

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE FOUR HUNDRED AND FORTY-THIRD PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 25 February 1988, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Harald Rose (German Democratic Republic)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 443rd plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

In conformity with its programme of work, the Conference continues today its consideration of agenda items 1, "Nuclear test ban", and 2, "Cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament". 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.

I have no speakers on my list for today. However, as you know, it is the practice of the Conference to maintain open the possibility for any member wishing to take the floor to do so at any time during plenary meetings. This is also in conformity with the provisions of rule 30 of the rules of procedure, which I mentioned a moment ago. Accordingly, may I ask if any representative wishes to take the floor at this stage? That is not the case.

The secretariat has circulated today, at my request, the timetable of meetings to be held by the Conference and its subsidiary bodies during the coming week. It has been prepared in consultation with the chairmen of the ad hoc committees. May I note that the timetable is merely indicative and subject to change, if needed. If there is no objection, I shall take it that the Conference adopts the timetable.

It was so decided.

Allow me now to make a few observations on the work done by the Conference in this month.

The Conference on Disarmament has commenced this year's activities amidst a changed international situation. After years of harsh confrontation, a continuing arms race and growing tensions, a turn for the better appears possible, as evidenced by the INF agreement.

The news that, on this very day, the withdrawal of Soviet shorter-range nuclear missiles from the German Democratic Republic is beginning will surely be received with great interest. What we have here is a concrete step designed to promote the rapid ratification and implementation of the INF Treaty.

The outcome of Secretary of State Schultz's visit to Moscow has bolstered expectations that an accord will be achieved to cut strategic offensive weapons by 50 per cent and to continue observance of the ABM Treaty.

The disarmament process must now be advanced on all levels, as was so emphatically demanded by the Foreign Ministers of Czechoslovakia, Indonesia, Hungary, Italy, the Federal Republic of Germany, Finland and Brazil, as well as the Deputy Foreign Minister of the Soviet Union. Their presence at this forum marked the political high point of this month. We heard powerful pleas for an enhanced role for the Conference and an overall strengthening of multilateral disarmament efforts, as well as the reaffirmation of the principle that multilateral and bilateral disarmament negotiations should

(The President)

complement and reinforce each other. The practical proposals put forward by them deserve our full attention, notably those aimed at the rapid conclusion of negotiations on the complete prohibition of chemical weapons.

The high-ranking guests also make it clear that they hoped the Geneva Conference on Disarmament would make a meaningful contribution to the third special session of the United Nations General Assembly devoted to disarmament. It is for us now to heed this message and to meet the challenge. The participation of 15 delegations of non-members is further proof of the extraordinary interest countries are taking in this forum.

Thanks to the constructive spirit that prevailed, the Conference got off to a quick start, which is essential in view of the relatively short span of time left for substantive work.

Following the adoption of the 1988 agenda and the programme of work for the first half of the session, we have succeeded in setting up a number of committees, most of which have already begun their negotiations and deliberations under the guidance of experienced and skilled chairpersons. The Group of Seven, whose task it is to suggest ways and means of rendering the work of the Conference more effective, has resumed its activities.

Steps have been taken to commence the process of preparing the required special report, which should become an important document for the work of SSOD-III.

We should not close our eyes to the fact that - despite the good atmosphere and the solution of organizational issues - there are still too few indications of tangible results being around the corner.

Not even the negotiations to ban chemical weapons have to date regained last year's momentum. Also, no agreement has been reached thus far on the re-establishment of the Ad hoc Committee on Outer Space. Owing to the considerable flexibility exhibited by many delegations on this issue, a consensus seemed so close last week. Under that consensus, deliberations would once again have been started as early as possible on the basis of the past year's mandate and presidential statement. However, there is no unanimous readiness to consent to the procedural scenario that was hammered out as a balanced compromise in February last year. For that reason, consultations will have to go on.

Additional intensive efforts are required to arrive at organizational arrangements on agenda items 1 to 3.

Informal consultations on other pending subjects need to be continued - for instance, on the expansion of the membership of the Conference and the proposal that a group of experts be set up under item 7 to identify new types and systems of weapons of mass destruction.

(The President)

In order to animate the discussion on a number of specific proposals, I arranged what may be called a first informal exchange of views on the Soviet initiative regarding a special group of scientific experts to be entrusted with looking into the structure and functioning of an international system to verify a nuclear test ban, and the establishment of an international system of global radiation safety monitoring, as well as the Australian proposal concerning the setting up of a permanent global seismic monitoring network.

Before I come to the end of my remarks, I wish to thank all delegations for the assistance they have extended to me in so many ways during my presidency. I am especially appreciative of the significant contribution the main co-ordinators, Ambassadors Meiszter, Taylhardat, Pugliese and Fan, as well as the subject co-ordinators, have made towards the solution of the problems mentioned above.

Let me, in this connection, express my gratitude to my predecessor, Ambassador Morel of France, who offered counsel and guidance in the preparatory phase of the session.

I wish my successor, Ambassador von Stülpnagel of the Federal Republic of Germany, every success in his term of office, and I would like to assure him of my delegation's constructive support.

My sincere thanks also go to the Secretary-General of the Conference, Ambassador Komatina, the Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference, Ambassador Berasategui, and the members of their staff, as well as the conference services, the interpreters and the translators for their dependable work. I think I should not forget either to say how grateful I am to the Chief of Protocol for his valuable help during the stay of our high-ranking visitors.

What will be important now is to make use of the time remaining until the end of the spring session and the beginning of SSOD-III in order to arrive at tangible results and thus to demonstrate that this Conference does indeed occupy a significant place in the overall process of preserving peace through disarmament.

As there is no other business for today, I now intend to adjourn this plenary meeting.

The next plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament will be held, in principle, on Tuesday 1 March. However, if, as a result of the consultations being conducted at present, there are new developments relating to the adoption of an organizational arrangement for agenda item 5, "Prevention of an arms race in outer space", I shall request the secretariat to convene a brief plenary meeting to deal with that question.

The meeting rose at 10.10 a.m.