

Conference on Disarmament

English

Final record of the one thousand three hundred and eighty-eighth plenary meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 31 May 2016, at 10.05 a.m.

President: Mr. Luis Enrique Chávez Basagoitia(Peru)

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The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I call to order the 1388th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

As this is the first time that I have chaired the Conference and the first time that I have taken the floor from this rostrum, at the outset I would like to thank Ambassador Tehmina Janjua, the Permanent Representative of Pakistan, for the manner in which she presided over this Conference. I also extend my gratitude to Ambassador Steffen Kongstad, the Permanent Representative of Norway, and Mr. Peters Emuze, the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of Nigeria, for the work carried out during their presidencies.

I should like to begin my presidency, if I may, by sharing some ideas. Firstly, I wish to tell you that, as well as an honour for Peru, it is a great responsibility for me to preside over the Conference on Disarmament at a time of concern at the unfortunate lack of progress towards achieving a world free of nuclear weapons. There is great frustration that after so many years we have not even been able to reach a minimum understanding on a programme of work. Yet this situation should not lead us to think that we have exhausted the possibilities for reviving the Conference and restoring its negotiating capacity. Therefore, I take on this responsibility with an appeal for us to redouble our efforts to break the deadlock and allow the Conference to begin substantive work leading to the negotiation of general and complete disarmament under effective international control.

The current impasse is not inevitable. In the past, the Conference on Disarmament was a negotiating forum that made an undeniable contribution to international peace and security and enabled significant progress in the area of disarmament. Nevertheless, it is unacceptable that some 16,000 nuclear devices continue to exist in the world while humankind hangs in the balance. We cannot underestimate the danger that these weapons pose for human rights and international humanitarian law, nor can we remain passive until disaster strikes. Historically, Peru has devoted its political energies to peace, disarmament and the strengthening of international security, as evidenced by the fact that we are party to all international instruments on disarmament and are firmly committed to meeting our obligations, with nuclear disarmament a priority.

The total and complete elimination of nuclear weapons is the highest goal to which we should all aspire. The Government of Peru recognizes the value and the contribution to international peace and security of the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (Treaty of Tlatelolco) and is proud to form part of the first nuclear-weapon-free zone in a densely populated part of the planet. We urge that this example be replicated in all regions of the world.

Developments in the Conference's work must necessarily be evaluated within this overall process, as well as in relation to the various differing perceptions of national security that many States, especially those most concerned with nuclear disarmament, still maintain. These markedly distinct concepts and visions have obviously contributed to enormous difficulties in building shared visions of nuclear disarmament and international security, even within regional groups. If we do not succeed in dispelling the conflicting perceptions that preclude the possibility of establishing a programme of work in the next 18 months, then we will have completed a lost decade for multilateral negotiations on disarmament. End of quote.

The words that I have just read out were delivered by the then Permanent Representative of Peru, Ambassador Manuel Rodríguez Cuadros, upon assuming this same Chair in 2005. His analysis was visionary, since it leaves us with no option but to recognize that we failed to overcome the dangers of that time and that today it is my turn to observe that we have completed another 10 years of deadlock.

In summing up why it has not been possible to reach agreement on a comprehensive and balanced programme of work, we must recognize that positions have remained steadfast and mutually exclusive. This cannot be interpreted as anything but clear evidence of a lack of political will, which has led to deadlock and prevented any further progress. We must therefore understand and recognize the interdependence between the different national interests of security, peace and development of the members of this Conference, divergent interests that continue to hinder any kind of progress. It is paramount that this trend be broken and that each member State shows the flexibility that will allow us to jointly address

complex challenges in the area of global security through the adoption of a programme of work and the urgent launching of negotiations.

It is in our hands to free this forum from its stagnation, demonstrating genuine political will and sending a positive message to the international community. Having considered various proposals and knowing in detail the established positions after so many discussions, the responsibility falls to each and every one of us to generate the political momentum needed to work towards a concrete outcome during this session.

In conducting this presidency, my intention is to first hold intensive informal consultations with a view to unblocking negotiations and obtaining a programme of work. This possibility does not seem too remote, since recent developments indicate that the proposals received this year could form the basis for the drafting of a text whose content is acceptable to all. Moreover, I believe it is necessary to avoid using plenary meeting time for the reaffirmation of positions that are already known, and whose reiteration has the perverse effect of hardening them and making them more rigid, when what we need now is greater flexibility.

I will keep the members constantly informed of developments during the informal consultations that I will conduct. In the current circumstances, and until such time as progress is achieved in those informal consultations — which will be the context in which the programme of work is discussed at the beginning of my presidency — plenary time may be put to better use. I therefore intend to convene a plenary meeting next Tuesday at which delegations wishing to speak on matters other than the programme of work will be able to do so.

I remain at the disposal of all of the members so that they may convey bilaterally their suggestions on how to use the plenary meetings in areas other than the programme of work.

Thank you for your attention and for the support that I am sure you will give me during my tenure.

I would now like to give the floor to delegations wishing to make a statement. Argentina, you have the floor.

Mr. Cima (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, I would like to thank Pakistan for its strenuous efforts to reach consensus on a programme of work for the Conference on Disarmament. I am sure that those efforts will continue under the presidency of the Ambassador of Peru, whom we congratulate and assure of the full support of the Argentine Republic. We are convinced that his leadership and experience will make for an excellent presidency, in which we are hopeful of progress.

Mr. President, as this is the first time I have taken the floor as the Permanent Representative of Argentina to this Conference since having the honour to take up this position, please allow me to restate some of my country's commitments in the area of disarmament.

The Argentine Republic participates in the work of the Conference on the understanding that it is the only multilateral negotiating forum in the area of nuclear disarmament. My country believes that we must reactivate the Conference so that it resumes the fulfilment of its mandate to negotiate multilateral instruments on nuclear disarmament.

Argentina is open to discussion and to working in a flexible yet practical manner towards the development of innovative proposals. Mr. President, we must prevent the Conference from becoming marginalized. The Government of Argentina also believes that the total and comprehensive elimination of nuclear weapons is the only guarantee against the use or threat of use of such weapons, thus avoiding the irreparable humanitarian consequences that such use would entail. For that reason, we will support any multilateral negotiation process that leads to the complete elimination of nuclear weapons in an irreversible, verifiable and transparent manner.

We welcome the work being undertaken in the framework of the Open-ended Working Group convened pursuant to General Assembly resolution 70/33 to identify

concrete and effective measures for a world free of nuclear weapons. This open and inclusive discussion is moving forward with renewed vigour and consensus thanks to the will of the participating States and the need to respond to the lack of progress in the framework of the Conference.

The Government of Argentina has actively participated in the work of this Group and has contributed to the drafting of two working papers: a proposal by the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) on effective legal measures to attain and maintain a world without nuclear weapons, and a working paper entitled “Addressing nuclear disarmament: Recommendations from the perspective of nuclear-weapon-free zones”.

Argentina also supports the process that is under way to discuss the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons, while at the regional level it has expressed its commitment to the possible negotiation of a legally binding multilateral instrument banning nuclear weapons, based on discussions and the articulation of positions within CELAC.

Finally, Mr. President, I would like to offer you our best wishes for the utmost success in your work at the helm of the Conference and to once again assure you of the full support and cooperation of Argentina in the pursuit of your objectives.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you, Ambassador, for your statement and for your kind words. In fact, on this occasion we have inadvertently reversed the traditional order of proceedings, because I should first have welcomed Ambassador Marcelo Cima, who today joins our endeavours in his capacity as the Permanent Representative of Argentina to the international organizations and also to this Conference.

It is always a pleasure to see a new colleague, because new colleagues symbolize the possible arrival of new ideas, which are always appreciated. On a more personal note, I might add that I take special satisfaction that the Conference is welcoming someone who is not only a colleague, but a friend. I must also take a moment to convey our collective gratitude to the delegation of Brazil and to Ambassador Pedro Motta Pinto Coelho, who has notified us that his term is coming to an end. I ask my colleagues in the Brazilian delegation to convey the greetings and the admiration of his colleagues in the Conference, along with our best wishes for his next venture.

Are there any further statements? That does not seem to be the case.

As I mentioned, this afternoon I will continue the consultations that I have already commenced with some of you. We will hold the next plenary meeting on Tuesday, 7 June, at 10 a.m. and I hope to have some positive developments to report by then.

I recognize the representative of Venezuela, who has requested the floor.

Ms. Sánchez (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, we would like to congratulate you on assuming the presidency of this forum. The delegation of Venezuela takes this opportunity to offer you our support and cooperation in all of your endeavours in the coming weeks. We also reiterate our gratitude for the efforts of the preceding presidencies to seek consensus on how we take forward the substantive work of the Conference on Disarmament. We must all be committed to this common effort. We appreciate the initiative to consult member States in order to find ways of overcoming the current impasse and to adopt a comprehensive and balanced programme of work for the 2016 session.

Mr. President, Venezuela attaches the utmost importance to the work of the Conference as the only multilateral negotiating forum for reaching agreements in the area of disarmament. The historic achievements of the Conference in multilateral disarmament negotiations include the Biological Weapons Convention, the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. If we leverage its full potential, the Conference could continue to function as an essential mechanism for the international community that can contribute to international peace and security.

My delegation would like to participate in any effort that seeks to renew the work of the Conference and thus restore it to an active state. This would allow us to maintain the

integrity, credibility and relevance of this forum in response to the realities of the contemporary world.

Mr. President, after many years of deadlock we now have four proposed programmes of work on the table. We take note of the proposals submitted for this year and we thank the delegations for their efforts. As regards the proposal presented by the Russian Federation, we consider that it has the merit of addressing a very important subject and we thank the Russian delegation for bringing the issue to our attention and for highlighting its urgency. My delegation appreciates this proposal because it demonstrates the firm commitment of the Russian Federation to preserving international peace and security. Venezuela reiterates its firm commitment to the fight against terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and expresses its dismay at acts of terrorism in different parts of the world that endanger international peace and security. The threat of chemical and biological terrorism has no borders, affects all States and is a concern for the international community at large. In view of its gravity and the risks it presents for security, this matter deserves our utmost attention and consideration. We listened carefully to the statement made by Ambassador Uliyanov during the plenary meeting of 17 May and we are grateful to his delegation for the explanations given and for the document circulated at that meeting, which contained a draft decision of the Conference on Disarmament establishing a programme of work for the 2016 session. We share the views expressed by the delegations of China and Cuba, among others, to the effect that the Conference should constructively examine the initiative of the Russian Federation regarding an international convention for the suppression of acts of chemical and biological terrorism.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of Venezuela for her statement. The delegation of Nigeria has asked for the floor.

Mr. Gbemudu (Nigeria): Nigeria congratulates you, Mr. President, on your assumption of this onerous duty as President of the Conference on Disarmament. We thank you for your positive statement this morning and we urge all States to support you in moving the Conference forward. We thank Pakistan for the efforts that they put in over the past weeks, and we believe that there is a light at the end of the tunnel. We encourage all delegations to recommit to the mandate of the Conference as the single body for negotiating nuclear disarmament. Mr. President, please rest assured of the unalloyed support of Nigeria as you carry out your work in the coming weeks.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of Nigeria for his statement and his kind words.

There being no further statements, that concludes our work for this morning. I remind you that the next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Tuesday, 7 June, at 10 a.m. The meeting is adjourned.

The meeting rose at 10.30 a.m.