



STATEMENT BY

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TO THE
CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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Mr President,

On this, my first occasion to address the Conference I want to express my appreciation to you and all members of this body for the warmth of your welcome, for your advice and for your encouragement. In light of Egypt's contribution to multilateral Disarmament issues and the fact that our countries work together as members of the New Agenda Coalition it is a particular pleasure to address this meeting during your Presidency of the Conference. I admire the efforts which you have made to encourage us - the members of the CD - to discharge our responsibilities and to adopt a Programme of Work.

Mr President,

Before my appointment to Geneva, I followed our efforts over many years to become a member of this body. I shared in the sense of achievement when Ireland was eventually admitted to membership and believed that it would provide the means to work with other States to progress our common agenda. It was with great disappointment that we found membership coincided with a period of deepening stagnation and growing frustration.

After three years the Conference is still unable to meet its obligations. In that period the world has become neither a safer nor a more secure place. A few months ago we witnessed the devastation wrought by terrorist attacks in New York, Washington and Pennsylvania. The resilience with which the Government and people of the United States responded to those attacks was testimony to the strength of their democracy and the ability of the human spirit to overcome evil. The immediate and continuing support of the international community to the

fight against terrorism bears witness to the strength of our collective commitment to what is a common threat and the effectiveness of international action when allied to political will. At the same time that the events of last September highlighted our vulnerability, the response to them demonstrated the need for focussed international action.

Outside of this meeting room fundamental change is taking place in our concept of what constitutes threats to international peace and security. Yet in this Conference - which its membership take pride in calling the 'sole multilateral forum' for disarmament negotiations - we continue to act as if nothing has altered. In his message of 22 January to the Conference of Disarmament, the Secretary-General of the United Nations expressed the hope that the Conference would respond to the challenges of disarmament and non-proliferation "with dynamism and determination". He pointed out that such a response requires "a complete break with the prolonged inactivity of the Conference". Yet we seem to make no progress. We fail to carry out the mandates given to us by other fora of which we are all members.

Over the past three weeks I have listened carefully to the statements which have been made. All have been thought provoking, most have conveyed a sense of urgency. All reaffirmed the commitment of the membership to an effective Conference on Disarmament. Some referred to preoccupations with issues of national concern. Speaking on behalf of a small country in an increasingly interdependent world we have long since concluded that the best way to guarantee our own security is to work wholeheartedly with others to seek to establish multilaterally agreed rules which effectively address issues of non-proliferation and disarmament.

Mr. President,

Ireland is fully aligned to the statement which Spain made earlier on behalf of the EU. Together with our EU partners, we believe that part of our collective response to the September 11 events must be to reaffirm the value of multilateral measures in disarmament and arms control. There are those who question the utility of such measures, pointing to the danger of non-compliance and the tendency of international agreements to reflect the lowest common denominator. We believe that such criticisms reinforce the need for greater cooperation and should not lessen it.

The report of the Conference to the 56th Session of the General Assembly recognised that the support for the Amorim Proposal contained in document CD/1624 was a basis for further intensified consultations. My delegation, in common with most others in this room believes the Amorim proposal is not only a basis for further consultations but provides a basis for decision by the Conference on its work programme. Ireland believes that this proposal takes into account, to the best possible extent, the interests of all States.

Along with other delegations, we regard the provisions of CD/1624 with respect to agenda item 1 on nuclear disarmament as a compromise. We have consistently favoured the early establishment of an appropriate subsidiary body to deal with nuclear disarmament and that will remain our position. We agree that the CD should also begin negotiations on a Treaty dealing with fissile material. Since 1995 we have in the Shannon mandate a basis for negotiations on this issue. Yet some are linking the launch of negotiations on FMCT to proposals to launch negotiations on other areas. It is difficult to understand the merits in this approach. On the third major issue confronting the Conference, we see merit in embarking on a process which will eventually lead to a legal agreement for the non-weaponisation of outer space.

Mr. President,

When expressing frustration with the inability of the CD at present to discharge its mandate, it is customary to pay tribute to its past history. The negotiation of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty was the last major achievement of this Conference. Yet the Treaty had not entered into force five years after being opened for signature.

An earlier milestone on the disarmament road was the negotiation 30 years ago of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention. In the aftermath of the tragedy of last September we might have expected that the States Parties would approach the fifth Review Conference with a strong sense of common purpose to strengthen its provisions and put in place a verification system. But the Review Conference could not conclude its work and will resume again later this year. With our EU partners, we believe it is important to continue working for the strengthening of the application of the Convention in all its aspects. The problem lies not only with our present failure to move forward but also with our inability to build on earlier achievements.

In an otherwise disappointing scene in Geneva it is well to acknowledge the positive outcome to the work of the Second Review Conference on the Convention to prohibit Certain Conventional Weapons. The extension of the scope of the Convention and its existing protocols is an important development. The agreement to convoke a Group of Governmental Experts on Explosive Remnants of War with a broad mandate that includes the possibility of negotiating a legally binding instrument will allow states parties to respond to the humanitarian concerns that have been expressed on this issue.

Mr. President,

If we all, as we constantly affirm, regard disarmament and arms control as issues of great importance we have to show greater ambition in our future endeavours and a greater willingness to meet the commitments which we entered into in the past. In this context Ireland attaches the utmost importance to the full implementation of the outcome of the 2000 NPT Review Conference. The unequivocal undertaking by the nuclear weapons states to achieve the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals must be accomplished, along with the other 12 steps towards that goal. Ireland, in cooperation with our partners in the New Agenda Coalition, and with all states parties, will actively pursue this blueprint, beginning with next April's Preparatory Committee. Some of the commitments entered into in 2000 relate to the Programme of Work of this body. If we believe in the value of this Conference we need to demonstrate it not in our words but in our decisions.

Thank you, Mr. President.