

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE NINE HUNDRED AND NINETY-EIGHTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 24 January 2006, at 9.15 a.m.

President: Mr. Zdzisław RAPACKI (Poland)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 998th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament and the first part of its 2006 session.

As you will recall, on 8 October last year, a massive earthquake struck South Asia, killing more than 87,000 people in Pakistan and 1,300 in India. An estimated 3.3 million people were left homeless in Pakistan alone. Subsequently, winter conditions in this hard-hit region and limited access to most of the affected areas in mountainous regions have further increased the number of casualties.

In the face of this tragedy, the international community has, once again, responded quickly and generously, providing life-saving assistance on the ground, as well as pledging the necessary funds for the recovery of the affected areas.

I would like to express, on behalf of the Conference on Disarmament and on my own behalf, the most sincere condolences and deepest sympathy to the peoples and the Governments of Pakistan and India.

In another disaster, more recently, a Slovak military plane carrying peacekeepers from the NATO-led mission in Kosovo crashed in Hungary on 20 January, killing 44 people on board. On behalf of the Conference on Disarmament and on my own behalf, I express the most sincere condolences and deepest sympathy to the families of the victims and to the Government of Slovakia.

I now invite you to join me in a minute of silence in memory of the victims of the earthquake, as well as those of the Slovak military aircraft crash.

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The PRESIDENT: As we begin the session of the Conference on Disarmament, I would like to bid a belated farewell to those colleagues who have left the Conference since we adjourned in September, namely: Ambassador Hu Xiaodi of China, Ambassador Jorge Iván Mora Godoy of Cuba, Ambassador Mohammad Reza Alborzi of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Ambassador Leonid Skotnikov of the Russian Federation.

I am confident that you will join me in requesting their delegations to convey to them our deep appreciation for their many valuable contributions to our endeavours during their tenure, as well as our sincere wishes for success and satisfaction in their new assignments.

Allow me also to extend a cordial welcome to the new colleagues who have assumed their responsibilities as representatives of their Governments to the Conference, namely: Juan Antonio Fernández Palacios of Cuba, Ambassador Gyula Szelei Kiss of Hungary, Ambassador Valery Loshchinin of the Russian Federation and Ambassador Yevhen Bersheda of Ukraine.

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

(The President)

It is an honour for me to open today the first plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament in the year 2006. I feel very privileged to preside over this Conference.

My country's dedication to the ideals of disarmament has been proven many times in this Council Chamber. I sincerely hope that my work as President of the CD - extremely demanding and responsible - will be rendered easier by your support and cooperation.

Allow me to thank the Peruvian presidency for its efforts aimed at moving ahead with the work of the CD. I would like to ask the delegation of Peru to convey to Ambassador Félix Calderón my greetings and wishes for every success in his new professional assignments.

Today Poland assumes its fourth CD presidency. I must admit that my Polish predecessors in this seat were in a much better position than I am. Ad hoc committees were working, CD reports to the United Nations General Assembly were written on hundreds of pages, and not on a dozen pages, as is the case today. Nobody could then imagine that the CD would not be able to adopt its programme of work.

In the view of my delegation, the CD - as the sole multilateral body devoted to negotiating disarmament instruments - has maintained its significance. I dare say that everyone in this room shares this opinion. During the consultations I have conducted recently, nobody questioned the importance or usefulness of the CD. On the contrary, the vast majority of my interlocutors underscored the necessity of a swift return to substantive work in the Conference. Many of them expressed their regret that the Conference remained de facto inactive as far as negotiations were concerned.

The past year was exceptional in a way. It was filled with events awaited by all of us. We witnessed the publication of the report of the United Nations High-level Panel, A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility. Most of its recommendations provided adequate answers to the global threats to peace and security. The report constituted a solid basis for taking decisions at the September United Nations Summit in New York. Unfortunately, the issues of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation were not adequately reflected in the decisions taken during the Summit. In the meantime, the outcome of the NPT Review Conference, conducted in May, did not live up to the expectations of the international community.

Such a situation has been the cause of frustration and resulted in quests for alternatives to the CD. It was reflected during the work of the First Committee of the General Assembly, when a group of countries submitted a proposal to create ad hoc committees. This has undoubtedly put a certain amount of pressure on the States members of the Conference. In response we should focus on finding an optimal way of achieving global security without impeding national security interests. We cannot afford to waste the opportunity to reach this goal.

(The President)

The Conference on Disarmament has an important role to play in assuring international security and peace. Its importance is particularly crucial today, in an era of multipolar international relations. We are faced with diverse challenges to international security. To name but a few: the management and destruction of stockpiles of cold-war-era weapons, non-State actors and weapons of mass destruction.

The role of the CD during the times of the rivalry of two super-Powers was instrumental. Today its role is substantial. Let me say it clearly - here in this Council Chamber - we can make a difference, we can lay the foundations for a better world tomorrow. We need to make every possible effort to break the stalemate within the CD. What we need is creativity, flexibility and above all the political will to make this Conference live up to the challenges outside this room. And let me stress: the world outside will not wait until the CD adopts its programme of work.

It is the duty of every CD President to seek consensus on a programme of work. I - and all the Presidents in the 2006 session - will spare no efforts to find possible ways to achieve it. For the past few days I have been conducting bilateral consultations with the delegations on the possibilities of adopting the programme of work. I will complete these consultations by 2 February, but it seems that there is no change in the positions of countries. However, we have noted more flexibility and readiness for more creativity. I plan to invite delegates to conduct a debate based on the CD agenda to identify issues which might constitute possibly elements of a future programme of work.

It should clearly be understood, however, that the main purpose of our work does not consist of adopting programmes of work. We are here to deal with issues - I repeat, ISSUES, which are crucial to the security of all. That is what I intend to focus on. My aim is to assist the Conference in identifying issues it could concentrate upon in order to answer challenges in disarmament and in the non-proliferation area.

The need to advance the work of the CD has prompted our initiative to invite all the CD Presidents of the 2006 session to cooperate on the possible shape of this year's session and to assure the continuity of actions by consecutive Presidents. We believe that, by concerted actions, CD Presidents can overcome the problem arising from the fragmentation of the CD session into four-week periods. That is why we have invited all the CD Presidents for 2006 (or the P6) for consultations with the groups' coordinators. The P6 also wishes to call upon Friends of the Presidents, who would assist us in informal consultations on the review of the agenda, the improvement of methods of work and later, perhaps, on other issues.

Above all, the P6 wishes to provide the CD with a clear vision of the shape of the CD proceedings this year. We hope to be able to announce it by the end of the Polish presidency, in order to have a sufficient amount of time to prepare for the debates, and - if you will - to invite experts from capitals.

Let me commend here the Ambassadors of the Republic of Korea, Romania, the Russian Federation, Senegal and Slovakia for their efforts in creating the P6. Let me also express hope for further fruitful cooperation.

(The President)

As was done in previous years, I intend to issue invitations to Foreign Ministers and other high-level officials to come to the CD and address the delegates. We need to create an atmosphere in which the necessary political will might be achieved. We should also remember that such political will is to be born in capitals, not in Geneva. The importance of keeping high-level officials aware of our work is therefore crucial.

While introducing our plans for the CD in 2006, I should also express my expectations with reference to your participation in this year's session. It is my sincere hope that you will all have a role to play in reviving the substantive work of the Conference. Working papers and CD official documents create the ground for substantive work. Regrettably, last year only two working papers on one agenda item were submitted as official CD documents. Is that an expression of weakening interest in substance? I sincerely hope not. I would therefore encourage you to submit papers, proposals and ideas. Only then can the CD really start to work. And let us not use the argument that everything has already been said and done in the CD. The world outside changes, our approach to address CD issues, while preserving positions of principle, can also change. I invite you, as well as the NGO disarmament community, to take part in the creation of substance for the future work of the Conference.

I would also encourage delegations to organize side events on issues of particular interest to them. That could further deepen our understanding of the issues present on the Conference table. That would also be a good opportunity for academic and civil society to engage in our deliberations on the substance of the CD.

It is an honour for me to preside over the work of a body which gathers the best of diplomatic talents and disarmament experts. As I said at the outset, I count on your support and cooperation. Only through common efforts might we prove to the outside world that the CD is not obsolete and defunct.

Let us look around this Council Chamber. José María Sert's paintings are calling to us: Hope, Justice, Strength, Law and Intelligence. Let us look up. Joined hands, the solidarity of peoples. The spirit of solidarity some 25 years ago led the peoples of Central and Eastern Europe to freedom and towards the end of the cold war. I strongly hope that solidarity in this room will allow us to achieve a breakthrough in the work of the Conference on Disarmament, with a view to assuring security for all.

It is customary that at the first plenary meeting of the session the Secretary-General of the Conference reads out the message of the Secretary-General of the United Nations to the Conference on Disarmament. Unfortunately, due to urgent and unforeseen circumstances, Mr. Ordzhonikidze cannot be present with us today and, therefore, he requested that the text of the message of the Secretary-General be distributed to you at this meeting. Accordingly, the secretariat will now distribute to you copies of the message addressed to the Conference by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan. The message will be issued as an official document of the Conference.

(The President)

As you know, I had hoped that the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan, might attend and address the Conference. Unfortunately, his very tight agenda does not allow him to attend. But with your consent, I will ask Mr. Ordzhonikidze to convey to the Secretary-General of the United Nations our appreciation for his personal support to the Conference and for the importance he attaches to our work.

I have one speaker for today's plenary meeting. The speaker is the representative of the Netherlands, Ambassador Johannes Landman.

Mr. LANDMAN (Netherlands): Entering a new year for the Conference on Disarmament, it is with somewhat mixed feelings that I take the floor, while expressing my delegation's full support to all six heads of delegation who will jointly take up this year's CD Chair.

At this juncture I address myself in particular to the Polish delegation. As first President, you, Ambassador, will have a special role to play in starting up the whole process of getting the CD back to work. The Netherlands wishes you, and through you, of course, your five successors, all the strength and wisdom needed to bring this about.

Let me come straight to the point. My country is pleased by the efforts shown by the six presidencies (P6) to work closely together in preparing for the upcoming sessions of the CD. Especially the efforts towards a timetable of activities for the whole year, and in particular the agreement on the appointment of six "Friends of the Chair", are new and welcome developments that should help the CD to make better use of time and resources.

However, we cannot close our eyes to the increasing pressure on the CD to finally, after more than eight years of pitiful inertia in a world that is rapidly becoming more dangerous, start doing again what it is here for, that is, negotiating disarmament and non-proliferation treaties.

With that in mind, my Government strongly wishes the CD to come down straight to business and not lose time on ritual repeat exercises as we have seen in past years. It is not at all necessary to again devote the CD sessions under the first presidency this year to talks on an agenda all of us know and on discussions on what to discuss during the rest of the year, as we have already done so often before.

In each of the more recent proposals for a programme of work, whether formal or informal, the same four issues emerge. Everybody knows them: a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT), prevention of an arms race in outer space (PAROS), nuclear disarmament, and negative security assurances (NSAs). We all know these are the issues delegations would want to discuss during this year.

So why beat around the bush? Why repeat the ritual dance of "discussing what to discuss"? Why do the P6 not propose right away a timetable for the four issues I just mentioned so as to allow discussions to start early on? - and of course doing so with inbuilt flexibility, including the possibility for delegations that wish to do so to introduce other issues.

(Mr. Landman, Netherlands)

This would create the conditions for the much-needed momentum in the CD that could indeed pave the way for a common understanding as to what issues are ripe for immediate negotiations and which ones deserve further study and reflection.

The Netherlands has never disguised that it is ready to start negotiating an FMCT. We think this can start tomorrow, as we consider it to be the most urgent issue to be addressed.

However, we are ready to engage in the discussions without bias, with an open mind and with respect for the positions of other members of the CD, but at the same time expecting from our partners in this enterprise a reciprocal open-mindedness, allowing us at the end of the year - or as much earlier as feasible - to draw some firm conclusions as to where to begin our programme of work in the year 2007. Otherwise, our efforts this year will amount to another exercise in futility.

I have heard that the CD has been referred to in the past as being “the best club in town”, without irony, that is. Surely that habit started a couple of decades ago, when the CD was a focal point in international politics. But even in that former context this self-qualification might have been a bit embarrassing. Whoever feels the urge for a round of what the French call so aptly “on se félicite” is probably in need of some recognition or another. Still, we should set our standards high, and as a newcomer, I would say: “Noblesse oblige”. Frankly speaking, in a world that is becoming ever more dangerous, there is no place for a CD that lounges about, or to say it in French again, “dans un monde qui se déchire, il n’y a point de place pour un Conférence qui danse”.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of the Netherlands, Ambassador Johannes Landman, for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair and incoming Presidents.

This concludes my list of speakers for today. Does any delegation wish to take the floor at this stage? I recognize the Ambassador of South Africa.

Ms. MTSHALI (South Africa): Mr. President, please allow me to congratulate you on assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and to assure you of South Africa’s support for your effort to steer us towards a consensual work programme for this year that will break the deadlock that has now plagued the CD for almost a decade. You have the important task of heading our work at the start of the 2006 first session of the CD. On a personal note, may I add that I do not envy you this onerous task, since South Africa will be in the exact same position at this time next year?

Generally speaking, my delegation has on more than one occasion expressed the view in this chamber that the inability of the Conference on Disarmament to fulfil its role as the single multilateral negotiating forum in the field of disarmament has less to do with the perceived structural and/or organizational difficulties facing the forum than the inability of member States to show the necessary political will and flexibility to allow meaningful progress to take place.

(Ms. Mtshali, South Africa)

My delegation is pleased that your presidency has also consulted with the other future incoming Presidents for the remainder of this year. We view this as a positive step in moving the CD process forward whilst at the same time recognizing the prerogative of the CD presidency to react and respond to the ongoing dynamics that will continue to affect our work. We have taken note with interest of your proposal to appoint a number of Friends of the President to assist you in facilitating the work of the Conference. This is a refreshing approach, but one that also leads my delegation to seek further clarification. We are familiar with the concept of coordinators appointed by the presidency, and the tasks that such coordinators fulfil. In this regard, we would therefore seek your advice as to how the Friends of the President would formally report to this body in the fashion that previous coordinators would have done. On this issue, it is also not clear to my delegation whether each incoming President would select and/or invite a new group of Friends of the President to assist him or her, or whether the group that you have identified would serve all the future Presidents for 2006.

On the question of the adoption of our agenda for this year, my delegation is of the view that the agenda adopted by the CD in 1979 still remains applicable in the current international disarmament and security environment. We therefore believe that the CD should be able to adopt the same agenda based on the Decalogue which it had adopted for the past number of years. In this regard, South Africa is of the view that the present agenda contains sufficient flexibility to allow progress and discussions to take place on a variety of issues relating to disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control.

Similarly, my delegation believes that the so-called “core” issues remain equally relevant to this forum. Past efforts to smooth out our differences on these issues have led to a number of formal and informal proposals to guide our future work. In my delegation’s view, however, the proposal of the five Ambassadors, as amended, would still appear to have attracted the strongest and most vocal majority of those sitting in this chamber. South Africa therefore still views the A-5 proposal as a delicate compromise that represents the most realistic proposal for the adoption of a programme of work.

As I have stated previously in this forum, South Africa remains willing to join a consensus on its adoption, and we would once again appeal to all CD members to show a spirit of flexibility as well as the necessary political good will to enable this body to live up to its reputation.

Members of this forum will recall that at the beginning of last year’s session, South Africa cautioned that the CD’s continued inability to commence required disarmament negotiations may well require alternative courses of action. We are all aware of the proposed alternative efforts by a number of member States during the 2005 First Committee in this regard, as you have mentioned in your speech. In South Africa’s view, these efforts were the result of the continued and continuing international concerns about the present disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control affairs in the world today.

Mr. President, you have my delegation’s wholehearted support for your initiative and efforts to galvanize this body into action. We think the time is ripe for the CD to reassert itself and to play its designated role as the forum it was meant to be. What is required is a collective

(Ms. Mtshali, South Africa)

effort aimed at addressing the global disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control issues that affect us all. In this regard, we should be respectful of one another's views, receptive to alternative ideas, and committed to what I believe should be our shared goal: to translate the international community's aspirations into action.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of South Africa and first incoming President of the Conference on Disarmament in the year 2007. We could hear our first representative of the first presidency last year and the first President of next year. Very encouraging. Of course, I will answer all your questions in a very detailed way, as far as Friends of the President are concerned. We are discussing all details with them and incoming Presidents. However, just now I can inform you that Friends of Presidents will be appointed on behalf of the P6 by the first President, and they will work the whole 2006 session of the CD. We shall give you more details on Thursday.

I recognize the representative of Pakistan, who would like to take the floor.

Mr. QURESHI (Pakistan): Mr. President, I am speaking on behalf of our Ambassador, Mr. Masood Khan, who was unable to attend this inaugural plenary meeting of the first part of the CD in 2006 on account of a high-level visit from Pakistan for the World Economic Forum in Davos. I would like to extend our warm felicitations on assuming the office of President of the CD, a responsibility which I am sure you will be able to discharge with the utmost sincerity and a high level of competence. I assure you that our delegation will extend to you our fullest cooperation in your efforts to help the CD move forward towards its hallowed objective of concluding universal, non-discriminatory and verifiable disarmament treaties.

The substantive issues will be taken up by our delegation during the course of the CD proceedings, but here I only wish to express our gratitude for the message of condolences and sympathy at the huge loss of life and property in Pakistan as a consequence of the devastating earthquake of 8 October 2005. In the preceding year the tsunami wreaked havoc in parts of Asia. Last year's first plenary of the CD opened with strong feelings of shock and grief at that horrendous tragedy. Unfortunately, an equally devastating tragedy in 2005 in some parts of South Asia, but mainly in Pakistan, finds the present session in similar grief. The only silver lining for the victims is the overwhelming and swift help that was offered from all corners of the world. In the face of a humanitarian disaster, the world community has shown its basic humanity through the outpouring of sympathy and general practical assistance, although the scale of the disaster is so unprecedented that it will take years, maybe decades, to rebuild normal civic life in the affected areas.

On behalf of the Government and people of Pakistan, I wish to record our most sincere gratitude to all the Governments, humanitarian organizations, relief agencies, NGOs and individual volunteers who participated directly or indirectly in the relief efforts. Pakistan is still struggling to manage the crisis of gigantic proportions. Encouraged and assisted by a caring and considerate world community, our nation will come out of this trauma through determination and perseverance.

(Mr. Qureshi, Pakistan)

I thank you once again for your solidarity and compassion for Pakistan in this time of our natural calamity.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Pakistan, and now I give the floor to the Ambassador of India.

Mr. PRASAD (India): Mr. President, at this stage the Indian delegation would like simply to convey its gratitude, through you, for the expression of sympathy and condolences by the Conference on Disarmament at the earthquake, with deaths in South Asia, particularly in our neighbour Pakistan. I thank you.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of India for his words, and now I give the floor to the representative of Slovakia.

Mr. ŠTEFÁNEK (Slovakia): Mr. President, the Ambassador asked me to express my gratitude to you for expressing condolences to the families of victims of the tragic crash of the Slovak military aircraft carrying Slovak peacekeepers who were returning from the KFOR peacekeeping mission in Kosovo. They were serving the cause of peace and stability in Kosovo, and after they had fulfilled their noble task, they tragically lost their lives just a few kilometres short of their homeland. Let me assure you that the condolences will be conveyed to the families of the victims of the accident, and to the Government and people of the Slovak Republic. I would also like to extend my gratitude to the Governments that have already expressed their condolences to the Government of the Slovak Republic.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Chargé d'affaires of Slovakia, Mr. Štefánek, for his statement, and I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Chile.

Mr. MARTABIT (Chile) (translated from Spanish): I have taken the floor this morning, Sir, particularly grateful to you for the work that you have done previously in this Conference in order to launch a programme of work once and for all. On this occasion and very briefly, I would like to congratulate you on your election as President, to invite you to continue the efforts that you have undertaken, coordinating with the future Presidents and also maintaining detailed and wide-ranging consultations with all the delegations, in order to set our Conference in motion once and for all. If there is one thing we all know it is that this situation cannot continue as it is, and that it is high time we got down to work. To that end, you may rest assured that, like the previous Presidents, you enjoy the complete and full support of our delegation.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of Chile, Mr. Juan Martabit, and thank him for the kind words he addressed to the President. Now I give the floor to the representative of the Russian Federation.

Mr. LOSHCHININ (Russian Federation) (translated from Russian): Mr. President, I heartily welcome you to the responsible position of President and convey to you our wishes for every success. You can count on firm support and cooperation from the Russian delegation.

(Mr. Loshchinin, Russian Federation)

We too would like to note the intensive and constructive work that you accomplished during the intersessional period; its results should help to achieve progress in the Conference this year, progress which we all await so much. I wish to assure you and all our distinguished colleagues that the Russian delegation will continue to do its utmost in order to enable the Conference as soon as possible to resolve the main issue - securing consensus on the programme of work and renewing substantive activities.

You have drawn our attention to this historic room. It is true, this room has seen a lot, and quite a lot was achieved in this room, even in the time when the Eighteen-Nation Committee was still in operation, and definite successes were achieved here during the cold war period, to which you referred. Now, fortunately, the cold war is behind us, and thus we have the right to expect major successes now that we are closer to each other, we understand each other better. In a nutshell, this is quite an abnormal situation, so you can count on full support from us, as well as from all the members of the Conference, cooperating in every way to achieve progress in this area. I agree with you that political will is shaped in capitals, but I would like to call on everyone - and for my part I will do all I can - to ensure that this political will is also shaped by us from here, from Geneva. This is also very important. Ultimately we are engaged in practical work here, we know the details and the nuances, and a great deal depends on the way in which we give guidance to our capitals. That is also particularly important in the light of the brief but very substantive statement by the Secretary-General, in which a sense of dissatisfaction at everything that is happening in the field of disarmament can also be felt. I take this opportunity to state that we are ready to support the adoption of the agenda for 2006 in its traditional form. In our view, this agenda would allow the Conference to consider practically any specific issue if there is agreement to do so on the part of the participating States.

And in conclusion, I would like to thank you sincerely for your kind words of welcome.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you very much, Ambassador, for what you have said, and again I wish you every success here in Geneva.

Now I would like to ask whether anyone else would like to take the floor. That does not seem to be the case, so now I intend to suspend the plenary meeting and to invite the Conference to consider, in an informal meeting which will immediately follow, the draft agenda for the 2006 session, as contained in document CD/WP.540, as well as the requests received from States not members of the Conference to participate in our work during this session, as contained in document CD/WP.541. Afterwards, we will resume the plenary meeting in order to formalize the agreements we may reach at the informal plenary.

I would like to remind you that the informal plenary meeting is open to the member States of the Conference only.

The meeting was suspended at 10 a.m. and resumed at 10.25 a.m.

The PRESIDENT: The 998th plenary meeting is resumed.

At the informal plenary meeting that we have just concluded, we have reached agreement on the draft agenda. May I take it that the Conference decides to adopt for its 2006 session the agenda contained in document CD/WP.540, which is before you?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: This agenda will be issued as an official document of the Conference by the secretariat. Now I would like to deliver a statement. "In connection with the adoption of the agenda, I, as the President of the Conference, should like to state that it is my understanding that if there is a consensus in the Conference to deal with any issues, they could be dealt with within this agenda. The Conference will also take into consideration rules 27 and 30 of the rules of procedure of the Conference, as well as paragraph 20 and other relevant paragraphs of the 2005 report of the Conference on Disarmament to the General Assembly, contained in document CD/1761."

I should now like to invite the Conference to take a decision on the request for the participation in our work from States not members of the Conference. These requests are contained in document CD/WP.541, and have been received from the following States: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, the Holy See, Jordan, Latvia, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malta, Mauritius, the Philippines, Portugal, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovenia, Sudan, Thailand, Uruguay and Zambia.

Does any delegation wish to take the floor at this stage? I recognize the Ambassador of Turkey.

Mr. KURRETIN: Mr. President, having taken the floor for the first time in the formal plenary, let me first congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. You can be assured of the full support of the Turkish delegation for your efforts to fulfil the difficult task entrusted to you. Under your able guidance and able guidance of five successive presidencies, we hope that 2006 will be a turning point in the efforts to overcome an impasse that has prevented the CD for eight consecutive years from launching substantive work. In fact, just a few minutes ago, the formal adoption of the agenda so rapidly is a very encouraging development.

Regarding the list of observers, I wish to inform the Conference that Turkey accepts the list contained in document CD/WP.541, with the understanding and precisions circulated in documents CD/1438 and CD/1738.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Turkey. May I take it that the Conference decides to invite these States to participate in our work in accordance with the rules of procedure?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: This concludes our business for today. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor at this stage? I recognize the representative of Peru, the outgoing presidency.

Mr. BELEVAN (Peru) (translated from Spanish): Mr. President, I only wish to take the floor, first, to congratulate you on taking the Chair of the Conference, and to thank you for the invaluable support you gave us during the four months of our term. And also to thank you for the kind words addressed to Ambassador Calderón, which I will pass on in due course. I would also like to wish you success and assure you of the full support of the delegation of Peru for your efforts, and to support all the proposals you have made for initiation of the work of the Conference on Disarmament in this 2006 period, in particular the establishment of this P-6 group and the formation of the group of Friends of the Presidents. The results of Peru's term of office, which as you know was lengthy, will also be conveyed to the Conference on Disarmament in due course.

The PRESIDENT: I thank you very much on behalf of the outgoing President. I would like to ask if any other delegate wishes to take the floor at this stage. I recognize the Ambassador of Cyprus.

Mr. DROUSHIOTIS (Cyprus): Mr. President, I, too, would like to extend my warmest congratulations to you upon the assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. I wish to assure you, having been admitted to participate in the Conference as an observer, of my delegation's full cooperation with you.

I would like to refer to the statement made by the representative of Turkey following the admission of observers to the Conference, including Cyprus, and his reference to documents CD/1438, and corrigendum 1, and CD/1738. These documents circulate letters from the Permanent Representative of Turkey which question the legal status of the Republic of Cyprus. They were effectively replied to by my Government in our letters dated 13 December 1996 and 15 July 2004, circulated as documents CD/1439 and CD/1740, to which I would like to draw the attention of the members of the Conference on Disarmament and the non-member States participating in the Conference.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Cyprus, and I take note of your statement. Would any other delegation like to take the floor? That does not seem to be the case.

Before adjourning the meeting, I would like to appeal to the members of the Conference to make good use of the time allocated to them and to inscribe their names on the list of speakers for the forthcoming meetings.

This concludes our business for today. The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Thursday, 26 January 2006, at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 10.35 a.m.