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# Conference on Disarmament

16 February 2010

English

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## Final record of the one thousand one hundred and sixty-ninth plenary meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 16 February 2010, at 10.15 a.m.

*President:* Mr. Mikhail Khvostov..... (Belarus)

**The President** (*spoke in Russian*): I declare open the 1169th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

Distinguished colleagues, yesterday a train crash occurred in Belgium, resulting in loss of life. On behalf of the Conference on Disarmament, I should like to express our sympathy to the delegation of Belgium and offer our sincerest condolences to the families of those who died.

In accordance with established practice, statements in plenary meetings can be made on any subject related to the Conference on Disarmament. The list of speakers is open, and I have the pleasure now to give the floor to the First Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus, His Excellency Mr. Igor Petrishenko.

Excellency, you have the floor.

**Mr. Petrishenko** (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): Distinguished Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, your excellencies, ladies and gentlemen. Allow me to thank the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Sergei Ordzhonikidze, as well as the previous President, Ambassador Abdul Hannan of Bangladesh, for their invitation to participate in the work of the Conference on Disarmament in 2010.

International security, arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament have always constituted one of the key priorities of Belarusian foreign policy.

The Republic of Belarus has made a significant contribution to the building of a nuclear-free world by renouncing possession of its existing arsenal of nuclear weapons and acceding to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) as a non-nuclear State. Having completely withdrawn all nuclear weapons from its territory by the end of 1996, Belarus has fully complied with its obligations under the Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF Treaty) and the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START).

Belarus made an equally important contribution to strengthening security throughout Europe and enhancing transparency and predictability in the region by reducing the size of its armed forces and conventional weapons. In the early 1990s, Belarus had an army of more than a quarter of a million troops. As a result of a well-planned structural reform, the size of the Belarusian army has been reduced to its current strength of 50,000.

Under the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty, Belarus eliminated more than 1,700 combat tanks, 1,300 armoured combat vehicles and 130 combat aircraft, representing approximately 10 per cent of the weapons and military equipment eliminated by all 30 States parties to the Treaty.

I would emphasize that Belarus made these efforts to eliminate weapons and reduce the size of its armed forces in difficult economic circumstances which resulted from the break-up of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and were exacerbated by the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster.

I remind the distinguished Conference of these facts and figures simply to confirm the well-known adage that the political will of States is a precondition for the resolution of all disarmament issues. Negotiations are merely a tool to that end.

We urge the States members of the Conference to support the positive momentum that is building in the Conference's work, to display political will and adopt the programme of work based on document CD/1864, and also to begin negotiations for the conclusion of a treaty to prohibit the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices (Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT)) without delay. We believe that all existing issues relating to the content and scope of the future treaty should be resolved in the context of the negotiation process. In our view, the adoption of FMCT will constitute an important landmark in the effort to enhance international security and disarmament. The

existence of such a treaty will make it possible for the international community to initiate a dialogue on a total ban on nuclear weapons, which must be seen as a realistic medium-term goal.

We eagerly welcome the signs of growing interest in nuclear disarmament issues shown by States and in international forums. This is a case in which “climate change” is clearly a blessing. We hope that this interest will be translated into practical decisions.

We are satisfied with the efforts of the Russian Federation and United States of America to draft and swiftly conclude a new legally binding treaty on measures for the further reduction of strategic offensive arms. We hope that the negotiations will be finalized in the near future.

At the same time, we are convinced that such steps should not only lead to the elimination of obsolete nuclear warheads and launch vehicles, but also establish commitments to stop further modernization of nuclear weapons and renounce reliance on nuclear weapons. We would like to see all nuclear Powers take the “Global Zero Nuclear Initiative” seriously.

Guarantees of the non-use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear States parties to the NPT constitute another issue that remains relevant. The provision of unambiguous security assurances is essential to ensuring trust and predictability in international relations and could help to strengthen the NPT-based nuclear non-proliferation regime. In this connection, we particularly welcome the Joint Statement by the Russian Federation and the United States of America concerning the expiration of the START Treaty, in which it was confirmed in particular that the security assurances recorded in the 1994 Budapest Memorandum would continue to remain in effect after 4 December 2009. We intend to continue working to obtain legally binding assurances that could take the form of an international instrument in accordance with the “Principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament” adopted at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the NPT.

Another priority item on the agenda of the Conference is Prevention of an arms race in outer space. Here, too, the position of Belarus is clear. Given that there are certain gaps in existing space law, further guarantees for the peaceful use of outer space are essential. In this connection, we welcome the draft Treaty on the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space and of the threat or use of force against outer space objects (PPWT) submitted to the Conference for consideration by the Russian Federation and China. As advocates of a preventive approach, we believe that the international community should take all possible measures to finalize the proposed treaty before the deployment of weapons in outer space becomes a reality.

Another key item on the agenda of the Conference is “New types of weapons of mass destruction and new systems of such weapons; radiological weapons”. The corresponding General Assembly resolution, adopted since 1996 at the initiative of Belarus, requests the Conference to keep the matter with a view to making recommendations on undertaking specific negotiations on identified types of such weapons. As sponsors of this resolution, we believe it imperative that the emergence of new types of weapons of mass destruction with characteristics comparable in destructive potential to those already in existence be prevented. We are convinced that the Conference is the most suitable forum for further discussion of this issue.

The last decade was in many respects a “lost decade” for disarmament. We also witnessed dangerous backsliding which upset the existing system of international security. The geography of military conflicts spread. Aggregate expenditure on weapons exceeded \$1 trillion.

Given this situation, we must undertake substantive work to strengthen existing legal instruments and devise new ones in the area of international security and disarmament, rather than claim that existing mechanisms are weak, deliberately downplaying them or rendering them totally ineffective. We continue to believe that security is indivisible. Unfortunately, this principle has yet to be put into practice. Attempts by individual States or groups of States to enhance their own security at the expense of the security of others has harmed the interests of all members of the international community.

The Republic of Belarus considers that universal multilateral agreements in the field of disarmament are uncontested tools that can actually provide common rules of conduct for all States without exception. It is only with this understanding that we can prevent the devaluation of such basic concepts as “peace”, “stability” and “well-being” and make our world a more secure place in which to live.

The forthcoming NPT Review Conference will offer a unique opportunity for testing the seriousness of our intentions. We are convinced that all States parties to the Treaty are prepared to engage in constructive work during this forum and to take decisions aimed at strengthening the NPT.

The Republic of Belarus, having consistently demonstrated in practice its adherence to the policy of comprehensive disarmament, intends to continue to play an active part in this process. We are ready for fruitful, results-oriented work to that end, with the active cooperation of all States members of the Conference on Disarmament.

**The President** (*spoke in Russian*): I thank the First Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Belarus for his important statement, and on behalf of the Conference on Disarmament I should like to thank him most sincerely for his presence at our plenary meeting today.

I shall now suspend the meeting for a few minutes in order to escort Mr. Petrishenko out of the meeting room.

*The meeting was suspended at 10.25 a.m. and resumed at 10.30 a.m.*

**The President** (*spoke in Russian*): I should like to resume our plenary meeting. And at the beginning of the presidency of Belarus, I should like to make some introductory remarks.

First of all, I should like to thank the Ambassador of Bangladesh, His Excellency Mr. Abdul Hanan, for his efforts to ensure that the Conference engaged in substantive work. I should also like to stress that Belarus will continue these efforts during its presidency, and I am convinced that we will receive the support of delegations.

I should also like to offer sincere thanks to the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, His Excellency Mr. Sergei Ordzhonikidze, to his Deputy, Mr. Jarmo Sareva, and to all Secretariat staff for their assistance and support.

I should also like to briefly share with you at this stage my perspective on the status of work of the Conference.

Last week, on Thursday, we held an exhaustive exchange of views on a possible programme of work for the Conference. This undertaking gave us all food for thought, delegations and President alike, or should I say Presidents. Given the polarity of views expressed as to what might constitute a common basis for the Conference’s programme of work, I began bilateral consultations and also held meetings with regional groups in order to ascertain what changes might be acceptable to all parties, and whether such changes were admissible in principle.

Any proposal put before delegations must, in my view, be viable, valid and non-confrontational. I remain optimistic that the patience we are demonstrating at this stage will be rewarded and that we will be able to work our way towards a compromise that will allow us to move forward with the substantive work of our Conference.

I should also like to note that time is not on our side and that the Conference requires concrete results and achievements, as our Secretary-General reminded us so clearly last Thursday.

With that, I should like to conclude my short introductory remarks. Would any delegation like to take the floor?

Japan. Go ahead, Mr. Ambassador, you have the floor.

**Mr. Suda** (Japan): Mr. President, I have asked for the floor to express the great thanks of our delegation to the former President, Ambassador Hannan of Bangladesh, for his efforts and particularly for holding very useful informal discussions last Thursday. I would also like to congratulate Ambassador Khvostov on assuming this very important presidency. I hope the Conference on Disarmament can make significant progress under strong leadership. My delegation is ready to cooperate with and support your efforts in this regard.

**The President** (spoke in Russian): Thank you, Ambassador, for your statement and for the kind words addressed to the presidency. I, too, hope that we can move forward with the active participation of all delegations present in this room.

Does anyone else wish to take the floor?

If nobody else wishes to speak, then this concludes our business for today; the next formal plenary meeting of the Conference will be held in this same room on Thursday, 18 February, at 10 a.m.

*The meeting rose at 10.35 a.m.*