



PERMANENT MISSION OF NIGERIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS OFFICE
AT GENEVA

1, RUE RICHARD WAGNER 1211 GENEVA 2
TELEPHONE 022 730 14 14 FAX 022 734 10 53
TELEGRAM: Nigerian, Geneva

STATEMENT BY

MR. BIODUN OWOSENI

**CHARGE D'AFFAIRES, A.I.,
AND
HEAD OF THE NIGERIAN DELEGATION**

AT THE

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT (CD)

ON "NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT"

Geneva, Thursday 11th March, 2004

Please Check Against Delivery.

Madam President,

On behalf of the Nigerian delegation, let me express my profound pleasure at seeing you assume the Presidency of the Conference of Disarmament (CD), the first time by Malaysia. Coming on the heels of your two immediate predecessors as Presidents, namely Ambassador Inoguchi of Japan and Ambassador Mohammed of Kenya, your assumption in the third straight relay of lady Presidents has brought not only glamour and excitement, but also some measured movement in the right direction, from the otherwise general staleness in this forum in recent times. I have in mind the illuminating and serious efforts, even if modest gains in the areas of focussed discussions on core issues and the enhanced participation of NGOs in the CD work. I am happy that you have intensified efforts to build on these achievements in the past four weeks of your tenure. My delegation also takes this opportunity to congratulate the NGOs in their statement to the CD on the International Women's Day being marked today.

Madam President,

Twenty two years ago, when two of us participated in the UN Fellowship Programme on Disarmament, as young diplomats from our capitals, representing Malaysia and Nigeria, we were particularly elated to watch the robust proceedings of the Conference on Disarmament, on the sidelines, at this very ornate Council Chamber in August/September 1982. As we all recall, the cold war was then still raging and the East-West military-cum-ideological rivalry was at its peak. The CD was thus a politically polarised forum then, from the aftermaths of the Second World War. However, it is on record that the G21 and other developing member-states, spearheaded by the Non-Aligned Movement, rose to the challenges by assuming the spectacular responsibility of channelling global efforts towards multilateral disarmament negotiations which led to remarkable achievements that the CD and its predecessor, the Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarmament (ENCD) could justifiably look back to

with pride. The 1967 Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), the 1981 Convention on Inhumane Weapons (CCW), the 1993 Chemical Weapons Convention, and the 1996 Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty are pertinent in this regard. When complemented by other real disarmament agreements concluded at regional levels such as the 1967 Tlatelolco Treaty establishing nuclear weapon-free zone for Latin America, the 1985 Treaty of Rarotonga for the South Pacific, the 1995 Bangkok Treaty for South-East Asia, and the 1996 Pelindaba Treaty for the African continent, it is thus clearly evident that the developing countries have made significant contributions and collective sacrifices in the sphere of global peace and security as well as regional and multilateral disarmament under effective international control. These initiatives and agreements today underpin the multilateral non-proliferation regime upon which we in the CD are trying to construct an edifice of more concrete, irreversible disarmament agreements that would guarantee lasting peace in a post-cold war era.

Madam President,

As a former UN Disarmament Fellow, and a distinguished representative of Malaysia, the country which currently chairs the NAM and played a vital role in the history of that Organisation, your Presidency provides a unique opportunity to situate the past achievements of the CD vis-à-vis the current stalemate since 1997, now leading the CD to atrophy and consignment to virtual irrelevance in the discharge of its responsibilities. This is why I share your views in your Opening Statement of 19th February 2004, and I quote: "If we do not, together, do something to move the CD forward, it will become irrelevant and will wither away as delegations refocus their limited resources to more pressing demands elsewhere. At a time when the global community is faced with grave challenges to peace and security, the CD has no choice but to get its act together".

Madam President,

The Nigerian delegation believes that the actual challenge facing the CD is to refocus it in order to continue to deliver on its

mandate and objectives, and thus prevent it from the unfortunate complacency manifested in recent years at allowing the CD ultimately to be turned into a lame-duck in the sphere of negotiating meaningful disarmament agreements that could eliminate the terrifying danger posed by nuclear weapons and activities of proliferators, as well as the relentless pursuit of qualitative development of nuclear weapons, being the most destructive in the arsenals of nations today.

Madam President,

In recent times, the CD has been treated to subtle efforts, no doubt meant to re-orientate it from its mandate and set objectives. These subtle efforts, in various guises and excuses, all masquerade under the orchestrated notion that some items on the agenda are not mature for substantive consideration and negotiation leading to agreement. On this altar, the overwhelming challenges of nuclear armament, weaponization of outer space, and the absence of security quarantees to non-nuclear weapon states against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, have all been consigned to stay in the cooler. At the same time, we are also being told that secondary items should be prioritized and tackled headlong instead, because they are likely to enjoy consensus. Thus the CD has continued to be shackled down under the weight of the rule of consensus, which if not quickly rescued to ensure its responsible use, could ultimately determine the fate of the CD itself.

Madam President,

As a representative of Nigeria that contributed so much, in concert with other fellow Non-Aligned countries and G21 members to bring effectiveness and mentioned recorded successes in the past decades, I am at pains to note that the CD, which I first observed with keen admiration from the sidelines in 1982 during the cold war era of tension, is now unfortunately being characterised by stalemate and lack of achievement since 1997, ironically at an era when the World is supposed to be enjoying peace. This implies that while the cold war has happily ended, the fundamental challenges facing

mankind have virtually not changed, namely the issues of common security and common development under a collective international architecture. Thus unilateral approaches and attempts at marginalising the interests and aspirations of other countries will not solve the common global problems or lead to any lasting peace. This is at the core of the crisis confronting the CD, using the lack of consensus as the alibi or convenient escape mechanism.

Madam President,

The CD and the overall multilateral disarmament agenda are thus at a cross-road. Is the world going to move forward into an era of meaningful accelerated disarmament, with the net dividends of decreasing tension, real peace, mutual trust, and accelerated global development? Or are we going to be bedevilled with, perhaps different but equally deadly post-cold war era foes of laager fortifications as substitute for collective security, while the aggressive forces of poverty and underdevelopment hold sway in three-quarters of the world, with predictable global consequences in terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, destabilisation by non-state actors through illegal trafficking and acquisition of small arms and light weapons in many developing countries, among other new transnational threats to security and development?

Madam President,

At the bottom of the unrelenting global tension is fear and insecurity, mainly resulting from the overkill military capability of the rich and the mighty, vis-à-vis the reality of defencelessness of the vast poor and under-developed. Reinforcing this, more than any weapons system, is the huge, devastating nuclear arsenals in the hands of a few that can nevertheless obliterate human civilization several times over in warfare. Since all weapons systems ever acquired, including atomic bombs, have been used in warfare, or are developed to be used, the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against their use at anytime, in order to save our and succeeding generations from this scourge.

This is why my delegation believes that the CD has no choice but to work harder, as a topmost priority, in achieving a Convention Prohibiting the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Nuclear Weapons and on their Destruction (i.e. Nuclear Weapons Convention), as the most important goal assigned to the CD by the First Special Session on Disarmament (SSOD-I) in 1979, to which my delegation remains committed. This also explains why Nigeria believes that the pride of place should be given by CD to nuclear disarmament, as the most crucial initiative that can eternally nail the coffin on the incubus of nuclear proliferation, and thus ensure the consolidation of post-cold war peace and expected concomitant accelerated global development.

Unfortunately, consensus is still being prevented on this important item. But it is on record that those who are preventing consensus on the CD Programme of Work since 1997 are not the members of the G21 which have worked tirelessly in the past, and continue to work assiduously towards the resumption of substantive negotiations, in this forum, the latest being the cross-group A5 proposal that now enjoys preponderant support in the CD. Although the A5 proposal does not meet Nigeria's expectation in the area of giving a negotiating mandate on nuclear disarmament, we nevertheless support it in the usual spirit of flexibility.

The antecedents of the past when important multilateral disarmament agreements were negotiated and concluded, including the Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Biological Weapons Convention, the Chemical Weapons Convention, and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty earlier mentioned, point to the inescapable fact that any meaningful agreement can only be a product of give-and-take, taking consideration of the long-term benefits and security to the entire international community, and not a take-it-or-leave it, winner-takes-all situation that is being indirectly foisted on the CD on important issues on the agenda. Thus my delegation believes that while consensus has never been easily reached in the CD, even during past negotiations leading to those important agreements mentioned, ultimate consensus can also be secured in the sphere of nuclear disarmament, if there is sufficient flexibility and necessary political

will to exorcise the terrible ghost of global nuclear annihilation, once and for all.

Madam President,

The history of proliferation of nuclear weapons illustrates that by failing to curb or stop their own vertical proliferation, the nuclear powers have inadvertently encouraged other states to proliferate horizontally, from 2 nuclear powers in 1950 to at least 8 states today. What is true of nuclear weapons is also true for other weapons of mass destruction. The lack of seriousness in nuclear disarmament has unfortunately generated certain impressions around the world, questioning the bonafide commitment of the nuclear powers to non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament. The continuing technological sophistication of these weapons, in violation of commitment under Article VI of the NPT, and refusal to conclude a legally-binding multilateral agreement to extend Negative Security Assurances against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons to the developing countries that have renounced the possession of nuclear weapons can only reinforce these impressions.

In view of the obvious glorification of the possession of nuclear weapons, so to say, can the rest of the World be expected, legitimately, to fold their arms unconcerned, without apprehension about the lessons of history where slave trade, colonialism, and other numerous forms of brutal subjugation, which today are at the root of our underdevelopment, especially in Africa, had been accomplished by sheer force of military might against the defenceless poor? The Nigerian delegation thus believes that the five major nuclear powers, as permanent members of the Security Council, should re-commit themselves to genuine nuclear disarmament, because any presumption of their indefinite possession of nuclear weapons cannot be compatible with sustaining global non-proliferation. As a first, tangible step in that direction, they should lead the way to ensure the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), as demonstration of good faith in this regard.

Madam President,

Another point I want to share with you on the way forward is whether the time is not ripe for the CD to examine and perhaps, review the utility or effectiveness of the monthly rotational Presidency of the CD by member-states. While it may have served a useful purpose in the past, in order to balance different political perspectives during the cold war era, my view is that it is increasingly becoming a mere rotation or change of musical chair, with very little to celebrate in it, because it leaves insufficient time at the disposal of successive Presidents to carry out serious, behind-the-scene consultations with various groups which are often the grease that oils the wheel of flexibility on difficult issues in the CD. Certainly, many delegations will share the view that what is crucial for all of us here as member-states of the CD, as well as the international community as a whole, is not the number of Presidents we have in rapid monthly successions, or where they come from, in particular, but the more important achievement of a breakthrough and concrete progress in the Programme of Work. In this vein, consideration could be given that a President's tenure be extended to, at least, two months in the future, in order to give a reasonable time for consolidation of Presidential efforts and initiatives. If this involves a change in the Rule of Procedure, so let it be, and my delegation will support such a change, in order to respond to and cope with one of the peculiar challenges of our time. The recent agreement on the enhanced participation of the NGOs in CD Work is most welcome by my delegation, as a good example, in this regard, even if the modalities are still being worked out.

Madam President,

As you finish your tenure as President this week, and as I also bid farewell to the CD, let me conclude by reminding all of us in the CD that disarmament is not an end in itself, but is geared towards lessening of global tension, enthronement of peace and security for all nations, reduction of military acquisitions to the lowest possible level of armaments, and the release of scarce resources for global development. In this vein, Nigeria reiterates that the ultimate way

forward for the CD, in order not to slide irretrievably into irrelevance, is to take the bull by the horn and hold tenaciously to its responsibility to the global community in its quest for genuine disarmament. Pursuit of security through acquisition and possession of the most sophisticated and deadly weapons, which are essentially wasteful overkill, on the one hand, when co-existing with widespread material want, poverty, and underdevelopment on the other hand, can only breed a sense of injustice, frustration and insecurity in many parts of the World. We must thus appreciate the inter-relationships between disarmament, global security and common development in order to see our way through in the CD. This goes without saying that in order to attain common global security and development, the G21 and other member-states committed to a nuclear-free world, must not relent, but persevere, whatever the odds or obstacles on their path, either now or in future, in confronting admittedly painstaking but inescapable challenges of achieving nuclear disarmament as the linchpin to successful comprehensive disarmament in general. This is actually the *raison d'être* for the creation of the CD in 1979, its continued existence today, and the major determinant of its place in history, as the sole multilateral negotiating body of the global community on disarmament. Efforts at escapism or gerrymandering from these challenges will continue to lead the CD into deeper quagmire, which should be avoided at all cost, in the interest of humanity. Nigeria calls upon all CD members, including the NGOs, to the rescue.

Thank you.