

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE ONE THOUSAND AND SIXTIETH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Friday, 16 March 2007, at 11.25 a.m.

<u>President:</u>	Mr. Gerardo BUGALLO	(Spain)
later:	Mr. Juan Antonio MARCH	(Spain)
later:	Mr. Gerardo BUGALLO	(Spain)

The PRESIDENT (spoke in Spanish): I call to order the 1060th meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

This plenary meeting is the last in a series of meetings during which the Conference has been addressed by Ministers for Foreign Affairs and other senior officials. Today, the Conference on Disarmament is honoured with the presence of two distinguished guests who have responded to our invitation to address the Conference - firstly, His Excellency Mr. Juan Manuel Gómez Robledo, Under-Secretary for Human Rights and Multilateral Affairs of Mexico, and secondly, His Excellency Mr. Miguel Angel Moratinos, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Spain.

Without further delay I now invite the Under-Secretary for Human Rights and Multilateral Affairs of Mexico, His Excellency Mr. Juan Manuel Gómez Robledo, to address the Conference.

Mr. Gómez ROBLEDÓ (Mexico) (spoke in Spanish): Mr. President, firstly I am very pleased to congratulate you on the excellent way in which you have guided the work of the Conference on Disarmament in recent weeks. It is an honour for me to address this Conference and to reaffirm the priority which Mexico attaches to nuclear disarmament and to the work of what is - and this is worth recalling - the only multilateral negotiating body that the international community has succeeded in establishing in this sphere.

The Conference's activities without any doubt have increased in recent years, on the basis of welcome initiatives which have led to the successful mechanism for coordination among the six Presidents for the year. This is an encouraging development. However, we should not deceive ourselves. For three years, we have been holding "structured debates" on all the agenda items, an exercise which, I am pleased to recall, began under the Mexican presidency in 2004 as a temporary arrangement pending the adoption of the long-awaited programme of work. The time which has passed since then appears to confirm the French saying that "il n'y a que le provisoire qui dure".

We have made progress in understanding each other better. We have made progress in establishing a dialogue, in dissipating mistrust and misunderstanding in several respects, but we have not come up with a programme of work, still less have we been able to fulfil the Conference's mandate, that of negotiating legally binding disarmament agreements. The process has been useful, but we must avoid transforming the Conference into a mere debating society, however useful those debates may be, and shoulder our responsibilities.

I would like to remind you that in 2005, in the framework of the General Assembly First Committee, Mexico and other countries, weary and frustrated at the deadlock, proposed an alternative mechanism which would make it possible to move forward on the subject which brings us here. This initiative continues to be valid. We are concerned that despite the great activity, the Conference is still deadlocked as far as substance is concerned, and it will therefore be necessary to consult once again as to the appropriateness of relaunching the 2005 initiative.

(Mr. Gómez Robledo, Mexico)

We need to put disarmament back on the international agenda. Its absence from the final document of the Summit is shameful. The space lost because of the lack of results needs to be made up. This absence was a matter of particular concern for Mexico. We hope the new Secretary-General will give disarmament the importance it deserves, as he has promised, and explain to us better the reasons for the change in structure which is to be approved today in New York. We hope it will not be just a change in name, but a new priority for disarmament. Without any doubt, if this Conference resumes substantive work, this will help to change the current perception of its growing importance.

Mexico reaffirms most emphatically that the priority on the disarmament agenda continues to be nuclear disarmament. We will never tire of repeating that the mere existence of nuclear weapons is a threat to international peace and security. The only guarantee is their total elimination, a legal and political commitment which the nuclear-weapon States entered into under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, and which they have not yet fulfilled.

This was also pointed out by the International Court of Justice in its historic advisory opinion of 1996. There is a dual obligation to negotiate and to achieve results in good faith. In this context, the continuing use of doctrines of nuclear deterrence as elements of some States' security policies is discouraging. It is still more discouraging to see an ever greater number of States sheltering under the nuclear umbrella. Maintaining the nuclear option as a means of military deterrence is not acceptable. It generates mistrust and makes the possibility of developing such weapons attractive to other States, while also increasing access to such weapons by non-State actors.

In this context, Mexico wishes to announce that, aware as we are that nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation are indissociable elements, we have taken an important step with a view to combating nuclear proliferation. Just a few weeks ago, my Government conveyed to the Government of Brazil, in its capacity as Chair of the troika of the Nuclear Suppliers Group, Mexico's decision to join that group as a positive measure to complement international efforts to reduce the scope for the diversion of dual-use materials and promote safe trade in such materials. In this context, let me pay tribute to the troika of the Nuclear Suppliers Group, which helped us to pursue this process and to dispel the doubts we had before formalizing this decision.

One step which would bring us closer to nuclear disarmament would of course be the conclusion of a treaty to prohibit the production of fissile material for military purposes. Mexico repeats that it would be prepared to begin negotiation of this instrument on the basis of a mandate without preconditions, but we reaffirm that, in order to contribute to the disarmament and non-proliferation regime, this agreement will have to contain provisions for verification and cover the issue of existing arsenals. But for the time being, let us begin our work: we will be able to examine and resolve these and other issues in the course of our negotiations, but let us not delay these negotiations any further.

(Mr. Gómez Robledo, Mexico)

Moving on to another subject, the States members of nuclear-weapon-free zones such as Mexico are of course interested in strengthening the legal regime which underpins them, covering practically the whole of the southern hemisphere, and increasing coordination and cooperation among the nuclear-weapon-free zones. We are also interested in the granting of full assurances by the nuclear States that they will respect such regimes and not use their nuclear weapons against the members of such zones.

In the context of the zone set up by the Treaty of Tlatelolco, we have urged and will continue to urge the nuclear States to review the interpretative declarations which they made when they acceded to Protocols I and II to the Treaty, interpretative declarations which in the view of my Government are equivalent in some cases to fully fledged reservations which are prohibited under the Treaty. But this is just one example of what nuclear-weapon-free zones can do.

To conclude, let me refer briefly to the review process for the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, on which we will embark on 30 April in Vienna. The challenge we face is to propose specific measures to progress towards the goal of a world without nuclear weapons and to strengthen the nuclear non-proliferation regime. We cannot fail again as we did in 2005.

There are three pillars to the regime established by the Treaty: disarmament, non-proliferation and the right to the peaceful use of nuclear energy. It goes without saying that none of the three has been fully realized. It is necessary to renew our commitment to all the rights and obligations which emanate from the NPT. Only in that way can we ensure that the regime is strengthened to the benefit of all, and at least that it is not further breached as it has been recently.

In this context, we are concerned that it is a depositary State of the NPT that has unilaterally deemed it appropriate to conclude a nuclear cooperation agreement with a State that is not a party to the Treaty which in our view is contrary if not to the letter, at least to the spirit of that instrument, to the purpose and very objective of the Treaty, thus undermining its fundamental objectives and emptying it of its content.

Mexico will continue, as it has done over past decades, to participate actively in the work of this Conference. We hope that we shall very soon see evidence of the political will needed to overcome the current situation, the continuation of which is absolutely unacceptable.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in Spanish): I thank the Under-Secretary for Human Rights and Multilateral Affairs of Mexico for his important address to the Conference, as well as for the kind words addressed to the Chair. Now I will suspend the meeting for a few minutes so that the Secretary-General and myself can escort the Mexican Under-Secretary out of the room. The meeting will resume in about 15 minutes with the presence of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Spain.

The meeting was suspended at 11.50 a.m. and resumed at 12.15 p.m.

Mr. March (Spain) took the Chair.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in Spanish): The 1060th plenary meeting of the Conference is resumed. I now have the pleasure to welcome on behalf of the Conference on Disarmament the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Spain, His Excellency Mr. Miguel Angel Moratinos. You have the floor, Sir.

Mr. MORATINOS (Spain) (spoke in Spanish): It gives me great pleasure, on the occasion of Spain's term in the Chair of the Conference on Disarmament, to address all of you in this room, the Francisco de Vitoria room, which symbolizes Spain's historic links with human rights and multilateralism, taking us back to the very beginnings of the former League of Nations. Spanish painter, José María Sert stated in 1934 that the leitmotiv in decorating these walls was the idea of expressing what unites and separates men. Allow me, then, to begin this statement with a reflection on peace and security in the world, to which the Conference on Disarmament has contributed and should continue to contribute with renewed momentum. This is the spirit of the proposals put forward by the Spanish Government, which will also have a three-dimensional representation in the artistic input by Miquel Barceló in the dome of conference room XX in this Office.

The twenty-first century, whose first decade we have yet to complete, has not fulfilled aspirations for peace and progress, nor has it allayed tensions and violence. During these years there has been a change in the collective perception and the concept of international security. The Combined effect of new actors, challenges and phenomena which have exacerbated the uncertainty and complexity of our times has placed security among the priorities of the international community.

The end of the cold war, the fall of the Berlin Wall, the brutal attacks of 11 September in New York, or those of 11 March in Madrid, together with other events in our more recent history, have modified the concept of security. Its formulation has changed. Concepts such as deterrence now have new content and nuances.

The Conference on Disarmament is aware of these emerging realities, which require multilateral responses, political will and concerted work to contribute by means of substantive results to stability and global peace. The international community is expecting effective contributions from this forum to the future of disarmament, because peace is a prerequisite for the development of areas and countries of the world. Peace and development make up an inseparable duo which should inspire our work to assist civil society to fight poverty and promote sustainable development.

In a globalized and interdependent world, security is a value and an aspiration shared by States, institutions, regions, communities and above all the citizenry. The lack of security nowadays is not exclusively caused by aggressive States, but rather by non-State actors, terrorists or other criminal organizations. The decline in security hampers the development of countries and peoples, because violence nullifies man's right to progress, and the development of human rights and democratic values is essential for the exercise of freedom.

(Mr. Moratinos, Spain)

The new approach to security is not based solely on its military component. It is not determined by the conventional concept of war or by the lack of aggressive confrontations between States. Today it is an even broader term and it is not limited to borders or military balances.

The European security strategy has identified five main threats: weapons proliferation, particularly weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, failed States, regional conflicts and organized crime, which today takes the form of networks for trafficking in persons, drugs, weapons or other criminal purposes. There is no need to dwell on the impact that conventional weapons have and their role in feeding back into crises and violence. We all perceive these threats, which in many cases are difficult to identify, isolate and combat because of their non-transparency and ever new forms. Their complexity demands comprehensive and coordinated solutions, in other words, joint action by the international community to eradicate them.

These thoughts lead us to the questions of how we should face up to these challenges and what measures are necessary and most effective for dealing with them. Without any doubt we need a multidisciplinary strategy that encompasses the areas of intergovernmental cooperation, the development of joint follow-up and monitoring instruments, exchanges of information, the establishment of new controls or the updating of existing ones. All these dimensions involve national defence, the strengthening of multilateral instruments and organizations, development cooperation, the eradication of illicit trafficking, and an array of aspects which confer on this forum a role of simultaneous importance and vigilance.

We must provide effective solutions to combat global security risks. The most appropriate course to follow is that of political and diplomatic agreement, which must be reflected in legally binding agreements on disarmament and arms control. Many hopes have been placed in this Conference, because security and disarmament require that we produce effective results.

The Government of Spain is resolutely involved in the promotion of processes leading to peace and innovation and revitalization of the multilateral system to transform it into a tool for peace and stability, forward movement and progress. This requires arms reductions and arms control, promoting support for the non-proliferation of weapons and disarmament, as this is the only way we can come closer to the dream of peace, this “perpetual peace” as Kant saw it, which today is more urgent and necessary than ever in order to address the challenges of the twenty-first century, which range from security and cultural coexistence to the balanced and sustainable development of our planet, as well as the inequalities of globalization.

An effective disarmament policy will make it possible to finance the efforts of States and civil society to combat poverty. Studies by UNDP and the World Bank have shown that extreme poverty as well as its dramatic consequences (disease and illiteracy) could be eradicated with relatively modest investment compared with the growing spiral of investment in armaments.

(Mr. Moratinos, Spain)

The additional cost of solving the health and nutrition problems of the entire world population is put at \$13 billion. With \$9 billion more it would be possible to solve the serious problems of water supply and sanitation, while \$6 billion would be sufficient to put all the world's children in school. We should also raise expenditure on assistance in the area of reproductive health.

The total cost of reaching these targets is \$40 billion, which could change the world situation and the reality of life for millions of people and countries all over the planet. Yet this figure represents only 5 per cent of world military expenditure, a very modest sum, a small amount, which contrasts with the escalation of weapons and their effects on the world, and also with the significant increases we have seen in defence budgets in many countries, which are starting to intervene abroad.

The proliferation of weapons and lack of market transparency also give rise to processes of poverty, as well as humanitarian crises, demographic changes, institutional instability, destruction and pollution. A lack of security exacerbates aspects which distort and hinder the growth of the international community, as well as its interrelations and interchanges, in an increasingly complex and interdependent global reality.

We must and can convert disarmament into a tool for solidarity and progress. Spain's society and Government and the European Union are convinced that uncontrolled armaments and the movement of such weapons seriously undermine stability and growth in advanced demographic societies, while further weakening failed States. The relationship between illicit trafficking in weapons and global networks of crime, drug trafficking, armed violence and the spread of conflict has been proven.

It is necessary to strengthen the efficiency and effectiveness of the international system, which requires more cohesive instruments, more political commitment and more legally binding agreements. Regulation must require States to live up to the obligations they have entered into and promote the development of strict and transparent verification systems which have been accepted by all States. We need to strengthen the capacity for consensus to establish legal frameworks which facilitate effective progress in the area of peace, security, cooperation and worldwide progress.

Dialogue, political action, diplomacy and regulation must promote solutions which provide an alternative to scenarios of violence and reduce the risks to collective security, since the capacity of terrorist networks and organized crime to adapt and innovate is growing, an increase which should be matched by an increase in our efforts to promote peace, disarmament and arms control.

It is of strategic importance for the Conference on Disarmament to regain momentum and vitality. The treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons or the conventions banning chemical weapons and biological and toxin weapons were adopted under its auspices. These milestones made this forum a key venue for the strengthening of trust and the development of the international community.

(Mr. Moratinos, Spain)

The latest results achieved by the Conference have not lived up to the expectations placed in it, since the 2005 Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons did not come up with a working document; the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty has not entered into force after 10 years; the Conference on small arms and light weapons to follow up the Programme of Action of 2006 did not advance beyond the achievements of 2001; the Millennium Summit did not include disarmament objectives; and areas of consensus within this Conference have shrunk. Spain hopes for a return of growing momentum in favour of arms regulation and control, as well as the establishment of legal frameworks which will engage the resolve of States and governments.

Spain participates in all - all - the instruments in the system, has signed all - all - the conventions and is a member of all the main forums to combat proliferation. The Government and society of Spain reaffirm their commitment to universalization of the main treaties, conventions, agreements and programmes of the multilateral non-proliferation system, a fundamental step in building a world free of weapons of mass destruction. It is our ambition that the main conventions will have universal coverage, so that no corner of the world will be excluded and we can ban the arsenals of death-dealing and destructive weapons from the future of mankind once and for all.

Mutual trust is the basis for respect, dialogue and understanding, as well as the channel for cooperation and exchanges in social, cultural, economic, institutional and political relations.

Spain and the European Union are working to find solutions to global security challenges, because of a conviction that we share the same future and the same destiny. Our efforts will not be in vain, because the search for creative solutions will be joined by others and will smooth the path towards agreement. Our security will improve as we increasingly reduce and control our arsenals. We need to cut the number of weapons and bring it into line with what is strictly necessary. We must establish controls and strict guarantees on the movement of such weapons. To this end there is an urgent need for the Conference to establish appropriate frameworks to ensure compliance with agreements and treaties in a transparent and committed way.

The European Union recognizes in its Strategy against weapons of mass destruction that proliferation is a risk to the security of our States, societies and interests. European and Spanish concerns are growing because of access to these weapons by non-State actors, which has unpredictable effects, especially if they fall into the hands of criminal and terrorist networks. We believe that the pace of disarmament is inadequate and we must pursue it in this forum, which has slowed down in recent years. This is the reason for complementary initiatives in addition to this Conference, such as the Proliferation Security Initiative, the conventions known as SUA treaties, for the suppression of unlawful acts at sea and against fixed platforms, the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism or Security Council resolution 1540, which universalizes the obligation of States to prevent and hinder non-State actors from gaining access to and using weapons of mass destruction, particularly for terrorist purposes.

(Mr. Moratinos, Spain)

In a few months we will be formally reopening the process for the 2010 Review Conference for the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, one purpose of which is to move forward in securing accession by the last few States which have not yet ratified it. In parallel, the provisional secretariat of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty has convened a conference in September to explore its early entry into force. There are only 10 States remaining whose ratification is needed for Protocol II to enter into force. We invite States and Governments to join this commitment to peace and global security.

Spain believes that it is of great importance to negotiate a treaty for the prohibition of the production of fissile material for military purposes. As has been pointed out by the presidency of the European Union, negotiations to that end should be opened, because the regulation of production would supplement in a significant manner the framework of nuclear disarmament and the non-proliferation regime. I think we should congratulate the countries that have declared a unilateral moratorium, which stimulates the formation of a working group to move forward in this direction.

I congratulate the States of Latin America and the Caribbean on the 40th anniversary of the Treaty of Tlatelolco, since news of the strengthening of nuclear-weapon-free zones is always welcome. We must encourage the establishment of more nuclear-weapon-free zones in all regions, and particularly in the Middle East. It is necessary to offer a consensual framework to the non-nuclear countries on negative security assurances vis-à-vis the nuclear-weapon States in accordance with the Treaty.

Spain believes that the system of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons has functioned well and provides a secure framework for the 187 participating countries. Without any doubt it is the most universal treaty and could even be more effective if all States were to sign with the International Atomic Energy Agency the most advanced instrument for nuclear verification, the additional protocol to the safeguards agreements.

Joint action to tackle the immediate challenges facing us in the nuclear sphere can create the appropriate and necessary conditions to come up with solutions to the pending problems and challenges and thus inaugurate a more secure era in nuclear proliferation. The solution is not to be found in magic formulas but rather in compromise, in serious work and in concerted efforts to overcome the shortcomings of the 2005 Conference and guarantee effective results for the 2010 Conference.

Where progress can be glimpsed is in respect of the Review Conference for the Convention on the Prohibition of Biological and Toxin Weapons. Its application, as well as the inclusion of the threat of bioterrorism, require a verification system which might find precedents in the system used for chemical weapons. In this way we can achieve the objective of universalization and clear the way towards a world free of chemical and biological weapons.

(Mr. Moratinos, Spain)

In 2006 Spain occupied the Chair of the Missile Technology control regime, where we slowed down the proliferation of delivery systems for weapons of mass destruction, an effort that we supplemented through our involvement in the arms control regimes (the Nuclear Suppliers Group, the Zanger Committee, the Australia Group) and accession to the Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missiles Proliferation.

Europe and Spain have benefited from scientific progress related to space utilization and research. For this reason they consider its preservation for peaceful purposes to be a priority and completely reject its militarization. We support the positions that strengthen the international legal regime so as to avoid an arms race in outer space, as well as the initiatives which resolutely supplement the current legal instruments and the prevention of an arms race in outer space (known as PAROS).

From the risks of weapons of mass destruction to those of conventional weapons, small arms and light weapons, which are regrettably involved in violence, death and destruction, as well as dramatic and conflictual episodes. Conventional weapons are present in all of these, and have a devastating effect on the development and progress of peoples and regions, while also accentuating global perceptions of fear and insecurity.

Fierce regional conflicts, terrorism, global and individual security are all targeted by illicit trafficking in conventional weapons. The Convention on the prohibition of certain particularly injurious conventional weapons and its five protocols, to which Spain is a party, call for progress in universalization, an enormous and arduous task which cannot be shirked or abandoned. Tragedy, pain and devastation must serve as a stimulus for disarmament - let us think for a moment of the risk posed to safety in the air by portable air defence systems (MANPADS).

Violence which injures, mutilates or kills thousands of people all over the world every day is caused by small arms and light weapons which circulate in an unregulated manner and find themselves in the hands of those who use them against the defenceless population. Regrettably, and despite the dramatic nature of this state of affairs, the desired results were not achieved last year in the conference to review the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eliminate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. It is therefore essential to continue to strengthen and implement the Programme of Action so as to ensure their regulation and to pursue worldwide, regional and local activities to reinforce controls on the circulation of these weapons.

The arms trade must have as its purpose meeting States' needs for national defence and legitimate activities in combating crime, as well as those related to upholding public rights and freedoms and the institutions essential to the rule of law. Spain has supported from the outset the initiative of negotiating a legally binding text on the arms trade, the international arms trade treaty, and we will shortly submit to the United Nations Secretary-General a proposal to establish joint binding criteria governing international arms transactions. We call on other States to submit proposals in order to build a central pillar of the system of non-proliferation, establishing models and common approaches for a legal and transparent trade in weapons.

(Mr. Moratinos, Spain)

In the face of conflict and cruel violence, international public opinion is increasingly aware and is mobilizing with calls for significant progress to be made in the area of peace and arms control. The Convention on the Prohibition of Anti-Personnel Mines, defended with tenacity and determination by civil-society organizations, is moving towards universalization. This process can now be repeated to negotiate a legally binding instrument to regulate cluster munitions, which cause unacceptable harm to the general population. At the Oslo meeting, standard-setting commitments were entered into, to which the greatest possible number of States and countries should subscribe.

As governments we have a responsibility to be in the forefront of progress towards regulating the use of weapons and disarmament. We have an obligation to provide a multilateral response so as to live up to our responsibility and the needs of our times, because I am convinced that this is what is insistently called for by our societies and their development. We must activate mechanisms to move forward with the commitment to peace and human rights, which implies a duty to prevent, deter, halt and if possible eliminate programmes of arms proliferation throughout the world, which give rise to uncertainty and exacerbate inequalities.

The world of the twenty-first century cannot allow global stagnation in the field of disarmament. Consequently, this Conference is called on to promote measures and means to address the challenges of peace, disarmament and security. Consequently, it is essential to build up areas of consensus and agreements here on those topics of great importance for the future, disarmament and arms control.

I would like to express the support and the gratitude of the Government of Spain to the six Presidents of the Conference for their work, as well as the valuable contribution of the seven coordinators together with the delegates gathered together in this room, which is so meaningful for Spain, and I hope that it will produce fruitful agreements on the issues that have been agreed on the agenda for this year.

I also congratulate the Conference for having adopted the joint Presidents' initiative, which strengthens this structure as it is going through a crucial and promising period. The new organization will facilitate the taking of additional steps of great importance to boost areas of work undertaken by the Conference in territories and among peoples. This is a forum which above all needs political leadership if we wish to sustain the opportunities that are opening up before us. Consequently, I consider that the high number of visits that have been made to this Conference this year are of the greatest importance: they reflect the growing interest and the need to strengthen disarmament.

We must also bear in mind that all efforts in the area of disarmament have a direct impact in the form of enhanced peace and development.

The Conference has a direct responsibility to bring about arms reductions and arms control, reduce risks and enhance security and peace. A contribution in this direction was made by the work of the Spaniard Francisco de Vitoria, a universal man, who gave his name to this room, a figure who furthered modernity and human rights, commitments that the Spanish Government is renewing and promoting in the area of security and disarmament.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in Spanish): I thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Spain for the important address delivered to this forum today, and I would also like to convey to the Minister the appreciation of this Conference for his presence with us today, the support this signifies for our work and his call on us to produce new and effective results. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Sweden, Ambassador Borsiin.

Ms. BORSIIN BONNIER (Sweden): Mr. President, through you, I wish to thank the Minister for coming here to address this Conference. I think it shows the importance you attach to the work that we try to carry out here.

We have listened very, very carefully to your messages about the interrelationship between peace, development and security in the twenty-first century. I want to benefit from your presence here also, as one of the incoming Presidents, and to thank Spain, the President and the Minister for all the efforts made during the Spanish presidency, which, as we all know, is coming to an end this week. As one of the P-6, I also want to assure you that we look very much forward to continuing close cooperation with Spain during the rest of the year.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in Spanish): The Minister has the floor.

Mr. MORATINOS (Spain) (spoke in Spanish): Many thanks for the comments by the representative of Sweden. It is true that during its term in the Chair, Spain has endeavoured to give a new political boost to the Conference. Work has been accomplished with a sense of consensus, of dialogue, of combining partnerships, and consequently of mobilizing the entire Conference, and we know that the Conference is at a critical and historic stage, because in the international community there is a feeling, following the Conference's great legacy to world peace and security, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, that it has a new responsibility. Consequently, although recent years have not been as satisfactory as all of us would have liked, perhaps, this feeling of guilt and neglect that was directed at disarmament aspects at the Millennium Summit can now be revisited. I consider that this year is a very important one to demonstrate this shared determination of all delegates to ensure that disarmament again becomes an essential item on the international agenda so that we can demonstrate to our peoples that it is an issue that warrants attention and priority from political officials. Consequently, I am sure that the President who will follow Spain - Sweden - will take on the same leadership, as we are familiar with the long-standing commitments of a country such as Sweden, a strong partisan and defender of multilateralism, which will support the efforts that have already been made.

I wish you all the best, and you can count on Spain's full cooperation and solidarity.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in Spanish): Thank you very much. I now give the floor to the representative of Venezuela.

Mr. ARIAS (Venezuela) (spoke in Spanish): I would like to thank Minister Moratinos for his visit and his words of encouragement, and particularly for the consistency between words and deeds. For my Government and the people of Venezuela it is a matter of pleasure and hope to see Mr. Zapatero at the head of the Spanish State and you in the Foreign Ministry. We view the withdrawal of Spanish troops from Iraq as an unequivocal demonstration of the determination and the spirit of peace which prevails in your Government and among the people of Spain. We appreciate this and we hope that in your time in the Spanish Foreign Ministry you will continue to send unequivocal signs of this message of peace. We wish you the best of luck in your diplomatic efforts to ensure that some binding instruments such as those you mentioned with regard to Protocol II can be implemented. Please do not fall ill. We need men like you in this difficult task of seeking peace.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in Spanish): I thank the representative of Venezuela for his very kind words, and I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Tunisia.

Mr. LABIDI (Tunisia) (spoke in Arabic): I would like to welcome His Excellency the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Spain. As I said, allow me to welcome His Excellency the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Spain. His international experience and wisdom are well known and he comes from a country that advocates peace and works for the cause of disarmament.

My country belongs to the Middle Eastern region and we respect and appreciate the effective role which Spain and its Minister for Foreign Affairs play in the Middle East and worldwide. Spain's presidency of the Conference on Disarmament, together with the other Presidents, offers a glimmer of hope that we will achieve progress in our difficult work. The role of Spain, the Spanish presidency and the other presidencies of 2007 do offer a glimmer of hope. We hope that in the coming year and subsequent years we will make tangible progress on the work of our Conference.

We again call upon Spain and its distinguished Minister for Foreign Affairs to continue their efforts for the sake of peace in the Middle East region and the world.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in Spanish): I thank the Ambassador of Tunisia for his very kind words, and I once again repeat to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Spain the appreciation of the Conference for his presence here with us today. I shall now suspend the 1060th plenary meeting of this Conference so that the Secretary-General and myself can escort the Minister out of the room. We shall resume in three minutes.

The meeting was suspended at 12.55 p.m. and resumed at 1 p.m.

Mr. BUGALLO (Spain) took the Chair.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in Spanish): The 1060th meeting of the Conference on Disarmament is resumed. We have very little time because the interpreters' work ends at 1 p.m. So, first, I would like to ask whether any delegation wishes to take the floor at this time. It seems

(The President)

not. So let me make an announcement on behalf of the six Presidents, as this is the last act of Spain's term in the Chair as such. I wish to announce that the group of six Presidents for this year has concluded what we might call its first phase of consultations with all the various delegations that make up the Conference with a view to working out positions in preparation for the evaluation of the work of the Conference in the tenth week. We have reached some preliminary conclusions, as I said. Our idea is that we will now make them known to the different regional groups, as requested by the Group of 21, and so in the Presidential consultations to be held on Monday morning the six Presidents for this year will approach the regional coordinators to organize those contacts. That concludes my announcement for this meeting, and also Spain's term in the Chair. I thank all the delegations for the feeling of support and the contributions we have received. Thank you very much. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor? Since none does, I adjourn the 1060th meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.