

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE ONE THOUSAND AND EIGHTY-FOURTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Friday, 25 January 2008, at 10.10 a.m.

President:

Mr. Samir LABIDI

(Tunisia)

The PRESIDENT (spoke in French): I declare open the 1084th plenary session of the Conference on Disarmament. As the session of the Conference on Disarmament begins, I should like to bid a somewhat belated farewell to our colleagues who have left the Conference since the closure of the 2007 session in September: Ambassador Toufiq Ali of Bangladesh, Ambassador Cheng Jingye of China, Ambassador Prasad of India, Ambassador Shein of Myanmar, Ambassador Bocar Ly of Senegal and Ambassador Strømme of Norway. I am certain that you will join me in requesting their delegations to convey to them our deep appreciation for their many valuable contributions to our endeavours as well as our sincere wishes for success and satisfaction in their new assignments. Allow me also to extend a cordial welcome to our new colleagues who have assumed their responsibilities as representatives of their Governments to the Conference, namely: Ambassador Bhattacharya of Bangladesh, Ambassador Wang Qun of China, Ambassador Hamid Ali Rao of India, Ambassador Lucia Fiori of Italy, Ambassador Lwin of Myanmar, Ambassador Bente Angell-Hansen of Norway, Ambassador Babacar Carlos Mbaye of Senegal, as well as Ambassador Bersheda of Ukraine, in his new capacity as Ambassador to the Conference on Disarmament.

I take this opportunity to assure them of our cooperation and our support in their new assignments.

Allow me to tell you how honoured Tunisia is to take the Chair of the Conference on Disarmament. Personally, I deeply appreciate this responsibility for this year, which is an important stage in the work of the Conference.

In this way the opening meeting, the 1083rd plenary meeting held on Wednesday, 23 January 2008, was an important event with two honoured guests, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations, and Mr. Abdelwaheb Abdallah, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tunisia. This event, unprecedented at the opening of the Conference, is perceived by our assembly as an encouragement to highlight the efforts of all the members of the Conference. The messages delivered by our distinguished guests bear witness to their resolute commitment to progress in the work of the Conference. It is a pleasure for me to personally thank my predecessors here for their meritorious efforts - Ambassadors Glaudine Mtshali of South Africa, Juan Antonio March of Spain, Sarala Fernando of Sri Lanka, Elisabet Borsiin-Bonnier of Sweden, Jürg Streuli of Switzerland and lastly Faysal Khabbaz Hamoui of Syria.

For me, this is also an opportunity to thank Mr. Sergei Ordzhonikidze, Secretary-General of the Conference, and all his colleagues, for their assistance and their readiness to cooperate.

In connection with our work, allow me to indicate that, as shown in the report of the Conference on Disarmament to the General Assembly of the United Nations for 2007, published under the symbol CD/1831 on 13 September 2007, it was my pleasure on several occasions to meet my predecessor the Ambassador of Syria, who had the honour to preside over the successful adoption of the 2007 report, to which we attach particular importance. The Chair also held bilateral consultations in New York starting in October 2007 on the occasion of my participation in the work of the First Committee of the General Assembly of the United Nations, later continued in Geneva. These consultations were held with all the delegations of member

(The President)

States, one by one, and were completed in mid-January 2008. These consultations, to which a considerable amount of time was devoted, provided us with an opportunity to hold fruitful meetings in order to target and discuss with all our colleagues the questions which enjoy our attention. I should like to say to them how much I appreciated the friendly and active collegial spirit which they all showed to us. Hence I wish to thank you particularly for your encouragement and your support. Apart from those bilateral consultations, many productive meetings were held in parallel with the 2008 Presidents at the ambassadorial and expert level.

At all of those meetings the working method was characterized by a careful hearing given to delegations, interactive dialogue, transparency, a spirit of openness and constructive analysis. This huge workload which we are shouldering with a sense of responsibility gave rise to results which we hope will be convincing in order to move forward the Conference proceedings, which will be closely followed by the international community.

Allow me now to give you an overview of the meetings held by the Chair with the Permanent Representatives to the Conference within the framework of the bilateral consultations and concerning the status of the preparatory work. The conclusions of the Chair's consultations clearly indicate that there is a widespread feeling among the members of the Conference in favour of the adoption of the agenda as of the first working meetings and, if possible, at today's meeting. We express the hope that the draft agenda of the 2008 session as contained in document CD/WP.548 will be adopted in the course of this sitting.

The adoption of the agenda will enable us to highlight the resolve of all member States so that the Conference can, as of day one, give a strong signal concerning its determination to move forward.

It should also be pointed out that in the framework of his intersessional consultations, the President has had useful exchanges of views with all delegations in connection with the documents on the work programme for the Conference for 2007. In connection with those documents, while many delegations have indicated their support for the President's proposal, other delegations said that they would not oppose the consensus. Some delegations considered that the work should be continued and additional consultations held in order to reach consensus. The Chair nevertheless noted the good will shown by the various parties in relation to the need to provide fresh impetus to our efforts in order to reach an agreement which would reflect the consensus reached on the basis of the President's proposal, which remains a solid foundation for work. Is it possible? Encouraged by the tenor of those consultations and attached to the spirit of dialogue and understanding which it has noted, the Chair considers that it would be both advisable and timely to continue the consultations begun during the intersessional period tirelessly, calmly and tenaciously in order to achieve the much-desired consensus.

I wish to assure you that the Chair will spare no effort to continue its consultations in order to identify and develop any element which can contribute to the spirit of consensus in order to move the work of the Conference forward. In this way it has striven for months to hold

(The President)

consultations at the P-6 level and meetings with the coordinators of the regional groups in parallel with the bilateral consultations. The informal plenary consultation of Monday, 21 January 2008 made it possible in particular for the Chair to submit to the delegations of member States an overview of the schedule of activities proposed for your attention.

I shall also ensure that I submit to you a full timetable of activities at various levels in order to ensure the best working conditions in a spirit of dialogue, understanding and openness.

I should like to take this opportunity to tell you how much importance we attach to the success of the Conference's work, which this year, in our opinion, should make considerable progress which we already sensed last year. In this way we have noted with interest and consideration the presence for the first time of two distinguished speakers, as I said before, at the opening session on Wednesday, 23 January, who encouraged us in our efforts to move our work forward.

I intend to suspend the formal meeting later and to have an informal meeting to consider the draft agenda. Once more I call on delegations to display the constructive spirit that they demonstrated during our consultations as well as constructive flexibility so that we can adopt the agenda for the 2008 session as soon as possible. Thank you.

On the list of speakers for today's plenary meeting, I have the representative of China.

Mr. WANG (China) (spoke in Chinese): First of all, allow me to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency for the first period of the 2008 session of the Conference on Disarmament. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank your predecessor, the ambassador of the Syrian Arab Republic, for his effective and fruitful work as the last President of the Conference in 2007.

Mr. President, allow me also to thank you for welcoming me to the Conference on Disarmament. This is indeed the first time that I am taking part in a formal meeting of this body in my capacity as the new Ambassador of China to the Conference on Disarmament, and I am fully aware of the heavy responsibility which that office places upon me.

At the present time, traditional security threats remain with us while such non-traditional security threats as terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and others pose new challenges to international peace and security. As the sole multilateral negotiating body for arms control, the Conference on Disarmament is entrusted with the crucial task of revitalizing the process of multilateral arms control. To that end, the international community should seek to build on the consensus that has already been achieved and work in a cooperative spirit to bring new vigour to the Conference on Disarmament so that it can play its full role in meeting the multiple challenges to our security and in promoting international peace and security.

We listened attentively to the statement delivered by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon at the opening session of our Conference, in which he appealed to all parties to show a spirit of compromise in order to carry forward the work of our Conference and to build on the progress made in 2007 with the aim of making this year a breakthrough year for the Conference on

(Mr. Wang, China)

Disarmament. In the view of the Chinese delegation, the principal task faced by the Conference is for us all to build on the achievements of the last two years and, through dialogue and consultation, to seek to narrow our differences in order to come up with a work programme that is comprehensively balanced and acceptable to all parties. We believe that if all member States can henceforth maintain their past tradition of showing respect for one another and treating one another as equals and, in particular, can show consideration for the specific concerns of all parties, we can surely brighten the prospects for the successful adoption of our programme of work. Indeed, thanks to the joint efforts of all members of the Conference on Disarmament over the past two years, the differences between all parties on the relevant items are gradually being narrowed. We have every reason for optimism and confidence in the future of our Conference.

China has always firmly supported and actively participated in the work of the Conference. We sincerely hope that consensus can soon be reached among the members of the Conference so that substantive work can be resumed on the core items on our agenda, which affect the interests of all parties, thereby making a new contribution to the process of disarmament and the promotion of global security. There is an ancient saying in China that, on a journey of 100 miles, the first 90 are only halfway. In other words, whatever the undertaking, the closer you get to your goal, the more difficult it becomes. The corollary of this, of course, is that if things are getting harder, it means you're getting closer to your goal. To break the present deadlock in the Conference, there are three things that we should bear in mind. First, we must remain patient and step up our efforts to consult and communicate with one another. Second, we must respect the concerns of all parties and show flexibility on all sides. Third, we must abide by the rules of procedure and maintain a spirit of transparency and openness. I believe that, so long as we can stick to these three points, we will undoubtedly be able to resume the substantive work of the Conference at an early date. My delegation stands ready to work with all other parties and will continue, working in a constructive spirit, to do its utmost in pursuit of that goal.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in French): I thank the representative of China for his statement and for his kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to His Excellency the Permanent Representative and Ambassador of the Russian Federation.

Mr. LOSHCHININ (Russian Federation) (spoke in Russian): Mr. President, allow me once again to welcome you as the first President of the Conference for 2008. You can always count on the unswerving support and cooperation of the delegation of the Russian Federation as you carry out your activities.

We also express our gratitude to the delegation of Syria, whose activities helped us to successfully complete work last year.

We are starting our work at a challenging time. The international community and our forum face some extremely acute problems, which were pointed out in particular by the Secretary-General of the United Nations when he addressed the Conference yesterday. Indeed, the extension of conflict in international politics, the exacerbation of regional crises and of the terrorist threat, the growing risks of proliferation of WMD, stagnation in the disarmament area - all this threatens international stability, diverts resources from constructive purposes and calls into question the possibility of achieving sustained economic growth worldwide.

(Mr. Loshchinin, Russian Federation)

What we are faced with is an acute need to agree within the context of open and frank debate on clear, widely acceptable and universal rules and principles for interaction in international affairs. It was that sort of discussion, which would allow us to arrive at consistent and realistic approaches to the resolution of acute issues facing the world in a period of globalization, that was called for by President Putin at an international conference held in Munich on 11 February 2007.

Stepping up efforts to achieve genuine disarmament would certainly help to strengthen strategic stability and international security. Russia is committed to the multilateral approach to resolving the issues of non-proliferation, arms control, disarmament and confidence-building through the strict implementation and strengthening of existing international legal agreements and the development of new ones. We believe in the need to make more active use of the potential of the Conference on Disarmament to help to strengthen the global regime for WMD non-proliferation and disarmament.

Ensuring security in outer space is a priority issue for Russia in the Conference on Disarmament. The problem of the prevention of an arms race in outer space has many facets and dimensions to it. The Conference must show that this can be achieved through multilateral agreement, taking account of the legitimate interests of all States by filling in the well-known gaps in international space law. It is time to move from words to deeds.

As you know, Russia as a co-sponsor with China has developed a draft treaty on the prevention of the deployment of weapons in outer space, the threat or use of force against outer space objects. This draft will be officially submitted for consideration by the Conference by Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov of the Russian Federation on 12 February 2008. As you know, the elements of this treaty were proposed by Russia and China together with a group of co-sponsors back in June 2002, and have been fruitfully discussed for more than four years now. We propose that in our future work on PAROS we should focus on the idea of developing this treaty. We believe that relevant academic and non-governmental organizations will subscribe to it. We are convinced that all the interesting and substantive ideas and proposals which have already been put forward will be drawn on this year when the Conference resumes substantive work on the draft treaty.

As in the past, we are prepared not to object to the start of negotiations on a treaty to prohibit the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear devices under the agenda item "Cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament" and, of course, within the CD's agreed programme of work. The drafting of such a treaty would constitute one more multilateral measure in the field of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation and thus would be a real contribution to strengthening the NPT regime.

Of course we have no objection to the holding of substantive discussions within an agreed programme of work of the Conference on the issue of nuclear disarmament and prospects of achieving appropriate international agreements on security assurances to States which do not possess nuclear weapons. We are ready to take an active part in such debates.

(Mr. Loshchinin, Russian Federation)

I wish to emphasize that the draft agenda of the Conference is acceptable to Russia, and we believe that it will soon be adopted by consensus.

Sir, as the first President of the 2008 session of the Conference, you have the difficult duty of drawing up the basic blueprint for and the practical organization of the work of the session. The main aim we all share is to achieve consensus on the programme of work by seeking compromise solutions which suit all States without exception, and resuming the substantive activity of the Conference. We welcome the decision taken by all six Presidents of the Conference this year to coordinate their efforts throughout the session by targeting them on this common aim. The proposals you have developed are, we believe, important, constructive and very promising.

We need to get the subject of disarmament back on the global agenda as soon as possible. We must do our utmost to succeed in that task, and a very important step in that direction would be agreement on a programme of work for the Conference on the basis of document L.1. The Russian delegation will be guided by that approach and will do all it can to ensure a positive outcome.

We wish you, Sir, and your colleagues in the group of six Presidents every success in your work.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in French): I thank the representative of the Russian Federation for his statement and, on my own behalf and on behalf of my colleagues, the six Presidents, for his kind words addressed to the Chair.

I have no other speakers on my list. Is there any other delegation wishing to take the floor now? That does not seem to be the case. I now give the floor to His Excellency the representative of the Netherlands.

Mr. LANDMAN (Netherlands) (spoke in French): I wish to raise a point of order. I carefully listened to your introduction and I should like to know whether I have properly understood that during our informal session we will in fact deal with every important subject relating to the agreement on our agenda, which is the basis of everything, and that we will then reach agreement on the question of those countries that wish to participate in the work of the Conference as observers, and that finally we will resume our formal plenary meeting, in which some delegations, including my own, for example, may perhaps wish to make statements of a political nature.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in French): That is precisely what I was going to say. As I said, I am now going to suspend the official plenary meeting and invite the Conference to consider in the informal meeting which will immediately follow the draft agenda for the 2008 session as contained in document CD/WP.548, as well as the requests from States not members of the Conference which wish to participate in our work during this session, as reproduced in document CD/WP.547. Afterwards, we will resume the official plenary meeting in order to

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formalize the agreements we have reached at the informal plenary meeting. I should like to remind you that the informal plenary meeting is open to the member States of the Conference only. The present plenary meeting is suspended.

The meeting was suspended at 10.40 a.m. and resumed at 10.50 a.m.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in French): The 1084th plenary meeting is resumed. At the informal plenary meeting which has just ended, we reached agreement on the draft agenda. May I take it that the Conference decides to adopt the agenda of its 2008 session, as contained in document CD/WP.548, which is before you?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in French): This agenda will be issued as an official document of the Conference by the secretariat.

In connection with the adoption of the agenda, I, as the President of the Conference, should like to state that it is understood that if there is a consensus in the Conference to deal with any issues, they can be dealt with within this agenda. The Conference will also take into consideration paragraphs 27 and 30 of its rules of procedure.

I should now like to invite the Conference to take a decision on the requests for participation in our work from States not members of the Conference. These requests are contained in document CD/WP.547 and have been made by the following States: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, Costa Rica, United Arab Emirates, Estonia, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Georgia, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Iceland, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Kuwait, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Mauritius, Moldova, Mozambique, Oman, Philippines, Portugal, Czech Republic, Holy See, Serbia, Slovenia, and Sudan.

Does any delegation wish to take the floor at this stage?

May I take it that the Conference decides to invite these States to participate in our work in accordance with the rules of procedure?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in French): I see that the observer States' nameplates have been set out. On your behalf, I bid them welcome. Before proceeding, I wish to announce that Mr. Sergey Lavrov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, will address the Conference on 12 February next. In addition, on Tuesday, 5 February, the Conference will be addressed by the Minister of Defence of the United Kingdom, Mr. Browne, and on Thursday, 7 February by the Administrator of the National Nuclear Security Administration of the United States, Mr. D'Agostino. I now give the floor to delegations that so wish. I give the floor to the Ambassador of Slovenia, who will be speaking on behalf of the European Union.

Mr. LOGAR (Slovenia): Mr. President, I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union, the candidate countries Croatia and The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the countries of the stabilization and association process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, which align themselves with this declaration.

Since this is the first time I am taking the floor during your presidency, allow me to begin by congratulating you on your assumption of the post of President of the Conference on Disarmament, particularly since you are taking your post as the first in a row of six presidencies in this 2008 session. I would like to assure you and the other P-6 presidencies chairing the Conference on Disarmament in 2008 of my full personal support and the support of the European Union in your efforts to continue the work of the Conference, particularly in overcoming its long-standing impasse. I would, furthermore, like to commend you and the other P-6 presidencies for the successful adoption of the traditional agenda of the Conference on Disarmament for this annual session.

The European Union is satisfied with the work of the P-6 presidencies in 2006 and 2007. This allowed the Conference on Disarmament to make progress over the last two years. The European Union welcomes the fact that the P-6 model of close and continuous coordination among the Presidents of the annual session has been retained for 2008.

The European Union is convinced that the 2007 session of the Conference on Disarmament marked an important step forward. The six presidencies that led it in 2007, namely South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland and Syria, successfully steered the work of the Conference, particularly during the first part of the annual session. In this context, I would like to thank on behalf of the European Union all seven coordinators, Ambassador Strømme of Norway, Ambassador Trezza of Italy, Ambassador Meyer of Canada, Ambassador Paranhos of Brazil, Ambassador Draganov of Bulgaria, Ambassador Wibisono of Indonesia and Ambassador Duncan of the United Kingdom, for their valuable work. In March 2007, the P-6 proposed the adoption of the work programme (document L.1) that includes many elements.

Allow me to underline once again the importance the European Union attaches to the Conference on Disarmament as the single multilateral forum at the disposal of the international community for global negotiations in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation. The European Union has been working consistently on the adoption of a programme of work. We will spare no efforts to revitalize this unique forum in order to resume negotiations and substantive work.

It is well known that the European Union attaches clear priority to the negotiation, without preconditions, in the Conference on Disarmament, of a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, as a means to strengthen disarmament and non-proliferation. It constitutes a priority ripe for negotiation. The European Union is also ready to engage in substantial discussion on the other items included

(Mr. Logar, Slovenia)

in L.1: on nuclear disarmament and the prevention of nuclear war, dealing with issues related to the prevention of an arms race in outer space and dealing with appropriate international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, as well as on other issues related to the Conference on Disarmament agenda.

The European Union is deeply convinced that document L.1, which was later complemented by documents CRP.5 and CRP.6, constitutes a carefully crafted compromise. The European Union appeals to all delegations of the Conference on Disarmament to go along with the consensus and adopt the documents which have been on the table since last year's session. This cannot be delayed much further.

The European Union wishes success to the 2008 P-6. As in past years, we will continuously support all efforts that can lead to a breakthrough, the adoption of the work programme and the resumption of negotiations and substantive work.

Finally, the European Union would like to remind you of our long-standing attachment to the enlargement process of the Conference on Disarmament, in particular to those member States of the European Union which are not yet members of the Conference on Disarmament but which already submitted their formal requests for membership many, many years ago.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in French): I thank the representative of Slovenia, who spoke on behalf of the European Union. I thank him for his statement and for his kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Netherlands.

Mr. LANDMAN (Netherlands): Mr. President, further to the substantive EU statement pronounced by the Ambassador of Slovenia, also on behalf of the Netherlands, I would like to add the following.

First of all, of course, I would like to congratulate you on this very smooth adoption of our agenda, which I would like to take as good auspices for our further proceedings this year. We are extremely pleased that like last year, and before last year, we have chosen to work together with the other five incoming Presidents during the sessions of the CD this year. This is indeed the basis for good work.

Last Wednesday, for the first time in our history, the United Nations Secretary-General addressed the yearly opening of the CD. He used very strong words, and I may quote from that: "The international community values the Conference on Disarmament as the world's single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum - but we need progress. ... Even with widespread agreement on the gravity of threats to international peace and security, you still have not been able to find common cause to address them. I am deeply troubled by this impasse over priorities. ... When you were at the verge of reaching a decision on this draft Presidential decision last June, I called on you to move forward in a spirit of compromise to seize that historic opportunity. You did not. ... Let us make this a breakthrough year."

(Mr. Landman, Netherlands)

We gained momentum last year. It should not be lost. A balanced and carefully crafted compromise for a work programme is on the table. On this we must proceed. There is no other way.

To inspire us in the coming weeks, I would like to give you some quotes which represent, so to speak, some part of the collective wisdom of our globalized world. I would like to start with a quote from the former Prime Minister of India, Nehru: "Crisis and deadlocks when they occur have at least this advantage, that they force us to think." Then I would like to go a little bit back in our history and go to Plutarch, who said: "Perseverance is more prevailing than violence; and many things which cannot be overcome when they are together yield themselves up when taken little by little." Then I would like to quote from Molière, who said: "It is not only what we do, but also what we do not do, for which we are accountable."

Now for those who believe, and apparently increasingly so, while we stay idle and are almost confirming such a view - and I am referring to the view that there is simply no realistic prospect of a nuclear-free world - for those who believe that, I would like to quote from the article in the Wall Street Journal on 15 January of this year, by George Shultz, William Perry, Henry Kissinger and Sam Nunn: "In some respects, the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons is like the top of a very tall mountain from the vantage point of our troubled world today. We cannot even see the top of the mountain, and it is tempting and easy to say, 'we cannot get there from here', but the risks from continuing to go down the mountain or standing pat are too real to ignore. We must chart a course to higher ground where the mountain top becomes more visible."

The PRESIDENT (spoke in French): I thank the Ambassador of the Netherlands for his statement and his kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Sri Lanka.

Mr. JAYATILLEKA (Sri Lanka): I would like to make it clear that I speak on behalf of Sri Lanka rather than as the representative of the G-21.

Listening to my colleague from the Netherlands, I was wondering really whether the wisdom of the ages gives us all that much comfort, because Heraclitus did say: "War is the master and father of all things." So that gives us very cold comfort in a conference on disarmament. I am not really sure therefore that it is very helpful to quote selectively thinkers of past and present.

What I would like to draw attention to is the fact that strivings in the field of nuclear weaponization are a symptom. They are a symptom of insecurity, real or perceived. They are an epiphenomenon of certain projects, of certain efforts to maintain or gain positions or status. In other words, there are underlying reasons for the build-up and proliferation of these awful weapons.

(Mr. Jayatilleka, Sri Lanka)

It is incumbent on us to be sensitive to those issues, concerns, dynamics of countries, and among countries, that result in the phenomenon we are trying to combat. Stemming from that consideration, I am not at all convinced that a chorus of exhortation to climb on board the bandwagon is the most successful way to go, because if certain States - and here I agree with my colleague from China: all States have to be treated as equal partners in this endeavour - if certain States have misgivings which have prevented them from being able to sign on to an otherwise worthwhile platform, then they must be engaged constructively. Security guarantees must be extended. Their real underlying concerns must be addressed, and the whole perspective must be one which is guided by the methodology or the attitude recommended by the ancients, that of holism. Without a holistic perspective, we will not be able to understand the phenomenon of hold-outs. So we need understanding, concern, wisdom, patience, reaching out to these partners of ours, making modifications if necessary, being flexible and drawing everybody into our constructive pursuit.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in French): I thank the Ambassador of Sri Lanka for his statement. Are there any other speakers? Allow me to tell you as we come to the end of this meeting that I would like to take this opportunity to say how much the Chair has appreciated the spirit of cooperation and understanding which you have displayed in order to adopt the agenda today at this meeting. The Conference has thus sent a strong signal of its resolve to go forward in the interest of one and all. It is also a challenge that we have to take up to impart the best impetus to our work. You may rely on the Chair to continue working in wholehearted cooperation with all of you throughout this year. Once again, I thank you. We have thus completed our work for today. The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Tuesday, 29 January 2008, at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 11.15 a.m.