

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/PV.1085
29 January 2008

ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE ONE THOUSAND AND EIGHTY-FIFTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 29 January 2008, at 10.10 a.m.

President: Mr. Samir LABIDI (Tunisia)

The PRESIDENT (spoke in French): I declare open the 1085th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. At the outset I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to all the members of the Conference for the good will which the delegations have displayed to continue our work in a structured fashion in the framework of the Conference, particularly during the adoption of the agenda at our last meeting.

As I indicated at the plenary meeting of Friday, 25 January, I would like to present to you a plan of activities for this year's session. I have asked the secretariat to circulate this plan of activities, which sets out our future working meetings. In this respect, other details relating to the various informal meetings will be provided very shortly so as to enable delegations to organize themselves. This plan of activities provides for two formal meetings per week which will take place on Tuesdays and Thursdays, one meeting with the regional group coordinators every Monday morning and consultation meetings with the regional groups every Wednesday. It will of course be up to the groups to organize themselves. Informal meetings on each agenda item will be organized regularly and as needed. The President's bilateral consultation meetings with the members of the Conference will be organized on Monday afternoons. As regards high-level visits, as has already been announced, high-level visits are scheduled in the timetable. On Tuesday 5 February, the British Minister of Defence will address the Conference. On Thursday 7 February, the Administrator of the National Nuclear Security Administration of the United States will address the Conference. On Tuesday 12 February, His Excellency the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation will address the Conference. Many other high-level visits to the Conference are being organized, particularly on the occasion of important multilateral meetings scheduled in Geneva. Having presented these arrangements to you, I would like to extend my warm thanks to all the delegations for their kind understanding and their constructive contributions to making this timetable of activities a framework that will foster the smooth conduct of the work of the Conference. If you will allow me, I will now suspend the official plenary meeting to deliver a communication to you in the informal meeting that will follow immediately.

As usual, the informal plenary meeting is open only to member States of the Conference and non-member States that have been invited to take part in the work of this body.

The meeting was suspended at 10.15 a.m. and resumed at 10.20 a.m.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in French): The representatives of the following countries are on the list of speakers for today's plenary meeting: Sri Lanka, Japan, Republic of Korea, Pakistan, Australia, Israel, Germany, Brazil and Egypt. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Sri Lanka.

Mr. JAYATILLEKA (Sri Lanka): Mr. President, while wishing you a very good morning, I shall pre-emptively excuse myself after the delivery of this statement, since I have to be at the intergovernmental working group on the Durban Conference.

I have the honour to make the following statement on behalf of the Group of 21.

(Mr. Jayatilleka, Sri Lanka)

The G-21 fully appreciates your striving to find common ground on a programme of work to begin our efforts as early as possible. We are confident that you will guide this Conference to find that common ground to build upon the momentum created to move the Conference on Disarmament out of its long-standing stalemate.

The G-21 firmly believes that the promotion of multilateralism and multilaterally agreed solutions in accordance with the rules of procedure of the Conference on Disarmament should be regarded as the core principle of any negotiations we may pursue in the Conference. This would preserve the unique role of this forum, which we consider as the sole multilateral negotiating body on disarmament.

While we reiterate our long-standing position that achieving total nuclear disarmament remains the highest priority of the G-21, we have shown flexibility in the past to move forward to adopt a balanced and comprehensive programme of work responsive to the core issues recognized by the Conference. We are also mindful of the urgent need to address the issues pertaining to fissile material, prevention of an arms race in outer space and negative security assurances, and in this regard we appreciate the different priorities of different delegations in addressing these four core issues.

Therefore, as we said at the outset, the Conference on Disarmament should promote a balanced and comprehensive programme of work, which will help us accelerate progress towards consensus. How to achieve this balance is the challenge before us, and we would assure you of our full cooperation and flexibility in that exercise, in the expectation that this will be reciprocated by other nations.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in French): I thank the distinguished representative of Sri Lanka, who took the floor on behalf of the G-21, for his statement. I also thank him for his kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Japan.

Mr. TARUI (Japan): At the outset, please allow me to congratulate you, Ambassador Labidi, on your assumption of the high post of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament at this important juncture. It is often said that the early stage of the Conference's annual session is always difficult, and this year is by far no exception. I am fully confident, however, that under your guidance, the Conference will overcome its difficulties and find a way to meet the tasks entrusted to it by the international community. I assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation.

I would like to remind the Conference that this is the tenth year since the CD last engaged in negotiations, and to re-emphasize the importance of reviving the function of the CD as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum of the international community.

Last year, under the six Presidents, we engaged in important substantive discussions on all the agenda items, and especially the four core issues. Moreover, the Presidential draft decision contained in CD/2007/L.1 was formally introduced in the plenary meeting of 23 March 2007.

(Mr. Tarui, Japan)

We believe that, together with the complementary Presidential statement (CRP.5) and the draft decision (CRP.6), L.1 could lead the Conference to immediately resume significant work in the course of this year. The discussions in the plenary meetings last year demonstrated broad support for this proposal, even though, unfortunately, it has so far not proven possible to take a decision.

Japan reiterates the importance for all member States to continue and intensify their efforts to reach a consensus on a programme of work, as suggested in last year's P-6 draft decision, or on the package proposal already on the table. In this regard, I would like to recall the words of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, who stated last week that the adoption of this balanced and carefully crafted Presidential decision would not deprive any member State of the ability to assert its national position in the subsequent phases of the Conference's work.

On the other hand, in the event that the CD does not immediately reach consensus on the draft decision, deepening discussions on substance similar to the first part of last year's session is vital. Accordingly, Japan gives its support to the current draft programme of activities. We are willing to actively participate in the scheduled discussions, especially on the core issues of nuclear disarmament, FMCT, negative security assurances and the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

Finally, in order for the Conference on Disarmament to fulfil its main function as the only disarmament negotiating body, Japan would like to re-emphasize the importance of continuing our work to find consensus on a negotiating mandate in parallel with our substantive discussions.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in French): I thank the distinguished representative of Japan for his statement and for the kind words he addressed to the Chair and I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. CHANG (Republic of Korea): Mr. President, to begin with, I would like to congratulate you on your assumption of the first presidency of the 2008 Conference on Disarmament. I would also like to express my sincere appreciation for your tireless efforts to conduct consultations during the intersessional period with the 2007 Presidents, as well as with each member State, to seek common ground aimed at bringing the CD back to substantive work. I can assert that your hard work will lead our discussions to a successful beginning for this year's work.

Last year the CD engaged in constructive and serious discussions under the able leadership of the six Presidents, based on the new P-6 mechanism initiated in 2006, and the appointment of coordinators for seven items of the agenda. This initiative has, without a doubt, greatly contributed to increasing the consistency and intensity of discussions in the CD, creating a significant momentum to bring the CD out of its long-standing stalemate. In particular, as veteran CD Ambassador Trezza of Italy put it in his farewell remarks, the appointment of coordinators complemented "vertically" the "horizontal" coordination among Presidents, by their genuine engagement and dedication. In this regard, my delegation supports the idea of maintaining this practice in 2008 to lead our discussions in a more constructive, effective and efficient way.

(Mr. Chang, Republic of Korea)

During the last meeting, we successfully adopted the agenda for 2008. In this regard, I would just like to remind you and other colleagues that we conducted informal rolling discussions on all the items on the agenda last year and extrapolated the priorities for more focused debates. Those are, as you are all aware, a treaty to ban the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, nuclear disarmament, negative security assurances, and preventing an arms race in outer space. Given the importance of the continuity and coherence of discussions in the CD, it would be better for us to concentrate on the core issues in order to build on what we achieved last year.

No one can deny the fact that the Presidential draft decision (L.1), together with the other two documents (CRP.5 and CRP.6), is the most noteworthy product of last year's session. I believe the proposal is based upon a realistic and balanced approach, and, as quoted by Japan's Ambassador, Secretary-General Ban said: "The adoption of this ... decision would not deprive any member State of the ability to assert its national position in the subsequent phases of the Conference's work." While recognizing that a fissile material cut-off treaty is the only issue ripe for negotiations in the CD, L.1 "does not exclude the possibility of future negotiations under any agenda item", as was clearly mentioned in the complementary Presidential statement contained in CD/2007/CRP.5.

L.1 is the only possible compromise for the moment to bring the CD back to work. Given that the proposal enjoys large support in this room, we should seek the way to mobilize the necessary consensus by addressing any remaining concern. My delegation sincerely hopes that we will be able to begin substantive work as soon as possible through the adoption of the L.1 proposal as a basis for the programme of work.

I believe in the saying "A hard beginning makes a good ending". I sincerely hope that through our deliberations this year the concerted efforts of the P-6 to rejuvenate the CD will reap a good harvest.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in French): I thank the distinguished representative of the Republic of Korea for his statement and for the kind words he addressed to the Chair and I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Pakistan.

Mr. KHAN (Pakistan): Mr. President, since I am taking the floor for the first time during the session, I congratulate you, Ambassador Samir Labidi, on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. We are aware of your leadership qualities prior to the commencement of this session. You have held extensive and productive consultations. You have demonstrated how inclusive consultations ought to be held. We have full confidence in you, and we would extend our fullest cooperation to make your presidency successful.

Pakistan associates itself with the statement made by Ambassador Jayatilleka of Sri Lanka on behalf of the Group of 21.

We want to extend our appreciation to the Ambassadors who have taken responsibilities as coordinators. Our understanding is that these coordinators are being appointed under the authority and prerogative of the President. The appointment of the coordinators is not a decision

(Mr. Khan, Pakistan)

of the Conference. The coordinators will act in their individual capacity. The coordinators are not Special Coordinators. The role of the coordinators is different from Special Coordinators, who in the past were appointed by the Conference and had a clearly defined mandate.

According to rule 23 of the rules of procedure, the Conference may establish subsidiary bodies, such as ad hoc subcommittees, working groups, technical groups or groups of governmental experts. The coordinators do not fall into any of these categories. The coordinators will work informally and unofficially under the authority of the presidency. They do not substitute or supplant mechanisms recognized by the CD rules of procedure. The reports of the coordinators on the discussions held by them will have no status. They will be transmitted under the authority of the President.

The P-6 coordination has played an important role in generating activity in the CD. We have full confidence in the six Presidents who will steer our work this year. The P-6 arrangement remains informal. The P-6 proposals are subject to open negotiations and the concurrence of all members. The outcome of their initiatives is not a fait accompli, and we know it would not be projected as such.

In order to succeed, the CD should make combined efforts and take on board the concerns of all its members. The purpose of any exercise that we undertake is to agree on a balanced programme of work so that the CD can commence its substantive negotiations on the core issues on its agenda. To reach this goal, five elements are important: (1) dialogue and consensus-building; (2) full understanding of all CD members' concerns; (3) bringing all CD members on board; (4) faithful adherence to the rules of procedure; and (5) transparency in decision-making.

Our delegation looks forward to working constructively with all CD members.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in French): I thank the distinguished representative of Pakistan for his statement and for his kind words addressed to the Chair and I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Australia.

Ms. MILLAR (Australia): Mr. President, the Australian delegation congratulates you on your presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. We offer you and your fellow Presidents our full cooperation with your efforts to guide our work to a successful conclusion. At the very least, we hope that this Conference will make a substantive start on its mandate to negotiate. For it is high time that it did.

The reality is that this Conference has achieved very little in the past decade. To be sure we have discussed, debated, deliberated, questioned and argued some of the most important security challenges facing the international community. We have "talked the talk", and yet, all the while, the expectations of our communities have seemingly far outgrown the capacity of this body to meet them.

It is time we "walked the walk" - time we fulfilled this Conference's negotiating mandate - time that we met the expectations of the international community.

(Ms. Millar, Australia)

Australia thus wholeheartedly endorses the United Nations Secretary-General's call for the Conference to resume its substantive work on the basis of L.1. The balanced and carefully crafted Presidential decision encompassed in L.1 and accompanying documents is a fair and just basis for our work. It is born of a painstaking and comprehensive consultation, evaluation and revision by the 2007 Presidents. And it remains the most realistic opportunity through which we can make the progress the international community has sought for more than a decade. The L.1 Presidential decision sets out vital goals and a means of achieving them.

The negotiation of a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other explosive devices is of the utmost importance to Australia. Such a treaty is an essential and practical contribution to global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

In Australia's view, an FMCT would encompass key elements, including a commitment to prohibit the production of highly enriched uranium and separated plutonium for nuclear weapons; appropriate measures to ensure adequate national implementation of the Treaty, as well as periodic review of this work; and appropriate measures to ensure effective verification of States' implementation of their commitments. Australia acknowledges that its view is not the only view of an FMCT; that there will need to be a negotiation leading to the final outcome.

In this regard, Australia welcomes the mandate for negotiations set out in L.1. Far from pre-empting the negotiations, it facilitates these by ensuring opportunity for all positions - be they on verification, stocks or other issues - to be scrutinized and tested as can only be done in a genuine negotiation. L.1 provides a realistic basis for substantive work on other issues in our agenda, taking into account the negotiating capacity of this forum and the relative level of development of these issues.

Nuclear disarmament is a high priority for the Australian Government and people. Australia thus welcomes the efforts of some nuclear-weapon States to reduce their nuclear arsenals and the degree of transparency afforded thus far. But we urge the nuclear-weapon States - and other States holding nuclear weapons - to make deeper, faster and irreversible cuts to all types of nuclear weapons - and to do so with even greater transparency. For it is you, the States possessing nuclear weapons, that bear the greatest responsibility - and the greatest capacity - for making substantive progress towards nuclear disarmament.

This is not to say that the responsibility for nuclear disarmament is yours alone. It is not. Non-nuclear-weapons States must ensure that their actions contribute to ensuring an environment conducive to nuclear disarmament. They can do so in part by living up to their end of the NPT bargain through full commitment to and implementation of their non-proliferation obligations. And together, nuclear-weapons States and non-nuclear-weapons States should use the L.1 mandate as an opportunity for this Conference to contribute to strengthening the process and pace of nuclear disarmament.

Our discussions of security assurances over the past two years, while less intense than on other issues, have nonetheless reinforced this issue as one of continuing concern. There is a need - one accommodated amply by L.1 - to focus discussion on practical measures to enable the provision of such assurances.

(Ms. Millar, Australia)

In this regard, Australia attaches great importance to the development of nuclear-weapon-free zones, freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned. Such zones can be an effective means by which negative security assurances can be provided to non-nuclear-weapons States parties to the NPT.

Australia first proposed a nuclear-weapon-free zone for the South Pacific in 1983, which was subsequently realized through the 1985 Treaty of Rarotonga establishing the South Pacific Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone. In this regard, Australia is very fortunate. But we acknowledge that other regions face even greater challenges to formulating NWFZs. Australia reiterates its support for the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in other regions, including the Middle East and Africa. And we trust that our discussions under L.1 can yield practical advancement in these regions.

Australia firmly believes that all nations have a right to unhindered access to outer space for peaceful purposes. States should avoid taking actions that jeopardize such access, or which might put at risk the manned or unmanned space assets of other nations. The L.1 proposal provides a good opportunity for us to consider ways and means to increase transparency and confidence in the spacefaring actions of each other. In doing so, we should be mindful that this Conference is not alone. We should consider how we can best contribute to the work undertaken in other forums to ensure unhindered access to space by all nations. Australia looks forward to discussion of various proposals, including the foreshadowed treaty on preventing the placement of weapons in outer space, under the L.1 mandate. Our hope would be that this Conference could identify practical means by which to strengthen the international community's confidence in the peaceful intent of all spacefaring nations.

Australia remains committed to seeing this Conference return to work. We can support the L.1 proposal. We can accept the accompanying clarifying statements. But what we find very difficult to accept is the prospect that this Conference will again fail to fulfil its mandate, that it will again fail our peoples. For it is not acceptable by any standard that the world's principal forum for negotiation on arms control and disarmament remain idle for so long ... all the more so when, as the United Nations Secretary-General made clear to us last week, it is the clear will of the overwhelming majority of nations in this chamber and beyond that we take action.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in French): I thank the distinguished representative of Australia for her statement and her kind words addressed to the Chair and I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Israel.

Mr. LEVANON (Israel): Mr. President, allow me to join my voice to all those who preceded me in congratulating you on assuming your duties as the President of the Conference on Disarmament. I would also like to extend Israel's gratitude to the outgoing and to the incoming P-6 and to assure you of Israel's constructive participation in the CD's deliberations during this coming year.

Last year's deliberations in the CD, held both by the P-6 and by the coordinators on the seven agenda items, have demonstrated that the CD has the potential of becoming a useful instrument in the hands of the international community to address global security issues.

(Mr. Levanon, Israel)

Member States have all made a significant effort to work towards a better understanding of national positions in the realm of global security. At the same time, those deliberations have emphasized the fact that for some States work in the CD relates to issues closely linked with vital national security needs. Those national considerations must be respected.

Israel does not object to the setting of long-term goals to be achieved by the international community in the field of arms control and disarmament, but at the same time, it should be clear that striving to achieve long-term goals without first identifying and addressing the present threats could be ineffective. It is incumbent upon the members to work jointly towards creating the conditions that would allow eventually achieving general and complete disarmament.

In our view, there are two fundamental threats to global peace and security that deserve to be placed as the highest priorities of the CD: the threat of terrorism in all its dimensions, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery.

The transfer of arms to terrorists is the scourge of modern civilization. It enables groups and individuals who act in contravention and disregard of international law to target civilians with the purpose of advancing their own goals. It contributes to the destabilization of States and regions and jeopardizes the prospects of reaching peaceful solutions to conflicts.

Such arms transfers do not occur in a vacuum. They occur when States wilfully transfer arms to terrorists or when States turn a blind eye to such transfers taking place on their own territory. They occur when arms transfers are not dealt with in a decisive manner or when addressing this problem does not rank high in States' priorities.

Long-, medium- and short-range missiles and rockets, as well as UAVs and MANPADS, have been some of the sophisticated weapons transferred to the Hizbullah terrorist organization by States in our region that are also members of this Conference. These transfers have continued uninterrupted, despite Security Council resolution 1701, as has also been confirmed by the reports of the Secretary-General.

However, the Middle East is not the only region afflicted by this plague. It is a disease affecting all regions of the world. The transfer of arms to terrorists should be treated in a comprehensive manner in order to avoid the creation of further conflicts, internal and regional instability, and above all, harm to civilian populations. In this respect, Israel submitted working paper CD/1823 to the CD on this issue last year and intends to continue elaborating on the topic during this year.

Israel believes that the responsibility of preventing arms from falling into the wrong hands lies first and foremost on a strong national commitment to act decisively to prevent such illicit transfers. No international arrangement in this regard would be effective without this fundamental national obligation. Israel therefore attaches great importance to the export control regimes and their evident contribution to efforts aimed at curbing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. It has traditionally exercised a robust national export control system.

(Mr. Levanon, Israel)

Evidence of that lies in Israel's recent legal and institutional reform process designed to ensure that its export control system aligns itself with the highest international standards set by the NSG, AG, MTCR and Wassenaar suppliers' regimes. This process has culminated in the new Export Control Law, passed at the Knesset in July last year, which entered into force on 31 December 2007. This law regulates control over the Munitions List of the Wassenaar Arrangement, and complements the Export Control Order which entered into force on 1 January 2007, regulating control over dual-use items and technologies, based on the dual-use list of the Wassenaar Arrangement. This law also follows the Import and Export Control Order (Chemical, Biological and Nuclear Exports) from 2004 and places Israel among those States which exercise the highest levels of control over exports of sensitive and dual-use items.

Israel has done so out of a clear conviction that national legislation is the basic feature for addressing proliferation threats. Israel has done so without being a party to the different export control regimes, and has demonstrated that these measures are feasible for any State.

Finally, my delegation and myself will continue to be constructively engaged during this year with the aim to elaborate more on ways to address the imminent and real threats to international peace and security.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in French): I thank the distinguished representative of Israel for his statement and for his kind words addressed to the Chair and I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Germany.

Mr. BRASACK (Germany): Mr. President, I would, first of all, like to congratulate you on your assumption of the post of President of the Conference on Disarmament. I can assure you, as well as your P-6 colleagues, of my delegation's full support in your efforts to guide the work of this Conference.

I would also like to fully associate myself with the statement delivered last Friday by the Permanent Representative of Slovenia on behalf of the European Union.

We are at the start of a new year and a new annual session of the Conference. We are happy to see that the valuable P-6 formula of the CD sessions 2006 and 2007 has been retained by this year's CD presidencies. This formula has provided substantial progress towards overcoming the deadlock in the work of the CD and the resumption of substantive negotiating, a goal that my delegation has consistently been working for in the last 10 years. I really regret still having to say that we are not there yet!

This is despite the constructive, structured and substantive discussions during the first part of the 2007 session of the CD, brought about by the six 2007 CD Presidents' "Organizational framework", which provided a very useful approach to identify those issues on the traditional CD agenda with the highest priority for the CD membership and their varying degree of ripeness for the next stages of substantial work.

(Mr. Brasack, Germany)

The Presidential proposal, L.1, later supplemented in a serious, patient and strenuous process to add clarity and to provide answers to questions raised by a few delegations by CRP.5 and CRP.6, indeed reflects the necessary decisions the CD will have to agree on to get back to work. I was able to express Germany's full and unequivocal support for the Presidential proposal, which is still on the table today, on numerous occasions, starting on 23 March 2007. Today I would like to reiterate this full and unequivocal support.

We have highly appreciated the work done by all of last year's coordinators and are very grateful for their efforts under their respective agenda items. These discussions - through their differing intensities and varying depths and detail - have clearly demonstrated to all CD members that, although all the items on the agenda have their own and valid *raison d'être*, a differentiated approach is nevertheless justified as to the degree of work to be done by the CD on different issues. We also highly commend the meticulous way in which the 2007 P-6 gathered the views of every single CD member State and managed to merge all these views into a coherent layout for the CD's activities.

In our view this carefully crafted Presidential proposal takes into account in an honest, fair, balanced and comprehensive manner the interests of all CD members - and in a realistic sense of compromise leaves them equally unhappy with it. There is no realistic and viable alternative to this approach.

Yet some CD members still have to cross the solid bridges that have been built by CD presidencies and the other CD member States throughout the whole 2007 session of the CD.

Germany fully agrees with the view expressed by United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon last Wednesday, 23 January 2008, in his opening statement: "The adoption of this balanced and carefully crafted Presidential decision would not deprive any [CD] member State of the ability to assert its national position in the subsequent phases of the Conference's work."

We therefore, along with our colleagues from the EU, urge all delegations to the Conference on Disarmament to go along with the consensus and adopt the documents which have been on the table since last year's session as swiftly as possible. This cannot be delayed much further.

Getting the CD back to fulfilling its function as the single multilateral forum at the disposal of the international community for disarmament negotiations is all the more important against the backdrop of the security challenges that we are facing today. The threats to our security are more diverse, less visible and less predictable. Non-proliferation, disarmament and arms control remain indispensable elements of cooperative security between States and are essential for effectively addressing those threats.

With the adoption of the Presidential draft decision as it stands by the CD, we would clearly send a signal to the world outside this Council chamber that we take this task seriously. This would underscore the relevance of a multilateralist approach to security and testify to our commitment to a multilateral treaty system, which provides the legal and normative basis for all disarmament and non-proliferation efforts.

(Mr. Brasack, Germany)

It is well known that my delegation attaches particular priority to the issue of an FMCT, where we would like to see negotiations start as soon as possible. Last year's discussions clearly showed us that this issue is indeed ripe for negotiation, as opposed to the other core issues - nuclear disarmament, the prevention of an arms race in outer space and negative security assurances - at their current stage. But we are committed also to contributing to substantial discussions on these other core issues. We consider all these issues to be important matters to be dealt with in the CD. But we also believe that progress can be best achieved with a combination of prioritizing and at the same time allowing for just and meaningful consideration of the concerns of all.

We support the view spelled out by the EU representative at last Friday's meeting that the traditional CD agenda and the rules of procedure allow for every CD member to raise any security issue relevant to the work of the Conference. As already mentioned, the P-6 formula and the "Organizational framework" of last year's P-6 for the first part of the 2007 CD session proved very useful. But we need to realize that we cannot simply copy this organizational framework while waiting for consensus on the Presidential proposal to emerge. Last year's organizational framework helped us identify those issues on the traditional CD agenda with the highest priority for the CD membership and to differentiate according to the degree of ripeness for negotiations.

I would like to thank you at this stage for submitting a schedule of activities up to mid-March today. Our yardstick for the schedule of activities is that this year's mode or schedule of activities must avoid a simple repetition of the discussions that we had last year; rather, it needs to be purposeful and build on their results and intensify to the degree possible the work on those issues identified as priority areas, while bearing in mind that real progress can only be made after the adoption of the Presidential proposals that for all practical purposes will serve as our programme of work.

We trust that you and your P-6 colleagues will redouble all efforts to convince the very few remaining member States to join the consensus on the Presidential proposal during the first part of this year's CD session in order not to lose the momentum and to allow for a meaningful start of negotiations and substantive work on all four issues.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in French): I thank the distinguished representative of Germany for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair and I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Brazil.

Mr. da ROCHA PARANHOS (Brazil): Mr. President, since this is the first time I am taking the floor during the current 2008 session of the Conference on Disarmament, I would like to congratulate you on assuming the important position of the first President of this year and assure you and all the other incoming Presidents of this year of the full support of my delegation. My delegation associates itself with the statement delivered by the distinguished Ambassador of Sri Lanka on behalf of the G-21, and we would also like to make some additional comments on a national basis.

(Mr. da Rocha Paranhos, Brazil)

Over the years Brazil has played a constructive and active role in this Conference towards achieving a programme of work that could encompass the concerns and priorities of the entire membership of the CD. In 1995 my Government supported the Shannon mandate that called for the beginning of negotiations on a non-discriminatory multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material. Later, in 2000, during Brazil's term in the presidency of the CD, Ambassador Celso Amorim tabled a proposal known as the "Amorim proposal" as a contribution from my country to ending the long-standing impasse over a programme of work. Then in 2003 Brazil supported the so-called "five Ambassadors' proposal". Last year a significant effort was put together by the P-6 - and here I would like to praise once again the Ambassadors of South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland and the Syrian Arab Republic for their strenuous efforts to find a programme of work. Unfortunately, this programme of work fell short of reaching consensus, but it is still on the table and we understand that there have been consultations on document L.1 among member States.

Brazil fully supported the proposal advanced by the six Presidents of the 2007 session consecrated in document L.1 and the proposed accompanying Presidential statements, and we continue to support that initiative. Although, as has been widely repeated here, it has elements that displease most of our delegations, including my own, we firmly believe that it presents us with an unprecedented opportunity to resume substantive work for which this Conference was established, namely, to negotiate legally binding international instruments in the field of disarmament. Last year's efforts by the P-6 should not, and must not, be discarded. We have a challenge before us and we should not be discouraged by the difficulties that we find on our path. It is precisely in times of difficulties or crises that creative solutions arise.

Brazil is fully committed to continue working with the 2008 Presidents and with each and every one of the member countries around in order to find common ground that building upon the L.1 proposal will enable us to advance and fulfil the role that we are called to do. Brazil is ready to move forward on negotiations on the basis of L.1 and the complementary Presidential statement, and we hope so are all of us.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in French): I thank the distinguished representative of Brazil for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair and I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Egypt.

Mr. SHOUKRY (Egypt) (spoke in Arabic): Mr. President, I would like to congratulate you on your assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament at the start of its 2008 session. I am fully confident that with your outstanding experience and in-depth knowledge of the issues under discussion you will be able to guide this Conference with consummate skill.

I would like on this occasion to assure you that my delegation stands ready to cooperate fully with you and with all the Presidents of the Conference throughout this year, and I wish you every success in your endeavours.

(Mr. Shoukry, Egypt)

I would also like to take this opportunity to express sincere thanks to your predecessor, His Excellency Ambassador Faisal Khabbaz, the Permanent Representative of Syria, who ably managed the work of the Conference during the latter part of 2007. I would like to express sincere gratitude to all the members of the secretariat for everything that they do to facilitate the work of the Conference every year.

Mr. President, your presidency of the Conference on Disarmament at the start of the 2008 session comes at a time when the international community is looking for the best way to allow this Conference to resume its role in promoting disarmament. Getting the Conference on Disarmament back on track so that it can perform its core function of elaborating international agreements in pursuance of disarmament, in particular nuclear disarmament, is a matter of the highest priority, since this would strengthen international peace and security. It would be truly regrettable if the Conference were to remain incapable of shouldering its responsibilities at a time when the international community was faced with mounting security challenges. It is no secret to anyone that no real progress will be made at the Conference unless the interests and priorities of all parties are given equal consideration, without selectivity or the use of double standards when it comes to consideration of disarmament issues. It is inconceivable that a specific subject should be imposed in a self-serving manner and that it should be promoted without consideration for the concerns of others. The work of the Conference should proceed on the basis of respect for the priorities of all States so that collective interests are served and tangible progress is made on disarmament, which in turn would doubtless improve the current international climate.

Egypt's commitment to working earnestly and tirelessly to attain the objective of complete and comprehensive disarmament is a firm commitment. Egypt is truly convinced of the need to eliminate all weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons, which indisputably, constitute the most devastating and destructive of all weapons. Nuclear disarmament will remain at the top of our priorities in all international disarmament forums and, in our view, it should also remain a top priority for the Conference on Disarmament at this new session, particularly in the light of the mounting challenges in the international security environment.

The member States of the Conference on Disarmament have a great responsibility towards the international community to work and to attain the objective of nuclear disarmament, to affirm the illegitimacy of the proliferation or use of these weapons pending their total elimination, and to respond to the many appeals from a majority of States, international organizations, non-governmental organizations and civil society warning of the threat that these weapons pose to international peace and security. We should like to stress that the complete elimination of all nuclear weapons is an irrevocable principle and a firm policy. We shall continue working with our partners to push for the nuclear-weapon States to shoulder their responsibilities under article VI of the NPT so as to preserve the credibility of that instrument, especially in the Middle East region, and all the indivisible and interrelated principles that emanate therefrom, as well as the other relevant resolutions.

I would like to conclude by saying that my country welcomes the adoption of the agenda for 2008 at the plenary meeting that was held on 25 January. I am looking forward to participating actively and constructively in the debate on all the agenda items. I would like also

(Mr. Shoukry, Egypt)

to express our sincere hope that the Conference will stand ready to bear its responsibilities as the sole multilateral forum for negotiations on disarmament at the international level, in particular on issues of priority to the international community, notably nuclear disarmament. I can assure you that the delegation of Egypt is committed to supporting all the earnest endeavours that you are making with the Presidents of the Conference to revitalize the Conference at this session and to bring an end to the impasse in the interests of all parties, within the agreed framework, and according to the priorities set for the Conference on Disarmament.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in Arabic): I thank His Excellency the Ambassador of Egypt for his statement and for his kind words addressed to the Chair. I thank him very much.

(spoke in French)

I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Chile.

Mr. MARTABIT (Chile) (spoke in Spanish): Mr. President, the delegation of Chile congratulates and thanks you for taking the Chair of the Conference on Disarmament. We acknowledge the untiring efforts that you have made both in New York during the work of the First Committee and here in Geneva in consulting with all the delegations of the member countries of this Conference. We also appreciate the commitment of your country, Tunisia, to this important negotiating body, in the shape of the presence of your Minister for Foreign Affairs at the opening session of the proceedings of the Conference for this year. We also highlight the participation of the Secretary-General of the United Nations in that opening session. We endorse the new appeal he made to us not to miss the opportunity to resume the work of the Conference once again.

We understand the appeal made to us by the Secretary-General as a responsibility that we must assume vis-à-vis the international community. In 2006 and 2007 we made constant efforts which cannot go to waste. Chile advocates the early resumption of the substantive work of the Conference. During this decade of failed attempts to rescue the Conference from the stagnation in which it is bogged down, my country has supported and promoted various proposals and initiatives. Among them we can naturally single out the proposal of Ambassador Celso Amorim, which has already been referred to, and the proposal known as the “five Ambassadors’ proposal”, in which my country played an active role. In the same spirit we have supported the formula of the six Presidents; we did so last year, the year before that and we are doing so this year. We support the proposal contained in document L.1 and we accept the complementary Presidential statements. We think that the innovative mechanism of the P-6 platform offers us continuity, coherence, inclusiveness, certainty and transparency. We support your timetable of activities, Mr. President.

In 2006 Chile took part in these efforts as a Friend of the Presidents, and today, with the same wish to cooperate in the search for a way out of the impasse which is affecting us, we are prepared to take on the coordinating role that we have been asked to take on, assuring the distinguished Permanent Representatives that under the title of coordinator we do not seek to

(Mr. Martabit, Chile)

arrogate to ourselves any prerogative, right or authority that would be distinct from its constructive nature. We simply want this Conference to make progress without problems - nothing more, nothing less.

We will spare no effort to move forward the discussion on the cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament. The first item on our agenda: we say it quite clearly, we would like to live in a world free of nuclear weapons.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in French): I thank the distinguished representative of Chile for his statement and for the kind words that he addressed to the Chair. I have no further speakers on my list. I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Iran.

Mr. HOSSEINI (Islamic Republic of Iran): Mr. President, my delegation also congratulates you on your assumption of the CD presidency. I am confident that under your diplomatic skills and dedication to the Conference, we will achieve successful results. I assure you of the full cooperation and support of my delegation. The views of my delegation on the programme of work will come to you later. Now I want to discuss another issue which we have heard today.

Today we have heard a statement full of unsubstantiated claims by the Israeli regime delegation. The background of that regime features all kinds of inhuman actions against civilians, also including State terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

Nowadays the Middle East is facing a serious problem that that regime created against civilians and against the strong condemnation of the international community. The same regime continues its behaviour against innocent civilians - men, women and children - indiscriminately. Such a regime with such a record no longer has the status to advise others on that issue.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in French): I thank the distinguished representative of Iran for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. Would any other delegation like to take the floor now? I now give the floor to the representative of the Netherlands.

Mr. LANDMAN (Netherlands) (spoke in French): I wanted to raise a topic that would tend to fall under "Other matters". I do not know if we have got to that stage in our work.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in French): I would now like to invite the Conference to consider a new request received from a State which is not a member of the Conference and which would like to participate in our work as an observer during this session. This request, reproduced in document CD/WP.547/Add.1, was received from the Dominican Republic. May I take it that the Conference decides to invite the Dominican Republic to participate in its work in accordance with the rules of procedure?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in French): I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of the Netherlands.

Mr. LANDMAN (Netherlands): Mr. President, after the mostly lofty interventions we have heard this morning, I would like to raise a very down-to-earth subject about taking the opportunity of the new year where we could make somewhere, at least, a new beginning. The subject I would like to raise is the subject of the immense waste of paper by this body - a waste of money, not to mention the results for the environment. Last week, for instance, we found on our desks, all of our delegations, 30 pages with requests for observership, while this could have been sent on the Web, and where we have hardly looked at it, hardly necessary for a routine decision where a list of names in itself would have sufficed. We all know that we receive, and still quite late, the records of our meetings in many copies and then new versions, again in many copies. I think a week ago we also received a thick book, a reference copy of our activities of last year also. The Netherlands received 10 copies.

I would like to submit that one hard copy suffices. And then we have the Net and we have e-mail. We could really save thousands and thousands of dollars and Euros. It could be better used. Where we still continue to produce a lot of paper, and frankly speaking, not much else, I suggest that we tackle at least this waste problem in an effective manner.

I would like to ask you if a formal proposal from the Netherlands is required or if you can take this up with the secretariat and come up with a proposal from your side which then could be discussed.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in French): I thank the representative of the Netherlands. We take note of his statement and will discuss this with the secretariat. I now give the floor to the representative of Germany.

Mr. BRASACK (Germany): Mr. President, I also have a down-to-earth question, albeit on a different topic and of a different nature, because during the meeting I certainly carefully studied the schedule of activities that you submitted this morning, and I have two questions as far as it is concerned. If delegations, for example, wanted to address the issues of items 1, 2 and 3 at the outset in the formal CD meeting, then they would have to address all three of those items next week, I take it? Because they all seem to be on the agenda next week. So that would be the first question. The complication there certainly is that we all know that as regards item 3, we will have a formal meeting on Tuesday, 12 February, where His Excellency the Russian Foreign Minister will present ideas, maybe even proposals. So it is certainly not so easy to address these kinds of things already before that is the case. That is certainly a very practical complication.

I certainly would like also to ask in week 5 - there is no formal CD meeting on Thursday, 21 February, and the same goes for week 7 on Thursday, 6 March. Is that subject to change, or is this the final programme? I ask for your indulgence because certainly the German delegation, but also our capital, has to prepare possible statements on the relevant items, and so we want to be sure when, in your view, would be the appropriate time. As I see it, as I mentioned, if you wanted to address agenda items 1, 2 and 3 at the outset in a formal way, it would already have to be next week. So I just wanted to have your confirmation, if I am reading the situation right.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in French): I thank the representative of Germany and I would like to say that it is scheduled for the informal meetings but that if necessary it is possible to move back to a formal meeting. On the first item and on the second item we are very flexible in the Chair. The most appropriate arrangements can be adopted. I thank you for your comment. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor? If not, we have thus completed our business for today. The next plenary meeting of the Conference will take place on Thursday, 31 January at 10 a.m. in the Council chamber.

The meeting rose at 11.30 a.m.