

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE ONE THOUSAND ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-SECOND PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 5 February 2009, at 10.10 a.m.

President: Mr. Le Hoai TRUNG (Viet Nam)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 1122nd plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

First of all, on behalf of the Conference, I would like to extend the warmest welcome to Ambassador Othman Hashim of Malaysia, Viet Nam's neighbouring country, and also a fellow member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. On behalf of the Conference, I would like to assure him of the fullest cooperation and wish him every success in his tasks.

I have the following speakers for today's plenary meeting. There are on the list the distinguished Ambassadors of Malaysia and the United Kingdom.

I now give the floor to Ambassador Othman Hashim of Malaysia.

Mr. HASHIM (Malaysia): Mr. President, thank you very much for the kind words and warm welcome. As this is the first time that my delegation is taking the floor, I wish to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. It is indeed an honour to see a fellow ASEAN country presiding over the work of the Conference. My delegation deeply appreciates the sincere efforts and consultations that your delegation has undertaken so far. We wish to assure you and your fellow 2009 Presidents of our cooperation and support in their endeavours to move the Conference forward and begin its substantive work.

Through you, we would also like to record Malaysia's appreciation to the 2008 CD Presidents, for their excellent efforts in guiding the work of the Conference. We also congratulate the distinguished Ambassadors who have been appointed by you to serve as Coordinators of the seven agenda items and look forward to working with them. My delegation also wishes to associate itself with the statement made on behalf of the Group of 21 earlier this session.

It has been more than 10 years since the last time that the CD engaged in substantive work. The difficulty we face in realizing the role of the CD and fulfilling its agenda has only come back to haunt us, with newly emerging security threats as seen these recent years. The world today is no safer than that envisaged by our predecessors. We have to strengthen our resolve and work towards reinvigorating the multilateral process in pursuing the aims of bringing this Conference back to substantive work. It is my delegation's sincere hope that at this year's session, the Conference will be able to find consensus on a programme of work.

Malaysia is greatly appreciative of the developmental and continuing role that the P6 mechanism has played since its establishment. We are encouraged by the intensive consultations within the Conference and by the Presidents, which have brought to light several proposals: in 2007, document L.1 and in 2008, document CD/1840. Unfortunately, despite all this, the CD has not been able to reach a consensus on a programme of work. This inability to forge a compromise is a setback in spite of the professed common goals of all the members of this Conference. Accordingly, we urge that continued efforts be made to accommodate the concerns to arrive at a consensus, based on the rules of procedure. The legitimate concerns of States members of the CD should be given the serious consideration they deserve. Such understanding would allow us to move on and focus our efforts on substantive work.

(Mr. Hashim, Malaysia)

Document CD/1840 represents a “fusion” of the 2007 Presidents’ proposal (documents L.1, CRP.5 and CRP.6). Similar to L.1, my delegation is of the view that CD/1840 falls short of our expectations to address other core issues in a balanced and comprehensive manner. CD/1840 highlights that the issue of FMCT is “ripe” for negotiations. Malaysia has nonetheless demonstrated its flexibility and readiness to work closely with members of the Conference by joining the momentum built up behind CD/1840, in the hope that this could bring the CD back to its substantive work. We call upon others also to demonstrate such flexibility, above all the political will needed, for the time to act is now. We recall the assurances of the 2008 Presidents that the draft decision was not cast in stone and that the Presidents were committed to consult delegations, and if necessary, make amendments to CD/1840. We hope that this approach will be continued as it could be the necessary prescription needed to find consensus - the possible breakthrough that the CD has been waiting for.

Whilst nuclear disarmament remains our highest priority, and pending negotiations on a nuclear weapons convention, the FMCT, similar to the CTBT, remains one of the next essential steps towards preventing the proliferation of nuclear material, eventually leading towards the attainment of genuine nuclear disarmament. We hope that other core issues, namely, nuclear disarmament, negative security assurances and the prevention of an arms race in Outer Space, of equal importance, will be addressed consequently in the CD.

As the Conference is well aware, last year Malaysia formally joined the group of the lead sponsors of the resolution “Decreasing the operational readiness of nuclear weapons systems”. Malaysia, committed and strongly supportive of the objectives of the resolution, joined the group with the conviction that such an initiative, while modest in approach, would nonetheless contribute incrementally to the process of non-proliferation and disarmament. The focus of the resolution calls for “further practical steps to decrease the operational readiness of nuclear weapons systems”. It is a positive disarmament step which Malaysia strongly endorses. De-alerting represents a renewed effort to highlight a practical disarmament aspect, which is implementable, that could help reduce the risk of nuclear war and enhance the security of all States. Decreasing the operational readiness of nuclear weapons would also further promote the implementation of negotiated arms control treaties by which a strengthened de-alerting approach could impact on the policies of the use of nuclear weapons in combat, and their delivery systems. This we believe is a small step, however much needed in moving forward the disarmament agenda.

The challenge of nuclear disarmament is a challenge which the CD was set to address. The CD must be creative, innovative and able to adapt to a dynamic and ever-changing global environment. For this purpose, it would also be necessary for us to have a close look at our methodology of work. We will have to assess the effectiveness of existing mechanisms and to revitalize them, and if necessary, create new ones. In this regard, we call upon the CD to open its doors and engage with non-governmental organizations and civil society. The disarmament community has benefited a lot through the engagement with civil society, as evident in the case of landmines, small arms and light weapons and other arms control treaties. The CD would benefit from the valuable insights, views, data and research that civil society has. It may be the

(Mr. Hashim, Malaysia)

greatly needed impetus that the CD needs to move forward and fulfil the role it was created for. We hope for further enriched discussions that would pave the way for the further participation of NGOs and civil society in the sessions ahead.

The CD is the world's sole multilateral disarmament treaty negotiating body. As members of the CD, we need to provide effective leadership, sound and pragmatic ideas, fresh initiatives and approaches, as well as new strategies, in order to ensure that the CD serves its purpose.

In concluding, let me assure you of my delegation's readiness to work with you, Mr. President, and other members of the Conference with a view to achieving a positive and successful outcome to the session of the Conference on Disarmament. As this is also the first time for me at the CD, I look forward to working closely with you, other fellow colleagues, the members of the Secretariat as well as the committed members of civil society that observe us from the gallery.

The PRESIDENT: I would like to thank the distinguished Ambassador of Malaysia for his important statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of the United Kingdom, Ambassador John Duncan.

Mr. DUNCAN (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland): Mr. President, since this is the first time I take the floor, let me offer my congratulations, not only on your appointment, but on the way you have conducted the presidency under your tenure. You and the other P6 presidencies can count on the support of my delegation in taking forward our work.

Yesterday was a very busy day for United Kingdom Foreign Office Ministers with the public launch of a policy information paper, entitled "Lifting the Nuclear Shadow", creating the conditions for abolishing nuclear weapons. This paper was distributed to all colleagues in hard copy yesterday afternoon, and is available on the Foreign Office website in electronic form, if that would be preferable for people. It is a paper aimed at the public, and therefore, it is a paper which has a lot of straight talking. There should, however, be no surprises. The fact that it is not using diplomatic language is no doubt a good thing, perhaps long overdue. Nuclear weapons and their abolition is an issue too important for endless semantic debate. The paper covers the waterfront, the role of the European Union, the IAEA, the United Nations and the need for institutional reform. It also covers at some length the arguments about NSAs, about FMCT, about the Middle East nuclear-weapon-free zone, about theatre nuclear forces, and also proliferation concerns. As I say, there is some straight talking, but none of these issues should be a surprise, and the views of the United Kingdom are very well known. The paper underlines that this is a collective endeavour. The issues are not black and white. There is no simple solution. It seeks to outline some conditions for progress. It does not change statements made here or in other forums, by myself or by other Ambassadors of the United Kingdom. As I say, it is a compendium in simple language.

Also yesterday, the Foreign Office Minister, Mr. Rammell, gave evidence to the United Kingdom Foreign Affairs Committee. Some of you met members of that Committee in Geneva during their recent visit. This is a much more detailed discussion, and the report of that will be available on the House of Commons website in a few days' time.

(Mr. Duncan, United Kingdom)

The United Kingdom is committed to moving forward towards a world free of nuclear weapons. We do not underestimate the difficulties. Indeed, the report describes this as a “massive diplomatic challenge”. But as I have said, we see it as a shared and collective ambition. It is the responsibility of those possessing nuclear weapons to respond to the concerns of those who do not. And equally, it is the responsibility of those whose civil programmes have raised questions to respond to those concerns.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador John Duncan for the statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I believe that the document that he has introduced is an important one, and we hope that it will contribute to the creation of better, more favourable conditions for the cause of disarmament and also for the work of the Conference.

I have no more speakers on the list, so I would like to know whether any delegation wishes to take the floor at this stage. That does not seem to be the case, so I would like to advise you that with respect to next week’s activities as outlined in the organizational framework contained in document CD/WP.553, the Conference will start the informal deliberations on the first four substantive agenda items under the guidance of the respective Coordinators. I am extremely grateful for the assurance by the Regional Coordinators of the fullest cooperation of the member States.

Regarding the presence of dignitaries who wish to address the Conference on days where the Conference is scheduled to have formal discussions on the agenda items, the Secretariat has informed me that in line with past practice a formal plenary will be scheduled on those occasions to allow the dignitaries to deliver statements, after which the Conference will revert to an informal setting to continue the work on the agenda items.

This concludes our business for today.

The next plenary meeting will be held on Thursday, 12 February, at 10 a.m., in this Chamber.

The meeting rose at 10.30 a.m.