

Conference on Disarmament

5 October 2022

English

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Note Verbale dated 16 September 2022 from the Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the United Nations Office at Geneva transmitting the remarks by H.E. Ambassador LI Song at the First Plenary Meeting of the 2022 Session of the Conference on Disarmament

The Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the United Nations Office at Geneva presents its compliments to the Secretariat of the Conference on Disarmament, and has the honour to request the Secretariat to register Remarks by H.E. Ambassador LI Song at the First Plenary Meeting of the 2022 Session of the Conference on Disarmament as an official document of the Conference on Disarmament.

The Permanent Mission of China is please to append herewith a copy of the said remarks and in both Chinese and English languages for the Secretariat's necessary action.

The Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Secretariat of the Conference on Disarmament the assurances of its highest consideration.



Annex

(Translated from Chinese)

Full translation of remarks by H.E. Ambassador Li Song at the first plenary meeting of the 2022 session of the Conference

(25 January 2022, Palais des Nations)

Ambassadors, colleagues,

Madam Secretary-General,

Now, I would like to make a statement in my capacity as the President of the Conference on Disarmament as well as the Chinese Ambassador for Disarmament Affairs.

At the outset, I am most honoured to read out a message from H.E. Mr. Wang Yi, State Councillor and Minister for Foreign Affairs of China, to the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva at the first part of its 2022 annual session:

“As the Conference on Disarmament begins its 2022 session, I wish to extend my sincere congratulations and best wishes on the opening of this session.

The world today is experiencing the combined impacts of major changes and a pandemic, with the scope of both unseen in a century. International relations and the global strategic security situation are undergoing complex and profound adjustments. Traditional security threats are now compounded with emerging security challenges. The international arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation system stands at a critical crossroads.

Facing the new circumstances and challenges, the international community needs to vigorously advocate peace, development, equity, justice, democracy and freedom, which are the common values of humanity; commit to the vision of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security at the global level; and resolutely uphold the authority and sanctity of the United Nations. It should steadily advance the reform of the global security governance system and the international arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation processes and jointly build a shared future for humankind that enjoys lasting peace and universal security.

As the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, the Conference has achieved important outcomes, including the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the Chemical Weapons Convention, making important historical contributions to global peace and security. In the new era, the status and role of the Conference as an important platform for global security governance have become more prominent, and the international community has high expectations regarding its work. China calls on all members of the Conference to undertake in-depth discussions on the traditional agenda items and emerging challenges based on the principles of mutual respect and consensus and to make efforts to revitalize the Conference, seek appropriate solutions on the basis of undiminished security for all, and achieve universal, sustainable and common security.

China unswervingly follows the path of peaceful development and is committed to be a builder of world peace, a contributor to global development and a defender of the international order. As the first holder of the rotating presidency of the Conference in 2022, China will actively fulfil its duties, commit to playing a constructive role and enhance coordination with the other rotating presidencies and member States to contribute its share to revitalizing the Conference.”

That was the content of the message in its entirety.

Dear colleagues,

State Councillor and Minister for Foreign Affairs Mr. Wang Yi's message fully testifies to the confidence and support that China places in the Conference. As its first President this year, I will do my utmost to cooperate with my colleagues in the group of the six Presidents of the current session, together with the last President of the 2021 session and the first of the 2023 session, and bring our work forward. In this connection, I wish to share my thoughts on the following three points:

First of all, the work of our Conference should fully reflect the reality of the international security landscape in all its dimensions. The Conference should move with the times and be innovative in its work while remaining faithful to the historic mandate entrusted to it by the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. Over the past four decades, the international situation has undergone a series of major changes of profound significance, many of which have a close bearing on the work of our Conference. Facing such new realities, Conference members must also keep pace with changing times and approach our work from a higher and broader strategic perspective so that what we are doing under the traditional agenda items can better match the new realities and prospects in the international security scene.

At the same time, the Conference also shoulders new mandates for our times. In the face of the fresh issues and challenges in the field of international security brought by new and emerging technologies, delegations need to explore preventive programmes and initiatives in arms-control diplomacy. In this regard, the present agenda of the Conference has plenty of room for such forward-looking, open-ended and innovative undertakings.

As the President, I would encourage all delegations to make the best use of our plenary as a platform for in-depth exchanges and discussions, including through open and frank debate and brainstorming, with the view to identifying common understandings and approaches which truly meet the general security interests of all members.

Secondly, the work of the Conference should be brought back to a healthy and professional track. The Conference is not an arena for big power competition and confrontation, or a tool for big powers to bully smaller ones. Rather it should be a major platform for pursuing genuine multilateralism and advancing global security governance in the interests of common security. All members of the Conference, irrespective of their sizes, are equals and should respect each other. The legitimate security concerns and interest claims of each and every State need to be fully taken into account and be accommodated reasonably. The principle of undiminished security for all must be made to work in practice.

In recent years, the Conference on Disarmament has been severely impacted and disrupted by "politicization", which has also seriously eroded trust and cooperation among delegations. This is one of the important causes of our current stalemate. I sincerely hope that through everyone's shared efforts, we can promote the "de-politicization" of the Conference so that it can return to a healthy and professional track and duly fulfil its responsibilities in a harmonious working atmosphere and with fresh vigour.

Thirdly, the Conference should continue its efforts to reach a balanced and comprehensive programme of work and embark on substantive work on all important agenda items. The failure of the Conference to start any treaty negotiations in recent years is caused in essence by the growing complication of the global strategic and security situation. This is a profound manifestation of the realities of international security in the Conference, and cannot be ascribed to the rules of procedure and working methods themselves, but instead further underscores the value and significance of the principle of "comprehensive balance". This important principle, under which the positions, security concerns and interest claims of every member State are respected, is the cornerstone of the work of the Conference.

In 2018, the Conference successfully set up subsidiary bodies to carry out substantive work on its major agenda items. Over the past three years, at the start of each annual session, the Conference Presidents have worked tirelessly under the principle of "comprehensive balance" to facilitate agreement on a programme of work. Their efforts deserve our appreciation and acknowledgment, and they should provide us with a crucial basis on which to build on our efforts this year.

I hope that member States will give full expression to their views at the initial stage of this year's session, focusing on the programme of work, and I will also undertake active bilateral consultations with each and every delegation to further sound out your views. I will then proceed on that basis with other Presidents of the session to jointly produce a concrete plan for your discussion and eventual decision.

Dear colleagues,

Every new year heralds a new beginning. The same can be said of the situation on the ground, of the Conference and indeed of ourselves. At the beginning of the new year, the leaders of the five nuclear-weapon States, namely China, the Russian Federation, the United States of America, the United Kingdom and France, simultaneously issued a Joint Statement on preventing nuclear war and avoiding arms races. The leaders affirmed that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought and reaffirmed that none of their nuclear weapons are targeted at each other or at any other State. They committed themselves to preserving and complying with bilateral and multilateral arms control agreements and emphasized that the five States should avoid military confrontations and prevent arms races. As the coordinator of the P5 mechanism, the Ambassador of France will share further information in this regard with this plenary.

China has always championed the idea that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought. We actively led and facilitated the five nuclear-weapon States to take that joint action. In that statement, the first Joint Statement on the issue of nuclear weapons by the leaders of those countries, the leaders demonstrated their political will to prevent nuclear war and together called for maintaining global strategic stability and reducing the risk of nuclear conflicts, which also has a positive significance for forging major-country relations marked by overall stability and balanced development. China hopes that the five nuclear-weapon States can continue to enhance strategic mutual trust and strengthen communication and cooperation, and can play a positive role in building a world with lasting peace and universal security.

Dear colleagues,

Our endeavour is not to repeat the past but to open up the future. The start of the Conference's work this year coincides with the beginning of the new Chinese lunar year, which will be the Year of the Tiger, a propitious year, since the tiger is supposed to bring good fortune and guard against evil spirits, and also symbolizes courage and strength. The common wish of the international community is that in the coming year, humankind can unite even more closely and with greater courage and strength to overcome the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, preserve world peace and promote common development.

The upcoming Beijing Winter Olympics will also bring new vitality and hope to the world. For my part, I hope and believe that the members of the Conference can also demonstrate a greater sense of unity and display greater courage and strength in seeking to revive and revitalize the Conference, work to preserve world peace, security and stability and advance the processes of multilateral arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. My team and I will make fresh efforts to that end, and are counting on your full support.

Thank you all.
