

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT DISCUSSES ITS WORK

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The Conference on Disarmament this morning held its first public plenary meeting under the Presidency of Iran in which delegations exchanged views on the work of the Conference.

During the meeting, Ambassador Mohsen Naziri Asl of Iran, incoming President of the Conference, outlined his approach to seeking agreement on a programme of work through future consultations and urged delegations to keep the momentum created by the discussions on the four core issues on the agenda held under the Presidencies of India and Indonesia. Iran's priority would be to consult with delegations concerning the agreement and implementation of a comprehensive and balanced programme of work, the revitalization of the Conference on Disarmament, the expansion of its membership, and civil society participation.

Delegations were invited to express their views, recommendations and priorities on issues related to the Conference and their expectations. Speakers reiterated the importance they attached to the Conference on Disarmament as the single multilateral negotiating forum and lamented that no agreement on a programme of work had been achieved, despite a number of proposals and the efforts made by previous Presidencies. It was hoped that previous drafts and proposals could serve as the basis for a consensus. Some delegations stressed the need for a comprehensive and balanced programme of work, while others suggested a simplified programme of work focused on the four core issues in the Conference's agenda. Delegations also highlighted the importance of multilaterally agreed instruments and the consideration of States' different security interests in the fields of disarmament and international security.

Ambassador Triyono Wibowo of Indonesia, outgoing President of the Conference, reiterated Indonesia's support to Ambassador Mohsen Naziri

Asl and thanked delegations for their kind words and support during his Presidency.

The delegations of Cuba, Syria, Pakistan, Russia, China, Algeria, Egypt, Indonesia, and Zimbabwe took the floor.

The next plenary of the Conference will take place at 10 a.m. on Tuesday, 4 June.

Statements

Ambassador MOHSEN NAZIRI ASL of Iran, Incoming President of the Conference on Disarmament, in his opening remarks, expressed Iran's full readiness to consult with Member States in an open and transparent manner; and urged delegations to keep the momentum created by discussions on the four core agenda items held under the Presidencies of India and Indonesia. During its Presidency, Iran would continue to consult with Member States in order to find ways to unlock the Conference, a deadlock created by the lack of political will in the field of nuclear disarmament. Iran's priority would be to consult with delegations concerning the agreement and implementation of a comprehensive and balanced programme of work. Iran invited delegations to express their views, recommendations and priorities on issues related to the Conference and their expectations. The next plenary meeting would focus on the programme of work and, while Iran had some ideas for topics of discussion for subsequent meetings, delegations would be informed after consultations. Iran would also continue to consult with delegations concerning the revitalization of the Conference on Disarmament, the expansion of its membership and civil society participation.

Multilaterally agreed instruments were the key for collective security and, given the devastating and inhuman nature of nuclear weapons, the Conference had the primary responsibility to negotiate and conclude treaties that would address the threat posed by nuclear weapons. The Conference should also take into account other developments, such as the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on nuclear disarmament, scheduled in September, and the establishment of an open-ended working group on nuclear disarmament which started its meetings in Geneva in mid-May. Members should work together to preserve the credibility of the Conference while respecting and upholding its rules and giving consideration to the security interest of all States. Iran would look at previous drafts and the

work carried by previous Presidencies as the basis for future consultations. It was important not to lose sight of the importance of the adoption of a comprehensive programme of work and Iran would endeavour to find agreement on substantive issues and procedural matters.

Cuba attached great importance to the achievement of tangible progress in negotiations and discussions in the arena of disarmament and arms control. In particular, Cuba attached the highest priority, as a member of the Group of 21 and the Non-Aligned Movement, to the achievement of nuclear disarmament. Multilaterally agreed solutions, in accordance with the United Nations Charter, were the only effective method for addressing disarmament and international security issues. Cuba reaffirmed its willingness to carry out negotiations in the Conference on any topic agreed by consensus. Concerning the optimisation of the disarmament machinery, Cuba saw the Conference as the sole multilateral forum and was alarmed by initiatives aiming at taking discussions out of this forum and resorting to other processes. It was the responsibility of one and all and political will was needed, particularly on the part of certain states, to heed the appeal voiced by the international community to make real progress in the field of disarmament. Cuba would continue to support this forum and reaffirmed its support for the work of the President.

Syria believed in the importance of the Conference and of maintaining it as the single multilateral negotiating forum in the field of disarmament and reaffirmed the views of the Group of 21 and the Non-Aligned Movement concerning the priority of nuclear disarmament. Syria called on all States to show the maximum flexibility and cooperation. Nothing prevented the Conference from dealing with the four core issues in its agenda in a balanced manner, and Syria supported a balanced and comprehensive programme of work that took into account the security interests of all States. The objective should be to achieve legally binding instruments. Despite the claims that one of these issues was more mature than others, Syria believed that no issue should take precedence to the detriment of the others. Achieving a treaty on the prohibition fissile material for nuclear weapons and other explosive devices would be an important achievement if taken as a measure of both disarmament and non-proliferation. Any treaty that did not take into account stockpiles was not useful since these posed a threat to international security.

Pakistan expressed appreciation for Iran's assessment of the prevailing situation and stressed that the Conference was the world's single multilateral

negotiating body. The reason for the lack of progress was the absence of the necessary political will to make that leap of faith that could unblock the stalemate. The Conference could not afford to ignore the ground realities of the world and could not function in an environment where there were double standards and discrimination. Every Member approached the work of the Conference on the basis of its security interests and the Conference should be sensitive to the security interest of all in order to make progress. As a member of the Group of 21 and the Non-Aligned Movement, Pakistan was committed to the objective on nuclear disarmament, which constituted the Conference on Disarmament's raison d'être. Unfortunately no progress at all had been made in the context of nuclear disarmament and it was high time to focus on this important item on the agenda.

Russia said it was prepared to agree with the priorities outlined by the President and noted that the Conference faced a critical period. The initiative to take the issue of nuclear disarmament out of the Conference and into the auspices of the General Assembly was fraught with danger, marginalised the Conference and, at the end of the day, upset the whole of the United Nation's disarmament machinery. The only way to re-establish confidence in the Conference would be to agree on a programme of work and, in this context, Russia welcomed the work of previous presidents and regretted that none of the previous proposals had been accepted. Different groups had different priorities; for some it was the prohibition of fissile material for nuclear weapons and it was the issue nuclear weapons for others. While Russia's priority was the prevention of an arms race in outer space, other priorities and different opinions had been considered. As an interim step Russia had also suggested agreeing on the so-called simplified programme of work, including discussions on the core main issues of the agenda, which would allow the Conference to carry out its negotiating mandate. It was very important to keep the Conference as the single multilateral disarmament forum. This idea was behind the statement delivered in support of the Conference on Disarmament by a group of 17 countries at the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly's First Committee.

China said that a comprehensive and balanced programme of work would reflect the commitment of the Member States of the Conference to promote multilateral disarmament. Previous presidents had come up with a draft programme of work and delegations had also presented proposals. China encouraged delegations to think creatively and to adopt effective measures

in order to agree on a programme of work at an early date and to move the Conference into substantive work. Members should take into consideration the security concerns of different Member States in order to create an atmosphere of trust.

Algeria said that Iran's Presidency came at a difficult juncture and that the resolution of the General Assembly concerning the establishment of a group of governmental experts to make proposals on the prohibition of fissile material for nuclear weapons and the resolution on the establishment of an open-ended working group on nuclear disarmament were a flagrant expression of the international community's deep concern. In order for the Conference to reaffirm its place in the field of disarmament, progress should be made to commence substantive work on the four core issues on its agenda. Should the Conference be unable to achieve consensus on a comprehensive programme of work, Algeria echoed Russia's proposal for a simplified programme of work in order to at least start discussions on the four core issues.

Egypt reaffirmed the importance of the Conference as the single multilateral negotiating forum and said that the Conference's priority should be to achieve consensus on a comprehensive and balanced programme of work in order to start negotiating instruments, in particular, on nuclear disarmament. The starting point could take as a basis document CD/1933/Rev.1, which had been submitted last year. Any work dealing with fissile material should be carried out in the context of disarmament and non-proliferation together; and should address the issue of stockpiles. Egypt wished the President success in his efforts to take the Conference out of its current impasse.

Indonesia welcomed Iran's plan to work towards the achievement of a programme of work. The Conference remained the single multilateral forum for disarmament negotiations and this principle should be upheld so that the Conference could be put back on track. Ambassador Wibowo of Indonesia, as outgoing President of the Conference, also thanked delegations for their kind words and support during his Presidency and consultations.

Zimbabwe said that while no agreement had been reached on a programme of work yet, Zimbabwe like other members of the Non-Aligned Movement placed great importance on nuclear disarmament and lamented that no progress had been achieved in this regard, despite lip service being paid. Zimbabwe hoped that some progress would be achieved soon.

Ambassador MOHSEN NAZIRI ASL of Iran, **Incoming President of the Conference on Disarmament**, in closing remarks, said that the remarks and views expressed by delegations, as well as existing proposals, would be taken into account. Iran would continue to consult with delegations and was ready to receive constructive views and proposals.