

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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FINAL RECORD OF THE FOUR HUNDRED AND FIFTY-SIXTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 12 April 1988, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Dávid Meiszter (Hungary)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 456th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

In accordance with its programme of work, the Conference starts today its consideration of reports of the ad hoc subsidiary bodies, as well as of the special report to the third special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.

As agreed in the timetable for meetings to be held during this week, the Conference will hold today, immediately after this plenary meeting, an informal meeting to start its consideration of the technical parts of the special report to the General Assembly of the United Nations, contained in document CD/WP.336, which was circulated in the delegations' boxes in all languages on Wednesday and Thursday of last week.

I have on my list of speakers for today the representative of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, Ambassador Nazarkin, and I now give him the floor.

Mr. NAZARKIN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) (translated from Russian): Thank you, comrade President. It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you to this post, as the representative of the Hungarian People's Republic, with which our country is bound by relations of friendship and close co-operation. We know that you are an experienced diplomat, and we wish you success during the important period in the Conference's work on the threshold of the third special session of the United Nations General Assembly devoted to disarmament. The Soviet delegation would also like to express gratitude to the representative of the Federal Republic of Germany, Ambassador von Stülpnagel, for his able guidance of our work during the month of March.

Today's statement by the Soviet delegation coincides with a significant date. Exactly 27 years ago today, on 12 April 1961, the world's first cosmonaut, a citizen of the Soviet Union, Yuri Gagarin, blazed a path for man in outer space.

Over a relatively short period in the history of civilization and science, achievements in space exploration have been truly astonishing. Dozens of States have embarked on space exploration, and every year more countries join in the utilization of space for their practical needs.

From the very outset of the space era, however, it became clear that the new technology is capable of tackling not only scientific and economic tasks, but military tasks too. The Soviet Union consistently advocates the use of outer space exclusively for peaceful purposes in order to contribute to the scientific, economic and social development of all States.

Our country has been consistently pursuing this policy here at the Conference on Disarmament too, in seeking to prevent an arms race in space.

At today's session, the delegation of the Soviet Union has tabled new concrete proposals regarding the creation of an international space inspectorate. We are expecting that the participants in the Conference will take an active part in discussion of this proposal and will express their views on it.

(Mr. Nazarkin - Union of Soviet Socialist Republics)

Turning to the issue which stands in first place on the Conference's agenda as item No. 1, I would like first of all to express my regret that although the spring part of the Conference's session is nearing its end, we have not been able to achieve progress in establishing a working organ on the issue of a nuclear test ban. The Soviet delegation is prepared to consider in a constructive way proposals and considerations aimed at the early establishment of an ad hoc committee. We believe that agreement on its mandate has been delayed for an unacceptably long time.

The Soviet Union, as we have repeatedly stated, favours the elaboration of a draft multilateral treaty on the complete and general prohibition of nuclear tests in the framework of the Conference on Disarmament as early as possible. The joint document submitted by the socialist countries entitled "Basic provisions of a treaty on the complete and general prohibition of nuclear weapon tests" could serve as a basis for such a multilateral substantive discussion.

Bearing in mind that certain other nuclear States, above all the United States, oppose such negotiations at present, saying that a comprehensive test ban can be achieved in the context of substantial reductions in existing nuclear arsenals and the elaboration of substantially improved verification measures, we are prepared, although we do not agree with such an approach, to seek mutually acceptable solutions.

As regards reductions in nuclear arsenals, it is well known that considerable, quite definite progress has been achieved recently. I have in mind first and foremost the signing of the Soviet-American Treaty on intermediate-range and shorter-range missiles. I also have in mind the progress achieved at the Soviet-American talks on nuclear and space arms. Here we have fairly good prerequisites for further movement towards the conclusion of an agreement on 50 per cent reductions in strategic offensive arms in the context of observance of the ABM Treaty and non-withdrawal from it for an agreed period. On a number of outstanding issues the positions can be seen to have moved closer together. I do not intend today to analyse the state of affairs at these negotiations. I would simply like to confirm that the Soviet side continues to consider that there is a real possibility of elaborating a mutually acceptable agreement by the time of the United States President's visit to the Soviet Union, and is working to that end. Thus, as regards the first prerequisite put forward by the United States concerning a nuclear test ban, there is undoubted progress.

This progress, in our view, should remove objections to the initiation of negotiations on a comprehensive nuclear test ban. As we understand it, however, those who object to this have yet another condition: the elaboration of substantially improved verification measures. Efforts in this field are focusing on the international exchange of seismic data as a means of verification. The Ad hoc Group of seismic experts is doing useful work discussing the overall concept of a modern international seismic data exchange system and plans for conducting a large-scale experiment on exchanging level II seismic data.

At the same time, we should not forget that methods of verifying compliance with a comprehensive nuclear test ban are not limited to international seismic data exchange. These methods also include such

(Mr. Nazarkin - Union of Soviet Socialist Republics)

effective means as on-site inspections, national technical means, atmospheric radioactivity monitoring and a large number of other measures. In this context, the effectiveness of verification of a comprehensive nuclear test ban should be judged not only by the capabilities of each of these methods but by assessing their combined effect. Hence it is already important, in our opinion, not to content ourselves with studying international seismic data exchange but to start considering other means of verification, and to do so in an integrated way. With this very aim in view we put forward, last year, a proposal for the establishment of a special group of scientific experts to prepare practical proposals on a system for verification of the non-conduct of nuclear tests, as well as the establishment of an international system of global radiation safety monitoring using space communication links. The group might consist of experts in the field of geophysics, radiochemistry, close-range seismology, atmospheric radioactivity monitoring, etc.

At present, as we all know, the Soviet-American talks on nuclear testing are continuing here in Geneva. The Soviet side adopted the stage-by-stage approach to the problem of nuclear testing in the framework of these talks on the understanding that agreement on improved verification measures at the first stage and ratification, on that basis, of the Soviet-American "threshold" treaties of 1974 and 1976 would be accompanied, without artificial pauses and delays, by efforts to tackle the other tasks on the agenda at the talks: the substantial limitation of the yield and number of nuclear tests as a step towards their complete cessation, which is the ultimate goal of the Soviet-American talks. At present, the parties at the talks are preparing for the holding of a joint experiment on verification and for the experiment itself.

We are convinced that the fact of holding bilateral talks should not serve as a justification for delaying multilateral negotiations on a complete nuclear test ban, still less for refusing to engage in any practical work which would lead to the conclusion of a multilateral treaty on the complete and general prohibition of nuclear tests. We are persuaded that multilateral efforts in the framework of the Conference on Disarmament and the Soviet-American full-scale talks on the limitation and ultimately the complete cessation of nuclear tests should proceed in parallel, should be mutually complementary and should lead to a positive outcome.

I would like now to turn to item 2 of the Conference's agenda, "Cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament".

In the view of the Soviet Union, the real prospect of reducing the strategic offensive arms of the Soviet Union and the United States by half opens up the possibility of starting already discussion in the Conference on Disarmament of concrete directions to be followed in multilateral efforts in the domain of nuclear disarmament. For that reason, we suggest that a start should be made on the practical identification of the substance of possible multilateral measures in this field.

We welcome the statement by the the distinguished representative of China, Ambassador Fan Guoxiang, who said on 23 February: "China, as a nuclear State will not shirk its due responsibilities for realizing the complete prohibition and thorough destruction of nuclear weapons."

(Mr. Nazarkin - Union of Soviet Socialist Republics)

The Soviet delegation believes that establishing an ad hoc committee on item 2 of the Conference's agenda would provide an appropriate forum for a multilateral exchange of views regarding the cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament. The Soviet delegation supports the draft mandate for such an ad hoc committee submitted by the "Group of 21" in document CD/819. In our view the draft mandate correctly defines issues of substance for multilateral negotiations in the field of nuclear disarmament, and thus contributes to enhancing the effectiveness of the Conference on Disarmament as the single multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament.

For that reason the refusal of the western group to establish an ad hoc committee on item 2 was a matter of regret for us.

I would like to make one more observation. As noted in paragraph 50 of the Final Document of the first special session of the United Nations General Assembly devoted to disarmament, "the achievement of nuclear disarmament will require urgent negotiation of agreements at appropriate stages ... for ... cessation of ... the production of fissionable material for weapons purposes". We proceed from the premise that production of fissionable materials for weapons purposes plays an important role in the qualitative improvement and development of nuclear weapon systems and is inseparably linked with the problem of cessation of production of all types of nuclear weapons. The importance of the problem of cessation of production of fissionable materials for nuclear weapons purposes is also mentioned in a number of United Nations General Assembly resolutions. Thus in a resolution adopted at the forty-second session, the Conference is requested "to pursue its consideration of the question of adequately verified cessation and prohibition of the production of fissionable material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices" (resolution 42/38 L of 30 November 1987).

It seems to us that this recommendation by the General Assembly is not being properly taken into account in the work of the Conference. That is why we propose that a group of experts, or some other mechanism, should be set up in the framework of the Conference to study the problem of cessation of the production of fissionable materials for nuclear weapons purposes, with the participation of all the Nuclear Powers, at the stage of complete elimination of their nuclear weapons.

Today essentially items 1 and 2 of the Conference's agenda have been touched upon in our statement. Starting from 1979, when adopting its agenda at the beginning of each of its annual sessions, the Conference has invariably allocated the first two places to these items. Moreover, the issue of prohibiting nuclear tests was also at the top of the agenda of the Committee on Disarmament from 1968 onwards. Yet it must be recognized with great regret that at the present time, on the eve of the third special session of the United Nations General Assembly devoted to disarmament, the Conference cannot register progress in the consideration of these two most important issues. I mean of course genuine progress, substantive progress, and not the number of statements made, documents introduced or reports presented to the United Nations General Assembly.

(Mr. Nazarkin - Union of Soviet Socialist Republics)

Equally meagre progress has also been made in the elaboration of measures to prevent an arms race in outer space - item 5 on the agenda - which I touched upon at the beginning of my statement today. Although the Ad hoc Committee on this item has been functioning in the framework of the Conference since 1985, for four years it has proved impossible to move forward in working out measures to prevent an arms race in outer space, since the committee has been functioning for four years on the basis of the same mandate, which does not provide for negotiations.

The Soviet delegation considers that such a state of affairs in the key areas of the Conference's work should be the object of very serious consideration at the third special session of the United Nations General Assembly devoted to disarmament. It is our expectation that, at the forthcoming special session, decisions will be taken that will spur on and give a powerful stimulus to negotiations on these problems, which are of vital importance to mankind.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics for his statement, and for the kind words he addressed to the Chair. I recognize the representative of Argentina, Ambassador Cámpora, and I give him the floor.

Mr. CAMPORA (Argentina) (translated from Spanish): Mr. President, my statement will be brief. None the less, since this is the first time that I have taken the floor in the month of April, I wish to express our satisfaction at seeing you assume the presidency with the efficiency and skill that are characteristic of your personal qualities of wisdom and impartiality. I should also like to forward our congratulations to your predecessor for the month of March, Ambassador Stülpnagel, for his successful accomplishment of the same important tasks.

I asked for the floor to read out the following communiqué from the Foreign Ministry of my country dated 6 April last.

"In view of the escalation of warlike acts in the war being fought by the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Iraq, which has now entered its eighth year, the Argentine Government has called upon the two countries to put an end to hostilities in accordance with the provisions of United Nations Security Council resolution 598 (1987), which it helped to draft with the aim of achieving peace.

At the same time, the Argentine Government feels it necessary to express its views categorically on the following aspects of the aforementioned conflict:

1. The extension of hostilities to the major urban centres of both parties, which has come to be called the 'war of the cities', gives a new and tragic dimension to the conflict by involving the innocent and unarmed civilian population on both sides. This calls forth the most energetic condemnation by the Argentine Republic.

(Mr. Cámpora - Argentina)

2. The use of chemical weapons and asphyxiating, poisonous or other gases in the war between the two countries is a serious violation of the Geneva Protocol of 1925 and of customary international law, which is a matter for grave concern on the part of the people and Government of Argentina."

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador Cámpora for his statement and for his kind words addressed to the Chair. I recognize the distinguished representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and I give him the floor.

Mr. MASHHADI (Islamic Republic of Iran): First of all I would like to express our thanks for the concern that the distinguished representative of Argentina expressed regarding the escalation of tension in the war between Iran and Iraq. For your information and the information of the Conference, I would like to say a few words. First, we too are concerned about the escalation of what has been known as the "war of the cities". We have given a positive response to the appeals of the Secretary-General since 1984, and we have said repeatedly that we will not attack residential areas and that the cities must be immune from the attacks. That was something our Foreign Minister reiterated two weeks ago here, and our attacks have only a deterrent aspect. Once again, for the correction of the record here, we reiterate that we will never attack cities if the Iraqis do not. We did not start the "war of the cities", we will not continue the "war of the cities", and as you have seen on several occasions, the Secretary-General has appealed and we have given a positive response here. I would like to reiterate again the position of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran that whenever Iraq stops attacks on cities the Islamic Republic of Iran will stop.

On the second point also I would like to draw the attention of the distinguished delegates here to the dangerous trend which is being followed. Iraq has announced, and the Foreign Minister of Iraq has announced, that they will use every means in order to deter what they have called the Iranian aggression, and for that pretext the Iraqi head of the news agency in Cairo also has announced that they will use chemical weapons. They have determined that several big Iranian cities will be attacked with chemical weapons. Blaming both countries and asking both countries in this regard gives Iraq a pretext to escalate. Using such words will only give a pretext for more extensive chemical attacks on bigger cities. As our Foreign Minister reiterated here, we have never used chemical weapons and we will not use chemical weapons.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran for his statement. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor at this moment? I see none.

May I turn to another subject? At the last meeting of co-ordinators, I was requested by the Group of 21 to put before the Conference for decision at our next plenary meeting on Thursday a draft mandate for an ad hoc committee on item 3 of the agenda, entitled "Prevention of nuclear war, including all related matters". The relevant text appears in document CD/515/Rev.4, which is being circulated by the secretariat this morning. In accordance with the

(The President)

practice of the Conference, after the list of speakers for Thursday has been exhausted, we shall hold a brief informal meeting to consider the draft mandate and, after that, we shall resume the plenary meeting to take up, for decision, the proposed draft mandate.

I have been informed by the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations that he has an announcement to make. I give him the floor.

Mr. KOMATINA (Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations): I wish to inform you that this morning I have been informed by the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva, Mr. Jan Martenson, that on Thursday 14 April this Council Chamber will be needed for a ceremony to take place on that date for the signing of the agreements relating to the Afghanistan talks. He has also informed me that, for security reasons, this area will have to be closed as from the end of our meetings this morning. He has also indicated that another conference room will be made available to the Conference for meetings on Wednesday as well as for our plenary meeting and the meeting of the Ad hoc Committee on the Comprehensive Programme of Disarmament which are scheduled for that date. Accordingly, the meetings of the Conference on Disarmament will be held as follows:

Group of 21 in conference room III tomorrow, Wednesday at 10.30 a.m.

Ad hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons, 3 p.m. in the same room.

Plenary meeting on Thursday at 10 a.m. in room XIX in the new building (door 40), in view of the presence of high-level visitors.

Ad hoc Committee on the Comprehensive Programme of Disarmament in room III on Thursday at 3 p.m.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Secretary-General of the Conference for his information. For my part, I should now like to inform the Conference that at our next plenary meeting on Thursday, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria and Austria, as well as the deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Poland, will be addressing the Conference. As usual, I shall be grateful if members could be present in the conference room assigned to us not later than 9.55 a.m. in order to greet the high-level visitors.

I now intend to adjourn this plenary meeting and to convene, in five minutes' time, an informal meeting of the Conference devoted to consideration of the technical parts of the special report to the third special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.

The next plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament will be held on Thursday 14 April at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 11 a.m.