

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE ONE THOUSAND AND THIRTIETH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 29 June 2006, at 10.20 a.m.

President: Mr. Ousmane CAMARA (Senegal)

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I declare open the 1030th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. Recently we were deeply moved and profoundly saddened to learn of the gruesome murder of four Russian diplomats who were taken hostage in Iraq earlier this month. Such heinous acts cannot be justified, and deserve the strongest condemnation. On behalf of the Conference on Disarmament and on my own behalf, I express our sincerest condolences to the bereaved families and to the Government and people of Russia.

In accordance with the practice established by previous Presidents of the Conference, this meeting will be devoted to a general debate on any subject related to the work of the Conference on Disarmament. On the list of speakers for today are His Excellency Mr. Valle Fonrouge, His Excellency Ambassador Doru-Romulus Costea of Romania and Her Excellency Ambassador Mary Whelan. However, before proceeding to the general debate I should like to make some opening remarks as Senegal takes the Chair of the Conference on Disarmament.

Today Senegal, in the shape of my humble person, takes the Chair of the Conference on Disarmament for the second time since 1997. With my first words I convey my country's tribute to this distinguished body and to extol the sacred mission to promote international security which is the very reason for its existence.

I wish to take this opportunity to commend the efforts of the four distinguished Presidents who preceded me, especially Ambassador Zdzisław Rapacki of Poland, the originator of what is known as the P6 initiative, to enable the Conference on Disarmament to take a step forward in its long quest for a programme of work. I have found the same resolve to cooperate among all the colleagues who have given me advice and suggestions, at my request or spontaneously. I wish to express my gratitude to them, just as I thank the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Sergei Ordzhonikidze, his deputy, Mr. Tim Caughley, and the entire secretariat for their efficient cooperation as I carry out my functions.

As I take the Chair of the Conference on Disarmament, I must first of all convey to all the nations represented here, as well as all those that share with it the same values, Senegal's message of good will. My country is pursuing with determination in Africa and in the rest of the world a policy guided by the ideals of peace, solidarity and mutually beneficial cooperation with its partners. In a statement to the nation to mark the New Year, the Head of State, His Excellency Abdoullaye Wade, interpreting the unshakable will of the women and men of Senegal, renewed the same message in the following terms:

“I shall spare no effort to strengthen fraternal relations and ties of good-neighbourliness with the countries of our subregion. At the same time we will step up our efforts to ensure subregional and regional integration and to safeguard peace through the peaceful settlement of disputes and the promotion of democracy in Africa. Our involvement in various peace initiatives on the continent, including through the sending of buffer forces, reflects our firm commitment to work for peace. The ratification by our country of the treaty establishing the African Union confirms our optimistic vision of Africa, an Africa which is stable, bolstered by its human resources

(The President)

and immense natural wealth, an Africa that is united in its diversity, ready to take on with success the challenges of the third millennium. In the era of globalization and the growing interdependence of the global village, our diplomacy will remain firmly committed to the noble ideals of the United Nations for the triumph of human dignity and justice, the maintenance of peace and security, the creation of better living conditions in greater freedom, the sense of moderation and the spirit of reconciliation among peoples and nations. Solidarity, security, liberty, these are the guiding lights that lead us as we carry out our foreign policy and strive for development, so that Senegal will remain for ever triumphant, raising its banner high among the nations of the world.”

My conviction is that this profession of faith can find no better reflection than in this forum, whose vocation is to give concrete form to the international community’s legitimate aspiration to security while protecting it from the threats it faces today, whether the risks of nuclear proliferation or of terrorism. Senegal, a campaigner for the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction, continues to believe in the relevance of the Conference on Disarmament, the sole multilateral negotiating body in the field of disarmament, which is particularly important in the current international context and has already demonstrated its effectiveness in the past. Precisely because of the changes in the international order and the groundswell leading to a process of universal renewal in which the United Nations system is not spared, the Conference on Disarmament seems to be at a crossroads. The stalemate which is affecting it, and which brilliant minds within it have been and are trying to remedy, poses a challenge for our imagination and our conscience both as individuals and in our capacity as representatives of member States. Far from lapsing into preaching, which would not be appropriate here, I remain convinced that the Conference on Disarmament has no alternative, in the light of reason and vision, but to assert itself as the pre-eminent multilateral forum for negotiating in the fields of disarmament.

Senegal, a non-nuclear-weapon State, is a party to all the treaties and conventions in the area of disarmament, not forgetting the Treaty of Pelindaba, which declared Africa a nuclear-weapon-free zone, and which is in the final domestic ratification stage, declares its readiness to support any initiative aimed at strengthening the nuclear non-proliferation regime. In this connection, Senegal is of the view that an international legally binding instrument relating to negative security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States would confer renewed authority on the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

My country, which supports the five Ambassadors’ initiative, known by the abbreviation A5, welcomes the fruitful thematic structured debates which the Conference on Disarmament has held this year, thanks to the P6 platform, both on nuclear disarmament and on the FMCT and PAROS. This exercise has demonstrated its potential usefulness and revealed the full benefit that can be gained from an in-depth dialogue among the members and an intellectual fraternity among experts and politicians.

(The President)

Coming back to the P6 platform, I think that this welcome initiative, while responding to a concern for continuity and consistency in the activities of the Conference during the year 2006, relies principally on the support that members have given it, thus reflecting a genuine resolve to move forward in pursuit of a programme of work and the restoration of the vital confidence without which no negotiations are possible. I intend to be guided by the same spirit during my term of office.

As you are aware, during Senegal's term in the Chair we will be revisiting two major issues on the Conference's agenda, namely, effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons (item 4) and the comprehensive programme of disarmament (item 6). In this context, I submitted to you for your attention on 21 June a timetable of activities including formal and informal meetings that will take place on Thursday, 3 August and Tuesday, 8 August on agenda item 4, and on Thursday, 10 August on item 6. I plan to encourage you to bring experts from your capitals to the extent that you consider their presence to be helpful. Most probably, these would be legal experts, given that negative security assurances are more political than technical in nature.

It remains my intention to encourage the holding of in-depth discussions for the purpose of ensuring balance among the topics dealt with by the various Presidents under the P6 platform. Of course, time will be allotted for the general debate, in particular during the formal plenary meeting on Tuesday, 15 August. I remain open to any suggestions and available for any bilateral consultations in addition to the weekly Presidential consultations involving the regional coordinators and the Permanent Representative of China.

As of now I would like to appeal to all of you to take an active and constructive part in the discussions scheduled for our August meetings. In order to ensure proper planning of our work, I would urge you to indicate your interest in the various debates to the secretariat in advance.

To enable delegations to prepare more effectively for the forthcoming meetings, I have asked the secretariat to prepare two compilations of existing documents on negative security assurances and on the comprehensive programme of disarmament. These compilations should be available during the summer break.

The 30 or so non-member States that ask to participate as observers each year and the considerable number of eminent persons who regularly join us here bear witness to the ongoing interest in the Conference on Disarmament. This interest culminated in the recent visit by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan. I can still hear his concluding words: "with political will, this Conference can reclaim its former mantle and generate tangible benefits that could shape the course of history". Let us all work hand in hand to give concrete form to this wish.

I now give the floor to the representative of Romania, Ms. Anka Elena Jurcan.

Ms. JURCAN (Romania): Mr. President, please allow me to speak on behalf of my Ambassador, Doru-Romulus Costea, who has been involved in another meeting since early this morning.

At the beginning of your term of office, please accept my congratulations for acceding to this important position, as well as the assurances of our delegation's full support in accomplishing your tasks. The Romania delegation appreciates very much the opportunity you offer us today for a general debate, especially taking into account the fact that we are thus concluding the second part of the 2006 CD session. I would like to take this occasion to make some brief remarks concerning events and debates that have recently taken place in what we ourselves have come to call the "outside world" and their necessary impact on the activity of the Conference on Disarmament.

Addressing a conference on nuclear disarmament held in Berlin at the beginning of this week, the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency warned that there was a real threat that terrorist groups would resort to nuclear weapons. "We worry about subnational groups, extremist groups, acquiring nuclear weapons. It is a nightmare because they will use them", said Dr. Mohamed ElBaradei. He also stated that in the aftermath of the 11 September attacks on the United States, extremists had become more sophisticated and were trying to lay their hands on nuclear arms: "We have seen the interest of these groups in acquiring nuclear weapons."

As we were informed by the distinguished representative of Norway, 130 representatives from 45 countries in Oslo last week took part in the international symposium on the minimization of the use of highly enriched uranium in the civilian nuclear sector as a measure to reduce the risk of nuclear terrorism, and the conversion of nuclear reactors, as an important nuclear disarmament dimension.

By checking the calendar of such international meetings on topics that are directly or indirectly related to the issues on the CD agenda, we might be surprised by their frequency. There is seldom a single day without any piece of news concerning the current threat of terrorist access to and potential use of WMD, especially nuclear weapons.

At the same time, we should pay due attention to the conclusions and recommendations drawn from these debates. And speaking of the latter, I think it is worth taking them into account in our own activity. Some delegations have already started to do so concerning the proposals put forward at the beginning of this month by the Commission on WMD chaired by Dr. Hans Blix. After carefully studying the report, we noted that half of the 60 recommendations pertain to the nuclear field - from regulating nuclear weapons to outlawing them. Yet again, seven of them address fissile material, with recommendation 26 spelling out that "The Conference on Disarmament should immediately open the delayed negotiations for a treaty on the cut-off of production of fissile material for weapons without preconditions. Before, or at least during, these negotiations, the Conference on Disarmament should establish a group of scientific experts to examine technical aspects of the treaty." I think we have the duty to use

(Ms. Jurcan, Romania)

such ideas as effectively as possible. It is my conviction that such an opening of the Conference towards the “realities of the outside world” must become a part of the creative thinking much desired in our endeavours.

I would also like to take this opportunity to praise the United Nations Secretary-General for taking the time to address the Conference on 21 June, thus signalling his great support and guidance for the activity of the sole multilateral forum for disarmament negotiations. Let me recall that he also mentioned the risk of non-State actors acquiring the means to carry out nuclear terrorism, as well as the fact that among other proposals, we have at hand “the elements of a ground-breaking instrument on halting the production of fissile materials for weapons purposes”.

Romania associated herself with the statements made by the Austrian presidency of the EU on 30 March and 22 May, according to which “the EU attaches a clear priority to the negotiation, in the Conference on Disarmament, of a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices as a means to strengthen nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. We call again for the immediate commencement of negotiations as well as the early conclusion of a non-discriminatory, universally applicable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, without preconditions, and bearing in mind the Special Coordinator’s report and the mandate for an ad hoc committee contained therein.”

While everybody recognizes the fact that the FMCT negotiation will not be an easy one, taking into account the several remaining divergent views on issues like scope and verification, we also have to admit that this is exactly the reason for a negotiating process, and none of the problems will be solved without embarking upon it.

The delegation of Romania is more than ready to elaborate on its national position during the FMCT negotiations that we hope will start rather sooner than later.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Romania for her statement and the kind words addressed to the Chair. I give the floor to Ambassador Mary Whelan.

Ms. WHELAN (Ireland): Mr. President, I would like to congratulate you on your assumption of the Chair of the Conference. Given your wide diplomatic experience, I have no doubt that you will work to ensure that we have a productive discussion and outcomes in the coming weeks. Could I also join my delegation to the words of sympathy which you expressed to the Russian Federation on the recent tragic loss of life?

My statement today will take up one of the issues which the P6 this year remitted to Friends of the President in order to facilitate their work and the objectives of the Conference.

On 1 June the then President of the CD presented a midterm report on the work of the Friends of the President. I do not know how the Friends intend to carry forward their work.

(Ms. Whelan, Ireland)

However, in an effort to facilitate and assist them, my delegation has decided to put on record over the coming weeks our views on issues with which the Friends are engaged. Today I will take up the topic of civil society participation in the work of the CD.

The non-paper presented by Ambassador Loshchinin on 1 June was entitled, "Midterm report on the findings of the Friends of the Presidents". It would be helpful to learn from the Friends how they arrived at these findings, in particular as they relate to paragraphs 15, 16 and 17 of the non-paper.

The failure of the CD to define an appropriate relationship with civil society has been of concern to many delegations, including my own, for quite some time. Addressing the Conference on 16 March 2004, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ireland suggested that the Conference should reflect on the relevance of its methods of work in today's world. He said that he found it hard to believe how a body charged with a mandate of such relevance to humankind and drawing its funding from the United Nations could continue to effectively exclude civil society from a meaningful role in its deliberations.

Already in May 2002, the then Sri Lankan Ambassador to the CD had reported on informal consultations which he had conducted on improved and effective functioning of the Conference. In this 2002 report he had noted the following:

"It is an anomalous situation that the CD still remains closed to civil society, while other international forums ... are allowing NGOs to participate in their meetings. ... CD could convene a special meeting or meetings of its plenary to allow NGOs to express their views and make their contributions. Such a modality is in line with the practice followed at the NPT Prepcoms, conferences and other international inter-governmental conferences."

His report noted the CD remained the only major disarmament forum where NGOs were not active.

During Ireland's presidency of the Conference in March 2003, we sought to address this anomaly. As President I asked and obtained the advice of the Legal Counsel for the United Nations on the question of civil society participation in the CD and was informed - and the secretariat will have this on file - that there was nothing in the rules of procedure to prohibit the Conference from inviting NGOs to its meetings.

I consulted widely with delegations on the matter, following which I wrote to regional group coordinators setting out possible options to improve the status of NGOs. These were not overly ambitious, and they were based on extensive consultations which I had carried out.

The following options were set out: that on an annual basis the CD would invite NGOs to address one or two plenary sessions. The second option was to invite NGOs to address one or two informal meetings per annum. And the third was to provide an opportunity for CD delegations and NGOs to meet in a separate format distinct from the established plenary and informal structure.

(Ms. Whelan, Ireland)

I suggested that any new arrangement would be for an initial period of one year, following which it would be reviewed.

None of these modest options commanded consensus in 2003. However, the baton was taken up by succeeding CD Presidents, and in particular by Israel and Kenya. In January 2004 the CD adopted its one and only decision for many years, which would set aside one informal plenary meeting per annual session for NGOs when the CD adopted a programme of work. As we know, there is still no programme of work, though the CD could be said to be working more effectively in 2006, and perhaps we should look again at how we could give effect, in a concrete way, to that decision.

What can we do to move the issue forward at the CD? In February and March we heard a great many delegations - indeed, I think, a majority of delegations - raise the issue of greater NGO engagement in the work of the CD. More recently we saw that the NGO community was prepared to utilize an aspect of the 2004 decision by making available outside the room publications relevant to the work of the Conference.

My delegation believes that with the active engagement of Friends of the President, we will in 2006 see some welcome progress in this area. The purpose of my intervention is to encourage the Friends to take a more active approach to the remit which has been given them in this matter. My delegation would be happy to meet with them to explore how this could be done, and to join in any consultations that they intend to hold on this matter.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Ireland for her statement and the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Argentina, Mr. Marcelo Valle Fonrouge.

Mr. VALLE FONROUGE (Argentina) (translated from Spanish): Mr. President, this delegation congratulates you on taking the Chair of this forum and assures you of its support as you guide us in our work.

Allow me to make these general comments on negative security assurances, as a preliminary approach to the structured debates on the scope and content of this fourth item on the agenda that we will discuss further on 3 August.

Allow me to begin by saying that the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty or a protocol to the Treaty would be as far as we are concerned the most appropriate frameworks for pursuing negotiations on a multilateral legally binding instrument on negative security assurances, bearing in mind the fact that the five nuclear Powers must ensure full and effective compliance with these measures and arrangements, in keeping with the provisions of that instrument, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, a cornerstone of the non-proliferation regime.

Our delegation has no objection to including consideration of negative security assurances in the programme of work of the Conference.

(Mr. Valle Fonrouge, Argentina)

Argentina welcomed the common position of the Council of the European Union, especially bearing in mind that two nuclear-weapon States are members of the European Union. The Union called on nuclear-weapon States “to reaffirm existing security assurances noted by the United Nations Security Council in resolution 984 (1995) and to sign and ratify the relevant protocols on nuclear-weapon-free zones, ... recognizing that treaty-based security assurances are available to such zones”.

Briefly, this delegation cannot let this opportunity pass without reminding the nuclear Powers of the appeal to withdraw or review the declarations they made on acceding to the two protocols to the Treaty of Tlatelolco on the Latin American nuclear-weapon-free zone.

It is necessary to rule out completely the idea that an attack using conventional weapons could be met with a response using nuclear weapons, under the cover of self-defence. Insistence on these theories which are contrary to reason and the law serve only to support the positions of those who, publicly or clandestinely, foster policies of nuclear proliferation. Thus, in the United Nations, Argentina has urged the nuclear-weapon States to grant more effective assurances to the non-nuclear-weapon States that they will never use or threaten to use such weapons against such States.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Argentina for his statement and the kind words addressed to the Chair. We have now come to the end of the list of speakers for today. I give the floor to the delegation of the Russian Federation.

Mr. VASILIEV (Russian Federation) (translated from Russian): Mr. President, I would like to welcome you to this high-level position, wish you success and assure you of the full cooperation and support of the delegation of the Russian Federation.

First of all I would like to thank you and the distinguished delegations for your words of sympathy in connection with the death of staff of the Russian Embassy in Iraq at the hands of terrorists. We will convey them to the families of the victims and the Russian Government. The official statement issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation in this connection contained the following passage in particular:

“The irreversible has occurred, despite all the measures taken to secure the release of our people. Whatever slogans and religious motives the terrorists may have invoked, they are monsters who lack honour, conscience and faith. We demand that the Iraqi leadership and the high command of the multinational forces do their utmost to ensure that not one of the participants in the crime against our citizens avoids just retribution. It is the coalition forces that are responsible for ensuring security in Iraq, including the protection of foreign diplomatic missions and their staff. We have repeatedly contacted the command of the foreign military contingent and insisted that they take the necessary measures. At this grave moment it must be recognized that Iraq has become an arena for terrorist actions which are causing suffering not only to foreign representatives but, first and foremost, to ordinary Iraqi citizens. In order to prevent new tragedies, in order that

(Mr. Vasiliev, Russian Federation)

Iraq should return to stability and that security should be ensured in that country, it is essential to achieve national harmony and unity among all Iraqis regardless of their ethnic or confessional background. There is also a need for genuine collective international assistance for the political process in Iraq. To date unilaterally devised schemes for political settlement have not produced any results. And the situation in the country has become worse and worse, exacerbating the threat to totally innocent people.”

I would add that recently we have heard much in this room about the problem of preventing terrorists from gaining access to weapons of mass destruction, portable anti-aircraft missile systems and other types of weapon. This is indeed an important subject. But no less important, maybe even more important, is the fact that we need to eradicate the root causes which give rise to terrorism and cause it to reproduce.

Since I have the floor, I would once again like to draw the attention of distinguished delegations to another matter. During the recent thematic week in the Conference on Disarmament dedicated to PAROS, many delegations came out in support of our efforts to update our views and approaches to possible measures of transparency and confidence-building in outer space activities.

Time is speeding forward. The start of the work of the First Committee at the sixty-first session of the United Nations General Assembly is just around the corner. General Assembly resolution 60/66 on “Transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities” contains a request to Member States to inform the Secretary-General before the beginning of the sixty-first session of their views on the advisability of further developing international outer space transparency and confidence-building measures in the interest of promoting peace, security and international cooperation and preventing an arms race in outer space. Since we are coming to a break in the work of the CD, we would like to remind distinguished delegations of that request contained in resolution 60/66 and call upon them to send the appropriate information to the Secretary-General in good time if they so wish.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of the Russian Federation, Mr. Anton Vasiliev, for his statement and the kind words addressed to the Chair. Now I wish to give the floor to the Secretary-General of the Conference.

Mr. ORDZHONIKIDZE (Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations): We have just heard the very interesting and specific ideas on the problems of the participation of NGOs in the work of our Conference that have been expressed by the Ambassador of Ireland. I believe we all paid attention to what she was telling us in the sense that there is a big gap between our Conference and many other organs of the United Nations or even international organs in general. There is a big gap between our organs and international organs in general that take into account the views of civil society more and more. Since her views were interesting and systematic, I would like to ask her to distribute her statement in writing so that we can benefit to learn more about her views. I hope the Conference will start seriously thinking about the matter.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the Secretary-General. I would now like to give the floor to the Ambassador of New Zealand, Mr. Don Mackay.

Mr. MACKAY (New Zealand): Mr. President, could I add my voice to others who have congratulated you on taking on your role and the confidence that we have in the work that we will address under your leadership?

I just wanted briefly to very much welcome and support the suggestion from the Secretary-General of the Conference with regard to the circulation of the statement from our distinguished Irish colleague. Obviously, the issue that she raises is one that has been around for a long time. It has been before the Conference for a long time, and it is important in our view that this Conference takes similar approaches to other conferences. I think that it is very much accepted that in other contexts there is a potentially huge role for civil society to assist bodies in their work. We would very much welcome the opportunity to study the statement from our Irish colleague and indeed to come back and discuss this issue further in the Conference. We would very much welcome a further exchange of views on this issue, and if there are colleagues who do have reservations about the participation of civil society in the Conference, it would be very useful to have an open exchange to see in what way it may be possible to deal with and redress the specific concerns that they might have in a way that would enable us to have rather greater input from civil society.

So I think in sum that this would be a very worthwhile discussion to have in the Conference, and it is something that we should very much keep at the forefront of our minds as we progress in the session under your leadership.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the Ambassador of New Zealand for his statement and his kind words addressed to the Chair. Would any other delegation like to take the floor? It seems not.

This issue was dealt with in a report from the Friends of the President which has been submitted to this Conference. I think that this Conference is completely free to discuss it on the basis of a formula, a format that it could possibly adopt when it deems necessary to do so. I would therefore urge the Friends of the President, with the agreement of the Conference, to continue consultations with the regional groups and perhaps to refer back to the Chair, which could see what arrangements the Conference might contemplate in order to address this matter. The Ambassador of France has the floor.

Mr. RIVASSEAU (France) (translated from French): This is a particularly valued moment for my delegation, seeing you in the Chair. I would like to congratulate you most warmly on taking the post and assure you of my delegation's cooperation.

One of this year's achievements is that we are working interactively, and so in that spirit I will react interactively to the two statements to which I listened very attentively, delivered by my Irish colleague and my New Zealand colleague.

(Mr. Rivasseau, France)

One step forward the Conference has taken this year is that we have managed to move beyond the recurrent purely procedural debates in which the Conference has been bogged down for the last eight years and we have managed to get down to substance. We must continue in that spirit. The Friends of the President have been given a mandate covering a set of subjects. This issue is one such aspect, perhaps not the most important since, as the Ambassador of Ireland pointed out, we already have a decision, and before thinking about new developments, we ought to start at the beginning, that is, by considering how to implement the decision we have adopted. That decision specifies a number of things once there is a work programme.

We are told that there is no work programme. When I read the rules of procedure, when I consult my colleagues, I discover that that argument may not necessarily hold water. We have a schedule of activities, and the rules of procedure of the Conference on Disarmament do not necessarily provide that a work programme entails the establishment of subsidiary bodies. According to the rules of the Conference, the programme of work may provide for the establishment of subsidiary bodies. So, if we agreed - perhaps next year, perhaps this year, I don't know - that although this may be disappointing, and may not correspond to our wishes, a schedule of activities means a programme of work - if we look at the practice of the Conference on Disarmament at the beginning of its existence in the 1980s, that was what was involved - if we were to agree that the Conference has a programme of work, then the contribution of the NGOs would be solved quite naturally, because we would have a decision which we could simply apply at that moment.

The conclusion I draw from all this is that we must not allow ourselves to be too distracted by procedural disputes which would take us back into the rut we have been exploring for eight years and probably into the same deadlock that we are all familiar with. Let us face the future with imagination and creativity. That is the call of the Secretary-General of the United Nations. I think that now, under your guidance and thanks to the P6 platform which you have set up, we must think about the lesson to be drawn for next year. It is on that basis I think we can hope to make the most progress.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of France for his statement and the kind words addressed to the Chair. I see Ireland's nameplate. You have the floor, Madam Ambassador.

Ms. WHELAN (Ireland): In response to the request from the Secretary-General of the Conference, I would be quite happy to have my statement circulated. Please forgive the typos. I had considered whether to deliver it today or when it was properly typed up in August, and I decided to deliver it today, so apologies about that.

On the purpose of putting it forward, it was really to ensure that the Friends of the Chair, which are a very good innovation that we've had this year, that they would have the benefit of interested delegations' views on the topics there, because when these topics were remitted to them, it wasn't, as I understand it, with a view that no action would be taken, it was a genuine

(Ms. Whelan, Ireland)

effort to see how these issues could be developed, and that was our contribution to it, and also in the interest of transparency that we would say in consultation with the Friends exactly what we would say in the room here.

I'd have to disagree slightly with Ambassador Rivasseau on the question of whether this is a purely procedural issue. For my delegation, this is an issue that we will pursue right across multilateral forums. That is, if you like, the democratization of the decision-making processes of the United Nations system or those funded by the United Nations system. So just as within the new Council on Human Rights, we would think it was extremely important that civil society's voice be heard, we would likewise have the same view in forums dealing with HIV/AIDS, in forums dealing with development and in forums dealing with human security. So for us, this is not a procedural question.

There is one point on which I very much want to agree with what France was saying, and that is that we seem to be working this year - whether we call it a programme of work, I don't know, or a schedule of activities - but it certainly feels like, sounds like, work. We are addressing all of the issues on our agenda.

We have indeed had civil society participation in our informal discussions, because I noticed in many of the experts that came, for example, to the discussion on FMCT, that a number of delegations did have representatives of what would be classically regarded as civil society. In their expert opinion I notice the same in relation to some other activities that have taken place in this room this year. So I would agree with Ambassador Rivasseau that maybe - and this is what I was trying to say in my statement also - maybe we should look at that decision taken in 2004 and say: is this the year where we could, given that we are working to what Ambassador Rivasseau equated to something very like a programme of work, maybe this is the year to in good faith give effect to that aspect of the decision of 2004 that the representatives of civil society could be invited to address one session. I don't think the roof would fall in if that were to happen. Or perhaps, consideration of whether we could look forward to that next year. But certainly we should have a debate about it.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank Ireland. I give the floor to Italy, Mr. De Benedictis.

Mr. DE BENEDICTIS (Italy): Mr. President, congratulations on your assumption of the presidency. This is only to reiterate what Ambassador Trezza said in a previous meeting regarding the role of the Friends of the President. We are ready to consult interested delegations especially on the specific issue of the agenda, which was the task which was assigned to him.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Italy for his kind words addressed to the Chair. Are there any other delegations wishing to speak? It seems not.

(The President)

Before adjourning the meeting, which is the last plenary of the second part of the 2006 session of the Conference, I wish to urge all delegations to make maximum possible use of the summer break which begins today to reflect on the results of the work accomplished by the Conference so far. When we reconvene at the end of July we will address the last of what are known as the four core issues, as well as the remaining items on the agenda. I am sure that at the end of this exercise we will have a fairly precise picture of the state of consideration of all the issues on the Conference's agenda, as well as the other issues addressed during the session.

In addition, I would encourage you to give thought to the final product of the session, that is, the Conference's report to the United Nations General Assembly, and in particular to the conclusions arising from this session and possible recommendations for 2007.

The next plenary meeting of the Conference will take place on Thursday, 3 August 2006 at 10 a.m. in this room. In accordance with the schedule of activities, at that meeting we will begin a structured, focused debate on agenda item 4, entitled "Effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons". In particular, delegations are invited to address the nature and scope of this agenda item. If necessary, this meeting will be followed by another plenary in the afternoon.

The meeting rose at 11.10 a.m.