

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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FINAL RECORD OF THE NINE HUNDRED AND THIRTY-SECOND PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 26 June 2003, at 10.20 a.m.

President:

Mr. Mario MAOILINI

(Italy)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 932nd plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. I suspect that this is going to be a rather eventful morning, not only because it rained last night, but because we have so many colleagues leaving. So prepare your handkerchiefs. And, on a more modest note, it is also the beginning of the Italian presidency.

Today we are going to bid farewell to four of our distinguished colleagues, Ambassador Anda Filip of Romania, Ambassador Chris Westdal of Canada, Ambassador Camilo Reyes of Colombia and Ambassador Henrik Salander of Sweden, who will soon complete their duties as the representatives of their respective countries to the Conference on Disarmament.

Ambassador Filip joined us on 22 August 2000. During her tenure she presented the position of her Government with authority, diplomatic talent and elegance. We have all appreciated her commitment to the resolution of the outstanding issues on the Conference's agenda and to the commencement of substantive work, as well as her persistent support for proposals aimed at achieving that end.

Ambassador Westdal has continued the proud traditions of his predecessors as he has represented his country for almost four years with tenacity, remarkable authority and clarity of vision. His strong commitment to overcoming the impasse in the Conference culminated during his presidency of the Conference at the beginning of the 2001 session. He will be remembered for the most thorough and sophisticated consultations on the programme of work of the Conference ever undertaken by any president and for the most comprehensive and sincere diagnosis of the state of the Conference, supplemented by carefully considered and well substantiated remedies. His exemplary performance in this function, his diplomatic talent and oratory mastery, as well as his remarkable human qualities and consummate sense of humour have justly earned him respect from all of us.

As a seasoned diplomat, Ambassador Reyes has left his distinct mark on various disarmament bodies. During his presidency of the Conference, in 2001, he led to a successful conclusion the arduous consultations on the appointment of the three special coordinators on the review of the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament, on expansion of the membership of the Conference and on its improved and effective functioning. Incidentally, I might recall here that the person speaking made a modest contribution to this achievement, together with his German colleague. As chair of the third session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 NPT Review Conference and subsequently, as chair of Main Committee I, Ambassador Reyes played a key role in ensuring the successful conclusion of the Review Conference and the adoption of its final document. Also, his presidency of the 2001 United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, as well as his crucial role in forging consensus on the Programme of Action, have been widely appreciated for his highest standards of professionalism, remarkable authority and diplomatic talent.

During his tenure, Ambassador Salander has always been in the forefront of disarmament efforts. Possessing a remarkable knowledge of the procedural and substantive issues before the Conference on Disarmament, he has taken an active part in all efforts aimed at fostering consensus on the programme of work. Together with Ambassador Reyes, as well as

(The President)

Ambassador Lint, Ambassador Dembri and Ambassador Vega, he has worked out a unique cross-group proposal of former presidents of the Conference on the programme of work, which has been enjoying a broad measure of support. He also defined new standards for effective multilateral diplomacy when he guided the work of the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2005 NPT Review Conference. There is no doubt that his factual summary of the discussions in the Preparatory Committee fully deserved being set to music.

So, on behalf of the Conference on Disarmament, and on my own behalf, I should like to wish Ambassador Filip, Ambassador Westdal, Ambassador Reyes and Ambassador Salander much success in their new important assignments and happiness in their private lives.

I have the following speakers for today's plenary meeting: for Belgium, Ambassador Jean Lint; for Algeria, Ambassador Mohamed-Salah Dembri; for Romania, Ambassador Anda Filip; for Sweden, Ambassador Henrik Salander; for Colombia, Ambassador Camilo Reyes; for Canada, Ambassador Christopher Westdal, and, following their statements, I shall be happy to give the floor to Ambassador Inoguchi of Japan, who will succeed me later this summer.

Before giving the floor to the first speaker on my list, however, I would like to make a statement as the presidency of Italy begins.

Mr. Secretary-General, Mr. Deputy Secretary-General, distinguished colleagues, I am fully aware of the honour and of the important responsibility of assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. As it is the only negotiating body on disarmament at the disposal of the international community, I think we should do everything possible to keep it alive and to be aware of the fact that shortcomings or long pauses in the pursuit of success should never discourage diplomacy.

At the beginning of this presidency of the Conference, I believe that we should consider what the fundamental elements characterizing the present international situation are as far as armament potentials and disarmament possibilities are concerned. We should then ask ourselves whether we have any chances of progress in the disarmament process.

The items we are supposed to negotiate stem from the so-called decalogue, which resulted from the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, on the basis of which the Committee on Disarmament shaped its agenda in 1979. In accordance with paragraph 27 of its rules of procedure, the Conference on Disarmament has never covered the full range of the items contained in the decalogue.

At present our agenda is made up of eight items: first, cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament; second, prevention of nuclear war, including all related matters; third, prevention of an arms race in outer space; fourth, effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons; fifth, new types of weapons of mass destruction and new systems of such weapons; radiological weapons; sixth, comprehensive programme of disarmament; seventh, transparency in armaments; and eighth, consideration and adoption of the annual report to the General Assembly of the United Nations.

(The President)

Furthermore, the Conference on Disarmament has not established any subsidiary body since 1999.

The first conclusion to which this leads us is that we are persistently operating - or trying to operate - on a 25-year-old agenda. This is a fact, not a moral or political judgement.

Nevertheless, let us examine - or try to summarize - the elements or realities of the international situation. They - contrary to the agenda - are all innovative and in a constant and far-reaching process of change.

The first reality is tremendous and unprecedented progress and sophistication in science and technology. What seemed relatively calm progress a few years ago has turned out to be hectic, continuous, unstoppable movement forward. Nobody knows whether what is known today will still be valid tomorrow, whether the scientific advantage we enjoy at dawn will be valid at sunset. Consequently, it is probably understandable that many ask why we should make compromises today on something that may turn out to be different tomorrow.

The second reality is the consequential revolution of armaments in the conventional area and in the area of weapons of mass destruction. If we can create a weapon also likely to give us a scientific and commercial advantage, why stop our research and development programmes?

The third reality is that the number of States in the international community has risen to the point where there are 192 members of the United Nations. Many of them are insecure. They have border problems, economic and financial problems, and natural resources to protect or to claim. They are not sure whether their territory will be respected or their sovereignty effective and enduring.

The fourth reality is that we are witnessing a profound change in the behaviour of the members of the international community and unprecedented threats to the lives and the very existence of States. There is no need to dwell on these two well-known factors. It is enough to say that what we hear calls for a revision of the Security Council, calls for effective multilateralism and a penetrating analysis of the so-called "humanitarian intervention or responsibility to protect". What we hear tells us that there comes a point when we can no longer insist that all responsibility falls on somebody else's shoulders and not also on our own.

What is the consequence of all this? I do not have any doubts whatsoever about your answer. My answer, your answer, can only be the same: uncertainty and fluidity. Under these circumstances, our agenda does not seem so outdated or unfit to reflect the real needs of the world. It is over-ambitious, if we want to negotiate all of it.

In an era of uncertainty it is not easy to work out understandings or agreements. But of course it is not impossible.

(The President)

I cannot be far from the truth when I say that this analysis is consciously or unconsciously your analysis. But what I am not sure of is whether we all draw the same conclusions. Many continue to think that, notwithstanding the situation, we should continue to believe that our 25-year-old agenda is still a valid source for our programme of work or that we should enforce that agenda - such as it is. Others have some doubts.

Notwithstanding this period of uncertainty, however, there are probably some roads ahead of us to be explored together.

We can choose the road of doing nothing, to wait and see. This room would be filled with the 65 members of the Conference, plus observers, but in reality, it would be filled with nothing, with silence, the silence of non-negotiation, of no activity at all.

Doing nothing in this room will not stop the dynamic forces of the world. Those forces will continue to work, and the gap between the States with much technology and those with less or no technology will increase. Doing nothing, however, will not prevent the erosion of some of the existing international agreements. Openly or surreptitiously, there will be efforts to evade a situation of impotence. Along this path we will most probably find moments of tension, to say the least.

There is another way ahead for us. To try - but really try - for a minimum, both substantial and procedural, while waiting for changes in the "four realities" with which I dealt at the beginning of my speech.

What is to be avoided - absolutely avoided - is silence, no action, no efforts to achieve a minimum of activity - not for the simple sake of moving, but with the intention of keeping a minimum dialogue and of avoiding tension.

Although we are well aware that the achievement of a programme of work remains our main goal, the best solution today is - as we said - to pursue a minimum likely to keep the Conference on Disarmament alive.

I am of the opinion that the pursuit of a minimum has been emerging during the past months and that the Conference could explore the possibility of consensus in some areas.

The Ambassador of Ireland, during her tenure of office, advanced the idea of injecting fresh thinking into the Conference on Disarmament by making its members more directly aware of the aspirations of civil society and, in general, of international public opinion. For the sake of continuity in the proceedings of this body, I believe that we can further explore the possibility of a relationship between the members of the Conference and the non-governmental organizations.

Moreover, the possibility of having intergovernmental institutions involved in disarmament activities, or some of the intergovernmental institutions, and brief the Conference on Disarmament, upon its request, on those aspects of their activities could be considered. I would refer in this connection to such bodies as the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical

(The President)

Weapons, the International Atomic Energy Agency and the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization. They could throw light on some of the points of our agenda.

Some old and new points have been submitted for our attention. Compliance has been the subject of a United Nations resolution adopted by consensus. Adopted likewise by consensus in 2002, we have had a resolution on terrorism and weapons of mass destruction. At this stage, these issues should not be considered for immediate negotiation but rather examined to see what elements are likely to be homogeneous with our disarmament efforts and what could be innovative, considering the proceedings and conclusions of other international organizations.

The issue of radiological weapons was examined last year, but probably deserves a better and closer scrutiny.

Without diverting attention from the core issues of its agenda, the Conference on Disarmament could start pondering what kind of international agreement could be formulated once the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons reaches its final stage in 2005.

Another area of consideration is represented by those issues on our agenda where no mandate is yet available, where the positions of member countries deserve an updating, a kind of revisitation, in consideration of the immense changes in science and technology which have occurred in recent years. Informal plenary meetings should be dedicated to those issues, provided they are planned well in advance.

This point brings us to the programme of work. So far we have had a proposal - that of the five ambassadors - that has not been thoroughly examined. In the version which we know there has been no follow-up. Should any new proposal be presented, it would be the unavoidable duty and responsibility of the President to submit it to the Conference.

In conclusion - and this is also my farewell message - let me emphasize that we must persist in keeping the dialogue alive.

I now proceed to give the floor to Ambassador Jean Lint of Belgium, and after him, the other permanent representatives whom I mentioned at the beginning.

Mr. LINT (Belgium) (translated from French): First of all, Mr. President, I would like to congratulate you on assuming the presidency of the Conference, and assure you of my delegation's full cooperation. I have taken careful note of the important message which you gave us, and I agree with it.

I would also like to extend my most friendly wishes to you for the future responsibility that you will be called upon to assume. My best wishes and thanks also go to two of the five ambassadors that are going to leave us, Ambassador Reyes of Colombia and

(Mr. Lint, Belgium)

Ambassador Salander of Sweden, and also to Ambassador Westdal of Canada and Ambassador Filip of Romania. It was a pleasure and privilege to work with such skilful and able colleagues.

You will recall, sir, that on 31 July 2002, when Ambassador Heinsberg of Germany was in the chair - and I would like here to repeat my commendation to him on his commitment to our work - our colleague Ambassador Dembri of Algeria, speaking in this forum on behalf of the five ambassadors, submitted an initiative on a draft programme of work for the Conference, covering practically all the items in the decalogue.

On 23 January 2003, after many consultations, I took the floor officially on behalf of the five to introduce our proposal, contained in document CD/1693. At the time, we were convinced that, thanks to this document, which remained open and could be amended and revised, agreement on the programme of work was clearly within our grasp and we urged parties to do their utmost to iron out their differences as soon as possible - differences, which did not seem so great to us - to allow the Conference to get back to work.

Thus, since 31 July 2002, the initiative of the five ambassadors has been supported in this forum by the following 34 countries: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bulgaria, Canada, Ecuador, Finland, Germany, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Iran, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Malaysia, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Peru, Poland, the Republic of Korea, Romania, Senegal, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine and Venezuela. And I will take this opportunity on behalf of the five ambassadors to thank those countries for their support.

Twelve members of the Conference have not spoken on the initiative, but have not opposed it: Bangladesh, Cameroon, Cuba, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Iraq, Mongolia, Morocco, Sri Lanka, Viet Nam and Zimbabwe.

For its part, the United Kingdom recently stated that it had no intention of submitting amendments to the proposal. Brazil declared that it did not oppose, or would not oppose, the proposal in the event of consensus. A group of eastern countries welcomed the initiative with satisfaction. Egypt appreciated efforts made this year. Myanmar stated that the initiative was a basis for intensive consultation. Pakistan and Syria appreciated the efforts of the five, but felt that the text on nuclear disarmament needed to be improved. Israel would determine its position when the proposal had been broadly accepted by the relevant parties. Belarus and the Russian Federation were open to the initiative if the text on PAROS was adapted. France believed that a solution first of all needed to be found on PAROS. China made a proposal for an addition to the text on PAROS which would allow it to accept the work programme. And, finally, the United States appreciated the proposal of the five ambassadors, but could not accept the text proposed by China.

I admit that this summary does not include all the various shades and nuances contained in the statements of our colleagues. Nevertheless, I do believe that it is an honest summation of what has been said in this forum. You will agree with me that the bone of contention is clearly

(Mr. Lint, Belgium)

the mandate on PAROS. We have heard the criticism expressed by China on the inclusion of the words “without prejudice” in our proposal. We have heard reluctance expressed by the United States to admit the Chinese addition “including the possibility of negotiating relevant international legal instruments”.

Thus, if the countries concerned wish to show that they want to reach a compromise, on behalf of the five I would like to put forward an amendment to the text. It is the following: in paragraph 4 on PAROS, I propose the deletion of the words “and without prejudice”. In the Chinese proposal, I propose that we replace “with a view to” by the words “including the possibility of”. This is a formulation which I owe to my colleague and friend Ambassador Chris Sanders of the Netherlands, who has successfully used it in other forums.

And I would ask you, Mr. President, and those who follow you, kindly to consider the possibility of holding consultations on the basis of these amendments.

To conclude, let me say that Belgium favours the participation of non-governmental organizations in our work. As far as procedure is concerned, we could be inspired by the rules followed in the United Nations, in particular those used for the Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, held in New York in 2001. These were the ones selected by the president designate of the 2003 Conference, our Japanese colleague Ambassador Inoguchi, to whom I wish every success in New York, and they should be acceptable to us all.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you very much, Ambassador Lint, for your statement. I now give the floor to Ambassador Mohamed-Salah Dembri of Algeria.

Mr. DEMBRI (Algeria) (translated from French): Mr. President, from the solemn tone of your statement today, it would seem that this is a rather exceptional meeting, in that, for the first time, it marks both the arrival and departure of a president. So we are not quite sure whether we should welcome you or say goodbye. What we shall remember, however, about you is, first and foremost, the consummate diplomat, the work which you have done here, with all of your colleagues, from both North and South, and the man of culture, as you have constantly demonstrated in both formal and informal settings. As I was just listening to your long message on the dangers besetting the Conference on Disarmament, I thought of one of the standard-bearers of your Latin literature, Juvenal, who, when the Roman Empire was showing such decadence, wrote - and I shall try and resurrect a little of my Latin: “In me mutatum quid nisi fata velis”, meaning: “In me, what would you wish to change except for the course of destiny?” That is the question facing the Conference on Disarmament today, and you were quite right in raising it as a general problem.

Before I go any further, though, may I bid farewell to those colleagues leaving us, who played an important role in our consultations and collective work, namely, Ambassador Anda Filip of Romania; Ambassador Henrik Salander of Sweden; Ambassador Camilo Reyes of Colombia, with whom I share more than one memory, since we were foreign ministers at more

(Mr. Dembri, Algeria)

or less the same time and our paths crossed in New York; and Ambassador Chris Westdal of Canada. It is a loss, indeed, for the Conference on Disarmament to see these ambassadors leave us, while of course it is our earnest hope that those who take over from them will soon fill the gaps that they leave.

I believe also that our colleague from South Africa, Ambassador Sipho George Nene, will be leaving, and although he may not yet have announced that officially here, it was announced in the group of the African Union which, I am currently chairing. He announced his departure, so I would also like to take this occasion to say how much we have appreciated the part played by South Africa in the work of the Conference on Disarmament.

So, like you, every year at this time, in June, we ask ourselves what is to become of the Conference on Disarmament. June is a crucial month because it brings the Conference to a parting of the ways: will it be able to carry on along the path of joint creativity, or will it once again find itself forced to sum up the entire year's work with a blank sheet of paper - what Mallarmé called "le vide papier que la blancheur défend", the empty page defended by its whiteness? We suffered this phenomenon last year, the year before that as well. Will the same thing happen again this year? It is possible, highly probable, even, and I believe that, like you, we must ask ourselves some major questions - particularly since, as we hail the efforts of all your predecessors this year, we are forced nevertheless to agree that successive presidencies of the Conference on Disarmament are increasingly suffering from creeping paralysis because the springs of creative collective work are broken. But where, exactly, is the problem?

I would agree with you when you say that the 1978 decalogue remains an essential basis for consideration and for the way in which we work. I would feel that we should maintain our impetus in that regard and not overexert ourselves in the quest for new avenues for our work opened up by developments in the world, avenues which are peripheral to our main concerns. We need to bring our focus back to the real issue, which, ultimately, is security for all and security by all. After all, we are coming up to the tenth anniversary of the NPT and never have the nuclear security agreements been under such grave threat. I repeat: never have the nuclear security agreements been under such grave threat. Back in 1995, we could never have imagined that a nuclear holocaust might one day be back on the horizon because our collective commitment to nuclear disarmament was rock-solid. Today, the question is open again. For whatever the changes taking place in the world, as you perceptively summarized them, the fact remains that, almost 10 years down the road from the conclusion of the NPT, on the very eve of the 2005 Review Conference, we have still not managed to negotiate in good faith on nuclear disarmament.

Yet article VI of the NPT places on us - and in particular the nuclear-weapon States - the obligation to achieve nuclear disarmament in all its forms. In all its forms - it is in the text, and everyone knows that it is there. And I believe that the judiciary arm of the United Nations, the International Court of Justice, in its interpretation of article VI, recalled the obligation to pursue negotiations in good faith and to achieve a precise result - nuclear disarmament in all its aspects in the context of strict and effective international control - I repeat: strict and effective international control.

(Mr. Dembri, Algeria)

Clearly, the question arises about compliance with commitments. This is not something that has arisen just a few days ago, in 2003, or in 2002 or 2001. This came up in New York at the Review Conference, chaired, incidentally, by Algeria and more specifically by my colleague Ambassador Abdallah Baali, who is familiar to many of you here. And in relation to this issue of respect for commitments, there was specific wording - and I think we need to refresh our memory on this from time to time - we set down 13 practical steps for systematic gradual efforts to arrive at nuclear disarmament. Let me just remind you of a few of those steps. First of all, there is ratification of the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty; then accession to the ABM Treaty; irreversible reductions in nuclear arsenals; de-alerting nuclear arms; and diminishing the role of nuclear weapons in national security policies.

That was three years ago and as we gather together here to reflect on these matters we should not lose sight of that fact because, whatever happens - and even when bilateral treaties are developed - we, in particular the non-nuclear-weapon States, do not find what we need. I might refer, for example, to the Moscow Treaty, concluded on 24 May 2002 between the United States and Russia, on the need to contain nuclear arsenals between now and the year 2012. This gives us cause for concern, as non-nuclear-weapon States, first of all because it is an agreement which may be revoked on the simple basis of three months' notice and which may be revoked in the exercise of national sovereignty. Now, treaties of this kind contain standard clauses which refer to what are clearly exceptional events that call into question or threaten the supreme interests of States, and that is still a problem to be tackled. In addition, under the treaty, nuclear warheads are to be stored, not destroyed. A number of warheads are to be kept in case of need for retaliation. There is no limit on multiple-warhead missiles and we are greatly concerned to find that the treaty provides no renunciation of the use of nuclear weapons, more specifically the possibility of using such weapons in the case of an armed attack, whatever its nature. This still is an open question. We have work to do in exploring and analysing texts, we have to refocus our collective work in the natural run of things and, clearly, without allowing ourselves to be disturbed by new issues which, just because they are topical, should not divert us from the essential reason for our collective presence here.

Worse still, when we look at everything that has happened since 2000, just three years ago, we will see that no guarantee on the non-use of nuclear weapons has been concluded or even put forward by the nuclear-weapon States to protect non-nuclear-weapon States. I am referring, of course, to the issue of negative security assurances. And this is a matter of urgency, this is an urgent subject on which we need very soon to come up with a negotiating mandate. These assurances, let me remind you, are not a mere function of the good will of the nuclear-weapon States, they are an obligation inherent in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. At the end of the day, this is a very strong call which is borne to us not just from the countries of the South but also from those of the North. And this, in my belief, is clearly an issue that must be put on the table before us, in addition to everything eloquently enumerated by my colleague Ambassador Lint: the Conference on Disarmament must do some effective work and come up with a treaty ensuring the protection of non-nuclear-weapon States from any attempt to use nuclear weapons against them.

(Mr. Dembri, Algeria)

These are some of the issues of concern to us that we have to tackle. In this context I might recall that, for some years now, we have seen new defence policies emerge, involving the use of missiles, and where the involvement of outer space is concerned, we are not at all sure where civilian use ends and military use starts. Again, the Conference on Disarmament could do useful work by endeavouring to clarify what might be highly ambiguous in this context of economic globalization, in a context where we are starting to see private enterprise enter the world of defence. This, too, is a highly topical issue which we must consider as a group.

Accordingly, my delegation would like to recall to our attention the spirit and the letter of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, because the Non-Proliferation Treaty, which for us remains the ultimate legal reference, is an instrument which applies both to nuclear disarmament and to non-proliferation. This is its intrinsic nature and we must affirm it.

The initiative of the five ambassadors was presented over the course of 2002 and it remains valid. We have just heard Ambassador Lint set out its basic provisions and recall the support which it enjoys in the Conference on Disarmament today. Thus, for the presidency there is one primary task, namely, to carry this initiative forward with all members of the Conference, because we are not that far from consensus, even though there is still some reluctance among us. Now I know that, here in the Conference on Disarmament, we constantly have to navigate a course between consensus and veto but I think that, with the new understanding that we have today, we should accept that a sense of compromise should persuade us to use consensus as a positive tool in our hands and not as a tool to block proceedings. The initiative of the five ambassadors is now a given in this Conference, we all know its provenance. This initiative has now become part of the Conference's creative efforts to achieve solidarity since the Shannon mandate, which is as far as my memory goes, it has encompassed all the initiatives that might help lead us out of our deadlock. It clearly derives from the Amorim proposal, which we all - or at least most of us - helped to baptize and defend. It now needs to be carried forward and further developed, as our colleague the ambassador of Belgium has reminded us. It takes account of the essential mandates to which we need to give our attention and on which we must focus our negotiating efforts, namely: nuclear disarmament, FMCT, PAROS and negative security assurances. It also proposes that special rapporteurs be entrusted with issues that need prior elucidation.

This initiative refocuses disarmament efforts within the decalogue and brings them back on to the natural course of events, if we look at things in terms of the big picture that you have painted, Mr. President. In this context we urge the presidency, yet again, to bring this matter to the discussion and negotiating table, so that we can quickly arrive at consensus, perhaps, in the first instance, not on all of the mandates, but on those mandates which appear not to create any doubts in our minds, if I may put it that way. This is how we could make progress.

In conclusion, Mr. President, I would like to tell you that, in the view of my delegation, non-governmental organizations do take part in our work: civil society is involved in our work and we see no problem in that participation being expressed in both formal and informal

(Mr. Dembri, Algeria)

arrangements. There is no reason why the United Nations, which has opened its doors to civil society in many of its debating forums, such as in the Commission on Human Rights, ILO, WHO, should not do the same in the Conference on Disarmament. I wish you every success and good fortune in your new position, Sir, and take this opportunity to reiterate to you my friendship and respect.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): Thank you Ambassador. It is always a pleasure to hear you speak and to observe your commitment to moving the Conference out of its impasse on to the road to progress. I believe that this confidence in our institution and in the potential wealth of ideas and suggestions generated by all members of the Conference on Disarmament can - indeed, should - form the basis for our work and its essential driving force.

Thank you also for your good wishes and for the kind words addressed to the Chair.

I now give the floor to Ambassador Anda Filip of Romania.

Ms. FILIP (Romania): Mr. President, since this is the first time that I take the floor under the Italian presidency of the Conference on Disarmament, please allow me to begin, on behalf of the Romania delegation, by warmly congratulating you on your assumption of this position. I wish to extend to Italy our wishes for a fruitful term of office and to assure you of my delegation's full readiness to work together in all your endeavours.

To you personally, Ambassador Maiolini, as well as to the other distinguished colleagues that will be leaving Geneva soon, I wish to extend my highest consideration, my heartfelt appreciation for your friendship and cooperation, and my very best wishes for the future.

It is with great emotion that I know take the floor, as I approach the end of my mission here in Geneva, as Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Romania to the United Nations Office, the Conference on Disarmament and the international organizations based in Geneva.

These past three years here have been very full and very busy, and they have brought me and the other members of my mission great satisfaction.

I say this because, on the one hand, we have seen how, after a decade in which Romania has been focusing very much on its own transformation and on the process of relinking with Europe as a whole and with its fundamental institutions, the United Nations system is regaining, at the level of Romanian foreign policy, the attention and the importance that it rightfully deserves. As an eloquent expression of this, Geneva has become a select destination for Romanian officials, for the President, the Prime Minister and members of Government, when addressing the major issues confronting the international community in this age of globalization - peace and security, human rights, science and technology, the information society, international trade, health and labour standards and sustainable development, among others.

Second, after many years - too many years - of isolation and mismanagement under an authoritarian and outrageously anachronistic regime, we have done our best to make Romania better known at the level of international Geneva. We have taken great pride and pleasure in

(Ms. Filip, Romania)

organizing a variety of public diplomatic events, and we hope that the Romanian Hall in this Palais des Nations or the statue - not far away in the Cour d'honneur - of Nicolae Titulescu, eminent Romanian statesman, twice President of the Assembly of the League of Nations and bold visionary who fought for the culture of peace and the spiritualization of borders, have not gone unnoticed.

As for the Conference on Disarmament itself, our views on its role and contribution are, I believe, well known, as they have been expressed in this hall a number of times, most recently just last week. We firmly believe that we have here a formidable potential for significant and substantive work, and Romania is one of the many countries ready to engage in such work. I remember when Mr. Ioan Mircea Pascu, the Romanian Minister of Defence, addressed the Conference on Disarmament in the spring of last year, and I also remember the round-table discussion which he had later, over lunch, with a group of distinguished ambassadors to the Conference, on a wide variety of issues relating to international security, disarmament and arms control. He was greatly impressed by the quality and level of that discussion and, as an outsider, he was convinced of the role that such people can play in building a better and a safer world. After all, it is well known that the Conference on Disarmament is the best club in town - and this for very good reasons.

Today the Conference on Disarmament is concluding the second part of its deliberations in the 2003 session, once again without being able to adopt a programme of work. Although we are all well aware of the several attempts made under the successive presidencies, no significant progress may be reported thus far: we are still unable to start real work and genuine negotiations.

A number of proposals have been tabled lately, both with a view to reaching agreement on the agenda and also to addressing the issue of a more effective structure and functioning of the Conference on Disarmament. Delegations were and continue to stay involved in extensive consultations. These initiatives and endeavours are a strong proof of the members' commitment to surmounting the current deadlock. I am not the first to mention that political will, balance, determination and vision are key elements in moving forward the activity of the Conference.

There is one particular thing I should like to underline about the Conference on Disarmament, namely, that this body has naturally been affected by the tremendous changes that have occurred in the world over the past 14 years. I need hardly mention how different things are today, after the fall of communism in central and eastern Europe or after the horrific events of 11 September. Somehow, the current stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament might be attributed to the necessity to update our proceedings so that they may better meet the new challenges of our times. And you yourself, Mr. President, have just most eloquently identified some of these new challenges and developments.

At the national, regional and global levels, policies and strategies are being reshaped in order to meet the new realities. Terrorism and weapons of mass destruction are in the headlines. The Conference on Disarmament is also affected by the process of defining the new international

(Ms. Filip, Romania)

security and stability architecture. In this respect, please allow me to recall the remarks made by our former Deputy Secretary-General, Mr. Bensmail, at the end of his tenure, in September 2000:

“Multilateral disarmament forums have always evolved over the years in response to changed political realities. The Conference on Disarmament is no exception in this respect, and the difficulties it now faces (...) are rather a reflection of the complexity and the dynamics of contemporary international relations.”

It is our strong conviction that the Conference on Disarmament has a unique role and place in the framework of multilateral bodies dealing with arms control, non-proliferation, disarmament and all related issues. Moreover, we are confident that it can once again become a major source for finding solutions to the fears and concerns of the international community.

In conclusion, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all my colleagues for their kind cooperation and the friendship that they have extended to me over the past three years. It has been a real privilege for me to be part of this elite diplomatic society in Geneva. Although I have not experienced the most exciting times of this forum, I go away with very good memories of our Thursday morning meetings.

I would also like to express my appreciation for the dedication and professionalism of Mr. Sergei Ordzhonikidze, the Secretary-General of the Conference, and of Mr. Román-Morey, the Deputy Secretary-General. I also warmly thank the entire Conference secretariat and our interpreters for their work and their support. To all of you in this hall, I wish the very best of health, happiness and professional success.

The PRESIDENT: Ambassador Filip, on behalf also of the Secretary-General, I thank you for your kind words and for your consideration. Indeed, we all leave Geneva fully aware that this is the best club in town. I now give the floor to Ambassador Salander.

Mr. SALANDER (Sweden): Mr. President, let me first assure you of all the support that I may still be able to extend to you during my last few days in Geneva. I believe that the chances are slim that you will preside over substantive work in the Conference on Disarmament before I leave Geneva, but if there is the slightest possibility of that, I will do my utmost to be of help to you. And you will certainly be a very distinguished president of the Conference, if this unused international body would suddenly start to live up to the expectations and hope remaining with many people all over the world.

I want to thank Ambassador Levy also for his skilful work during his latest presidency, and I extend my best wishes to Ambassador Inoguchi for her term.

When I now leave my post as Permanent Representative of Sweden to the Conference on Disarmament, after four years, I do so with mixed feelings - or even strongly contradictory emotions. On a personal level, I am extremely grateful - and I really mean that - to have come to know such a wonderful group of colleagues whom I now regard as very good friends and with whom I sincerely hope to remain in touch and meet again often.

(Mr. Salander, Sweden)

In that sense, therefore, these four years have not been wasted. On the contrary, they have in many ways been some of the most rewarding and enjoyable years of my life so far. Professionally, however, I cannot but feel that my time here has been partly wasted. Within the Conference, no really substantive work has been done during my time here. We have tried hard, and it sometimes takes a great deal of work to do nothing, as the saying goes. But the sinister truth is that this international institution, created with an enormous investment of ingenuity and constructivity, has achieved nothing in about seven years now. And worse, its membership, as an indivisible collective, has not even given it the possibility of achieving anything.

Speaking personally again, outside the confines of the Conference, I have managed to become involved in some serious substantive work in other processes and institutional arrangements, but this has not happened within the Conference on Disarmament, and that hurts me, I must say, when I look back over these years.

When I referred to the membership collectively, I am of course aware that you all know that blame for the standstill in the Conference cannot be shared equally among members. A large majority, a very large majority, of members would be able to start work tomorrow. A small minority perceive their interests to be at such risk, if work is started, that those interests cannot even be guarded by the consensus rule of the Conference, or by the many other checks and balances that are built into an institution like this. This is a remarkably rigid position, which causes extensive damage to international cooperation and multilateral diplomacy.

The inactivity, the passivity, is staggering. No ideas are put forward. No solutions are proposed. Some delegations are even starting to suspect that this inactivity suits those few member countries rather well. I hope that this impression is incorrect. For their part, however, my authorities do not see much evidence that the P-5 countries, just to mention the most obvious subgroup in this context, are genuinely anxious to start substantive work in the Conference.

Many successive presidents of the Conference, culminating three years ago with Ambassador Celso Amorim, have devoted enormous effort to trying to solve the deadlock. Together with my friends, Salah Dembri, Camilo Reyes, Juan Enrique Vega and Jean Lint, I also tried to find some way forward. Our contribution, we believe, is now regarded by most Conference delegations as the closest that we have come to a pragmatic starting point for work in the Conference on Disarmament, and we hope that this will be reinforced by the small but important changes we have just introduced, as presented by Jean Lint.

To the delegations that think our contribution is not worthwhile - and these are in fact very few - I say simply: "Come up with something better." If this or that part is unacceptable to you, reformulate it. To characterize the five ambassadors' proposal in such terms as "no improvement", "opaque" or "unclear", as we have been told informally by some members who cannot support our proposed programme of work, and then at the same time not come up with any alternative, strikes us as a rather unconstructive way of conducting multilateral discussions.

(Mr. Salander, Sweden)

All in all, much as we may regret the individual frustration that many of us feel, it is still of little significance compared to the non-utilization of an institution that was created by our Governments for a common purpose. This said, there is always a glimmer of hope somewhere. One day the Conference on Disarmament will probably be back in action again, and then I will ask my Government to send me or somebody else back here to do full-time substantive work within the Conference.

Until that time, I extend my thanks and best wishes to the Secretary-General, Mr. Ordzhonikidze, and to the Deputy Secretary-General, Mr. Román-Morey, as well as to Mr. Bogomolov, Mr. Zaleski, Mr. Mantels and all my other friends in the secretariat, to the interpreters and to Ms. Lewis and Mr. Carle of UNIDIR, who demonstrate that important work can be done even in an unproductive environment. And to all my counterparts and friends in the Conference on Disarmament delegations, I extend my heartfelt thanks for these years and express my strong hope that we will continue to work together in some format some day.

The PRESIDENT: I thank you for your statement. We know your dedication and, even as we bid you farewell, we hope that your work be given due attention and give you the encouragement and strength to return to us to perform more productive work. I thank you, Mr. Salander, and I wish you well for your future. I give now the floor to Ambassador Camilo Reyes of Colombia.

Mr. REYES (Colombia) (translated from Spanish): Mr. President, allow me, first of all, to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. This represents both a privilege and a challenge for you. You are well aware that, today more than ever, this institution requires our commitment and efforts and, on behalf of Colombia, I would like to assure you of our support in all initiatives and actions which seek to revitalize the Conference on Disarmament and impart to it the energy that it needs to fulfil the mandate which it has had since the beginning.

Colombia has worked with enthusiasm and commitment in the area of disarmament. In 1999, it presided over the third session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 NPT Review Conference and was able to achieve the necessary consensus to ensure the success of the Review Conference. I recall the scepticism with which many delegations viewed attempts to take decisions on procedural matters which were central to organizing the work and to tackling a number of topics related to the recommendations to be referred to the Review Conference. Negotiations took place on the Preparatory Committee's work programme, on the definition of clusters, and on the earmarking of specific periods of time for nuclear disarmament, prohibition of the production of fissile material and the resolution on the Middle East. Discussions also turned on the problem of the time that would be allotted for statements by non-governmental organizations, on the results expected from the Review Conference and on the recommendations that the Preparatory Committee was to refer to the Conference. There were discussions about the provisional agenda and about the allocation of issues and items to the main committees. I remember well the discussions about the rules of procedure and the possibility of setting up subsidiary bodies instead of working groups and the amendments to rule 44 to allow the

(Mr. Reyes, Colombia)

participation of the CTBTO in the Conference. I also clearly recall efforts made to accept the idea of including in the final report the documents of the Chair, which would be used as a basis for the Review Conference.

Colombia also presided over Main Committee I of the 2002 NPT Review Conference. This committee had under its mandate the following two substantive topics: nuclear disarmament and negative security assurances. I presided over seven sessions dealing with these topics, during which I based myself both on documents submitted during the Preparatory Committee's third session and on statements by delegations and the contributions which they submitted in writing. As Chair I submitted a new document which was revised twice and which, with the necessary changes, was finally accepted, so that its elements could be included in the final outcome of the Conference.

The Review Conference managed to achieve agreement both on the review of the application of the Treaty and on its prospects for the future: it was accepted that nuclear disarmament was of interest to the international community as a whole and not just to a few States. We managed to achieve an unequivocal commitment by the nuclear-weapon States to the complete elimination of their nuclear arsenals and agreement was reached on a series of steps to achieve nuclear disarmament and international stability. We reaffirmed the need to refrain from the threat or use of force against other States and the principle that the only guarantee against the threat or use of such weapons was their total elimination. Working with efficiency, dedication and conviction, Colombia contributed in a constructive and timely fashion to the achievement of the final results of the 2000 Review Conference of the NPT treaty.

My country also presided over this institution between June and July 2001 and I can say with a certain measure of modesty and also with a good deal of satisfaction that it was under the presidency of Colombia that we agreed on the only decisions to have found consensus over the last five years. When I appointed the ambassadors of Bulgaria, Germany and Sri Lanka as special coordinators on the review of the agenda of the Conference, on its improved and effective functioning and on the expansion of its membership, we were able to take on topics of immense importance in the daily business of the disarmament cause and which, in some cases, are of very great political significance. This also brought a breath of fresh air to the listless environment which sometimes settles in this room during the warm summer days.

In order to contribute towards the work of the Conference on Disarmament, Colombia has been working with Algeria, Belgium, Chile and Sweden on the so-called five ambassadors' proposal, which, as you know, is contained in document CD/1693. At this point I will not go in any detail into a description of its content, because this document has already been examined very fully in this room, but I can assure you that my delegation has spared no effort whatsoever in seeking to find a way out of the most unfortunate situation in which the Conference is currently caught. We have done this with the conviction that no nation, no State, no member of the international community can possibly be interested in seeing this situation continue. Our proposal represents different groups of countries; it is a comprehensive, flexible and balanced proposal. We have expressed it in the broadest and the most transparent terms so that we can accommodate the most sensitive and the most prudent delegations. Its

(Mr. Reyes, Colombia)

elements can be combined or interchanged and they do not prejudice or presuppose anything other than the need to restore the Conference's ability to function and to respond to the needs of the international community and our own countries.

My country also presided in July 2001 over the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Traffic in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. This conference was the fruit of efforts by a small group of countries which, over more than 12 years, had worked to define the elements which would enable the international community to tackle head-on a problem faced by the vast majority of countries. We are talking here about a scourge which each day claims more than 1,000 victims and which has devastated the social fabric of countries, generated widespread poverty, impeded development, led to conflicts in many countries and then prevented them from being settled. In spite of the very difficult circumstances surrounding the convening of the conference and the widely differing priorities, points of view and interests which have all had an influence on negotiations, it was nonetheless possible, after two weeks of exhausting work, to approve, at 7 a.m. on Saturday 21 July, a programme of action which represents consensus among 170 countries.

The work which has been developed since then, based on the commitments agreed in the programme of action, involves the pursuit of a common approach and a common endeavour among States and non-governmental organizations and the need to act in concert with civil society. Today we can see a great number of steps taken at the global, regional and national levels which are underpinned by this association between State and civil society. By way of examples, I would like to mention the very important work which has been carried out by such organizations as the Geneva Forum, the Small Arms Survey, the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA) or Safer Africa, among others.

This coming July in New York, under the presidency of Ambassador Kuniko Inoguchi of Japan, will see the First Biennial Meeting, held for an exchange of information on the way in which States are implementing the Programme of Action. I am certain that the meeting will be able to identify new elements and methods of making our work even more effective.

The work on small arms and light weapons is a duty which we may not shirk. We are not talking here about preventing a tragedy: we are talking about halting a daily massacre which, in spite of its extreme brutality and persistence, we have thus far managed to ignore. Colombia has also worked - and this of course applies to many others present here - within the framework of the Ottawa Convention, because, as an affected country, we are very interested in promoting its development and further strengthening.

Colombia believes that the Conference on Disarmament must try and free itself from the procedural straitjacket which is rendering its operation so difficult. Such constraints include the constant need to approve our work programme or to change the president every month. These are issues which we have discussed in the past and which we should not simply shelve. We also believe that the Conference should be widened and should move without apprehension towards universal membership and the participation of non-governmental organizations in an open and spontaneous manner.

(Mr. Reyes, Colombia)

As for the problems that have prevented us from adopting a programme of work, I would refer here to the formula which has been put forward by Ambassador Lint. It may be that this subtle change of six words will make it possible for this community to get back to work. It is essential to understand the links between the mandates of the working groups in terms of their proper relative weight and, ultimately, with their limited consequences.

At a time when non-State actors have become the primary initiators of violence, at a time when terrorism has finally been identified as one of the main threats to democratic security, the security of citizens and international security, and when civilians are its main victims, it is absolutely essential for this institution to overcome the obstacles which prevent it from carrying out its duties. For Colombia, it is clear that, in the current world situation, non-proliferation has acquired a very special relevance, and that, without prejudice to existing commitments on disarmament, it is increasingly urgent to see it achieved. Allow me therefore to appeal to you all to continue your efforts to ensure that the Conference can once again carry out its duty and develop the instruments essential for the consolidation of non-proliferation and disarmament as essential elements for peace and security.

As I take my leave of you all, I would like to express my thanks to you for your friendship and cooperation. In spite of the difficulties which we have experienced, I have been able to witness the dedication and professionalism with which, on so many occasions, difficulties and challenges have been faced. I can assure you that I take away with me very valuable lessons and that none of these efforts will have been in vain.

My special thanks go to the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Sergei Ordzhonikidze, to Mr. Enrique Román-Morey, to Ms. Patricia Lewis and to the whole secretariat team, the interpreters and the technical staff. I would just like to recall that in Colombia you will always have a friendly country. Colombia is your friendly country, and you now also have a new friend in the Colombian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you for your statement. It has been a useful recapitulation of your great achievements and of the dedication with which you served not only this body but also the United Nations during your long, brilliant and, of course, still continuing and future fruitful professional life. I now give the floor to Ambassador Christopher Westdal of Canada.

Mr. WESTDAL (Canada): Congratulations, Ambassador Maiolini, on assuming the presidency. I am happy and I am honoured that, although we will not be here much longer, we get to perform this last task together. I have been privileged to be your colleague. You have always served our Conference and our cause with distinction, as have other dear colleagues who are here today to say farewell: Ambassador Dembri, Ambassador Filip, Ambassador Salander and Ambassador Reyes. Thank you all for that. And thanks to you, Ambassador Maiolini, and to others who have already spoken, for your generous remarks about my work here and for your best wishes.

(Mr. Westdal, Canada)

It has been my fortune to speak for Canada for the past four years in this historic Conference in your esteemed company, in the splendid setting of this august chamber under José-Maria Sert's great, apt murals of ceaseless struggle. It is now my lot to leave. I speak today to say farewell, to sum up what I have gained from my time here and to convey what advice I would hazard for you who will stay on.

Although I have gained knowledge, insight - I hope - and friendship here, I have achieved no tangible result of value in arms control and disarmament. Although we have not been idle here - it is taking work to look for work - we have gained no traction, had no work of substance, nothing to negotiate, nothing even to "deal with", whatever that means. This cloud of discomforting facts has steadily darkened over the course of my assignment.

I find some balm in Ecclesiastes: "The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong (...) but time and chance happeneth to [us] all." So let us get guilt out of the way, right at the outset. As you know, I think this Conference of ours is a tool of proven value, a shop that has delivered the goods before, global public goods, and can do so again. It is a poor workman that blames his tools - and a hapless tool that takes the rap. I do not. It has not mattered how wise, far-sighted, imaginative or energetic the score of presidents whom I have seen in my time here have been, nor how wholeheartedly many of their colleagues have tried to help them, nor how well the staff have staffed or the interpreters interpreted. One hard fact of our time and chance here is that major Powers have left our order book empty, our work programme in dispute. We have led horses to water and brought water to the horses, but they have not drunk for years now - and they still do not look thirsty to me. Maybe we are dealing with camels.

(continued in French)

There are several reasons for this and, while the relative weights of these reasons are perhaps obscure, because there are knots, some hidden, within knots of disagreement here, the fundamental reasons why we have had nothing to negotiate are no mystery. There are some among us who do not wish to take the next logical step toward nuclear disarmament, to "suffocate" weapon production, as Pierre Trudeau put it decades ago, to cut off the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons. Some clearly want more fissile material than they now have, not out of oft repeated and unsurprising resentment of those with mountains of the stuff, necessarily, but rather to make more nuclear bombs. Meanwhile, some of those among us do not want to ban weapons in space. Some do not want to deal with nuclear disarmament here, even to "study" it, as some would say, let alone negotiate to that end. And some here do not want to negotiate negative security assurances.

Indeed, in each of these fields - familiar parts of the work programme which, it seems, we have come so close to adopting - we seem further from action now than we were when I arrived. Over these four years, let it be said, some here have lost a great deal of faith in our whole multilateral enterprise.

(Mr. Westdal, Canada)

(continued in English)

There has been much other change over those four years. They saw the end of the end of the cold war. This is a new world freed of that profound dispute. Russia is a NATO partner. The Moscow Treaty promises major reductions in deployed strategic weapons. Those four years saw the end of the ABM Treaty and new beginnings for ballistic missile defence research, development and deployment. They saw an “unequivocal undertaking” by nuclear-weapon States and agreement on practical steps to nuclear disarmament - and they later saw vital elements of that historic programme disavowed. In those four years, some Governments came to power and some stayed with little wholehearted commitment to binding multilateralism. A seven-year labour led to a still-born compliance protocol for our ban on biological and toxin weapons, even after an anthrax attack threw into stark relief the huge danger in bioweapon threats. We saw instability in Asian security architecture in the wake of nuclear weapon proliferation to India and Pakistan and perhaps beyond - cases where the problem in the implementation of the NPT article VI on disarmament is that there is no NPT around to be implemented. And we saw the last proud product of this house, the nuclear-test ban, derailed and reductions authorized in lead-times for possible new nuclear tests.

Unforgettably, we also saw the catastrophic terrorism of 11 September, which startled the whole world as one and provoked potent global sentiments, remember, of vulnerability, sympathy and solidarity. We have since seen the fateful threats in proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the stuff they are made of move to the centre of the attention of the world community. We have seen sharp new intolerance for any merely hortatory means to contend with their menace, and over those four years, ominously, we have seen the taboo against the use of nuclear weapons eroded by the conflation of nuclear with chemical and biological threats, by the consequent erosion of negative security assurances and by legislated research on new types of nuclear weapons for use on such targets and deep bunkers. And we have seen wars in Afghanistan and Iraq caused by fear of weapons and other means of mass destruction in hands thought quite prepared, itching even, to use them.

That powerful fear does and will endure. It sustains a war on terrorism and it drives robust counter-proliferation policy and action inherently difficult to reconcile with consensus-based multilateral security structures like the pacts on weapons of mass destruction which this Conference exists to create.

Given the depth, nature and speed of all this background change in the concepts and in the circumstances of global security, and given the close links of our Conference to current security realities, it is scarcely surprising that there has not been agreement here to undertake the inherently laborious negotiation of consensus on new binding multilateral covenants. All told, let us be honest, we have far more questions than we do answers about just how to give multilateralism teeth when it needs them, say, or just how to sustain asymmetrical arrangements long enough for us to achieve effective international law before which all might be equal, or, more generally, just how we would otherwise plan to coexist in the long term with ubiquitous nuclear weapons, which have enough power in them to end life on earth, while the taboos and restraints on their use have been eroded.

(Mr. Westdal, Canada)

No agreement on a programme of work here will require more answers, a steadier state, a much broader base than we have had here of shared comprehension, vision and aim, and more political commitment and active reinvestment to build faith in the effectiveness of multilateral arms control, in its verifiability, in its reliability when and where it counts.

Those requirements - shared purpose, call it, and more, justifiable faith - constitute a worthy agenda in themselves. I commend it to you, noting that in neither our rules nor our lack of an agreed work programme is there any impediment to contributions to that essential debate here through reflection, consultation with colleagues and with civil society and statements by delegations or visiting officials and political leaders.

It is clear that we do not altogether have enough confidence in our collective means and, while we might all recognize the awesome gravity of the threats in unchecked proliferation and while we are rapidly elaborating complex webs of national, plurilateral and multilateral instruments to try to cope, we are yet far from broad agreement, and we are nowhere near consensus, on just what to do about them - generically, or in specific cases. So, there may not be negotiations for you to conduct here for some time, dear colleagues, but in the disarmament community which this Conference anchors here in Geneva, both governmental and non-governmental, and in the First Committee, in the NPT, IAEA and OPCW and beyond, there is obviously immense intellectual and technical work to do to confront this grave agenda and to build common purpose, trust and reliable verification, the essential foundations after all of negotiated multilateral arms control and disarmament. And there is as well all the other disarmament work that goes on in this town, in some of which we make real progress, from landmines, small arms and explosive remnants of war to the BWC - just in case anyone thinks that we are idle posted here.

I have spoken about some things that have changed in my four years here. I shall now speak of some that have not.

The grave threat of nuclear proliferation, in a ghastly class of its own, has not changed - other than by becoming more compelling than ever. The explosive 11 September attack on the World Trade Towers was equivalent to less than 1,000 tons of TNT, with no radioactive fallout. It surely deepened our commitment to nuclear disarmament by making us imagine anew what hideous damage thermonuclear megatons would wreak. There are, after all, a thousand thousand tons in a megaton. Nuclear weapons are unimaginably lethal, irremediably indiscriminate and uniquely dangerous. Yet we have been seeing them revalued, not devalued. We need to remember what is wrong with them, to sustain the stigma and taboo against them.

Nor has the threat changed in violations of our outright bans on chemical, biological and toxin weapons, "repugnant", as we have sworn, to the conscience of our kind. Nor has the threat changed in missile proliferation. We have been trying to build norms against their spread, but we clearly have a long way to go to get that job done.

(Mr. Westdal, Canada)

The stark, pressing need for comprehensive international cooperation has not changed. We have been well reminded that no country, however weak or disorganized, however strong and able, is alone on this planet. We are all in this together, our fates intertwined. Thus, in the language of the First Committee, multilateralism is a core principle of international security; it is all everyone's business.

We have been well reminded too that the multilateral system depends on the engagement, the example and the leadership of prevailing Powers - and, surely, that relationship is reciprocal: the powerful depend on the engagement of the multilateral system to contend with proliferation problems, as now for example, from north Asia to the Middle East.

That multilateral system in our field of arms control was exercised thoroughly in response to the chronic non-compliance of Iraq. In the evidently high-quality work in that domain by UNSCOM, UNMOVIC and IAEA we learned much of great value about monitoring and verification. It is all grist for the mill of the urgent work that needs doing to develop permanent, objective, adaptable verification capability for use, with effect, whenever we need it.

We must not let recent disagreement about how to enforce pacts on weapons of mass destruction obscure the surviving salient fact of unprecedented international political, legal and institutional cooperation being sustained in the war on terror, or distract us from the urgent need to secure the materials of mass destruction, above all, to contend with the vast fissile residue of the cold war. That is why the G-8 is so hard at work, at such great expense, in the Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction, launched at Kananaskis last year. That partnership serves our common security; it warrants widespread support.

Finally, the values and vision that we need to prevail have not changed. There still cannot for long be one rule for some and another for others, for example. That is a truth which we all know in our homes and our communities. It is the value in equality before the law, a surely essential dimension of political sustainability.

We need a vision true to our deepest values to prevail. We need it to sanctify life itself and human meaning in the clear light of their manifest, astonishing and surely sufficient divinities. The stakes have been sky-high for more than half a century now in our race for global governance coherent and effective enough to contend with the grave global threats before us, the existence and the spread of nuclear arsenals foremost among them.

Colleagues, as you persevere here - which is your duty, whatever your private views of the odds - keep this house and the community that it anchors as well as you can. In good stewardship, there can be regret and frustration perhaps, but never shame or sloth. Your ranks may thin - they are thinning now - but that is just good management; live with it. But your responsibilities, intellectual and technical, here in Geneva, in New York, in Vienna, The Hague, in our capitals and beyond, are as thick and as heavy as ever. For you must not only keep this house and keep other structures of multilateral arms restraint. You must, more deeply, keep the faith, shore up its broad foundations, build on them well with good works to honour its good words; keep the faith that we shall achieve the global coherence which we need across the wide

(Mr. Westdal, Canada)

range of our institutions and instruments of security, in our values and our deeds and in our norms, our laws and our order; the faith that we shall take down these man-made threats of massive indiscriminate killing as surely inconsistent with essential human dignity, meaning and very being; keep the faith that we can build a better world and that we shall find ahead a safer path of peace and grace.

I thank all of you, every one, delegates and United Nations staff in the room and our interpreters too in their booths. I will treasure memories of my time and work with you for all the rest of my life. Goodbye and Godspeed.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you, Ambassador Westdal. Let me for a moment leave formality aside and not only thank you, as Ambassador of Canada, but also as a friend and a person who has given us the benefit of his sagacity in these proceedings on disarmament. I thank you for the comprehensive picture that is conveyed in your statement, because, as a matter of fact, Geneva is not only the Conference on Disarmament but something else. There is some bitterness in other statements that I was able to see and to witness, but I believe that the “enlightened” vision which you shared with us and your faith in the future of goodwill and our capabilities will be the best farewell and testimony for our future work. Thank you, Ambassador, and I wish you happiness and every success in your work. I now give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador of Finland, who has asked for the floor.

Mr. REIMAA (Finland): Mr. President, on behalf of myself and my delegation, we welcome you most sincerely to the Chair. I believe that we are all looking forward to constructive, consistent and firm guidance in our deliberations over the coming weeks, but at the same time we are forced to say goodbye to you. Let me, on behalf of myself and my colleagues on our delegation, thank you most sincerely for your friendship and your cooperation and wish you, as you take up your new functions, the same courage and determination that you have shown here with us over these last years.

Let me also express our appreciation to those colleagues who are leaving. I believe, as their eloquent speeches show, that there is in them a combination of energy, imagination, and on the other hand, some frustration. Although we come from the same region as Henrik Salander, and Finland and Sweden share many similarities in the non-proliferation and disarmament field, I must make a fine distinction here, as we are often very happy to do with our Swedish colleagues. We have different degrees of frustration. I may come back to that when it is my time to leave, but that moment has not yet come.

I did not intend to speak and I cannot follow the eloquence of my predecessors, but let me just make a brief comment to follow on the statement which Ambassador Lint made today.

The Conference on Disarmament is a body where we work under the rule of consensus. We have almost daily difficulties in differentiating how we deal with procedural technical matters, practical matters or real substance. Although those are some of the distinctions, however, we always have the obligation to follow the rule of consensus. This means all 65 of us,

(Mr. Reimaa, Finland)

at least in principle and on the basis of the rules of procedure. With the experience that we have gathered over differing periods of time - in Finland's case, less than seven years - we believe that we have equal status. We have equal rights and we have equal obligations.

Now in Ambassador Lint's statement, which was a plenary statement, he has officially identified 58 of us, and he has mentioned certain categories. We find Finland in the first such category and we appreciate that. I am not challenging Finland's attribution to that category. But I should just remind Ambassador Lint that, when we made the statement, it was in an informal plenary, where open, honest dialogue was requested and we were ready to engage in that kind of dialogue.

We also remember that, when the five ambassadors introduced their ideas - that was nearly a year ago - the initiative was characterized as evolutionary, open and constructive and was open to improvements. I really welcome the drafting changes that Ambassador Lint, on behalf of the five ambassadors, has proposed today. I really hope that at least that part of his statement will show that the original idea is still a living idea.

After listening to him and considering the structure of his statement, however, I am not quite sure if that kind of an open and constructive process and method has come to an end, because I have the feeling that we have now been placed under time pressures, as Ambassador Dembri has urged the current President and the following President to push those ideas forward so that we know where we are. I hope that, when we close the 2003 session of the Conference on Disarmament we are not going to apply the working methods of the First Committee of the General Assembly.

My final hope and that of my delegation, Mr. President, and our wish to the successor to the Italian presidency, our dear Japanese colleague, Ambassador Inoguchi, is that you will keep the constructive and positive process alive - because in Finland we are not used to using the method of name-calling in processes where we are still trying to achieve consensus - so that you can provide us, I trust, with a credible and honest effort in order to establish a sound basis for the Conference on Disarmament to engage in substantive work as soon as possible.

But, Mr. President, my dear friend, once again, it was nice to work with you and I hope to see you in the near future.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you very much for your kind words, for your consideration, and also for the affirmation of our personal friendship. I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of South Africa.

Ms. MAKUPULA (South Africa): Mr. President, my delegation congratulates you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. We in the South African delegation would like to wish you success in your endeavours in performing the duties of this challenging task and also to ensure you of our full support and cooperation.

(Ms. Makupula, South Africa)

I am taking the floor on behalf of Ambassador Sipho George Nene, the Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations and Other International Organizations in Geneva, who could not participate at the Conference this morning due to his engagement with one of our cabinet ministers, who is here in Switzerland on official duties. Ambassador Nene has requested me to inform the Conference of the end of his term of official duty, as he will be leaving by the end of this month to join our Foreign Ministry in Pretoria. In this regard, my delegation has taken note of the good wishes expressed to him by Ambassador Dembri of Algeria.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you for the information. We are sad to learn of that departure. If we look forward to the end of the month, we will see that our next meeting is on 31 July. In view of this, we shall try to give the Ambassador's departure all the dignity and solemnity that he deserves. I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Japan, Ambassador Kuniko Inoguchi.

Ms. INOUCHI (Japan): Mr. President, today we have heard many important statements, including very important farewell statements by our colleagues who are about to leave Geneva. We appreciate your kind words in recognition of the contributions that they have made to the Conference on Disarmament and also to the multilateral disarmament community in general during their tenure.

We have also learned, however, that you, too, are going to leave us soon to assume very important and demanding duties, which require your profound political experience and your diplomatic talents. Indeed, we will miss you very much. Ever since you joined the Conference on Disarmament in September 2000, you have always articulated and upheld the position of your country, Italy, with a distinctive authority and calm elegance. Your strong commitment to overcoming the impasse in the Conference has been appreciated by us all. The authors of the various proposals aimed at bringing the Conference back to work could always count on your insight, imaginative comments, encouragement and enthusiasm for fostering consensus. Your skills at mediation and moderation and your impartiality earned you the well-deserved post of Chair of the United Nations Disarmament Commission, a function which you have discharged with your usual dedication and with exceptional diplomatic talent.

We also appreciate that, during this very short presidency of yours, you have injected new ideas on the future work of the Conference and you have also prompted others to bring forward their new ideas on the future of the Conference on Disarmament, as we have seen today, and I hope that this will stimulate our search for comprehensive solutions to the outstanding issues before the Conference.

On behalf of the Conference on Disarmament, and on my own behalf, I should like to wish you, Ambassador Maiolini, and your family much success and happiness in the future.

The PRESIDENT: Ambassador, I thank you very much for your moving words and I trust that it will not seem presumptuous or immodest when I say that I am going to keep them among my documents that I will keep always close to me for future activities. You also have a task of some difficulty to perform in New York in a few days. I mention the importance and

(The President)

value of the meeting in New York on small arms and on the advisability of considering the still far-away conclusion of the Programme of Action as something deserving the attention of this forum without detracting energy and attention from the agenda that we all cherish.

On closing as President, I would like to call on all member States of the Conference on Disarmament to take away with them the new changes proposed by the five ambassadors, through the agency of Ambassador Jean Lint and Ambassador Salah Dembri, in order that they can be examined by their capitals and be considered as homework for the forthcoming period - I shall not term it a "summer vacation". I believe that performing that task would be an expression of vitality and a demonstration of faith in our capacity to overcome obstacles.

With this I conclude our business for today. First of all, I would like to ask if there is anybody else wishing to take the floor? I do not see anyone, thus, we have concluded the second part of the 2003 session of the Conference on Disarmament.

I thank you very much for what has been said and for the dedication that you have demonstrated to the Conference on Disarmament and wish you a good summer vacation.

The next plenary meeting will be held on Thursday, 31 July, at 10 a.m. in this room.

The meeting rose at 12.20 p.m.