

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/PV.1080
30 August 2007

ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE ONE THOUSAND AND EIGHTIETH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 30 August 2007, at 10.15 a.m.

President: Mr. Faysal KHABBAZ HAMOUI (Syrian Arab Republic)

The PRESIDENT (spoke in Arabic): I declare open the 1080th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. At the outset, I should like to extend a warm welcome on behalf of the Conference on Disarmament to the participants in the United Nations Programme of Fellowships on Disarmament who are observing the proceedings of this plenary. I am quite sure they will benefit from their participation in this forum, especially from the presentations that will be made to them on the various aspects of the work of the Conference. On behalf of the Conference on Disarmament and on my own behalf, I should like to bid farewell to Ambassador Elisabeth Bonnier, our distinguished colleague from Sweden, who will be leaving Geneva soon to take up other important duties, having brought with her a wealth of experience gained within the Swedish Foreign Ministry and abroad, including a first round from 1983 to 1988 in the Conference on Disarmament and also as a member of the Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters. Ambassador Elisabeth Bonnier joined us in 2003 as the Permanent Representative of Sweden to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva. As a representative of a country with a pre-eminent focus on multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation, she has always been actively and insistently involved in the effort to break the deadlock in this body and to resume the substantive work. I should like to express my particular gratitude to her for her extensive efforts to end the stalemate in this body as one of the six Presidents of this year's session. On behalf of the Conference and on my own behalf, I would like to convey to Ambassador Bonnier every wish for success and happiness. While we are sad to see Ambassador Bonnier leave Geneva, I am happy to extend a cordial welcome to our new colleague from Canada, Ambassador Marius Grinius. On behalf of the Conference on Disarmament and on my own behalf, I would like to assure Ambassador Grinius of our readiness to provide him with every kind of assistance and support for his work in Geneva.

Before turning to the speakers for today, I would like to introduce the Presidential report on the third part of the 2007 session. I closely followed the consultations that the former President of the Conference on Disarmament, Ambassador Jürg Streuli, held on the Presidential proposal. I also followed the work of the six Presidents on the same matter. A series of meetings were held with a large number of Ambassadors of member States. Allow me to summarize the results of these activities as set forth in the Presidential report on part 3 of the 2007 session, which was distributed to you today by the secretariat. My evaluation of the results consists of three points. The first point is that a wide range of delegations expressed their support for the Presidential proposal based on the three annexed documents, L.1 CRP.5 and CRP.6. Although some delegations expressed reservations about certain elements of the proposal, they said that they were willing to join the consensus on the proposal. Others expressed the view that more work and consultations were needed to reach a consensus. The second point is that the Conference on Disarmament has achieved substantial progress by conducting important thematic debates on all agenda items. However, it has not yet been able to reach a consensus on a programme of work. As to the third point, momentum has been created to end the long-standing impasse at the Conference on Disarmament and efforts to reach an agreement must be continued. This is the summary of the three points contained in the Presidential report on part 3 of the 2007 session. I should now like to open the floor to any delegations that wish to make a statement at today's meeting. I have no speakers on my list. Does any delegation wish to take the floor? The Ambassador of Sweden. You have the floor.

Ms. BORSIIN BONNIER (Sweden): Mr. President, I thank you very much, and initially, let me warmly welcome you on the assumption of the Chair of this august body. Although I will be leaving Geneva, I assure you that my delegation will continue to do its utmost to support you in the important tasks ahead. I also thank you warmly for your initial kind remarks on my person.

This is my last plenary meeting, and therefore, in line with the traditions of the CD, I will conclude with a few personal remarks.

Mr. President, for altogether nine years, as you noted, I have entered this Council chamber with hope and with expectations. I have seen this room being the anchor of sincere multilateral work to bring about a more secure world. At times the Conference on Disarmament has even been the centre of gravity for the international community in Geneva. I have seen it vibrating with energy, bold ideas, creative intellect focused on problem-solving and a determination to make a difference and to turn the tide. Important pieces of international law have been negotiated here; compliance with vital norms has been discussed and defended with vigour and conviction. But I have also seen the opposite: an anaemic stalemate with delegations resorting to recitals of ceremonious mantras, covering up the traces of their own passivity with useless finger-pointing and blame games, hiding behind the commas of the rules of procedure and shamelessly abusing the consensus rule to abort any attempt to seriously tackle difficult or sensitive issues - in effect taking the whole multilateral approach to disarmament and arms control hostage to their own particular perceptions, preferences or dictates. But still, I continue to enter this room with hope and expectations.

The certainties of yesterday are gone. Security perceptions, threats and challenges are in a state of flux. New dangers are emerging, adding to the burden of the old ones. But the debate of old versus new threats is a meaningless one. Unless we try to face both, neither will be dealt with. In the nuclear field we see more brinkmanship than statesmanship. Globalization works to make complex weapon technologies widely available. Military expenses have risen to well beyond a trillion United States dollars. The illusion of an impenetrable defence is taking new forms. Our space assets with their huge scientific and economic potentials are not secure. Cyber-wars are no longer just science fiction, but can disrupt our societies on a massive scale. The overall balance between global security problems solved and those unsolved is, I believe, negative.

The uncertainties of tomorrow are, however - and let us not forget - the opportunities of today. Reluctantly or enthusiastically we will have to accept that global problems in a time of galloping globalization cannot be solved unilaterally, bilaterally or even in small circles of like-minded nations. Global security must be built globally. Effective multilateralism is both necessary and possible. It means that the legitimate security concerns of all States must be acknowledged. It means seizing opportunities when they arise. It means reconsidering positions that yield no results. And it means a readiness to give and take. Global security can never be a zero-sum game.

Just as the rule of law is a fundamental cornerstone in domestic affairs, so it must also be in international affairs. Without it we will be on the slippery slope towards anarchy and the use of force. Laws are sometimes broken, but this does not make them less essential. Quite the

(Ms. Borsiin Bonnier, Sweden)

opposite. It reinforces the need to uphold and strengthen them. This is particularly important in the area of international security relations. But there are serious lacunae, both as regards the laws themselves and our ability to see them complied with.

We do have a forum where we can approach all these difficult realities together. It is called the Conference on Disarmament. Rejecting the use of the CD is irresponsible. Those blocking the potentials of this body should understand that they are inflicting real damage not only to the security of others, to our common security, but in the long run also to their own.

Since the beginning of this year I have had the privilege of working as one of the P-6. This Presidential sextet has jointly and consistently tried to put the CD back to work, tried to move us from talk shop to workshop, tried to make us take on the challenges of our time. And by now, most delegations stand ready to try. We have come very close to begin a beginning. As I am now leaving, I am sorry not to be with you when you cross the last bridge. Because cross it you will. There is no other way.

Now there remains for me only to express my many and sincere thanks: to the Secretary-General for his support, wisdom and friendship, always at our side. To my fellow P-6 colleagues and our coordinators for their remarkable team spirit and seriousness of purpose. To my colleagues, the CD Ambassadors and their delegations for their many expressions of support and friendship. To everyone in the secretariat who keeps toiling for us in good spirits and solidarity. To the interpreters who try to make sense of our sometimes incomprehensible utterings in all languages. And to the representatives of civil society who with great patience and frustration stay engaged. Thank you all.

When I leave this Council chamber today I will do so as I have always entered it - with hope and expectations.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in Arabic): I thank the Ambassador of Sweden for her kind wishes addressed to the Conference, and we in turn wish her every success. The delegation of France has asked for the floor. You have the floor, Madam.

Ms. RAMIS-PLUM (France) (spoke in French): I simply wished to raise a point of a technical or even presentational nature in the draft decision which is attached to the report on the third part of our session. I think there is simply a small presentational matter which, in the opinion of my delegation, needs to be rectified. The body of decision L.1 has been separated presentationally from the complementary Presidential statement. We consider that, in the original version of this document these two elements which from a whole were together and should remain together, as they were in the text of decision L.1 which has been distributed until now.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in Arabic): I thank the representative of France. We shall discuss this matter with the secretariat. Does any delegation wish to make a statement? I do not see any.

(The President)

Concerning next week's work, the secretariat, later this afternoon, will place the draft report on the 2007 session in the members' pigeonholes. For ease of access, the secretariat will also send out an electronic copy, in PDF format, to the regional coordinators, who can then distribute the document to the members of their respective groups.

Next week, i.e. on Tuesday 4 September 2007, I will proceed with the first reading. As usual, this will be done at an informal meeting right after the formal plenary, which will start at 10 a.m. in this room.

Before bringing this morning's work to a close I wish to make some comments on the final report. First, I should like to thank my colleagues the Ambassadors of the G-6 for their strong support for this draft report. I also wish to thank the secretariat for its outstanding efforts which helped us to complete this draft on time for it to be translated into all the United Nations official languages.

As I have already said, the G-6 chairpersons helped us to prepare this report and supported it once it had been completed. The report reflects the consensus in the group. We all hope that this consensus will lead to a consensus within the Conference, especially given that the G-6 represents a wide cross section of the Conference membership. We look forward to your cooperation in adopting this report, which we endeavoured to ensure would contain an objective and impartial account of the proceedings at this year's Conference. We did our utmost to take account of the concerns of all the members, which was not an easy task. The President hopes that when the draft text is discussed next Tuesday, it will enjoy the support of you all, that you will take account of these comments, and show the necessary flexibility for its adoption. Thank you for your understanding.

Before closing the meeting, does any delegation wish to take the floor? I see none. I declare this meeting adjourned.

The meeting rose at 10.45 a.m.