

**Highlights of the informal plenary meetings on
“Negative security assurances”, “New weapons of mass destruction: radiological
weapons”, and “Comprehensive programme on disarmament”**

**Statement by Ambassador Khasbazaryn Bekhbat of Mongolia
on 24 June 2004**

Monsieur le President,

Comme je prends la parole pour la première fois sous votre Présidence, permettez-moi de vous adresser mes félicitations chaleureuses ainsi que tous mes meilleurs vœux de succès à l'occasion de votre accession à la Présidence de la Conférence du désarmement. Soyez assuré de la coopération et du soutien sans réserve de ma délégation dans l'accomplissement des tâches, aussi importantes qu'exigeantes, qui sont maintenant les vôtres.

J'aimerais également saisir l'occasion pour remercier sincèrement le Secrétariat qui m'a offert son assistance si généreuse dans la rédaction de ma déclaration dont je vais vous donner la lecture en anglais.

Mr President,

The purpose of my statement today is to present the highlights of the informal plenary meetings held under my presidency on 3, 10 and 17 June 2004, during which the Conference discussed various aspects of the following items on its agenda: “Effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons” (item 4), “New types of weapons of mass destruction and new systems of such weapons; radiological weapons” (item 5), and “Comprehensive programme of disarmament” (item 6).

As in the previous report, it is not my intention to provide a detailed summary of statements, nor a thorough analysis of nuances in the views expressed during the discussions. Instead, I would limit my presentation to the main issues that were highlighted during the discussion of the above agenda items.

As expected, views on **negative security assurances** to non-nuclear-weapon States differed considerably, and the differences followed a well-established pattern. At one end of the spectrum, there were advocates of a multilateral, unconditional and legally binding instrument negotiated in the Conference on Disarmament, and at the other, those who considered the existing assurances provided by nuclear-weapon States, either in unilateral declarations or in the context of nuclear-weapon-free zones, sufficient. Others were of the view that the NPT was the preferred forum for dealing

with the issue of security assurances, although some were also ready to accept dealing with NSA within the context of the mandate of an Ad Hoc Committee on nuclear disarmament.

Furthermore, while some States were of the view that all those countries that renounced the option of possessing nuclear weapons had a legitimate right to unconditional and legally binding security assurances, others linked the right to such assurances to full compliance with the provision of the NPT. Others were of the opinion that the importance of security assurances was greatly exaggerated, and that a legally binding treaty was neither achievable nor relevant to today's threats.

On the issue of **new types of weapons of mass destruction**, delegations mainly addressed the issue of radiological weapons or - in other words – radiological dispersal devices. Some, however, tried to explore new avenues on this subject, be it new weapons, such as, *inter alia*, radio-frequency weapons and information operation weapons, or threats against critical facilities and infrastructure that could endanger the proper functioning of societies. The latter was also addressed in the context of the "Comprehensive programme of disarmament". There were proposals to establish criteria for identifying new weapons of mass destruction, and it was suggested that the Special Coordinator envisaged in the A5 proposal could provide more insight in this matter.

In addressing radiological weapons, appreciation was expressed for the efforts already made, in particular those by the IAEA, aimed at strengthening the protection of nuclear material. In particular, references were made to the current revision of the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Materials, the Code of Conduct on the Safety and Security of Radioactive Sources and the Convention on Nuclear Safety.

While some States remain convinced of the usefulness of a global instrument to ban radiological weapons, and on the role of the CD in this field, others were doubtful as to the efficacy of seeking a ban on radiological weapons since States were not likely to develop such weapons. Accordingly, they were in favour of, *inter alia*, strengthening existing measures related to the protection of nuclear materials, such as those by the IAEA, the G8 initiatives, and the Global Threat Reduction Initiative, as well as addressing the issue of the potential use of radiological devices by terrorists.

Discussions on the item entitled "**Comprehensive programme of disarmament**" led to recalling the original objectives of this item, as well as to exploring its potential utility in addressing arms control and disarmament issues that are not explicitly included on the agenda of the Conference. There was a proposal to expand its scope so as to include also non-proliferation issues and to make it applicable to both conventional and nuclear weapons. More detailed proposals included, *inter alia*, addressing such issues under this item as verification of and compliance with key arms control and disarmament regimes; certain aspects of small arms and light weapons, including the development of concepts on brokering of these weapons, contribution to the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action by comparing regional experiences in this regard, or new threats and challenges to international security. In this context, some delegations raised also the issue of critical facilities and infrastructure. There were also proposals to address comprehensive approaches to international security matters under this item.

Finally, as the discussions of items on the Conference's agenda progress, questions of the possible follow-up to this exercise have also been raised. Lively discussions with the elements of interaction among delegations prompted some of them to express interest in the continuation of informal plenary meetings, which would be devoted to specific topics that could be identified and agreed upon. There were also proposals that the President of the Conference commence consultations on the ways and means of continuing of the discussions in a structured manner.

I would like to add my voice to these proposals. As we all have experienced in this part of the session, the efforts of my predecessors in office have generated a new momentum in the Conference on Disarmament. Frank and comprehensive discussions have engaged almost all of our Members in clarifying their views on all the items on the agenda of the CD. This may be the long awaited sign that, after many years of impasse, the Conference has finally moved forward from discussions on the programme of work to a new stage – that of actually addressing the substance of the items on its agenda. This might be a very modest achievement, but it is worth making additional effort to consolidate and nurture our gains. Monsieur le President, Je vous remercie.
