

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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FINAL RECORD OF THE FIVE HUNDRED AND FIFTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 20 April 1989, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Simon Bullut (Kenya)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 505th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

The Conference continues today its further consideration of outstanding matters. However, in conformity with rule 30 of its rules of procedure, any member wishing to do so may raise any subject relevant to the work of the Conference.

As announced at our last plenary meeting, I intend to take up today, for decision, the request received from Oman to participate in the work of the Conference. We shall do so once we listen to the speaker who will address the plenary.

I have on my list of speakers for today the representative of Morocco. I now give the floor to Ambassador Benhima.

Mr. BENHIMA (Morocco) (translated from French): Thank you, Mr. President. The delegation of the Kingdom of Morocco welcomes your assumption of the presidency of the Conference for this last month of our spring session. It wishes to congratulate you as the representative of a friendly country and a distinguished son of Africa. I would also like to associate myself with the colleagues who have spoken before me in wishing a warm welcome to Mr. Ait-Chaalal, the Ambassador of Algeria, whom we have known for some 20 years. I am convinced that the experience he has acquired during a long and brilliant diplomatic career, added to his outstanding personal qualities, will make a valuable contribution to the work of the Conference.

My delegation intends to deal today with two aspects of nuclear disarmament because of their very close connection and the absence of any negotiations dealing with them. With regard to the cessation of the nuclear arms race my delegation wonders whether, for this priority subject in our work, 1989 will be identical to preceding years, which were characterized by the paralysis that is afflicting the Conference and prevents it from dealing resolutely with the problem of the nuclear arms race, the most threatening phenomenon for mankind. This question is justified by the broadly shared misgivings that exist in this Conference itself. The structural void that has existed for more than a decade on this agenda item prompts us to think deeply about the existing situation.

Several years ago, the absence of consensus on the establishment of a subsidiary body could be justified because of the distrust and tension that still characterized East-West relations. Today the dialogue between the United States and the USSR that is being consolidated, the pursuit of consultations between the two big blocs and the commencement of political settlements of regional conflicts are welcome developments that should normally bring with them a political willingness to finally commence negotiations with a view to liberating our globe from the most awful of threats, that represented by the nuclear arms race. This is an objective which the international community yearns to achieve, having become keenly aware of the threat presented by the nuclear peril for the survival of mankind and the continuation of civilization. Of course, the bilateral agreements

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concluded between the United States and the Soviet Union should be welcomed, but it will be acknowledged that these agreements are partial and insufficient because they do not halt the build-up of nuclear arms, whose proliferation and refinement do not reassure us.

In 1945, just one country, the United States, had nuclear technology. Today, according to the 1988 edition of the yearbook World Armaments and Disarmament published by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, SIPRI, there are nine countries that have the capacity to produce nuclear weapons, to which we have to add the five major nuclear Powers. In comparison with the state of affairs at the beginning, the nuclear stockpiles counted in 1988 were estimated at 55,000 nuclear bombs. This frightening figure shows that the arms race has led to major qualitative changes, as may be seen in the development of neutron weapons, electromagnetic pulse weapons or x-ray lasers. Moreover, according to a study prepared by the United Nations, nuclear technology has made it possible to produce bombs capable of releasing in a fraction of a second as much energy as has been released by all the conventional bombs during all the wars in history. In parallel to this terrifying strike force, new systems of nuclear weapons are notable for greater mobility and increased miniaturization, which makes them hard to check and locate. From this highly instructive comparison between the dawn of the nuclear era and the present stage of development of these weapons, a striking fact emerges: the danger engendered by nuclear weapons has continuously increased over the years. It is growing as the arms race continues. Hence the logical conclusion that the nuclear spectre which appeared with the emergence of this armoury of weapons will disappear only when these weapons have been totally eliminated.

To emphasize such a truth might seem paradoxical at a time when the two major Powers are in the process of destroying their short-range and intermediate-range missiles and when their experts are negotiating a 50 per cent reduction in their strategic stockpiles. Our fervent wish for the cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament, which we share with the entire international community, is not at all in contradiction with bilateral negotiations. Quite the contrary - the conclusion of the INF agreements was, for all of us, a great source of satisfaction. Likewise, we welcomed the commencement of talks on strategic weapons. These are unprecedented measures that follow the same lines as the objective the United Nations has set itself since its inception. Of course, the ground that has been covered as a result of the INF, and the progress which we very much hope will follow as a result of START, bring us closer to our goal, but without our being able to achieve it. We still have a very long way to go to attain our shared objective of general and complete disarmament. The INF agreements have led to the destruction of a nuclear-weapon system. But they have not put an end to the qualitative improvement of nuclear weapons, nor even banned the development of new systems of such weapons. Moreover, according to the signatories themselves, these agreements on short-range and medium-range missiles cover only 4 per cent of the world nuclear stockpile.

With regard to future agreements for 50 per cent reductions in the strategic stockpiles of the two major Powers, the SIPRI Yearbook 1988 shows that they will cover only 24,000 nuclear warheads, that is, barely 40 per cent

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of the existing nuclear stockpile. These figures give rise to two questions. What about the remaining stockpiles - not only those belonging to the two major Powers, but also those belonging to the other nuclear Powers? The same question also arises with regard to those not officially recognized nuclear weapons that are in the possession of the other countries that are not members of the club of the five nuclear Powers. In the view of my delegation, the efforts to be followed in seeking replies to these two questions should start with our Conference.

Some 10 years ago, this body was designated unanimously by the international community as the sole multilateral negotiating body for disarmament. Its mandate was defined in the Final Document adopted by consensus by the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. In pride of place among the high-priority subjects with which it was entrusted stand the issue of nuclear disarmament. In this regard paragraph 50 of the Final Document stipulates:

"The achievement of nuclear disarmament will require urgent negotiation of agreements at appropriate stages and with adequate measures of verification satisfactory to the States concerned for:

"(a) Cessation of the qualitative improvement and development of nuclear-weapon systems:

"(b) Cessation the production of all types of nuclear weapons and their means of delivery, and of the production of fissionable material for weapons purposes;

"(c) A comprehensive, phased programme with agreed time frames, whenever feasible, for progressive and balanced reduction of stockpiles of nuclear weapons and their means of delivery, leading to their ultimate and complete elimination at the earliest possible time."

Eleven years after its adoption by consensus, we are still waiting for the implementation of this famous paragraph. This is why we cannot conceal our deep regret at the absence of any consensus on the very principle of the establishment of an ad hoc committee entrusted with item 2 of our agenda. In order to move out of this deadlock, the Conference innovated three years ago when it decided to examine the question of the cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament in informal meetings of the plenary. My delegation participated in those meetings, although it was sceptical about such a procedure, which we considered futile because it was not in conformity with the negotiating mandate of the Conference. This informal "structured" debate nevertheless allowed us to clarify questions and positions relating to the various aspects of the problem of cessation of the arms race. The purpose of this candid exchange of views in the view of the Group of 21 (Non-aligned and Neutrals), was to prepare the ground for subsequent negotiations. That did not happen, because after three sessions of informal discussions, the negotiations so ardently wished for still remain problematical, not to say impossible.

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In order that one of the most urgent and important items on our agenda should not be condemned indefinitely to the shackles of informal deliberations and in order that it should not be consigned to oblivion, my delegation would like to appeal to the reason of all the member countries of this Conference to display responsibility and political sense in order to provide it with a subsidiary body with an appropriate mandate. In enabling such a body to be established, the members of this Conference will not only be discharging the commitments they unanimously entered into in the Final Document of 1978, but they will also be responding to the appeal made by the United Nations General Assembly in resolution 43/78 E, the third paragraph of which "again requests the Conference on Disarmament to establish an ad hoc committee at the beginning of its 1989 session to elaborate on paragraph 50 of the Final Document". Finally, a consensus on the establishment of an ad hoc committee on item 2 would contribute to the success of the forthcoming review conference on the non-proliferation Treaty, which is scheduled for next year. Article VI of the Treaty stipulates that "each of the Parties to the Treaty undertakes to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date".

It should be remembered in this context that at the last NPT review conference in 1985 regret was expressed at the failure to implement this article. That is why the Final Declaration made an appeal in which it urged the Conference on Disarmament "as appropriate, to proceed to early multilateral negotiations on nuclear disarmament in pursuance of paragraph 50 of the Final Document". It is time for the Conference to respond to the appeals and exhortations addressed to it from all quarters and finally discharge the function that was entrusted to it by the entire international community. Just as it is imperative for it to draw on the dynamics of the negotiation and the favourable international climate that is now taking shape. Cessation of the arms race is not a utopia. It is an objective that our Conference can attain. Nuclear disarmament must not remain a taboo subject for our Conference. No effort should be spared to make our Conference play the role that rightly falls to it in parallel with the bilateral negotiations. A vital complementary role without which general and internationally verifiable nuclear disarmament will remain a pipe dream.

The prevention of nuclear war, which is closely connected with the nuclear problem, is the subject of intensive debate in the Conference. The detailed examination of this subject is a first reaction to the solemn warning made by the General Assembly in the Final Document of its tenth special session devoted to disarmament held in 1978. Paragraph 18 of the document states that "removing the threat of a world war - a nuclear war - is the most acute and urgent task of the present day". It is unanimously recognized that the appearance of nuclear weapons in theatres of operations and in military strategies has radically transformed war. Because of their destructive power and their long-term consequences, these weapons shattered the barriers of what was once called limited warfare. It is undeniable that because of their very nature, nuclear war is never limited. Worse still - once it has been unleashed, this type of war knows no boundaries and goes beyond any predetermined limits. Together with considerable loss of human life, ecology as well as universal civilization are exposed to annihilation. In this

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context, I would like to quote the late Olof Palme, the former Prime Minister of Sweden. In his address to the international Colloquium on nuclear war, nuclear proliferation and their consequences organized by the Groupe de Bellerive in 1985, Palme said: "Leaders in the nuclear-weapon States have to face the fact that a nuclear war would have devastating effects all over the world, including on the attacking party."

I think that this concise phrase contains all the images of the nuclear apocalypse, which we will content ourselves with summing up by mentioning only "nuclear winter, epidemics on an unprecedented scale, serious damage to the environment and the dislocation of the world economy". That suffices to assess the extent of the nuclear threat. Consequently, the prevention of such a cataclysm has become a universal concern. In this way the United Nations General Assembly has forcefully stated in many resolutions that the prevention of nuclear war and the reduction of nuclear risks are matters of the highest priority which are of vital interest for all the peoples of the world. However, the most vivid acknowledgement of the danger of nuclear war emanated four years ago from the leaders of the two major Powers themselves. The leaders of these two countries, which possess more than 95 per cent of the world's nuclear arsenal, recognized in their Geneva Declaration in November 1985 that "a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought". Consequently, and in order that the significance of such a declaration should not be restricted exclusively to its historical dimension, the international community is entitled to demand that the proper follow-up action should be taken.

To that end there is no alternative other than the need to urgently negotiate preventive measures to exclude for ever the use of nuclear weapons and the unleashing of a nuclear war. There is no doubt that the responsibility for negotiating all the measures that will avert a nuclear war falls in the first place on the nuclear-weapon States. Nevertheless, because of the catastrophic consequences that such a war would have for the whole of mankind, the challenge is too important to be left solely in the hands of the nuclear-weapon States. The survival of mankind is the duty of all; and this duty gives rise to our collective obligation to contribute to attaining this goal by holding comprehensive negotiations in order to remove the risk of nuclear war for ever. Such negotiations can only take place in a multilateral body. The Conference on Disarmament is one such body. It is in fact the sole organ whose vocation lies in the negotiation of measures and agreements in the sphere of disarmament. Unfortunately, and for obvious reasons, the Conference has not been able to discharge the mission that has been entrusted to it in this specific area of disarmament. Each year, endeavours undertaken by numerous delegations, and more particularly by the Group of 21, have come to grief because of the opposition to the establishment of a subsidiary body on this item. Our disappointment at the fact that it is impossible for the Conference to deal with this subject as it should is even greater because the mandate put forward by the Group of 21 was very modest. The terms of document CD/515/Rev.4, which is still valid, are well thought-out and balanced, since they take into account the views of the other groups. It should be recalled in this connection that the first paragraph of resolution 43/78 F of the last session of the General Assembly "notes with regret that, despite the fact that the Conference on Disarmament has discussed

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the question of the prevention of nuclear war for several years, it has been unable even to establish a subsidiary body to consider appropriate and practical measures to prevent it".

The failures by our Group over these four years to give item 3 of our agenda a subsidiary body with an appropriate mandate do not discourage us at all. Nor at any moment have these failures modified or weakened our commitment to do everything to devise measures to prevent a nuclear war. Quite to the contrary, these failures have only strengthened our great determination to persevere along this path with the resolute hope that the rightfulness of the objective will finally overcome the reluctance that is preventing the setting up of this ad hoc committee that we most ardently want to establish. The principles behind our efforts for effective action to be taken to prevent a nuclear war are not specific to a given country or exclusive to a given group. These are principles that derive their force from the right of everyone to life, a right which was so brilliantly defended before this Conference by President Raúl Alfonsín of Argentina two years ago. Moreover, this right to life acquires its noble significance when we link it with our collective obligation to guarantee future generations a life free of the spectre of nuclear war. To achieve it, there is no alternative other than that already stipulated in paragraph 3 of resolution 43/78 F, which provides - and I should like to conclude with this quotation:

"Again requests the Conference on Disarmament to undertake, as a matter of the highest priority, negotiations with a view to achieving agreement on appropriate and practical measures that could be negotiated and adapted individually for the prevention of nuclear war and to establish for that purpose an ad hoc committee on the subject at the beginning of its 1989 session".

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Morocco for his statement and for the kind words he addressed to me. That concludes my list of speakers for today. Does any other member wish to take the floor? I see none.

I propose that we take up now the draft decision contained in document CD/WP.363, relating to a request by Oman to participate in the work of the Conference. No objection has been raised to the request and, accordingly, we may make an exception and consider it directly in plenary. If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Conference adopts the draft decision.

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: I now turn to the timetable of meetings to be held by the Conference and its subsidiary bodies during the coming week, up to 27 April, which is the closing date of the first part of the annual session. As usual, the timetable has been prepared by the secretariat in consultation with the chairmen of subsidiary bodies. It is indicative and subject to change, if the need arises. On this understanding, I put before the Conference, for decision, the timetable for next week. If there is no objection, I shall take it that the Conference adopts the timetable.

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: I should like to inform you that the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Peru, His Excellency Guillermo Larco Cox, will be our first speaker at our next plenary meeting on Tuesday, 25 April. As usual, your co-operation in enabling us to start that meeting on time will be appreciated.

The secretariat has been informed that, because of arrangements relating to the Iran-Iraq ministerial talks, the Conference delegations' pigeon-holes on the first floor are being placed on the third floor opposite the delegates' lounge.

I have been requested to announce that the Group of 21 will hold a meeting in this conference room immediately after the plenary.

I shall now adjourn this plenary meeting. The next plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament will be held on Tuesday, 25 April at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 10.40 a.m.