

Conference on Disarmament
Closing remarks by
Ambassador Carlo Trezza
Permanent Representative of Italy
Geneva, 14th August 2003

Mr. Deputy-Secretary-General, Distinguished Colleagues,

this is the last Plenary Session to take place under the Italian Presidency of the CD and the moment to draw some conclusions about these weeks of work. I have been continuing my consultations both formally and informally until today and I want to thank all colleagues who have given me precious advice and information. I also want to thank those who have taken the floor during the Italian Presidency and who have thus given a constructive contribution to our work. Indeed I believe that in spite of the difficulties we have had and still have to adopt a program of work of the CD, it is important that delegations present their views and give their contribution.

At the last Plenary, three delegations, Ukraine, China and the Russian Federation, made statements with regard to the latest developments. They all referred to the proposal made on June 26th by the Permanent Representative of Belgium on behalf of the 5 Ambassadors on the program of work of the Conference, namely to the suggestion of an amendment to the text of the 5 Ambassadors on PAROS and to an adjustment of the Chinese suggested amendment to the same text. All of the three delegations, although in different ways, had expressed a positive attitude vis à vis such a proposal; their response ranges from acceptance to flexibility. It is also my understanding that the 5-A proposal is now to be considered amended by the June 26th adjustment suggestion. We can

therefore view that proposal for a program of work under a new light, since it now incorporates the above mentioned adjustment. This reading was confirmed to me by some of the authors of that text as well as by some of their representatives.

Distinguished Colleagues,

I have already stated that in my view progress at the CD will not be the result of a miracle, but rather the outcome of a gradual process – centimeter by centimeter – aiming at reducing the gap between the different positions and at revitalizing the Conference. This is why in the past weeks the Presidency, working both in Geneva and in some capitals, has tried to encourage and assess a possible gradual progress.

I have informally consulted the day before yesterday with all the Coordinators and the Representative of China to assess the evaluation of the latest developments within their respective groups. In particular I have asked them how the June 26th proposal and subsequent reactions by three countries are being seen within their groups. I have also had consultations with the former and future presidencies, as well as with other colleagues.

All this has converged into the Presidential consultations which have taken place yesterday.

May I say that I feel moderately encouraged by the result of these consultations since two of the three coordinators made, on behalf of their respective groups, what I consider a positive assessment of the latest developments: i.e. the new language proposed on behalf of the 5 Ambassadors on Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space on June 26th and the reaction by some delegations. Of course further study and

reflection by delegations are necessary. There was no negative evaluation. Other perceptions and priorities were also expressed on issues not specifically related to the June 26th proposal.

I therefore think I can conclude that there is a sound and constructive base for further work. This however is just a small "embryo", one which should be cocooned, safeguarded and nurtured, so that it can flourish and grow in the future. Not all countries and groups can move at the same pace. In the CD, due to the consensus rule, we have to move as a convoy in a climate of understanding and solidarity. I therefore encourage further study and reflection.

Even if we could reach a full common understanding on the June 26th proposal we would not have yet solved the issue of the program of work. So more has to be done to bridge the existing gap on the program of work which should not be a "take it or leave it" package. Some items on the existing list may be considered ready for negotiation and discussion. Some delegations have already mentioned what they consider to be some of the most important items. As I said last week, we should not establish a hierarchy among items. We should take into consideration concerns of all sides and there should be a balance – at least in the long term – among the many items. Several countries have voiced to me the problems they would have in dealing with all of them simultaneously.

Dear Colleagues,

The search for a program of work remains in my opinion the principal task to be pursued at the present stage and I have dedicated my greatest efforts to that. I have also tried, during Italy's presidency, to

address other issues which deserve our attention. I had very useful discussions on "new items" which could be considered in view of the fact that the Agenda of the CD was agreed upon many years ago and that major new developments have taken place in the meantime. I remain of the view that it is legitimate to address those issues. We should examine in particular the way in which these developments can affect our program of work.

In my opening statement I said that a great appreciation goes to those of us who have succeeded in bringing their government officials to address the Conference, because CD issues should be brought to the attention of our political leaders. I wish therefore to pay tribute to the two delegations which have announced that government officials from their countries will address the Conference on Disarmament in the coming weeks. I consider that to be a very positive development.

Let me conclude by thanking the regional Coordinators, the previous and future Presidencies, the Secretariat, all delegations and the interpreters for their support, cooperation and assistance. My best wishes go to my successor in this chair, Ambassador Inoguchi. She will have the task of presiding over this body at an important period, not only because the CD Report will be drafted during her tenure but also because in the past few weeks some significant events have taken place and will continue to occur. I am convinced that the Conference is in good hands at this particular stage. We can place our full support and confidence in the incoming Presidency.