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Official Records

Disarmament Commission

210th Meeting

Monday, 21 April 1997, 11 a.m.
New York

Chairman: Mr. Garcia (Colombia)

The meeting was called to order at 11 a.m.

Opening of the session

The Chairman (*interpretation from Spanish*): I declare open the 1997 substantive session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission.

Statement by the Chairman

The Chairman (*interpretation from Spanish*): I should like at the outset most sincerely to thank all the members of the Commission for having chosen me to chair this session of the Disarmament Commission. In so doing they have conferred upon me a signal honour and a privilege.

I should like in particular to mention the generous contribution made by the delegation of Ecuador in postponing its own bid for a vice-chairmanship of this Commission, an office for which it had already received the endorsement of its regional group.

I should like also most sincerely to express my appreciation to Ambassador Hoffmann, my predecessor, for the important, outstanding and fruitful work he did during his term of office as Chairman of the Commission.

I cannot fail to pay tribute to the Secretariat staff, and in particular to the Secretary of the Disarmament Commission, for the preparation of the documentation made available to us and for their steadfast commitment to the work of the Commission.

It is significant that the Disarmament Commission is beginning its 1997 substantive session just a few days after the conclusion of the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), and just a few days before the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

I am certain that the Disarmament Commission, as the only universal body in the disarmament field, will live up to the demands of the role entrusted to it: examining and submitting recommendations on various problems in the field of disarmament, while also promoting the implementation of the relevant decisions adopted by the General Assembly at its tenth special session.

The Commission will also have to live up to expectations in its role as the specialized deliberative body within the United Nations multilateral disarmament machinery that allows for in-depth deliberations on specific disarmament issues, with a view to the submission of concrete recommendations on those issues.

At this session, the Commission will resume its practice of examining three agenda items over a period of three weeks and a day.

This year, the Commission will begin consideration of agenda item 4, "Establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned". We will also begin consideration of agenda item 6, "Guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace in the

context of General Assembly resolution 51/45 N". Also, for the second consecutive year, the Disarmament Commission's agenda includes consideration of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.

The climate is favourable for making progress on those three items. I am certain that, with the resolute contributions of all the delegations participating in the current substantive session of our Commission, we will make headway and achieve results — all the more important at a time when we are talking about improving both the effectiveness and efficiency of our Organization.

I am convinced not only of the tremendous importance of the Disarmament Commission, but also of the fact that the best way for us to move ahead with the process of strengthening the Commission is to contribute to the achievement of tangible results.

Adoption of the agenda

The Chairman (*interpretation from Spanish*): If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to adopt the provisional agenda for this session, as contained in document A/CN.10/L.40.

The agenda was adopted.

Organization of work

The Chairman (*interpretation from Spanish*): At its organizational session, the Commission considered a series of matters that included, first, the provisional agenda; secondly, the establishment of the three Working Groups on the three substantive agenda items; thirdly, the appointment of Chairmen of the Working Groups; and, fourthly, the decision on the date and duration of the 1997 substantive session.

In this regard, the Commission elected Cuba, Luxembourg, Mongolia and Viet Nam as Vice-Chairmen. Still pending are the vice-chairmanships from the Group of Eastern European States and from the Group of African States. Ms. Genevieve Hamilton of Australia has been named Rapporteur, and the Commission has appointed Ambassador Michael Hoey of Ireland as Chairman of Working Group III, dealing with agenda item 6, on conventional disarmament.

As to the other two Working Groups — one dealing with the fourth special session of the General Assembly

devoted to disarmament and the other dealing with nuclear-weapon-free zones — consultations will continue. We hope that they will very quickly determine the chairmanships of those Working Groups.

I would like to take this opportunity to extend my congratulations to the newly elected members of the Bureau of the Commission for 1997.

Organizational matters

The Chairman (*interpretation from Spanish*): I would like to discuss now the general programme of work for the current session, contained in document A/C.10/1997/CRP.1. The programme of work is an indicative timetable for the work of the Commission, subject to necessary adjustments. The Secretariat will prepare and distribute a timetable for the first week of the session, after it has been decided upon by the Bureau, in consultation with the Chairmen of the Working Groups at tomorrow's Bureau meeting. The timetable for this week should be available by tomorrow afternoon. The same procedure will be followed for the timetable for subsequent weeks.

As to the allocation of time for each agenda item, the principle of equal footing and flexibility for practical purposes will be observed. As I have noted before, the timetable of work will take into account the needs of each subsidiary body through consultations with the Chairmen of the Working Groups. Since, however, items 4 and 6 are new items, and since we should make every effort to conclude as soon as possible item 5, on the fourth special session of the General Assembly on disarmament, a heavier workload for Working Group II, on agenda item 5, is anticipated, and more meeting resources will be allocated to that group. The other two Working Groups will share the remaining meeting resources.

As members will see in document A/CN.10/1997/CRP.1, containing the programme of work, five meetings have been allocated to the general exchange of views. I would like to ask delegations wishing to make general statements to inscribe their names on the Secretariat's list of speakers as soon as possible. The deadline is 6 p.m. today. For general statements, 25 copies should be provided to the Secretariat.

If there is no comment or objection, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to proceed in this manner.

It was so decided.

The Chairman (*interpretation from Spanish*): In order to utilize efficiently the available conference resources, I would like to appeal to all members of the Disarmament Commission to be punctual so that we can begin our meetings in accordance with the Commission's timetable.

Regarding documentation for the current session, I wish to point out that last year's report (A/51/42) of the Disarmament Commission to the General Assembly at its fifty-first session, as well as the documents listed in the report, will serve as important background documents for this session. Previous reports of the Commission, of course, will also be useful for reference. In the course of deliberations on various agenda items — particularly items 4 and 6, which are new ones — the Commission may have before it a number of working papers submitted by delegations. I request interested delegations to submit their working papers to the Secretariat as soon as possible for processing.

As in previous years, non-governmental organizations are welcome to attend as observers the plenary meetings and the meetings of the Committee of the Whole of the Disarmament Commission.

General exchange of views

The Chairman (*interpretation from Spanish*): Having considered various aspects of the organization of work for the current session, I would like now to call on those delegations that wish to make general statements on the various subjects contained in the agenda. We will proceed in the order that requests were received from delegations.

Mr. Ramaker (Netherlands): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The following associated countries align themselves with this statement: Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway also associate themselves with this statement.

I would like at the outset to present my warmest congratulations to you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the 1997 session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission. This morning, during the organizational meeting, it was emphasized how eminently qualified you are to chair this session of the Disarmament Commission. We wholeheartedly concur.

Our congratulations also go to Ambassador Wolfgang Hoffmann, who presided over last year's session of the

Disarmament Commission. His well-known and extensive diplomatic skills — which I have had the pleasure to witness more than once from close by — contributed significantly to the adoption by consensus in 1996 of the report and recommendations on international arms transfers. We hope that the delegation of Germany will transmit our thanks to Ambassador Hoffmann.

This year again, the Disarmament Commission has a full agenda. Three substantive items will be discussed, two of which, as the Chairman noted, are new to our agenda.

At the start of the 1996 session, the European Union expressed its regret that, in the two preceding years, the Disarmament Commission had not been able to reach agreement on any item on its agenda. The Disarmament Commission ought to be a specialized United Nations body for in-depth deliberations on specific disarmament issues and for the submission of recommendations to the international community. In our view, failure to make such submissions in 1994 and 1995 did not enhance the status of the Disarmament Commission.

It was therefore an encouraging development that during its 1996 session the Disarmament Commission was able to adopt by consensus a set of guidelines for international arms transfers, in the context of General Assembly resolution 46/36 H. The European Union considers it essential for all States to exercise responsibility in the transfer of conventional arms, and to take steps aimed at curbing the illicit arms trade.

Conventional arms issues deserve sustained attention in the United Nations. We therefore welcome the decision of the Disarmament Commission to adopt this year a new item relating to conventional arms control and hope that the success of the last Disarmament Commission session in this field can be built upon. We also believe that the Conference on Disarmament should have conventional arms issues on its programme of work. The European Union is committed to the goal of the total elimination of anti-personnel landmines and will work actively towards the achievement at the earliest possible date of an effective international agreement to ban these weapons world-wide. In particular, the European Union aims at the swift establishment by the Conference on Disarmament of an ad hoc committee on anti-personnel landmines.

Another encouraging development is the Disarmament Commission's decision to include a new agenda item, entitled "Establishment of nuclear-weapon

free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among States of the region concerned". Delegations might recall that such an item was originally proposed by the European Union. We thank all member States for the constructive spirit which allowed for the adoption of this agenda item.

Over the years, nuclear-weapon-free zones have been instrumental in strengthening nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. Recently the States parties to the Treaty of Tlatelolco celebrated the thirtieth anniversary of the opening for signature of that treaty. Other regions have followed this important example, establishing the Treaties of Rarotonga, Pelindaba and Bangkok. Efforts aimed at the establishment of further zones continue, and they deserve our support.

We should support these efforts because nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned enhance regional and international peace and security. The European Union notes that the creation of such zones is fully consistent with article VII of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and was encouraged as a matter of priority by the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to that Treaty. The European Union welcomes advances made in the past few years in this field with the creation of new nuclear-weapon-free zones, which have greatly extended the areas of the world covered by such zones, and the support given by nuclear-weapon States to such zones, including the signature in 1996 by both of the European Union nuclear weapon States of the relevant protocols of the Treaties of Rarotonga and Pelindaba. The European Union hopes that consideration of this new agenda item will result in consensus guidelines, which could help to facilitate further progress in this area.

This year, the Disarmament Commission will once again consider the agenda item entitled "Fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament". The European Union participated actively in the work on this item last year. It submitted a working paper in which it outlined its ideas of what a fourth special session on disarmament should look like.

A fourth special session on disarmament should consider disarmament and non-proliferation issues in the new international security environment. Its agenda should be balanced between subjects relating to weapons of mass destruction and to conventional arms, covering the whole range of disarmament issues. Consensus on its objectives is necessary before such a special session or its preparatory

committee can be convened. This requires further careful and thorough preparation.

The European Union looks forward to participating in further constructive exchanges on the special session during the coming weeks. In this context, the European Union recalls that the decision of the General Assembly to convene a fourth special session on disarmament in 1999 and a meeting of the Preparatory Committee before the end of the fifty-first session of the Assembly was clearly subject to the emergence of consensus on the objectives and agenda of the special session from our deliberations on the matter at this session of the Disarmament Commission. It is therefore important that all delegations work constructively towards consensus on this item. The European Union, for its part, intends to do so.

The item entitled "Guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace in the context of General Assembly resolution 51/45 N" is new on our agenda. As already indicated, the fact that the Disarmament Commission once again agreed to include an item related to the complex issue of conventional arms control is to be welcomed. A balanced agenda is an essential prerequisite for adequate fulfilment of the Disarmament Commission's responsibilities.

The issue of conventional arms control is a complex one. The Disarmament Commission, in its report on guidelines for international arms transfers, noted that

"All States have the inherent right to self-defence, as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, and consequently the right to acquire arms for their security, including arms from outside sources".
(A/51/42, *annex I, para. 1*)

However, for humanitarian reasons the use and transfer of certain conventional weapons has been prohibited or limited. Furthermore, conventional weapons have been the subject of specific disarmament measures when regional circumstances allowed, as in the case of the Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe.

The international community has been confronted by problems caused by the destabilizing accumulation of conventional weapons in several parts of the world. The illicit trafficking of arms, although of a different nature, needs also to be addressed. Transparency in armaments and the attention devoted to small arms and to the wider

issue of arms transfers are examples of the increasing attention devoted within the United Nations and the international community to the question of conventional arms control. Further efforts are needed. In this context, the European Union encourages States to submit full returns to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms.

The title of the 1997 Disarmament Commission's conventional item refers directly to General Assembly resolution 51/45 N, on consolidation of peace through practical disarmament measures, which was adopted by consensus. That resolution stressed the importance of certain practical disarmament measures for the maintenance and consolidation of peace and security, especially in areas that have suffered from conflict, and of aiming, in an integrated manner, at concrete recommendations for how to deal with the numerous, mainly small-arms-related, problems in post-conflict environments. This is the first year of the three-year cycle during which the Disarmament Commission will consider this important subject. It would be natural for the Commission to focus this year on the scope of the issues it will consider under this agenda item. The European Union believes that, rather than considering broad issues related to arms exports and their regulation, progress is more likely to be made if we concentrate on practical post-conflict disarmament measures. A set of consensus guidelines on such issues could provide invaluable assistance to the international community in the efforts to remove arms and restore stability in post-conflict situations.

We have a full and varied agenda. The European Union expects the Disarmament Commission to live up to expectations, and looks forward to working in a constructive and balanced manner in the coming weeks towards concrete results to guide future multilateral disarmament efforts.

Ms. Eshmambetova (Kyrgyzstan): I would like to join preceding speakers in extending sincere congratulations to you, Mr. Chairman, on your election to your high post. I express the hope that the exchange of views within the framework of the Disarmament Commission, under your wise and skilful leadership, will be fruitful and our labours crowned with success.

As we begin the work of the Disarmament Commission this week, I think it appropriate to take note of both the progress that has been made and the setbacks that were encountered at the recently concluded first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation

of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Perhaps the most important lesson to recall is that, for the disarmament process, compromise is as important as conviction. Perhaps my delegation to the Preparatory Committee had expectations that were too high with regard to the possibilities of realizing the lofty non-proliferation and disarmament objectives embodied in the NPT, but I do not believe that to be the case. We did make considerable progress in identifying practical steps to strengthen the implementation of the Treaty, and we came very close to adopting by consensus a forward-looking Chairman's paper, with draft recommendations for the next session of the Preparatory Committee. The somewhat less ambitious Chairman's working paper that was eventually adopted contains a very useful inventory of specific disarmament and non-proliferation proposals.

My delegation wishes to call particular attention to the official NPT Preparatory Committee documents on the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia, submitted jointly by Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. That document states:

"In realization of the recommendations contained in the 'Principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament', adopted at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference, Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are especially pleased to note that on February 28, 1997 they formally endorsed in the Almaty Declaration the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. This joint action, following earlier initiatives by several countries of the region, is indicative of the importance the States of Central Asia attach to article VII of the NPT and paragraphs 5 to 7 of the 'Principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament'. As the NPT States parties prepare for the next review conference in the year 2000, the Preparatory Committee takes positive note of this development".

I would like to express my gratitude to the many States parties to the NPT that, last week at the Preparatory Committee, endorsed the Central Asian nuclear-weapon-free zone initiative. We especially welcome the support for the initiative contained in the statement made to the Preparatory Committee by the Non-Aligned Movement, and the encouragement that we received from countries such as Australia, Canada, China, Egypt, Indonesia, New Zealand, South Africa and Poland. It is our hope that additional support for the initiative will

be forthcoming at the Disarmament Commission meetings this week.

Mrs. Kurokochi (Japan): I should like at the outset to extend my heartfelt congratulations to you, Sir, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the United Nations Disarmament Commission. The delegation of Japan is confident that under your able guidance the 1997 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission will be particularly fruitful. I assure you of my delegation's full cooperation as you discharge your important responsibilities.

In recent years we have witnessed significant progress in disarmament in the multilateral framework. The decisions taken at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), including the indefinite extension of the Treaty, and the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty in 1996, are major examples of such achievements. Unfortunately, however, we have not yet seen the commencement of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty, which is regarded as one of the three important measures for nuclear disarmament in the NPT principles and objectives of 1995.

The Disarmament Commission, which enjoys the participation of all United Nations Member States, has an important role to play in this context. Specifically, as a deliberative body and a subsidiary organ of the General Assembly, it could serve as a forum for the exchange of forward-looking views among delegations with a view to recommending various guidelines in the field of disarmament. My delegation hopes that the Commission will in fact strive to fulfil this role.

Let me express my delegation's views on each item on the agenda for this year's session.

We continue to follow with great interest the development of nuclear-weapon-free zones. The Treaty of Tlatelolco celebrated the thirtieth anniversary of its opening for signature in February this year. France, the United Kingdom and the United States signed the Protocols to the Treaty of Rarotonga in March last year, and the following month, more than 40 African countries signed the Pelindaba Treaty, and the nuclear-weapon States signed its Protocols. On 27 March, the Bangkok Treaty entered into force.

The 1995 decision on principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament reaffirmed the conviction that the establishment of internationally

recognized nuclear-weapon-free zones, on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned, enhances global and regional peace and security. Japan shares this conviction.

I should like to take this opportunity to reiterate Japan's long-held position on nuclear-weapon-free zones. In our view, the following conditions must be met for such zones to be effective.

First, the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone should be supported by all countries concerned, including the nuclear-weapon States. Here, I should like to refer to the NPT principles and objectives, which state that

“The cooperation of all the nuclear-weapon States and their respect and support for the relevant protocols is necessary for the maximum effectiveness of such nuclear-weapon-free zones and the relevant protocols.” (*NPT/CONF.1995/32 (Part I), Decision 2, para. 7*)

and further that

“The development of nuclear-weapon-free zones ... should be encouraged as a matter of priority, taking into account the specific characteristics of each region.” (*ibid.*, para. 6)

Secondly, the zone should in no way jeopardize the peace and safety of the region concerned or of the world as a whole.

Thirdly, appropriate safeguard measures, including inspection and verification, should be established in the zone.

Fourthly, the zone should be in conformity with the principles of international law, including that of free navigation on the high seas.

Japan believes that when these conditions are met, the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones can contribute to nuclear non-proliferation, thus strengthening peace and safety not only in the regions concerned but in the international community as a whole. As stated in the NPT principles and objectives,

“The establishment of additional nuclear-weapon-free zones by the time of the Review Conference in the year 2000 would be welcome.” (*ibid.*)

Regarding the issue of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, the Assembly decided, in operative paragraph 1 of its resolution 51/45 C,

“subject to the emergence of a consensus on its objectives and agenda, to convene its fourth special session devoted to disarmament in 1999;”

and, secondly, in operative paragraph 3,

“subject to the outcome of deliberations ... at the 1997 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission, to convene a meeting of the Preparatory Committee ... before the end of the fifty-first session of the Assembly in order to set an exact date and to decide on organizational matters”.

Operative paragraph 3 of the resolution further states that the General Assembly

“requests the Preparatory Committee to submit its progress report to the Assembly at its fifty-second session.”

Japan supported this resolution when it was voted on last year.

We are of the view that, if the fourth special session is to be held, it must produce significant results for further progress in disarmament, particularly nuclear disarmament. As we are all aware, a special session will certainly place a great financial burden on the United Nations; thus, it is important that, through our thorough discussions, we establish a common understanding as to its purpose, agenda and dates. In particular, both the nuclear-weapon States and the non-nuclear-weapon States should try to come to a mutually acceptable agreement on these questions.

With regard to agenda item 6, “Guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace in the context of General Assembly resolution 51/45 N”, we hope that our deliberations here will show us how best we can apply the progress of practical disarmament measures to the United Nations experience in the resolution of conflicts and the consolidation of peace. We believe that our discussion on this issue will contribute to finding solutions to actual conflicts in future.

Concerning General Assembly resolution 50/70 B on small arms, on which my country took an initiative in 1995, the work by a panel group of experts is now under way.

We hope that those efforts, together with the advancement of practical disarmament measures, will facilitate conflict resolution, the consolidation of peace and the promotion of disarmament.

We look forward in our deliberations on this item to gaining a clearer idea of the direction our efforts should take.

Mr. Valle (Brazil): Allow me at the outset, Mr. Chairman, to express the particular satisfaction of my delegation at seeing you, a most distinguished representative of the sister country of Colombia, in the post of Chairman of the United Nations Disarmament Commission. We would also like to thank your predecessor for his contribution as Chairman of the 1996 session, which succeeded in concluding valuable guidelines on international arms transfers.

A famous Brazilian author once said:

“A prophet is a person who can see the obvious”.

At this time, I find it useful to restate here a fact that is recognized as obvious by an ever growing majority, tending towards consensus, in the international community: nuclear weapons are obsolete.

Since the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and the end of the military division of Europe between two antagonistic blocs, this fact has been increasingly acknowledged, including by the decision-makers in the nuclear-weapon States. Yet even before that, there were some who, in a prophetic vein, could see clearly enough.

Already in 1981, Admiral Noel Gayler, former Commander-in-Chief of United States forces in the Pacific, stated before the United States Congress that

“there is no sensible military use of any of our nuclear forces. The only reasonable use is to deter our opponent from using his nuclear forces.”

In 1987, former German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt shed light upon the nuclear debate when he said,

“flexible response is nonsense ... The Western idea ...that we should be willing to use nuclear weapons first, in order to make up for our so-called conventional deficiency, has never convinced me.”

I also recommend to the Commission the impressive collection of similar quotes contained in pages 32 and 33 of the report of the Canberra Commission.

Nuclear weapons are obsolete because there is no political or strategic problem which, if sought to be solved through the use of nuclear weapons, would not become exponentially worse.

Now the point is sometimes made that the threat of use of nuclear weapons, or a veiled and unstated threat to that effect, would have played a certain positive role in the context of the Gulf war. However, as former United States Secretary of State James Baker recalled in his memoirs, it had already been decided that coalition forces "would not retaliate with chemical or nuclear response" even if attacked with chemical munitions.

The reasons behind this wise decision may have been the same identified by the Canberra Commission:

"the consequences of nuclear retaliation...might have been even more far reaching than the threat it was seeking to deter";

and, in particular,

"use of nuclear weapons in response to use or threat of use of other weapons of mass destruction would cross an important psychological as well as military threshold, making the management of future conflicts even more uncertain."

If nuclear deterrence against chemical and biological threats is somehow considered legitimate by some, there may be others who hold the view that the converse is also true. Therefore, those who seek to find new roles for nuclear weapons in order to justify the extraordinary expense and risks associated with them run the risk of endangering the international norm against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

The sole possible remaining role of nuclear weapons is the deterrence of their use by another possessor of nuclear weapons. This Gordian knot may be instantly cut through an unequivocal commitment to the complete elimination of all nuclear weapons under appropriate verification mechanisms.

In addition, it has already been determined by the International Court of Justice that the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons would generally be contrary to

international law. Even the testing of such weapons has been banned by the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). Can anyone conceive that a weapon too horrible to be tested would be used or brandished in anger by the leaders of a civilized nation?

Let me add here that the international community shares the assumption that the last nuclear test ever has already taken place. As President Clinton stated before the General Assembly at its fifty-first session,

"The signatures of the world's declared nuclear Powers — the United States, China, France, Russia and the United Kingdom — along with those of the vast majority of its nations, will immediately create an international norm against nuclear testing even before the Treaty formally enters into force." (*Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-first Session, Plenary Meetings, 6th meeting, p. 2*)

Any suggestion that, pending the entry into force of the CTBT, the nuclear-weapon States might somehow — due to some highly questionable argument — not be bound to refrain from testing is a challenge to the non-proliferation regime and to the moral conscience of mankind. Let me be absolutely clear on that: the resumption of nuclear testing by any State would risk destroying the efforts of the past several decades to advance non-proliferation and disarmament, and not only in the nuclear area.

Nuclear weapons remain extremely dangerous. Their indefinite retention brings intolerable risks of further proliferation and, sooner or later, of use, either by design or by accident.

We sometimes hear the argument that only the promotion of regional and global stability and security could help create the conditions for further nuclear-disarmament progress; that progress towards general and complete disarmament, perhaps down to the last handgun or slingshot, would be a precondition for nuclear disarmament.

It is imperative to support the exact opposite argument: the fact that we still live in a dangerous world makes nuclear disarmament even more indispensable. In fact, since the end of the cold war, we may be experiencing a unique window of opportunity to make nuclear reductions irreversible and move towards internationally verifiable abolition. The old East-West tensions have abated; new ones have not yet fully

crystallized and still appear solvable; but we cannot be absolutely certain whether this will be so in the future.

If we miss the present opportunity and carry the outdated way of thinking about nuclear confrontation into a new period of global tension; and if by doing so we unleash a new nuclear arms race, multiplied a hundredfold by new technological developments and by further proliferation, what calamities will we be inviting upon our grandchildren?

One of the items in our order of business deals with the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned. It is a subject on which we can reasonably hope to reach agreement, since it is universally recognized — and was recently reaffirmed by the States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) — that such zones enhance global and regional peace security.

We heartily welcome the more positive attitude of the nuclear-weapon States, in recent years, towards nuclear-weapon-free zones. In particular, the ratification of the Protocols to the Treaty of Tlatelolco and the signature of the Protocols to the Treaties of Rarotonga and Pelindaba by all five nuclear Powers constitute most significant developments. We are also encouraged to learn that consultations are under way which will hopefully result in the adherence of the nuclear-weapon States to the relevant Protocols to the Treaty of Bangkok. Further proposals to create nuclear-weapon-free zones in other parts of the world have also been generally welcomed.

The study of the preambles and the negotiating history of the nuclear-weapon-free zone Treaties clearly shows that the purpose of the States parties, apart from safeguarding their own peoples from nuclear weapons, was to contribute to nuclear disarmament. As expressed in the third preambular paragraph of the Treaty of Rarotonga,

“all countries have an obligation to make every effort to achieve the goal of eliminating nuclear weapons”.

Nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties prove in practice that it is possible to safeguard security while renouncing the nuclear option. The objective is that they spread an example that will eventually cover the whole globe, as an important element of the regime which one day will oversee the complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

During the celebration of the thirtieth anniversary of the Treaty of Tlatelolco, the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Hans Blix, speaking on behalf of Secretary-General Kofi Annan, reminded us that

“more than 110 United Nations Member States are party to these agreements. With Antarctica included, they form a nuclear-weapon-free mantle over a vast, densely populated area of the southern hemisphere”.

The moment is appropriate to present some comments on General Assembly resolution 51/45 B, entitled “The nuclear-weapon-free southern hemisphere and adjacent areas”, which the Brazilian delegation had the honour to introduce to the General Assembly at its fifty-first session. We are happy that the resolution was adopted by the significant majority of 129 to 3. At the same time, we would obviously have preferred that it had been approved by consensus, since it serves the interests of all.

During the last session of the First Committee, the sponsors conducted intense consultations with all interested States to seek to ensure general agreement. However, it was not possible, due to lack of time, to dispel all the misunderstandings which may have prevented some States from supporting the resolution. Let me assure all members that the Brazilian delegation is willing to resume consultations with all interested parties in order to achieve general agreement.

It should be noted that neither the text of the resolution, nor the statements which introduced it, asked for the endorsement of the idea of a southern hemisphere nuclear-weapon-free zone treaty, as was misconstrued by some of those who did not support the initiative. The resolution, rather, calls, in essence, for the consolidation of the denuclearization regime established over a vast area of the globe by the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Bangkok, Pelindaba and Antarctica, a goal which has been acknowledged as desirable by all; and it calls for concerted efforts to this effect by the members of the nuclear-weapon-free zone Treaties.

It was made abundantly clear in official statements that the resolution did not seek to impose new legal obligations. The only legal commitments in this context are those assumed under the nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties and other relevant treaties and norms of international law. Furthermore, in order to dispel any possible doubts about the relationship between the

resolution and the law of the sea, the sponsors agreed explicitly to recall

“the applicable principles and rules of international law relating to rights of passage through maritime space”. (*General Assembly resolution 51/45 B, fifth preambular para.*)

We hope that as we further discuss this subject, it will become clear that all legitimate concerns can be adequately addressed and that the international consensus in support of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned will be further reinforced.

The Brazilian delegation will present its contribution on all three substantive items of the agenda in the context of the respective working groups. You may be assured, Mr. Chairman, of our constructive cooperation.

Ms. Karimova (Uzbekistan) (*interpretation from Russian*): The delegation of Uzbekistan would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission. We are sure that your guidance will guarantee the success of our work. My delegation will make every effort to promote the attainment of important results at this session.

On the threshold of the twenty-first century, the world community is compelled to resolve a number of global problems, some of the most serious of which relate to the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and of military nuclear technologies; the siting of harmful substances; and places for the storage of waste materials.

As members know, the nuclear non-proliferation process is based on a whole package of United Nations treaties, which have been duly reflected in national legislation and in export control regulations. At the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the NPT was extended indefinitely, which has given unprecedented stability to the non-proliferation regime.

But any strategic evaluation of the world situation reveals an increased desire to expand the membership of the nuclear “club”. This is the greatest of dangers and could upset strategic stability and nuclear balance, as well as leading to a whole series of environmental disasters.

Uzbekistan belongs to the large group of countries that observe the rules of stability and international security and

the norms of conduct that prohibit all proliferation of nuclear weapons. Since the very first days of its independence, our country has shown the world that it has specific experience, which has been reflected in consistent progress towards democratic development and market reforms based on stability. These efforts have not gone unnoticed. Studies on Central Asia indicate that, increasingly, Uzbekistan is a source of regional stability.

For us, it is important that, among the priorities of efforts under the NPT, special stress be laid on activities to expand nuclear-weapon-free zones, a sphere that was specifically covered in a number of paragraphs of the Final Document of the 1995 Review Conference. The relevance of this subject has been corroborated by the documents of the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and by the agenda of this substantive session of the Disarmament Commission. It is rightly considered to be among the items that should be discussed at the 2000 NPT Review Conference. This is important because more than 100 countries, accounting for more than 70 per cent of the world, now participate in nuclear-weapon-free zones.

Our commitment to a policy of non-proliferation is reflected in our having become a party to the NPT, and in the initiative to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. We therefore viewed the results of the 1995 Conference with particular optimism and satisfaction. They enabled the emergence of a whole new area of regional strategy for strengthening security, stability and cooperation. In that connection, implementation of the proposal for Central Asia to become such a zone could play a decisive role in strengthening regional stability.

The President of Uzbekistan, Mr. Islam Karimov, put the Central Asian proposal before the international community for its consideration, first at the forty-eighth session of the General Assembly, then at the Lisbon summit of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). This has been described as my country’s top foreign policy priority. The initiative has garnered regional support and has now become the subject of international discussion. As members know, the convergence of views and intentions on this matter emerged during discussions at the Almaty summit of Central Asian Heads of State on problems relating to the Aral Sea, held at Almaty on 28 February 1997.

On that date, the Presidents of five countries of the region signed the Almaty Declaration. We note with satisfaction that the Declaration, which has been circulated as a document of the General Assembly (A/52/112, annex), has been viewed as an instrument for political unity and mutual understanding among our five States on the question of a Central Asian nuclear-weapon-free zone. This will enable us to begin work on the legal formulation of the initiative, as we gradually move towards regional agreement. The Almaty Declaration virtually defines the geographical parameters of the zone, which would cover the Central Asian region consisting of Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

It is our understanding that the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Pelindaba, Bangkok and Rarotonga share a common basis and display a number of specific differences; this was made possible by a flexible attitude towards the concept of nuclear-weapon-free zones. We emphasize that point of departure of the draft proposal on a Central Asian zone will be the region's environmental situation.

The future strategy for establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone will be defined at an international conference to be held at Tashkent from 14 to 16 September 1997. As the host country, Uzbekistan invites all interested States to participate in that conference. The Permanent Mission of Uzbekistan to the United Nations has issued a press release on this matter, copies of which are available in this conference room.

Organizations referred to in the press release are authorized to receive suggestions and proposals, all of which will be submitted to the conference organizational committee and given serious consideration from a substantive perspective as well as for the purpose of drawing up a list of participants for the Tashkent conference. The experience Uzbekistan has gained since independence shows that young democracies require the implementation of measures for the consolidation of national and regional security. Their compliance with international security norms must be coordinated to bring them into line with international structures. In this connection, the delegation of Uzbekistan would like to make one request: to include, in matters for discussion in the Disarmament Commission, the subject of the holding of the conference. We also hope that you, Mr. Chairman, will accept the official invitation of the Government of Uzbekistan to participate in the conference in Tashkent in September. That invitation will be issued soon.

The conference will be able to provide a wealth of material for defining new approaches to the problems involved in establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones in the context of a radically changing international situation. We believe that the 30 years of experience in organizing such zones should be synthesized, universalized and institutionalized. That work has already begun: this meeting is an example of it. However, it must be stimulated by new initiatives. I request delegations, during the exchange of views, to consider the value of the idea of declaring 1998 the year of nuclear-weapon-free zones. If the initiative is considered to be a measure that would enhance the strengthening of regional global security, Uzbekistan could put it forward at the forthcoming Tashkent conference. The implementation of the proposal would make it possible in the near future to review all approaches to, and analyse all opinions on, the issue of nuclear-weapon-free zones. In that way we may be able to move towards a more universal understanding of the problem and towards its institutionalization.

Promising international support already exists for the idea of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. I believe that at this meeting, which is taking place under your direct guidance, Mr. Chairman, that support could be increased.

Mr. Granovsky (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): Allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of this session of the Disarmament Commission, and to wish you every success in your work in that important post. You will, of course, be able to count on the constructive cooperation of the Russian delegation in discharging your important responsibilities.

Multilateral disarmament forums have recently acquired a new dimension. In a qualitatively new international situation, in which radical changes in disarmament have taken place, arguments to the effect that the disarmament agenda has run out of steam and lost its priority importance are, we believe, unfounded. To the contrary, as it becomes further integrated into the broader context of international security, disarmament is bringing to the fore new tasks and goals.

I should now like to consider the question of how we see disarmament priorities in the context of the current agenda of the Disarmament Commission. In our post-confrontational era, the process of disarmament, particularly nuclear disarmament, is continuing to develop. Recent years have seen real progress in nuclear

disarmament. Following the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), last year's major achievement was the opening for signature of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). At the same time, present-day realities and the major steps made in curbing the arms race require the international community to make further efforts to consolidate its achievements.

I note with satisfaction that the process of nuclear arms reduction has become widespread. As was emphasized by the Presidents of Russia and of the United States of America at their summit meeting in Helsinki, significant progress has been made regarding strategic stability and nuclear security. Both Russia and the United States are continuing to reduce their strategic arms. Implementation of SALT I is significantly ahead of schedule. In Helsinki, the Presidents also reached an understanding about the need, after the entry into force of SALT II, to start negotiating a SALT III agreement.

One of the priority areas in multilateral disarmament is the consolidation of the non-proliferation regime for weapons of mass destruction. We are convinced that the current global non-proliferation regime should be backed up by concrete new steps in individual areas geared towards regions and States that cause particular concern from a non-proliferation standpoint. We believe that the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in various regions of the world is an important element in the consolidation of international peace and security, and promotes the development of disarmament processes at the global and regional levels. Such zones help narrow the geographical scope of military nuclear activities, and thereby strengthen the non-proliferation regime. The Russian Federation has consistently supported the efforts of States to establish such zones in various parts of the world. We are pleased that radical progress has recently been made in this area. Nuclear-weapon-free zones in Antarctica, Latin America and the South Pacific have been joined by those in Africa and South-East Asia. I hope that practical steps will be taken to establish a zone free from all types of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East.

We support, *inter alia*, the initiative of the Republic of Belarus to establish in Central and Eastern Europe an area free from nuclear weapons. This initiative is being put forward in conditions that are fundamentally different from those under which the ideas for a nuclear-weapon-free Europe were put forward during the era of bloc confrontation. The value of the Belarusian initiative lies in the fact that it would incorporate the proposed nuclear-

weapon-free area into the general structure of common European security in the context of the post-confrontational world. We believe that the best way to implement the Belarus initiative would be to draft a treaty on a nuclear-free space in Central and Eastern Europe.

Our position remains unchanged with regard to the need, when concluding nuclear-weapon-free-zone agreements, for strict compliance with the generally recognized norms of international law. The effects of such treaties cannot extend beyond the territories of States parties, including the airspace and the territorial waters established under international law.

However, given the importance of establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones in the context of strengthening the non-proliferation regime, we are in favour of a scrupulous elaboration of all parameters of the proposal involved. This means primarily that the geographical configuration of the zone must be clearly defined, as must the conditions for its establishment, in particular the question of the transit of nuclear weapons through it and their deployment.

In April 1996 the President of Russian, Boris Yeltsin, proposed that nuclear weapons be concentrated on the territories of nuclear-weapon States. The implementation of this initiative would definitely expand the regions that are so far free of such weapons. These would be located only within the confines of the national borders of States that possess such weapons. We understand that this proposal and the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones in various regions of the world have the same orientation.

The link between nuclear problems requires a comprehensive approach to resolving them. Let us take, for example, the problem of providing security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States. We sympathize with the desire of non-nuclear-weapon States to go further in this direction. I wish to note that the participation of the nuclear Powers in the relevant nuclear-weapon-free-zone treaties makes it possible for the appropriate guarantees to be given to the approximately 100 non-nuclear-weapon States that participate in such agreements.

This stage of the disarmament process has given rise to a series of problems, the discussion of which, *inter alia*, could become the basis for the work of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.

We believe that it would be difficult to challenge the importance of convening the special session on the threshold of the year 2000. Equally important is the fact that its work should be concluded by the adoption of important and truly future-oriented decisions. The advantage of this approach is supported by unfortunate experience: the two previous special sessions devoted to disarmament yielded zero, or close to zero, results. Do we need to repeat previous mistakes, particularly when we are talking about a forum that must give new vitality to the disarmament process for the new millennium?

With regard to the priorities to be discussed during the special session and the items to be considered as a matter of priority, we believe that a sensible balance needs to be struck between the set of problems relating to weapons of mass destruction and issues having to do with conventional weapons. Each of these clusters should be given due attention. Moving too far in the direction of the nuclear dossier could be counter-productive. Forums of this scale should not be limited to providing a thorough exchange of views, but should give long-term political results. I repeat: it would be extremely undesirable if the fourth special session of the General Assembly were to represent yet another lost opportunity in the area of disarmament. The world community is entitled to expect from it real, tangible results.

Most importantly, preparations for this forum should be careful and conscientious, and the session should conclude in the adoption of truly solid and future-oriented documents.

Today, disarmament is part and parcel of the world's efforts to consolidate international peace, to resolve conflict situations and to establish a new model of comprehensive security.

The international dialogue on these problems is proceeding apace. A new approach, based on the unity of security interests and not on a kind of bloc logic, is required with regard to disarmament problems in Europe as well.

In this connection, we commend the results of the May 1996 Review Conference on the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE). An acceptable decision on flank issues has been reached, and we must now implement the decisions agreed to.

The initial bloc approach that was the basis for this Treaty is now obsolete. It is important now to adapt the

Treaty to the new European and world realities. This is a prerequisite for strengthening the vitality of the CFE Treaty in future.

The instability that continues to prevail in a number of regions of the world highlights acutely the close link between the disarmament process and the settlement of local and regional conflicts, as well as the relevance of regional and subregional disarmament measures. These are bound to become part of the system of preventive diplomacy that is being formed within the United Nations and will be an important element in the maintenance of regional stability.

The dramatic effects of regional conflicts are convincing proof that the problem of micro-disarmament is acquiring a global dimension, requiring renewed efforts in this area.

In the course of the discussions held during the fifty-first session of the General Assembly on the cluster of items on conventional weapons, the item on anti-personnel mines received particular attention. We have witnessed attempts to revise the well-balanced result of last May's Conference on inhumane weapons — the landmine Protocol.

We believe that efforts to force a ban on mines would be counter-productive. The main task now is to implement the revised Protocol to the 1980 Convention and to ensure the fullest participation possible in that Protocol by States that will scrupulously abide by its norms and standards.

We think that the time is ripe for the international community to become more actively involved in States' demining efforts as part of post-conflict solutions. Here, the United Nations should play the central role in coordinating international efforts to carry out the demining programme. Russia, on the basis the experience we have gained in this area, is prepared to participate, at both the multilateral and bilateral levels, by providing assistance to the countries that require it.

We believe that specific work needs to be done on coordinating political measures to resolve local and regional conflicts and to extend the multilateral disarmament process, which would check the spread of landmines and small arms.

We think that control is also a priority. We need to establish and perfect a careful strategy for international

control, as well as multilateral mechanisms to this end. Russia stands ready to study further possible initiatives to develop international cooperation in this area.

Recently, the question of regulating arms transfers has been a high priority in the work of the United Nations. We want to strengthen the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. It is an important instrument for transparency in the export and import of arms and will help prevent destabilizing accumulations of weapons.

I hope that the decisions taken this year by the Disarmament Commission will make a meaningful contribution to resolving the problems I have addressed.

Programme of work

The Chairman (*interpretation from Spanish*): The Secretariat has informed me that there are no speakers for this afternoon. One delegation that had asked to be on the list for this afternoon has graciously agreed to postpone its statement until tomorrow morning.

Accordingly, this afternoon we have time available for consultations among delegations or groups of delegations.

At present three delegations have asked to speak tomorrow in the general exchange of views. According to the Secretariat, any other delegations wishing to speak tomorrow may indicate this either by telephone or directly here today. I request delegations to inscribe their names on the list of speakers for the general exchange of views no later than 6 p.m. today.

The meeting rose at 12.35 p.m.