption of good faith in respective commitments cannot alone suffice to ensure such confidence.

(Mr. Clerckx, Belgium)

This leads me to the question of the measures contemplated to cope with ambiguous factual situations which prompted doubts as to compliance with the fundamental provisions contained in article I of the treaty, namely, the obligation to destroy chemical-weapon stockpiles and their production facilities according to agreed time-tables and the prohibition on the development, production, stockpiling, transfer or use of chemical weapons. Measures whereby an international organization to be created would play an active role are envisaged: they range from the exchange of additional information to on-site challenge inspection which would cover undeclared sites not subject to the systematic inspection provided for in other articles of the Convention.

The difficulties encountered by the Conference on the latter question should not unduly surprise us in so far as we are seeking a new formula for a set of verifiable disarmament measures of unprecedented scope. Sizeable differences persist. It is essential, however, to arrive without delay at a credible and effective solution for challenge inspection so as to ensure that regular verification measures do not have the result of totally exempting from all control anything that is not explicitly contemplated as falling under them. To a great extent, challenge inspection would then contribute to the credibility of systematic inspection measures linked to declared sites and accepted as such by States.

The future Convention will, of course, have to include effective provisions which can be implemented as early as possible enabling on-site fact-finding in the event of credible allegations by a State party concerning the use of chemical weapons. Let us hope, however, that such an eventuality will never happen again and that the future convention will be sufficiently effective in all its provisions of verification to rule it out forever. It will thus have given a concrete example of a very ambitious disarmament measure that has been carried out and is verifiable, and will prompt to redouble our efforts along this path in order also to achieve, in the conventional and nuclear fields the very essential and urgent dismantlement of overarmament in the world.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Belgium for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the President. I wish to extend a very warm welcome to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sri Lanka, His Excellency A.C. Shahul Hameed. In thanking him for his visit, I should like to recall that he is well-known to us, since he has addressed the Conference twice in the past. I am sure that members will listen to his statement with particular interest in view of the contributions that he has already made to our work. I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sri Lanka, His Excellency A.C. Shahul Hameed.

Mr. HAMEED (Sri Lanka): Mr. President, my visit to the Conference on Disarmament this year coincides happily with your Presidency. Burma and Sri Lanka are two small Asian countries with a shared philosophical and cultural tradition over centuries of history. Drawing our strength from this tradition we have, as modern nations, endeavoured to make our contribution in the international fora devoted to disarmament side by side with other members.

(Mr. Hameed, Sri Lanka)

Sri Lanka has always attached great importance to this sole multilateral negotiating body. It is true that small nations alone cannot shape the destiny of this Conference. In a way it can be argued that issues on the Conference's agenda have no direct link with developing countries, particularly with small developing countries. In a major confrontation this argument will become irrelevant. Everybody on this planet will be victims. The reconstitution of the Conference was to give representation to the voice of the Third World -- a voice that is substantial and cannot be ignored.

Two voices that were raised courageously and incessantly in the cause of disarmament were stilled this year with the death of Alva Myrdal and the assassination of Olaf Palme. This is my first statement in a global disarmament forum since these tragic events. May I, therefore, pay tribute to these two Swedish fighters for peace whom the world proudly claims as its citizens.

We are already in the second half of 1986. Ironically we need to be reminded that we are observing this year the International Year of Peace. The only resolution the United Nations General Assembly could adopt by consensus on 24 October last year, when we observed the 40th anniversary of the United Nations in the presence of so many distinguished Heads of State and Government, was the resolution on the International Year of Peace. A few weeks after we had the 40th anniversary celebrations of the United Nations, the Organization was in the grip of a financial crisis threatening its very existence. We have not overcome that crisis. It is more deep-seated than a question of balancing budgets. It represents a collective crisis of commitment to the objectives of the United Nations Charter and the machinery that was established to implement it. Today the International Year of Peace stands in jeopardy of being remembered as a year of discarded treaties, aborted proposals for disarmament, blatant justification of the use of force in international relations, violations of the sovereignty of States through interference in the internal affairs of countries and the continued presence of foreign troops in other countries.

The Non-Aligned Foreign Ministers meeting in New Delhi in April this year once again noted with concern the renewed escalation in the arms race particularly in nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. Newly emerging technologies are bringing into being new generations of weapons of mass destruction both nuclear and non-nuclear. Similarly preparations are going on for the development of new weapon systems in outer space through the application of new technology and this throws up a new dimension of grave import.

We live in a world of violence -- violence which is both overt and covert. Peace and justice have to be defended from violent assaults. These assaults sometimes come from terrorism, which is today a global problem. Terrorism often cloaked by the dignity of a political cause is in fact nihilism seeking converts through terror and not through the democratic process. Our capacity to defend the world of peace and international law and order depends on our own observance of that international law and order which includes the United Nations Charter and the body of treaties. The sophistry of argumentation cannot conceal the abandonment of civilized restraints to secure a short-term advantage in the arms race and in the global competition for power.

(Mr. Hameed, Sri Lanka)

If treaties and international commitments are to be disregarded and the jurisdiction of international institutions to be unilaterally ignored, what moral leverage have we, with those who undermine the Rule of Law. International law and order transcends national perceptions. It cannot be upheld by force alone. Over 200 years ago, Edmund Burke, the great British statesman, said in his speech on Conciliation with America, "The use of force alone is but temporary. It may subdue for a moment; but it does not remove the necessity of subduing again; and a nation is not governed which is perpetually to be conquered".

We could say with equal validity today that the world is not governed which is perpetually subjected to the threat or use of force, whether political, economic or military. It is precisely in recognition of this fact that the United Nations was created as "a Centre for harmonizing the actions of nations" in maintaining international peace and security; developing friendly relations among nations and achieving international co-operation in solving economic, social, cultural and humanitarian problems. It is what the International Year of Peace is about. Peace and the agreements on disarmament that you seek to put together in this forum will remain forever elusive unless we are agreed around this table that international law and morality can never countenance the use of force as an instrument of policy except within the strict confines of the Charter. That, in the final analysis, distinguishes civilized governments from terrorist groups.

Another set-back we have witnessed in this International Year of Peace is the failure to hold the International Conference on the Relationship between Disarmament and Development. We appreciate the reasons that have led to the postponement. Sri Lanka had looked forward to this Conference and had welcomed the Joint Declaration by the panel of eminent personalities in the field of disarmament and development. United Nations studies on the economic and social consequences of the arms race and of military expenditure and the Study of the Relationship between Disarmament and Development have had the cumulative effect of establishing that the link between two important goals in the Charter -- disarmament and development -- is viable for all countries. Already countries like Sweden have shown that as part of the disarmament process military resources can be converted to constructive civilian use and that the reallocation must be planned ahead to avoid the perpetuation of military-industrial complexes. This reallocation in a world of finite resources must be planned on a global basis. In the transitional phase while national security requirements remain undiminished reductions in military expenditure can be achieved on a voluntary basis. The international Conference on the Relationship between Disarmament and Development must be held in 1987 and Sri Lanka hopes that all nations will participate in a fit and proper manner.

In the 40th anniversary year of the United Nations we were glad to see the leaders of the two most powerful nations meet in this city. A number of important principles governing the international security situation and the process of disarmament came under their scrutiny. This year we have also had the innovative proposals of 15 January from General Secretary Gorbachev and a series of other initiatives. We are encouraged that new proposals placed by the USSR before the conclusion of the fifth round of the bilateral negotiations have been received with interest and are being seriously

(Mr. Hameed, Sri Lanka)

studied. We hope this represents the turn of the tide and that existing treaties which stood in danger of being breached will now instead be fortified with fresh agreements for deep reductions in existing arsenals of nuclear weapons. A holistic view of disarmament is emerging. The opportunity for peace must be seized. Both parties are aware of their enormous responsibilities to the international community. Another Summit Meeting this year was promised in the Joint Statement. Summit Meetings are certainly good. They can build on the basis of the Joint Statement of last year to achieve tangible results not only in Geneva but in Vienna and in Stockholm.

For many years Sri Lanka has along with other nations attempted to see the 1971 Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace implemented. After the successful meeting of littoral and hinterland States of the Indian Ocean in 1979 we have looked forward to an International Conference on the Indian Ocean as a means of achieving the objectives of the Declaration. The recent initiative of Brazil to declare the South Atlantic as a Zone of Peace, coming after the Treaty of Rarotonga last year establishing the South Pacific nuclear-weapon-free zone, is an index of the growing awareness of the need to insulate regions from power rivalries and their destabilizing influences. The conclusion of an international legal régime for the sea, though falling short of universal adherence, focuses attention on the naval arms race. Sri Lanka, Chairman of the Ad hoc Committee, continues its effort for the convening of the International Conference on the Indian Ocean in Colombo. The Conference alone can lay down the broad guidelines for any effective implementation of the Declaration.

A new dimension of the arms race that seems dangerously imminent is in outer space. Here too Sri Lanka has been associated in efforts in this forum and in the United Nations to prevent an arms race in outer space. Nearly two decades ago Sri Lanka cautioned against unrestrained military activities in outer space. We did so because of our past concern with the phenomenon of the terrestrial arms race and its dynamics entailing the familiar sequence of research, development, testing and deployment. As the representative of Sri Lanka -- then Ceylon -- to the United Nations General Assembly in 1966, I had occasion to state, at the time of the adoption of the Outer Space Treaty, that:

"The second paragraph of Article IV prohibits military manoeuvres and all other kinds of military activities on celestial bodies. Here again, we note with disappointment that military activities are not prohibited in outer space and on the Moon.

... My delegation wishes to record its reservations on Article IV and our hope that by implication it will not give a licence for military activities in outer space and on the Moon. In that case, the lofty objective of the treaty would be negated."

Our concerns have been borne out by the military-related development of space capabilities which took place during the past two decades. Speaking at the Second United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space held in Vienna in August 1982, I said that "The World Community will indeed run the risk of misdirecting the achievements of Space Science and Space Technology if these remain the special preserve of a few to be exploited

(Mr. Hameed, Sri Lanka)

in rivalry for narrow national benefit. Therein would be the grave danger of militarizing space not only through auxiliary military applications such as surveillance satellites and search and rescue operations but also through specifically aggressive weapon systems placed in space". Four years later we witness an arms race in space weapons being conducted in research laboratories. Before the research of today becomes the reality of tomorrow we must legislate effectively to keep space free of weapons. We are glad to note that the Ad hoc Committee under this agenda item has begun serious work in identifying and examining the issues involved. The vital need to preserve the ABM Treaty of 1972 and to arrive at an agreement banning Anti-Satellite weapons has been accepted by an overwhelming number of nations. The strengthening of the Space Registration Convention and the inviolability of satellites for registered peaceful uses are other necessary steps. The technical complexities of the subject demand that a global effort be made to seek agreement on the parameters of the discussion before any negotiation can begin. Sri Lanka's view is that this is best achieved within a group of scientific experts working on an independent mandate to provide this Conference with the technical expertise it requires.

We have also worked for international co-operation in the peaceful uses of outer space and I recall again my statement in the UNISPACE Conference of 1982 in Vienna where I stated -- "Some consideration has already been given to the possibility of creating an International Space Agency. This is in keeping with an evolving trend in international life today ... It is necessary to prepare ourselves for the space age with the institutional machinery which could make outer space a truly successful area of genuine co-operation among nations". We believed then, as we do now, that a World Space Agency would be in the best interests of the international community to ensure that the peaceful uses of space was conducted in a co-operative manner guaranteeing that developing countries also benefited from this common heritage of mankind. We are glad therefore to welcome the recent initiative to convene an international Conference to consider the creation of such an organization. Peace and stability in space are pre-requisites for productive investments for exploration and exploitation of outer space for the benefit of mankind. If we fail now to create such conditions, we will have failed again, as we did 20 years ago.

Neither space nor the oceans of the world can be insulated from the arms race if this Conference remains a mere bystander in world events. The establishment of this multilateral negotiating forum has a purpose for which all nations are in undeniable agreement. You are engaged in the important task of negotiating a chemical-weapons ban and I wish you all success in this. We must rid the world of the production and use of these awful weapons. That is not to set different priorities but to work pragmatically in areas where possibilities of success exist. We acknowledge a common debt to the Government of the Netherlands for the useful workshop held recently. Work on a ban on radiological weapons has acquired a greater urgency after the tragedy of the Chernobyl accident. While expressing our sympathy to the Government and people of the USSR, we cannot help drawing a lesson from this accident on the need to protect peaceful nuclear installations from not only accidental damage but also intentional attacks. The spontaneous international effort to ensure nuclear safety and the laudable role of IAEA which will hold an international conference in September to strengthen international

(Mr. Hameed, Sri Lanka)

co-operation in nuclear safety and radiological protection augur well for the world's capacity to learn from its mistakes. Will we be similarly wise to negotiate the disarmament agreements necessary to ensure human survival and prevent a nuclear war?

The Conference's inability to act -- as distinct from debate -- on the priority nuclear issues set out so clearly in the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament remains an indictment of the global system for the negotiation of disarmament. Sri Lanka urges once again as an initial step urgent commencement of work on a nuclear-test ban. The Third Review Conference of the NPT similarly called upon the nuclear-weapon States to participate in the urgent negotiation and conclusion of a comprehensive nuclear-test ban in the Conference on Disarmament. The overwhelming majority of the international community remain convinced that the conclusion of a treaty banning all nuclear tests would be the single most important step which could strengthen existing legal régimes against further proliferation of nuclear weapons both laterally and vertically. The elements for a mandate that can be accepted by all do exist. Successive resolutions at the General Assembly have pointed to the overwhelming desire of nations for this measure. Major work has been done in the verification sphere and discussions can commence without prejudice to final agreements that may emerge on the scope of the issues involved. Sri Lanka's flexibility on this and other issues is well known. We are not rigid on modalities or structures. Nor are we dogmatic on slogans or mandates. However, we have seen too often that flexibility is ineffective if it is unmatched by willingness to compromise elsewhere.

May I return to Edmund Burke, who said that "All governments, indeed every human benefit and enjoyment, every virtue, and every prudent act, is founded on compromise and barter". No disarmament can be achieved without compromise and barter. Negotiation from strength, negotiation by breaching existing agreements, and negotiation through intimidation will not yield the results that will have a universal validity and a durability. Sri Lanka will always appeal for the spirit of compromise in the Conference.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sri Lanka for his important statement, and for the kind words addressed to the President and to my country. That concludes my list of speakers for today. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor?

As agreed earlier today, I intend now to adjourn this plenary meeting and convene immediately an informal meeting which will be devoted to discussion of the substance of agenda item 2, entitled "Cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament".

The next plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament will be held on Thursday, 10 July, at 10.30 a.m. The plenary meeting stands adjourned.

The meeting rose at 11.15 a.m.