
Conference on Disarmament

4 July 2019

Original: English

Note verbale dated 25 June 2019 from the Permanent Mission of Zimbabwe addressed to the secretariat of the Conference on Disarmament, requesting to distribute the Statement, presented by H.E. Ambassador T. Mushayavanhu on 6 June 2019 at the 1504th Conference on Disarmament Plenary meeting, as an Official Document of the Conference on Disarmament

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Zimbabwe to the United Nations Office and other International Organisations in Geneva presents its compliments to the Conference on Disarmament Secretariat and has the honour to request the latter to distribute the attached Statement presented by H.E. Ambassador T. Mushayavanhu as an Official Document of the Conference on Disarmament.

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Zimbabwe to the United Nations Office and other International Organisations in Geneva avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Conference on Disarmament Secretariat the assurances of its highest consideration.



**Statement by H.E. Ambassador T. Mushayavanhu,
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Zimbabwe:
Conference on Disarmament: 6 June 2019**

Thank you, Mr. President,

My delegation is pleased to participate in this debate and joins others who have spoken before us in thanking you for the draft Programme of Work which you have placed before this Conference. We are glad that the draft Programme of Work before us has been the product of wide consultations. In this respect, my delegation wishes to express its profound appreciation for your sterling efforts, which have yielded a balanced, comprehensive and ambitious draft for our consideration.

Mr. President,

My delegation believes that the draft Programme of Work that you have developed and circulated is a good basis for our deliberations. We think that this draft sets the appropriate tempo for succeeding Presidencies, including for the 2020 Session. My delegation is satisfied that this draft Programme of Work before us proposes the establishment of Working Groups for all the priority agenda items of the CD, complete with proposals for negotiating mandates, so that we can resume substantive work. We continue with a more in-depth study of the Programme of Work.

Mr. President,

The fact that we are still discussing the Programme of Work under the fourth presidency of this session, clearly indicates the need for some creative approaches on how we should organise our work in these unusual circumstances. In this respect, I will dwell a little on procedural issues. My delegation wishes to draw the attention of Conference to Rule 22 of the Rules of Procedure, which allows us to consider, among other things, the very pertinent question regarding the organisation of the work of this Conference. Rule 22 states that: "The Conference may hold informal meetings, with or without experts, to consider as appropriate substantive matters as well as questions concerning its organisation of work."

Given the painfully little progress, if any, that we make in this conference, year in year out, my delegation believes that perhaps we need to adopt a Programme of Work with a long-term horizon, far beyond the present confinement to one session. Our look at the Rules of Procedure indicates that the multi-year approach is not proscribed. Rule 28 states: "On the basis of its agenda, the Conference, at the beginning of its annual session, shall establish its Programme of Work, which will include a schedule of its activities for that session." We think that a multi-year Programme of Work can always be adopted in one session, and re-affirmed at the beginning subsequent sessions. We believe that the adoption of such a multi-year Programme of Work does not therefore require the CD to amend the existing Rules of Procedure, and yet this long-term horizon has the distinct advantage of liberating the Conference from its perennial fixation with an annual Programme of Work, and allowing the CD to resume substantive work.

Mr. President,

The fact that today we are still discussing the Programme of Work, mid-point the 2019 session, suggests that perhaps we need to have another look at how our work can be reorganised, as already provided for under Rule 22 of the Rules of Procedure.

My delegation therefore wishes to present to this Conference a formal proposal to re-organise our work and introduce a multi-year Programme of Work. We believe that we should not continue to pretend that we are in conformity with Rule 27 of the Rules of Procedure, when we are in fact discussing the Programme of Work, not at the beginning of the session, but continue to do so way towards the end of the session. The Rules of Procedure also require that we include a schedule of activities of the CD for this session, as we correctly did for the Subsidiary Bodies during the 2018 Session. The question which we should ask ourselves is: What useful activities can we seriously undertake in the remaining time for the 2019 Session, even if the Conference were to agree on a Programme of Work

under the Presidency of either of my colleagues, the Permanent Representatives of Venezuela and of Vietnam, which we would welcome. I think we need to collectively reflect more deeply on this organizational question and consider adopting a multi-year approach to the Programme of Work. At our last plenary session on Tuesday earlier this week, one delegation in fact also flagged a similar idea. The fact of the matter is that, whichever way we look at this issue, our negotiations on a Programme of Work with a limited one-year horizon have been stifling the CD and diverting it from resuming substantive work. We agree with the Australian delegation that perhaps our negotiations should have a longer-term horizon, in order for them to be sustainable and achieve their desired outcomes.

Mr. President,

Our proposal for a multi-year, long term horizon, for the Programme of Work also draws from the experience of the 2018 Session. Colleagues will recall that, at the beginning of last year, agreement was reached on a Programme of Work that included the establishment of Subsidiary Bodies and attendant schedule for the activities for that session. With the benefit of hindsight, my delegation believes that, after the good work done within the Subsidiary Bodies, we should have built into the 2018 Programme of Work the element of automaticity in terms of rolling over the life of Subsidiary Bodies into subsequent sessions. My proposal is based on these kinds of experiences in this conference. If the limited one- year horizon is stifling the work of this conference, then it behoves on us the membership to be practical and pragmatic in the organisation of our work. We are, of course, not oblivious to the fact that each Presidency will want to inject its own ideas into the work of the Conference.

Finally, Mr. President,

The last time that we negotiated the CTBT was twenty-three years ago, underlining the fact that the critical challenges before this conference are not amenable to a quick fix solution. We, therefore, need to be creative in our approach, and ensure that progress achieved in one year is rolled over to subsequent sessions. Indeed, the progress and goodwill achieved in the subsidiary Bodies could have been rolled over and built upon during this current situation.

My delegation is ready to engage your office, and with other members, to further refine our proposal.

I thank you.
