



General Assembly

Sixty-sixth session

First Committee

24th meeting

Monday, 31 October 2011, 10 a.m.
New York

Official Records

Chair: Mr. Viinanen (Finland)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda items 87 to 106 (continued)

Action on all draft resolutions and decisions submitted under disarmament and international security agenda items

The Chair: I shall now call on those representatives remaining on the list of speakers in explanation of vote or position on draft resolutions under cluster 4, "Conventional weapons", contained in informal paper 3. I now give the floor to the representative of Lebanon.

Mr. Ziadeh (Lebanon) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation would like to make the following statement to explain its abstention in the voting on draft resolution A/C.1/66/L.4, entitled "Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction". Our abstention in the voting on the draft resolution in no way contradicts our firm conviction of the importance of and our solid support for the lofty humane principles of the Ottawa Convention and its pivotal role in the alleviation of human suffering caused by anti-personnel mines.

Lebanon is not yet a party to the Ottawa Convention for legitimate reasons that are beyond its control and that are directly related to the country's national security and to Israel's continued occupation of part of its territory. Moreover, Israel itself is also not yet a party to the Convention.

It is worth mentioning that Lebanon has been the victim of the random and arbitrary use of anti-personnel mines, and the specific victims have been innocent civilians. That has been the case in southern Lebanon, where people are still suffering as a result of the mines that have been deployed by Israel in repeated acts of aggression against Lebanon for many decades now.

In that connection, my country's delegation would like to express its heartfelt appreciation to all friendly and brotherly countries, international organizations and non-governmental organizations that are contributing to mine clearance in southern Lebanon.

Mr. Rim Kap-soo (Republic of Korea): I would like to briefly explain our vote on draft resolution A/C.1/66/L.4.

As we have repeatedly expressed on many occasions, the Republic of Korea fully supports the spirit and objectives of the Ottawa Convention and of the draft resolution. We believe that that important Convention plays, and will continue to play, a central role in alleviating the human suffering caused by anti-personnel landmines. However, owing to the unique security concerns on the Korean peninsula, we are compelled to give priority to our own security and are unable to accede to the Convention at this point. Therefore, we have abstained in the voting on draft resolution A/C.1/66/L.4.

Nevertheless, we are no less concerned about the problem associated with anti-personnel landmines and

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are committed to mitigating the suffering they cause. The Republic of Korea is exercising tight control over anti-personnel landmines and is enforcing an indefinite extension of the moratorium on their export. We have responded regularly to the International Campaign to Ban Landmines and its questionnaire, providing all relevant information on our landmine process and activities. Furthermore, the Republic of Korea has joined the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and its amended Protocol II, under which we are actively participating in a range of discussions and activities aimed at ensuring only a limited and responsible use of landmines.

We also joined Protocol V on Explosive Remnants of War and are implementing all the relevant obligations. In addition, our Government has been making meaningful financial contributions to mine clearance and victim assistance through the relevant United Nations mine action programmes, including the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Action and the International Trust Fund for Demining and Mine Victims Assistance. The Republic of Korea will continue to contribute to the international efforts for mine clearance and victim assistance.

The Chair: We have thus concluded our action on cluster 4, “Conventional weapons”, and we will now turn to cluster 5, “Regional disarmament and security”.

We shall now take action on draft resolution A/C.1/66/L.23. I now give the floor to those representatives wishing to speak in explanation of vote or position before the voting.

Mr. Balé (Congo) (*spoke in French*): As I stated previously during the introduction of draft resolution A/C.1/66/L.23, I had hoped that the Committee would be able to adopt it without a vote. However, I had submitted a draft preambular paragraph that I would like to read out to the Committee now, in order to supplement the text. That paragraph would come after the tenth preambular paragraph, which reads:

(*spoke in English*)

“Emphasizing the need to strengthen the capacity for conflict prevention and peacekeeping in Africa, and welcoming the close cooperation established between the United Nations and the Economic Community of Central African States for that purpose”.

(*spoke in French*)

I should like to propose that a new preambular paragraph be inserted immediately following that paragraph, to read as follows:

(*spoke in English*)

“Taking note with interest of the increasing focus on extending the Standing Advisory Committee on human security questions, such as trafficking in persons, especially in women and children, as an important consideration for subregional peace, stability and conflict prevention”.

(*spoke in French*)

With this revision, I would like to ask the Committee to adopt the draft resolution without a vote.

The Chair: We will now proceed to take action on draft resolution A/C.1/66/L.23. I give the floor to the Secretary of the Committee to go through the proposed revisions to the draft once again.

Mr. Alasaniya (Secretary of the Committee): Draft resolution A/C.1/66/L.23, entitled “Regional confidence-building measures: activities of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa”, was introduced by the representative of the Congo at the 19th meeting, on 24 October. The sponsors of the draft resolution are listed in documents A/C.1/66/L.23 and A/C.1/66/CRP.3/Rev.3.

The draft resolution is accompanied by an oral statement of the Secretary-General, of which I am now going to read only the relevant parts.

Implementation of the request contained in operative paragraph 4 of the draft resolution regarding the provision of the support needed for the implementation of steps identified in the Sao Tome Declaration towards the continued active participation of States members of the Standing Advisory Committee in the arms trade treaty process would be subject to the availability of voluntary contributions to the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa.

In addition, the implementation of the request contained in paragraph 7 of the draft resolution, regarding the provision of assistance for the smooth functioning of the early-warning mechanism for Central Africa, would be subject to the availability of

voluntary contributions to the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa.

The implementation of the request contained in paragraph 10 of the draft resolution, regarding the facilitation of efforts undertaken by the States members of the Standing Advisory Committee, in particular in their execution of the Implementation Plan for the Kinshasa Convention, would be subject to the availability of voluntary contributions to the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa and the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs.

Moreover, the implementation of the request contained in paragraph 11 of the draft resolution, regarding the provision of assistance to the countries of Central Africa in tackling the problems of refugees and displaced persons in their territories, would be subject to the availability of voluntary contributions to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

The implementation of the request contained in paragraph 12 of the draft resolution, regarding the provision of full assistance for the proper functioning of the Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa, would be carried out within the resources provided under section 23, "Human rights", of the programme budget for the biennium 2012-2013. Furthermore, the implementation of the request contained in paragraph 18 of the draft resolution, regarding the provision of the assistance needed to ensure the success of the Standing Advisory Committee's regular biannual meetings, would be carried out within the resources provided in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2012-2013.

Accordingly, the adoption of draft resolution A/C.1/66/L.23 would not give rise to any financial implications under the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2012-2013.

At this meeting, as representatives heard, the representative of the Congo made an oral revision to the draft resolution, as follows.

After the eleventh preambular paragraph, which reads:

"Emphasizing the need to strengthen the capacity for conflict prevention and peacekeeping in Africa, and welcoming the close cooperation established between the United Nations and the

Economic Community of Central African States for that purpose",

a new paragraph will be added, which reads as follows:

"Taking note with interest of the increasing focus on the Standing Advisory Committee on human security questions, such as trafficking in persons, especially in women and children, as an important consideration for subregional peace, stability and conflict prevention".

The Chair: The sponsor of the draft resolution has expressed the wish that the Committee adopt it without a vote. If I hear no objection, I will take it that the Committee wishes to act accordingly.

Draft resolution A/C.1/66/L.23, as orally revised, was adopted.

The Chair: The Committee has thus concluded action on cluster 5, "Regional disarmament and security". We shall now move on to the draft resolutions listed under cluster 7, "Disarmament machinery".

I give the floor to the representative of Austria to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/66/L.21/Rev.1.

Mr. Riecken (Austria): As my delegation introduced, on behalf of Austria, Mexico and Norway, draft resolution A/C.1/66/L.21, entitled "Taking forward multilateral disarmament negotiations", let me today briefly introduce the revised version, which contains three main changes, taking account of the informal and bilateral consultations held during the past weeks.

At the outset, I would like to thank delegations for their great interest in our draft resolution, their constructive participation in the informal consultations and their considerable support for this ambitious proposal during the current session of the First Committee.

First, in the twelfth preambular paragraph, we deleted the reference to Security Council resolution 1887 (2009), but retained the reference to the action plan of the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

Secondly, in subparagraph (a) of paragraph 2, we clarified the fact that the working groups on priority issues of nuclear disarmament envisaged in our

proposal would encompass, inter alia, nuclear disarmament and the achievement of a world without nuclear weapons, negative security assurances and the negotiation of a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT), whereas another working group would be devoted to the issue of the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

In that regard, I would like to address one question that is of particular concern to some delegations, namely, negotiations on an FMCT. While the first draft referred to the elaboration of the elements of such a treaty in the light of ongoing consultations in pursuance of a consensual programme of work of the Conference on Disarmament, the revision refers to the negotiation of such a treaty.

The discussions of the working group could address how the future negotiation of a treaty could serve both disarmament and non-proliferation purposes. That is also fully in tune with draft resolutions A/C.1/66/L.40/Rev.1 and A/C.1/66/L.41, which were adopted by the Committee last week.

Thirdly, in subparagraph (b) of paragraph 2, we amended the sequencing to the effect that the possibility of initiating negotiations on legally binding instruments on any of the aforementioned issues should be considered by the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session, following the submission of a consolidated report by the working groups.

What we retained expressly is the last preambular paragraph, which reads as follows:

“Mindful of Article 11 of the Charter of the United Nations, concerning the functions and powers of the General Assembly to consider and make recommendations, inter alia with regard to disarmament”.

From our perspective, during its current session, the First Committee engaged in discussions that reflected the importance that all delegations attribute to that key provision of the Charter. That is a signal that the General Assembly is deeply aware of its functions and powers in the field of disarmament.

In 1978, the General Assembly mandated the Conference on Disarmament to negotiate disarmament treaties. For the past 15 years, the General Assembly has acquiesced with regard to the failure of the Conference on Disarmament to fulfil its mandate. The Assembly should therefore start to explore other

options on how to take forward multilateral disarmament negotiations.

During this session of the First Committee, we discussed four concrete proposals, in particular in the light of the ongoing paralysis of the Conference on Disarmament. A few delegations are apparently, and regrettably, seeking the continuation of the stalemate in the Conference. What matters, however, is the security interest in disarmament negotiations of the overwhelming majority of States Members of the United Nations.

We hope that all member States of the Conference on Disarmament will finally heed the numerous calls made by the General Assembly to do precisely this: to move from procedure to substance. We call on all delegations, here and in Geneva, to work towards that objective.

Austria, Mexico and Norway welcome the dynamic and substantive discussions that we have been able to hold in the course of the session. Throughout our consultations, we have stressed that our concrete proposal on taking forward multilateral disarmament negotiations is about substance, not procedure.

We are pleased at the fact that we have been able to trigger a debate that will certainly go on. In that respect, we have achieved one of our key objectives. However, consultations on how best to take forward multilateral disarmament negotiations must and will continue. For one thing is certain: a continuation of the stalemate is not an acceptable option.

Having considered all comments made by delegations in both our open and bilateral consultations, we have decided to preserve the integrity and strength of the proposal. Our delegations will therefore not press for action to be taken on revised draft resolution A/C.1/66/L.21 at this session of the First Committee.

We thank those delegations that have expressed support or provided constructive comments, and we look forward to continuing this important reflection process on making progress on substance.

We also welcome the adoption of draft resolution A/C.1/66/L.39, which was co-sponsored by Austria, Mexico and Norway. By virtue of the adoption of that draft, the Committee has already provided for the inclusion of the item entitled “Revitalizing the work of the Conference on Disarmament and taking forward

multilateral disarmament negotiations” in the provisional agenda of the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly.

At its current session, the General Assembly has already started to explore options with respect to taking forward multilateral disarmament negotiations, a fact that we very much welcome. In that spirit, we look forward to continuing work with all delegations to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons.

The Chair: The Committee takes note of the statement made by the representative of Austria and of the wish expressed therein that action not be taken on draft resolution A/C.1/66/L.21/Rev.1.

We will now proceed to take action on draft resolutions A/C.1/66/L.16 and A/C.1/66/L.34.

I now give the floor to representatives wishing to speak in explanation of vote or position before the voting.

Mr. Kasymov (Kyrgyzstan): The delegation of Kyrgyzstan wishes to be a sponsor of draft resolution A/C.1/66/L.34, entitled “United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific”.

The Chair: We shall now proceed to take action on draft resolution A/C.1/66/L.16. I give the floor to the Secretary of the Committee.

Mr. Alasaniya (Secretary of the Committee): Draft resolution A/C.1/66/L.16, entitled “United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean”, was introduced by the representative of Peru, on behalf of the Group of Latin American Countries, at the 19th meeting, on 24 October. The sponsors of the draft are listed in document A/C.1/66/L.16.

The Chair: The sponsor of the draft resolution has expressed the wish that the draft be adopted by the Committee without a vote. Unless I hear any objection, I shall take it that the Committee wishes to act accordingly.

Draft resolution A/C.1/66/L.16 was adopted.

The Chair: We shall now proceed to take action on draft resolution A/C.1/66/L.34. I give the floor to the Secretary of the Committee.

Mr. Alasaniya (Secretary of the Committee): Draft resolution A/C.1/66/L.34, entitled “United Nations

Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific”, was introduced by the representative of Nepal at the 19th meeting, on 24 October. The sponsors of the draft are listed in documents A/C.1/66/L.34 and A/C.1/66/CRP.3/Rev.5.

The Chair: The sponsor of the draft resolution has expressed the wish that the draft resolution be adopted by the Committee without a vote. Unless I hear any objection, I shall take it that the Committee wishes to act accordingly.

Draft resolution A/C.1/66/L.34 was adopted.

The Chair: We have thus concluded our work on all the draft resolutions before the Committee.

In accordance with the adopted programme of work, our last order of business will be to adopt the programme of work and timetable of the First Committee for 2012, as contained in document A/C.1/66/CRP.4, which I believe has been distributed to all delegations.

As members will notice, this document is based on the practice of the Committee in previous years, especially with regard to the total number of meetings allocated to the specific stages of the Committee’s work.

May I remind all delegations that the First Committee shares its conference facilities and other resources with the Fourth Committee, which has been meeting in this room in the afternoon when we meet in the morning, and vice versa. Consequently, the work programmes of the two Committees are closely coordinated. The draft programme of the First Committee for 2012, which members have before them, has therefore been prepared in consultation with the Chair of the Fourth Committee. The two Committees will continue to coordinate their work and to maintain a sequential pattern of conducting their meetings in order to maximize their shared resources.

The draft programme of work under consideration will, of course, be finalized and issued in its final version before the First Committee begins its substantive work at its next session.

Are there any questions or comments on the draft programme of work and timetable of the First Committee for 2012, as contained in document A/C.1/66/CRP.4?

I give the floor to the representative of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Workman (United Kingdom): I have a very brief question, which you may, Sir, have answered in your comments about sharing the facilities with our colleagues from the Fourth Committee. We wondered whether it might have been possible to consider moving the meetings scheduled for the mornings of 29, 30 and 31 October to double sessions on some of the days in the preceding weeks, so that we would not need to spill over into the week beginning 29 October. But based on your comments, Sir, it may simply be impossible to find conference space in other facilities to do that.

The Chair: We take note of that request. I will consult with all delegations this winter, before the Committee holds its official meeting in the spring. In that way, we will try to arrange our programme of work so that it allows for the best possible participation of all relevant parties in the work of the Committee.

Are there any delegations wishing to take the floor at this stage?

That not being the case, may I take it that the Committee wishes to adopt the programme of work and timetable of the First Committee for 2012 as contained in document A/C.1/66/CRP.4?

It was so decided.

Statement by the Chair

The Chair: It is certainly anti-climactic to have this meeting on a Monday morning; it would have been so much nicer to have concluded on Friday.

Before I adjourn the meeting and close the 2011 session of the First Committee, I would like to make some final remarks in my capacity as Chair.

This year the Committee finished its work in exactly four weeks and one day, with 24 meetings, as indicated in the programme of work contained in document A/65/418. Statements were made by 102 delegations within the general debate segment, while there were more than 197 interventions during what was a very active thematic discussion format. During the session, the Committee adopted 48 draft resolutions and five decisions: 21 draft resolutions were adopted by a recorded vote, and 27 draft resolutions and 5 decisions were adopted without a vote, which

corresponds to 60 per cent of all of the actions taken, compared with last year's figure of 66 per cent.

I would also like to make some more substantive remarks. As I pointed out in my opening statement one month ago (see A/C.1/66/PV.3), the First Committee is a highly important part of the disarmament machinery, in which it should play a central role. I am very pleased to note that during the current session, Member States have been participating actively and constructively. We have heard more interventions from Member States than at previous sessions. Delegations have presented thoughtful ideas on a broad range of issues related to disarmament.

I would like to thank all delegations for making their statements very direct and very much to the point. I believe that the active participation and interest of so many Member States and non-governmental organizations augurs well for the future of the First Committee.

We should seize this moment to reflect on how to improve the work of the Committee in order to make it even more efficient and more focused. For instance, we might consider the extent to which it is necessary to repeatedly adopt the same draft resolutions year after year. An alternative could be to adopt some unchanged consensus draft resolutions that have no budget implications every other year, and thus ease the workload of the Committee, with the understanding, of course, that each and every draft resolution is important to at least one delegation.

Delegations could even further condense their interventions and attempt to avoid repetition. I have noticed that many issues are raised repeatedly during our debate. While I understand the necessity of emphasizing those matters, we might also think about structuring our work in such a way as to avoid having to discuss the same issues over and over again.

Sometimes delegations exceeded their allotted time when delivering their statements, but I am quite delighted that that did not happen too often. Combined with the large number of draft resolutions, however, that can have the effect of delaying the Committee's progress on its programme of work.

Another important issue to consider is the participation of civil society in our work, as the non-governmental organization presentations to the First Committee have been combined into a single session,

held at the end of the thematic debate and just before the Committee takes action on draft resolutions and decisions. Should they be able to address the Committee during its thematic debate, their interventions would be more focused and relevant.

As I have mentioned previously, I intend to approach all delegations in the coming months to consult on those issues. When I assumed my duties as Chair, I noticed that there were many immediate requests for me or for the Committee to take action on organizational matters. Of course, it was not possible owing to the limited time available in which to prepare the issues. My intention is to prepare next year, sufficiently early in the spring, so that we can consult with all delegations and produce great results in that regard. In my consultations, I also intend to take up certain other issues with the various delegations, in order to find ways to further streamline the work of the Committee.

A central theme in our discussions this year has been the continued paralysis of the disarmament machinery. Delegations have been virtually unanimous in condemning the present stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament. There has certainly been an increase in frustration and in the demands of the Secretary-General and civil society for Member States to take action. As those issues have been addressed several times with several delegations, I think that there is stronger political will to resolve the matter, so that those coming from Geneva can proceed in the Conference on Disarmament.

With those words, I would like to thank all delegations for their active participation in the work of the First Committee during this year's session. It has been a great ride for me, and I have enjoyed my every moment as Chair of the Committee.

I would also like to thank my fellow members of the Bureau, the three Vice-Chairs, Mr. Amr Aljowali, of Egypt; Mr. Mohammad F.A.O. Almutairi, of Kuwait; and Ms. Ayesha Borland, of Belize, as well as the Rapporteur, Mr. Archil Gheghechkori, of Georgia, each of whom provided tremendous assistance to me in my efforts to effectively discharge my functions as Chair.

On behalf of the Committee, I offer my gratitude to the Office for Disarmament Affairs and the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, headed by Mr. Sergio Duarte and Mr. Shabaan Muhammad Shabaan, respectively, for their support and their dedicated staff, who facilitated our work in every way possible.

I would also like to convey my heartfelt thanks to the Secretary of the Committee, Mr. Timur Alasaniya, and his team at the First Committee secretariat, for their tireless efforts to support and facilitate our work throughout the session. As members of the Committee probably know, today is Timur's last day in the service of the Organization. I would like to thank him very much for all the contributions he has made over the years to the First Committee and the United Nations.

Special thanks go to all interpreters, translators, record-keepers, press officers, document officers, conference officers and sound engineers, who have been diligently working behind the scenes in support of the Committee's work. They have made great efforts to ensure that the Committee functions as well as it does.

We have now concluded the main part of the 2011 session of the First Committee. The Committee will reconvene in the spring to review what we have accomplished in our informal consultations and to elect a new Chair for the sixty-seventh session. Let me bring my remarks to a close by wishing all those who are leaving New York a safe trip back home.

The meeting rose at 10.55 a.m.