

SEP 17 1992

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

Report of the Chairman of the Open-Ended Consultations
on the Improved and Effective Functioning of the
Conference on Disarmament

1. At the end of the 1991 informal open-ended consultations on the improved and effective functioning of the Conference on Disarmament, conducted under the Chairmanship of Ambassador Ahmad Kamal of Pakistan, the Conference had decided to continue consideration of its improved and effective functioning at its next annual session, in the same format and under the same Chairmanship as in the previous two years. This decision was incorporated in paragraph 18 of the 1991 annual report to the General Assembly of the United Nations (CD/1111).
2. In view of the Conference on Disarmament's major preoccupation during 1992 with the negotiations on the chemical weapons convention, only four meetings on the improved and effective functioning of the Conference could be organized during the 1992 annual session.
3. It was agreed that these informal open-ended consultations during the current year could be attended by non-member States participating in the work of the Conference.
4. The following paragraphs summarise the trends of the debate and the points on which consensus emerged.
5. Report writing: The discussions centred on: (a) the possibility of shortening the annual report; (b) the possibility of limiting the time spent on the actual negotiation of the text of the report; and (c) the possibility of referring to individual countries by name or on the basis of their group affiliation.
6. It was generally agreed that all three desirable possibilities should be borne in mind in drafting future reports. Caution needed to be exercised in ensuring that the objective of brevity did not impact adversely on matters of substance.
7. Reduction of plenary meetings: The discussions centred on whether the overall number of plenary meetings, which had been already reduced in the previous year, could be reduced even further, particularly by allowing cancellation on days when no speakers were inscribed.
8. There was general agreement that participants would be encouraged to inscribe themselves on the speakers' list at least 24 hours in advance, thus enabling the Secretariat to cancel the Tuesday plenaries if no speakers had been inscribed by that deadline. This possibility of cancellation of Tuesday

plenaries would not affect either the regularity of the Thursday plenaries, even if there were no speakers, or the possibility of organizing a limited number of extra plenary meetings, as and when required by the Conference. It was also agreed that participants would be encouraged to inform the Secretariat in advance about the topics that they wished to address in their interventions.

9. Organization of work of ad hoc committees: The organization of work of ad hoc committees was discussed with a view to examining the possibility of allocating specific weekly periods to different subsidiary bodies at different times in the year, partly in order to focus the discussions more pointedly on a single subject, and partly in order to prevent the simultaneity of meetings held by the Conference and its subsidiary bodies, which was putting great pressure on smaller delegations.

10. There was general agreement that time periods could be staggered under a fair division of the available weeks between different ad hoc committees, but giving each ad hoc committee the due possibility of re-examining its allotted subject of responsibility again in the third part of the annual session so as to take stock of new developments during the year before it finalized its report. It was recognised that some subjects were of such importance that their consideration in subsidiary bodies would in any case have to be spread over the whole of the annual session.

11. Tenure of presidency: The discussions centred on the adequacy or otherwise of a four-week tenure for the presidency, in the light of the opposing requirements of the need for continuity, and the need for due rotation among all members.

12. There was general agreement that, while no change should be made in the current four-week tenure (spanning the intersessional gaps whenever they occurred), it would be desirable for the President to associate, wherever possible, the outgoing President in matters which were being carried over from the previous presidency, as well as the incoming President whose presence during the Wednesdays' presidential consultations would enable the latter to step more smoothly into the presidential chair.

13. Rule of consensus: The discussions centred on whether the rule of consensus could be changed or modified to draw a distinction between questions of procedure and questions of substance, or whether time limits could be placed on the search for consensus, after which other procedures would be followed. The possibility was also mentioned of applying the rule of consensus in the work of the Conference, but making an exception perhaps in the work of the subsidiary bodies.

14. Discussions were inconclusive and no consensus emerged.

15. Establishment of ad hoc committees: The discussions centred on whether the existing procedure could be changed, if possible with the automatic establishment of ad hoc committees on all agenda items.

16. Discussions were inconclusive and no consensus emerged.

17. Duplication in documentation: Discussions centered on some cases where unnecessary duplication of lengthy documentation appeared to have occurred.

18. There was general agreement that greater care would be exercised in avoiding unnecessary duplication. If necessary the implications of rule 45 of the rules of procedure would be re-examined next year.

19. Agenda and membership: Discussions centred on the importance of moving forward on these two items during 1993, as well as on identifying a possible mechanism to do so.

20. There was general agreement that, with the end of the intensity of work on the chemical weapons convention, attention should now be focused on these two important areas. In order to identify possible future courses of action, the President of the Conference would be entrusted with the task of conducting consultations during the intersessional period after the end of the 1992 annual session of the Conference, and to report back to the Conference at the beginning of the 1993 annual session. The President would be assisted in his consultations by the incoming President and the Secretary-General.

21. Conclusions: The informal open-ended consultations on the improved and effective functioning were once again seen by all members as positive and constructive, and as evidence of the desire of the Conference to improve its effective functioning and to keep it under constant review.

22. It was agreed that informal open-ended consultations on the improved and effective functioning of the Conference on Disarmament would continue again in 1993, in the same format and under the same Chairman.