

Conference Of Disarmament Discusses Efforts To Agree On A Programme Of Work

June 4, 2013

UNOG

[http://www.unog.ch/unog/website/news_media.nsf/\(httpNewsByYear_en\)/31A28362D22E6AD1C1257B8000505AC0?OpenDocument](http://www.unog.ch/unog/website/news_media.nsf/(httpNewsByYear_en)/31A28362D22E6AD1C1257B8000505AC0?OpenDocument)

The Conference on Disarmament this morning held a public plenary meeting to discuss efforts to agree on a programme of work.

In his opening remarks, Ambassador Mohsen Naziri Asl of Iran, President of the Conference on Disarmament, updated delegations on the status of consultations on the main obstacles that hindered agreement on a programme of work. Regarding previous approaches towards the development of a programme of work, Ambassador Asl recalled that maximalist approaches that emphasised the Conference's negotiating mandate had failed to secure consensus; on the other hand, a simplified approach could provide an opportunity for discussions without engaging in a negotiating mode. The President said he was taking into account the interests of all Member States and the efficiency of the Conference, and was ready to work towards a consensus formula.

During the discussion, delegations regretted the failure of the Conference to adopt a programme of work despite the efforts of previous Presidents to develop proposals on the basis of consultations. Some speakers suggested that such proposals, in particular those contained in documents CD/1864 and CD/1933/Rev.1, remained of value and should be considered as part of future efforts. Delegations noted the repeated calls made by the international community to the Conference to fulfil its mandate and, noting developments at the margins of the Conference, highlighted the need to uphold the Conference as the venue for substantive work on multilateral disarmament issues.

Some speakers reiterated the view that negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other explosive devices (FMCT) should take priority, was ripe for negotiation, and constituted the first step towards nuclear disarmament. Others emphasised the importance attached to nuclear disarmament and said that while they

were ready to engage in negotiations of an FMCT this should not constitute a precondition for progress in other areas. Several delegations reaffirmed the legitimacy of national security concerns while stressing that the rules of procedure and practice of the Conference provided an opportunity to deal with such concerns while advancing multilateral negotiations.

The Conference devoted a segment of its proceedings to informal and off-the-record discussion on the topic of a programme of work to which the press and the public were not admitted.

The following delegations took the floor during the plenary: Ireland on behalf of the European Union, France, Germany, Japan, Zimbabwe on behalf of the Group of 21, the Netherlands, Finland, India, Cuba, Sweden, Slovakia, Australia, Algeria, South Africa, Spain, Indonesia, Pakistan and Iran.

The next plenary of the Conference will take place at 10 a.m. on Tuesday, 11 June.

Statements

Ambassador MOHSEN NAZIRI ASL of **Iran, President of the Conference**, updated delegations on the status of consultations on the main obstacles that hindered agreement on a programme of work. Regarding previous approaches towards the development of a programme of work, Ambassador Asl recalled the two main approaches previously taken. A maximalist approach emphasised the Conference's broad negotiating mandate but, despite its advantages, did not enjoy consensus. A second pragmatic or simplified approach could enable delegations to discuss issues without engaging in a negotiating mode and seemed to be an option to consider. While Iran would prefer a negotiating mandate and a clear reference to negotiations on a nuclear weapon convention, the President would take into account the interests of all Member States and the efficiency of the Conference, and would work towards a consensus formula.

Ireland, speaking on behalf of the **European Union**, expressed concern at the Conference's continuing stalemate and urged all States to join consensus in adopting a programme of work, which would enable negotiations on a

treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other explosive devices (FMCT). National security concerns, while legitimate, could and should be addressed as part of a negotiation process rather than as a prerequisite. Ireland reaffirmed the European Union Member States' commitment to engage in substantive discussions on all the core issues included in CD/1864; reiterated their longstanding commitment to the enlargement of the Conference; and looked forward to the enhanced interaction with civil society organisations.

France said that the adoption of a programme of work was essential to overcome the current deadlock. The negotiation of an FMCT was the priority and, while there were diverse views on the different aspects of the treaty, document CD/1299 maintained an equilibrium between them that was largely accepted. A negotiation on fissile material must be part of a comprehensive and balanced programme of work and document CD/1864 remained a point of reference in this regard. It provided a very clear mandate for negotiations on fissile materials and would allow for opening discussions on other main topics.

Germany said that after a 17-year long deadlock the Conference was in a critical stage and the establishment of the Open-ended working group on nuclear disarmament was a direct result. A revitalized Conference on Disarmament would still be highly desirable and would provide a suitable framework for making tangible progress in the field of disarmament. Many attempts had been made to agree on a programme of work, including documents CD/1864 and CD/1933/Rev. 1. Germany regarded the early conclusion of an FMCT as an important building block on for a world without nuclear weapons. The purpose of a programme of work was to give the Conference a clear direction about what to do operationally and ideal solutions should be abandoned as they were often mutually exclusive.,

Japan believed that the goal of a peaceful and secure world free of nuclear weapons was widely shared, but that there were differences concerning the approach to reach this ultimate end. The steady accumulation of practical disarmament and confidence building measures could help move forward. Although the core issues were all significant, Japan attached particular importance to a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons. With the help of CD/1299 the Conference provided a suitable environment for negotiations on such a treaty and Japan reiterated that the

Conference once agreed upon a programme of work, CD/1864, enabling such negotiations.

Zimbabwe, speaking on behalf of the **Group of 21**, congratulated Iran on the assumption of the Presidency and thanked the President for the update on his consultations. The Group of 21 expressed its appreciation for the President's efforts to develop a programme of work for the Conference to resume its activities and looked forward to the interaction with the President during consultations. The Group also appreciated the efforts of Indonesia, as a previous President and fellow member of the Group of 21, to work towards the adoption of a programme of work; and expressed appreciation for the open and transparent manner in which India conducted consultations during its Presidency.

Netherlands said that the programme of work should be a tool to get to work and would find it problematic to support a programme of work that was lacking substance and could not bring the Conference to the start of negotiations. The issue of fissile material was the topic for which there was most support, as the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Action Plan, voting patterns in the First Committee and discussions in the Conference evidenced. While the Conference had been important in the past, no results had been produced in the last 15 years. Achieving real progress, rather than the sole maintenance of the Conference should be the primary objective. In principle, the Netherlands was interested in all possibilities and the forum where negotiations would take place was of lesser importance.

Finland was fully prepared to proceed on all four core issues in a balanced and equitable manner, but its own preference was on the commencement of negotiations on an FMCT. The programme of work was a major balancing act between different interests within the Conference and Finland appreciated recent attempts to find a consensus document by the Hungarian and Indonesian Presidencies. Finland would see value in looking into the Conference's working methods and revitalization as proposed by Switzerland, for example, addressing issues of membership, participation of civil society, its agenda, and the rotation of the presidency.

India said that nuclear disarmament continued to be India's highest priority and, without prejudice to this goal, India supported negotiations on an FMCT in accordance with the agreed mandate. The Conference's rules of procedure and practice allowed for the protection of national security

interests while undertaking negotiations, thus advancing shared and agreed multilateral priorities on international agreements which enhanced both national and international security. Developments at the margins of the Conference highlighted the need to uphold the Conference as the venue for substantive work on multilateral disarmament issues, including negotiations, in accordance with a programme of work and the rules of procedure.

Cuba said that the current paralysis was not due to the working methods but to the lack of political will on the part of some States. Cuba was ready to start parallel negotiations on a number of treaties, among others, on the elimination of nuclear weapons, on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, and on negative-security assurances. International security was threatened by nuclear weapons and it was important to move towards the total prohibition and elimination of this threat. The Conference should urgently start negotiations on a convention banning the development, production, stockpiling and use of nuclear weapons, including the non-discriminatory and verifiable elimination within an agreed timeframe.

Sweden had often called for the resumption of substantial work in the Conference. Consensus on a programme of work had been achieved on the basis of CD/1864 and this proposal remains Sweden's preference. The programme of work was not a mechanism for solving all substantive disagreements but was intended to get substantive work going. Sweden was open to move forward on all core issues, although foremost among these issues was the negotiation of an FMCT. As stated in other forums, Sweden believed in a step-by-step approach to nuclear disarmament. An FMCT and the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) were essential elements in the process towards global zero.

Slovakia regretted that this year the Conference had once again failed to meet its obligation to establish a programme of work and to commence negotiation. The Conference was a key element of the whole disarmament machinery and, while there were different priorities, flexibility should be displayed in order to overcome existing differences. The Conference remained the best place to produce global, well-founded and viable instruments. Slovakia continued to support the immediate commencement of negotiations on a FMCT, it was an indispensable step, and would clearly reinforce the non-proliferation regime and complement the CTBT.

Australia had made known its views on the substantive work the Conference should be doing, particularly, in relation to the implementation of the NPT Action Plan. All State parties to the NPT should remain committed to actions 6, 7 and 15, as well as the rest of the Action Plan. Australia placed importance on the negotiation of an FMCT as a pragmatic step towards the achievement of a world free of nuclear weapons. The Shannon mandate, contained in document CD/1299, remained relevant and would allow for all voices to be heard in the context of negotiations on a treaty.

Algeria said that since 1996, the Conference had not been able to move towards negotiations. The General Assembly had set up the Open-ended working group to develop proposals in nuclear disarmament precisely because there were problems within the Conference, and a rich discussion had taken place during the first session of the working group. The spirit that pervaded could and should have an effect on the Conference and Algeria encouraged the President to continue to carry out consultations. Members should consider a more flexible approach and a broader mandate on the four core issues so that the Conference could at least start discussing them and preparing the ground for future negotiations.

South Africa supported the immediate commencement of negotiations on an FMCT in the Conference, but this was not the only issue that should merit consideration and progress on this issue should never become a precondition for achieving progress on other measures for nuclear disarmament. Neither the possession of nuclear weapons nor efforts to acquire them could guarantee national security. The establishment of a comprehensive framework of mutually reinforcing instruments could not be postponed. South Africa warned against selective approaches regarding the commitments arising from the Non-Proliferation Treaty, in particular in detriment of those related to nuclear disarmament.

Spain said that the rules of procedure created a Machiavellian obstacle course in a yearly-bid to find consensus. It said that the first obstacle was the adoption of the agenda, then the adoption of the programme of work and then its implementation. Meanwhile, the Conference continued to debate the same issues on the agenda, again and again, instead of fulfilling its negotiating mandate. In the 1990s a number of issues had been tackled simultaneously and sooner or later yielded negotiations. The limited membership of the Conference sought a reduced but representative

membership precisely in order to be conducive to negotiations. A programme of work ought to help open negotiations on FMCT in the first place. The Conference was seriously running the risk of losing its central role within the disarmament mechanism.

Indonesia said that the programme of work was a cornerstone of the Conference's work; however there had been no hints of consensus in sight since CD/1864. The Conference should consider working on a basic timetable of activities and settling mandates for the different working groups individually. The Conference needed to develop a new working culture and new approaches. The responsibility for the development of a programme of work should not be entrusted solely to the President, but Members should actively contribute through their regional groups. The Conference could also consider different timetables, for example, allowing for the sequential discussion of different core issues over a number of years.

Pakistan said that its position was well known and, as a member of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of 21, nuclear disarmament remained the top priority. However, if some delegations did not find convenient negotiations on nuclear disarmament, the Conference on Disarmament could negotiate negative security assurances, an issue that was ripe for negotiations as no nuclear-weapon States would contemplate the use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon States. Pakistan disagreed with the idea that progress in the Conference should be equated with progress towards the negotiation of an FMCT, and stressed that this approach had not worked in the past.

Iran had always expressed support for a comprehensive and balanced programme of work which included nuclear disarmament, the highest priority for the Non-Aligned Movement. Iran would like to see a negotiating mandate for a nuclear weapon convention and a concrete timeframe for the elimination of nuclear weapons under strict verification. Iran was willing to be constructive as long as the programme of work was balanced in its treatment of other core issues. Iran would not support a selective and unbalanced programme of work and was ready to continue to seek a consensual document which included the concerns of all Member States on the basis of ongoing consultations.

Ambassador MOHSEN NAZIRI ASL of **Iran**, **President of the Conference**, in concluding remarks, said that he had taken note of the

different views expressed with regards to the programme of work. The Conference continued in an informal mode, in order to provide delegations with the possibility to interact off the record.