

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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FINAL RECORD OF THE NINE HUNDRED AND FORTY-SEVENTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 19 February 2004, at 10.25 a.m.

President: Ms. RAJMAH Hussain (Malaysia)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 947th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. Before we start our business for the day, I would like to express, on behalf of the Conference, our deepest sympathy and sadness over the tragic loss of lives following the train derailment in the Islamic Republic of Iran in the town of Nishabour. Please accept our deepest condolences.

On a happier note, I would like to extend a very warm welcome, on behalf of the Conference, to the new Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea, Ambassador Hyuck Choi. He is sitting right in front of me here, and I would like to assure him of our full cooperation. Welcome, Ambassador.

Today we have four speakers on our list: France, Ambassador Rivasseau; Myanmar, Ambassador Mya Than; Venezuela, Ambassador Portocarrero; and Malaysia will be delivering a national statement as well.

However, before giving them the floor, I would like to make some opening remarks as Malaysia assumes the presidency of the Conference for the first time in our history.

It is indeed a great honour for Malaysia to assume the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament for the period from 16 February to 14 March 2004. I am pleased to follow in the footsteps of my distinguished predecessor, Ambassador Amina Mohamed of Kenya, a fellow member of the Group of 21, to which Malaysia belongs. I would like to commend Ambassador Amina for her tireless efforts aimed at launching the substantive work of the CD. It is certainly my intention to continue her efforts by taking her findings at the close of her presidency as the common ground for starting my own consultations with members of the Conference. In so doing, I will also take into consideration the thorough analyses, conclusions and recommendations of other distinguished predecessors in this office, as well as the proposals submitted by delegations and groups.

Malaysia is a small country of 23 million peace-loving people and still a developing nation. Our experience and expertise in multilateral disarmament negotiations is still on the learning curve when compared to many other delegations in this august chamber. I am, therefore, filled with a deep sense of humility as I assume the position of President of the CD, as I am only too conscious of the heavy responsibilities that lie on my shoulders in guiding the work of the CD forward.

As Malaysia is the current Chair of the Non-Aligned Movement as well as the Chair of the Summit of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, I am further motivated to place the utmost importance on the work that I will be shouldering during the next four weeks, given that international peace and security are important objectives of the two organizations that Malaysia is currently leading.

(The President)

Let us for a minute reflect on the purpose of why we are gathered here. The Conference on Disarmament is the world's single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum. The CD's overall task, as agreed by its members, is to promote the attainment of general and complete disarmament under effective international control. Established in 1979, the CD is not a United Nations body but an autonomous body that receives support from the United Nations system. The budget of the CD secretariat is included in the United Nations budget, and the CD is permitted to hold its regular meetings in this very ornate and beautiful Council Chamber at the Palais des Nations.

While the CD is able to claim credit for important disarmament treaties negotiated in the period up to the mid-1990s, we have not been productive for the last seven years. It has been the mantra of successive Presidents before me, and rightly so, too, that the CD has been languishing in an idle mode for the last seven years, due to its inability to agree on a programme of work. While delegations have studiously attended CD meetings to deliver statements and to take part in discussions on issues affecting international peace and security, we have not been able to agree on how to move forward on substantive work on the various issues of importance and common concern on the agenda of the CD. We have, therefore, been unable to come up with anything productive in the last seven years that we can claim has contributed to the enhancement of global peace and security under effective international control. Although there is a proposal on a programme of work on the table (dubbed the A5 proposal) which enjoys broad support, some key delegations have yet to pronounce their position on it. If we do not, together, do something to move the CD forward, it will become irrelevant and will wither away as delegations refocus their limited resources on more pressing demands elsewhere. At a time when the global community is faced with grave challenges to its peace and security, the CD has no choice but to - in plain and simple English - get its act together.

The challenge before me, then, as current President of the CD, as with all my predecessors, is how to find the "magic formula" to get us to start our substantive work. How do I as President find the political will among key delegations to close that gap which still separates us from productive work? While I make no great promises to be able to bring out this magic formula, I will nevertheless exert maximum efforts to bring the delegations of the CD towards consensual agreement on a programme of work that is balanced and acceptable to all. That will be my prime objective. The time for each President to perform this miraculous job, however, is short. My task as President, besides presiding over meetings, is primarily to facilitate discussions and the meeting of minds. The success of the CD, my dear friends, lies not in my hands but in the hands of all delegations working together.

I know that in striving to achieve the noble objectives of the CD, delegations have the full support of Mr. Sergei Ordzhonikidze, Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and Director-General of the United Nations Office in Geneva, Mr. Enrique Román-Morey, Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, and other members of the secretariat. On behalf of the delegations to the CD, allow me to express our deepest appreciation to them for the unstinting support they have provided, and will continue to provide, to CD delegations and to the office of the President. I know that they share the deep frustration of the delegations over the lack of substantive progress in the CD over the last seven years.

(The President)

Let me close my first statement as CD President by wishing the Conference on Disarmament the very best in our search for consensual ground to move forward. I count on the support and cooperation of all present, including members of civil society who observe our work progress from the public gallery.

I now have pleasure in giving the floor to the first speaker of the morning, Ambassador François Rivasseau of France.

Mr. RIVASSEAU (France) (translated from French): Madam President, allow me to congratulate you on taking the Chair of the Conference and assure you of my delegation's full support.

The decision on civil society taken by the Conference on 12 February prompts my delegation to make a few comments that I would like to share with you. This declaration included a number of paragraphs, in particular paragraphs 2, 4 and 5, which were not fully satisfactory to us and in fact called for subsequent clarifications from the Chair. I would also note that the costs of the decision had not been precisely evaluated, and in the circumstances I would like to remind you of my country's position that the question of participation by civil society, which is very important, should not be envisaged independently from a positive outcome of a thoroughgoing debate on the general problem of improving the working methods of the Conference, following up the work done in the last few years in our forum.

We believe that the debate on this subject should continue. The important solutions that we sketched out last week will make much more sense in the framework of the simplification and rationalization of working methods, and it is in this spirit that we will continue our approach to this subject. The agreement of 12 February should not lead us to forget the other areas of work which still await us.

Madam President, I should like to thank you and to add in conclusion that we were deeply touched by the introductory statement that you have just made. It shows us the right direction, and we hope that we will be able to draw the fullest benefit from the coming weeks.

The PRESIDENT: I would like to thank Ambassador Rivasseau for his remarks. We will certainly take note of the comments he has made. Thank you very much for your kind words to the Chair. The next speaker on my list is Ambassador Mya Than of Myanmar.

Mr. THAN (Myanmar): Madam President, I am delighted to see you, a close friend and a sister from a fellow ASEAN member State and a friendly neighbouring country, Malaysia, presiding over the Conference on Disarmament. You know that you can count on the full support and cooperation of the Myanmar delegation. We are confident that you can and will provide effective leadership to the CD at this crucial juncture.

(Mr. Than, Myanmar)

I wish to bid farewell to the leaders of the delegations to the CD who have left Geneva on completion of their tours of duty: Ambassador Rakesh Sood of India, Ambassador Nugroho Wisnumurti of Indonesia, Ambassador Prasad Kariyawasam of Sri Lanka, Ambassador Johan Molander of Sweden, Ambassador Mykhailo Skuratovskyi of Ukraine and Ambassador Eui-Yong Chung of the Republic of Korea.

I should also like to welcome in our midst the new arrivals: Ambassador Michel Adam of Belgium, Ambassador Mikhail Wehbe of Syria, Ambassador Elisabet Borsiin Bonnier of Sweden, Ambassador Doru Costea of Romania, Ambassador Sarala Fernando of Sri Lanka, Ambassador Jackie Wolcott Sanders of the United States of America and Ambassador Hyuck Choi of the Republic of Korea.

I would be remiss if I did not pay tribute to your predecessor. I commend your predecessor, Ambassador Amina Mohamed of Kenya, for her skilful guidance in the smooth adoption of the agenda and the decision on the participation of civil society in the annual sessions of the CD.

The world is still at the teething stage of an emerging new world order. We do not know yet exactly what shape and character the new world order will assume, or what its manifold ramifications and full implications will be. The international security environment is also changing, and we are facing additional security threats, while still grappling with the old security problems.

We should, therefore, engage ourselves collectively as well as individually in a thoroughgoing exercise of soul-searching and deep reflection on the present and the future of multilateral efforts for arms control and disarmament.

The demise of the cold war in 1989 put an end to the East-West confrontation and ideological conflict. However, the post-cold-war era brings with it additional security threats. The post-cold-war situation has proved to be even more unpredictable and more complex.

Then the world witnessed with great shock the tragic events of the terrorists' attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon on 11 September 2001. This was another watershed in international relations. The post-11 September era presents us with additional security threats: the threats of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction. These threats have been even further magnified by the ongoing process of globalization.

How shall we cope with the additional security threats and challenges posed by the new international security environment today? How shall we continue our efforts to resolve the long-standing old security issues and address additional ones? How shall we make optimum use of the existing forums - including the CD, the sole multilateral negotiating forum in the field of disarmament - to negotiate necessary arms control and disarmament agreements, while exploring new possibilities wherever appropriate? All these important questions are tapping on our brains. We should try to find adequate answers to those questions.

(Mr. Than, Myanmar)

Although we are still striving to attain a clearer vision, some stark realities and hard facts have already been dawning upon us. However powerful a country may be, it cannot go it alone when it comes to dealing with global security problems. This has been demonstrated by international efforts in the war against terrorism. Although multilateralism is passing through a difficult time, it is certainly irreplaceable by unilateralism in dealing with global security problems. The twin problems of nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament must be dealt with in a coordinated and correlated manner. One problem cannot be resolved in isolation from the other. The same applies to the problems of non-proliferation and disarmament of other weapons of mass destruction.

This year's session of the CD is taking place at a difficult and delicate time for multilateral arms control and disarmament.

We have been witnessing the weakening of international commitments. To our dismay, even the commitments enshrined in the Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference have been called into question.

The international community has witnessed the demise of the ABM Treaty. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), which constitutes one of the urgent steps to be taken for the implementation of the systematic, progressive and irreversible process of nuclear disarmament, is still struggling for its entry into force. This important negotiating forum, the Conference on Disarmament, has been mired in an impasse for the past seven years, if we omit the year 1998 when the CD had a nominal programme of work but did not actually engage in any substantive work.

This is a defining moment for the Conference on Disarmament.

After seven years of impasse, the CD's credibility and relevance will be further questioned if the CD once again has another lost year in 2004. I believe that it is a view shared by all the member States of the CD that the CD must not have another blank year in 2004. To this end, let us go the extra mile and take the remaining gap in our stride to overcome the current impasse in the CD.

Although the CD has not been able up to now to take a decisive step to adopt a programme of work and start its full functions, the fact remains that there is no lack of efforts and initiatives on the part of the delegations to the CD in this respect. There have indeed been intensive efforts and consultations among the delegations of the CD with a view to reaching consensus on a programme of work.

Currently, the five Ambassadors' initiative - the A5 proposal - is on the table. It has served as a useful basis for consultations. I commend the five Ambassadors for their valuable contribution.

(Mr. Than, Myanmar)

As Ambassador Kuniko Inoguchi, the previous President of the CD said in her statement in the plenary on 20 January 2004, the A5 proposal has yet to achieve consensus, although many delegations have indicated their support for the initiative. We should do our utmost to narrow down the remaining differences and achieve consensus on a programme of work expeditiously.

We should build on the A5 proposal, and should welcome any other innovative proposals and initiatives that may help us to find common ground.

Bearing this in mind, I should like to propose a few amendments to the A5 proposal with a view to facilitating the ongoing intensive consultations in order to reach consensus on a programme of work as soon as possible. My humble intention in so doing is to complement the A5 proposal. I keep an open mind. I am very flexible.

In fact, I have consulted closely with Ambassador Mohamed-Salah Dembri of Algeria, the only remaining member of the original group of the A5, as well as with the Permanent Representatives of the A4, to work out a revised version of the A5 proposal, incorporating my proposed amendments.

This revised version may be termed the A6 proposal or the A5+1 proposal. Or it may be given another name. It does not matter. What really matters is substance. The text of this revised version is being circulated to all delegations to the CD as an informal paper for ready reference.

We do hope that this revised version will contribute towards narrowing down the remaining differences and facilitate our efforts to reach consensus on a programme of work.

Myanmar's proposed amendments consist of two parts: establishment of four ad hoc committees on the four main subjects, and appointment of special coordinators.

My humble intention is to build on the A5 proposal. I have added only a few new ideas, nuances and language that, I believe, will improve the text and facilitate our endeavours to bridge the remaining differences.

First, I should like to stress that draft I, on the establishment of the four ad hoc committees on nuclear disarmament, the fissile material ban, prevention of an arms race in outer space (PAROS) and security assurances (SA), respectively, is our priority. We should focus on it. Draft II on the appointment of special coordinators is of lesser importance, which we will pursue only if the member States are still interested in the appointment of special coordinators.

Second, my approach is, therefore, to delink the question of the establishment of the four ad hoc committees from that of the appointment of the special coordinators.

Third, I have attempted to make it a smaller package.

(Mr. Than, Myanmar)

We often talk about the need to refrain from making linkages. One merit of this approach is that the question of the establishment of the four ad hoc committees will be liberated from the rigid framework of a linkage with the question of the appointment of the special coordinators. This makes it shorter, simpler and easier to build consensus on.

Fourth, nuclear disarmament is the highest priority for Myanmar and most of the member States of the CD. It is also the first item on the agenda of the CD. Hence, I follow the order of the time-honoured agenda of the CD.

Fifth, on the issue of nuclear disarmament, my slight amendment is to stick to the agreed language of the Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference in order to make it simpler.

Sixth, I also leave out the Presidential statement to make it simpler and easier to reach an agreement on. Presidential statements are devices which we use as a fallback only when it has become absolutely necessary to supplement the programme of work. We may work on such a statement only when there is a need for it to clinch an agreement on a programme of work.

I believe that these proposed amendments will serve as useful building blocks in the evolving process aimed at achieving consensus on a programme of work. With an open mind and a flexible attitude, I would welcome any other constructive suggestion or amendment that will build on this revised text and will really advance our endeavours to clinch a deal on a programme of work.

But the time will soon come to stick to one revised text and concentrate on it so that we may seriously and earnestly get down to the business of negotiating the final consensus text of a programme of work acceptable to all the members of the CD.

May I now express some thoughts of the Myanmar delegation on additional issues or “out of the box” issues? The CD should be open to appropriate additional issues so that its work may remain relevant to the needs of our time.

In the view of the Myanmar delegation, the CD may address appropriate additional issues or “out of the box” issues that may include, among other things, measures to prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction; radiological weapons; some aspects of the prohibition on illicit trade in small arms; the prohibition on exports and illicit transfers of anti-personnel mines; compliance issues; missiles; and any other additional issues to be agreed upon by the member States of the CD.

This list is tentative, and not exhaustive. The important thing is that the CD should address whatever additional issues the member States can agree upon.

We should also keep the format and modalities of dealing with additional issues flexible. The CD may address additional issues at plenary meetings, either informal or formal. It may later establish an appropriate mechanism or mechanisms to deal with appropriate additional issues, as required.

(Mr. Than, Myanmar)

As to the question of what kind of product or products we can expect from such an exercise, we can have useful products such as political declarations, declarations of principles or even agreements. It all depends on the collective will and judgement of the member States of the CD.

We are ardent advocates of multilateralism. We must do our utmost to strengthen multilateralism, particularly in the field of arms control and disarmament. We are mindful of the fact that multilateralism is also a means, not an end, in itself. Multilateral forums should be put to their optimum use to deliver concrete results. The Conference on Disarmament and its predecessor bodies have delivered many important multilateral treaties, including the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention. We sincerely believe that the CD is capable of delivering new multilateral agreements, and of addressing additional security issues relevant to the needs of our time, provided that there is political will on the part of the member States.

Let us, therefore, revitalize the CD and let it perform its proper function, i.e. to negotiate multilateral arms control and disarmament agreements.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador Mya Than of Myanmar for his thought-provoking paper, and I am sure all delegations will reflect on the proposals he has just submitted. It is now my pleasure to invite Ambassador Portocarrero of Venezuela to take the floor to make a general statement.

Mr. SANTANA (Venezuela) (translated from Spanish): I will read out this statement on behalf of Ambassador Portocarrero, who was supposed to be present this morning in the room. Reasons beyond her control have prevented her from attending.

Madam President, for my country it is a genuine pleasure to see you in the Chair of the Conference. Professionally and personally we are sure that your extensive experience, your approach to encouraging decision-making and your firm commitment to disarmament offer sufficient grounds for hoping that there will be positive reactions to your proposals, which we will enthusiastically support. Similarly, and with equal enthusiasm, I would like to congratulate Ambassador Amina Mohamed, who with her diplomatic skill, her dynamism and her determination succeeded in mustering significant support among member States to intensify the work of the Conference and enable civil society to participate in this forum.

Allow me to outline a number of matters in relation to progress in my country during the past year in relation to disarmament and arms control, and also offer a number of thoughts concerning the future activities of the Conference on Disarmament.

Concerning anti-personnel landmines, on 24 September 2003, Venezuela, through the national armed forces, announced the destruction of 47,189 anti-personnel landmines, thereby fulfilling Venezuela's commitment entered into by virtue of article 4 of the Ottawa Convention, while retaining a reserve of 5,000 landmines for training purposes. During the recent meeting of the standing committees in this city, we gave a presentation confirming that our territory is free of stockpiles of anti-personnel landmines.

(Mr. Santana, Venezuela)

Concerning small arms, in 2003 we enacted the Disarmament Act. Under this instrument the Government will eliminate small arms, light weapons and home-made arms unlawfully held by members of the public. Similarly, there will be checks on gun licences and lawful possession using computerized registers and, lastly, weapons not in the possession of the State will be decommissioned. In this way we will seek to preserve peace, coexistence, the security of the community and its institutions as well as the physical integrity of individuals and their possessions. This is in line with the contents of the United Nations plan of action on small arms and light weapons, which Venezuela highly values and strongly supports.

I would also like to announce that we will shortly be ratifying the Convention for the prohibition of certain conventional weapons which are excessively injurious or have indiscriminate effects, thus enhancing our compliance with all disarmament instruments to which we are party, and demonstrating our firm commitment to all the measures which contribute to international peace and security as well as to respect for and promotion of the rules of international humanitarian law.

These announcements oblige me to set out my country's position concerning the activities of the Conference on Disarmament once again. Like other States, we are moving forward at the national level in addressing issues related to disarmament, without any corresponding movement in this single negotiating forum. This year which is beginning, it would seem, brings us new omens for achievement of the goals of the Conference on Disarmament: the renewed interest in the agenda in the shape of the intensive discussion prompted by the French delegation's proposal, the willingness to meet informally to discuss the items on the agenda, the inclusion of civil society in our work, and lastly, but no less importantly, the most recent statements by members who have added to the broad support enjoyed by the five Ambassadors' proposal, among them the whole Group of 21. In this regard, Venezuela is optimistic about the chances of securing a programme of work during the present year. To that end, we invite the countries which have not yet made their comments on this last proposal to do so, in order to clear the path for the future negotiations we must embark on in order to discharge our responsibility.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Venezuela. I understand that Ambassador Portocarrero could not be with us this morning. I would like to commend you on your optimism for starting up our substantive work for this year.

I would now like to take off my President's hat for a while to deliver a national statement as Ambassador of Malaysia to the Conference on Disarmament.

Last week, at the plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament on 12 February 2004, the Ambassador of the United States to the CD distributed a copy of United States President Bush's speech at the National Defense University in Washington, D.C. on 11 February 2004, which addressed the subject of weapons of mass destruction. In the speech, the United States President made several undue references to Malaysia. Malaysia is indeed disappointed that the speech appears to question the commitment of the Government of Malaysia on the issue of nuclear non-proliferation.

(The President)

Malaysia refutes any suggestion that a Malaysian company, SCOPE, is involved with an international network which supports the illegal production of centrifuges. Since reports of the alleged involvement of SCOPE in the production of certain centrifuge components, Malaysia has undertaken thorough investigations and extended full cooperation to all concerned. SCOPE has confirmed that, while it did manufacture 14 semi-finished components for Gulf Technical Industries (GTI) based in Dubai, their end use was never disclosed by GTI or any other party. SCOPE's contract with GTI was publicly disclosed during the listing of its parent company, SCOMI, on the Kuala Lumpur stock exchange in May 2003, as required by the regulating authority.

Investigations have shown that the components made by SCOPE for GTI, which included casings and clamp holders, were generic - I repeat, generic - and suitable for several uses. Investigations also confirmed that SCOPE did not and does not have the capability to manufacture a complete centrifuge unit, or a majority of the parts needed to assemble a centrifuge.

It must be stressed that Malaysia has always supported international efforts to prevent the illegal transfer of nuclear technology or the illegal production of materials which may be abused for the clandestine development of weapons of mass destruction. Malaysia is committed not only to non-proliferation but also to the total and complete elimination of all weapons of mass destruction.

Malaysia therefore regrets that an ordinary business contract entered into by SCOPE has been distorted, exaggerated and blown out of proportion. We take exception to the fact that Malaysia has been deliberately singled out in the speech when President Bush had also clearly stated that other necessary parts were purchased through network operatives based in Europe, the Middle East and Africa. Yet the President failed to name those countries hosting them.

Malaysia feels offended that it has been unfairly and deliberately targeted by President Bush, thus tarnishing Malaysia's track record on the issue of non-proliferation. Malaysia does not belong to the league of nations with nuclear aspirations, and it is for this reason that the United States should refrain from implicating the country in nuclear proliferation activities. Malaysia would hope that the United States would manage its affairs with small countries like Malaysia with fairness.

The Honourable Foreign Minister of Malaysia, Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar, issued a press statement on 13 February 2004 containing the above rebuttal we have just made in response to the remarks of President Bush. The delegation of Malaysia to the CD hereby requests the secretariat to distribute copies of this statement and the press statement of the Foreign Minister of Malaysia to delegations and observers to the Conference on Disarmament, and to enter these documents as official documents of the Conference on Disarmament.

I would now like to resume my role as President of the Conference. That concludes my list of speakers for today. Does any delegation wish to take the floor at this point in time, before we move on to other business? That does not seem to be the case, so I will move on to our closing remarks.

(The President)

Before I adjourn this first meeting of the Conference on Disarmament under my presidency, I would like to inform all delegations that, unfortunately, I will have to be out of Geneva from 23 February to 1 March to attend the summit meeting of the Group of 15 in Caracas, Venezuela, in my capacity as Personal Representative of the Prime Minister of Malaysia to the G-15. While I am conscious of my duties as President of the CD and would like to be here in Geneva throughout my term, this is one official duty that I cannot skip, since the Prime Minister of Malaysia will be attending the G-15 summit, so I hope you will bear with me. In fact, several other Ambassadors of the CD who are G-15 members will also be going with me to Caracas.

During my week's absence I will be temporarily replaced as President of the CD, as provided for under article 10 of the CD's rules of procedure, by Ambassador Pablo Macedo of Mexico, who is next in line after Malaysia to take over the presidency. Ambassador Macedo, an able and distinguished diplomat, will preside over the CD meeting on Thursday, 26 February 2004, and the Presidential consultations the day before. I hope you will take note of this announcement.

Now, on another issue on the follow-up to the decision on civil society, you will recall that at the plenary meeting last Thursday under the chairmanship of Ambassador Amina, the Conference adopted a decision on the enhancement of civil society in the work of the Conference on Disarmament. Paragraph 5 of the decision, you will recall, refers inter alia to a formal selection process that will be put in place to consider requests from non-governmental organizations to address the Conference. In this connection, as a follow-up to that decision, I would like to request the secretariat to prepare a background paper on a selection process, and I would be very grateful if this paper could be finalized before 4 March 2004. So you have about two weeks to prepare this.

I had also intended to convene an informal plenary on Thursday, 4 March, and possibly to continue on 11 March, on the subject of the CD's programme of work, so as to provide delegations with an opportunity to have a lively cross-group interaction on the programme of work which has eluded us so far. These meetings are to be held immediately after the plenary meetings scheduled for those days. I raised this question yesterday in the Presidential consultations. Since I have learned this morning from one Group Coordinator that there is one delegation which would still like to refer this matter to its capital, I do not believe we have a consensus as yet on the proposal, and I will leave the proposal on the table for the time being until I hear again from all delegations that they are willing to come on board.

With that I would like, before we conclude our business for today, to check whether there are any delegations which would still like to take the floor. That does not seem to be the case, so this concludes our business for today.

The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Thursday, 26 February 2004, at 10 a.m. in this conference room under the temporary chairmanship of Ambassador Pablo Macedo of Mexico.

The meeting rose at 11.10 a.m.