

Allow me to extend my congratulations for your assumption of the Presidency and to assure you of our full support in the carrying out of these weighty responsibilities that go with your office.

We are marking today the reconvening of the CD for its third and final session of this year. In a matter of weeks we will be turning our attention to the preparation of the report to UNGA. I fear that we will have to report that, once again, an agreement on a Program of Work has eluded us. On its core business, this conference has failed to get into gear.

Given the overwhelming priority accorded the Program of Work, I believe by all delegations here, we would hope to see in the balance of this session, now that policy reviews in certain capitals have been completed, a series of discussions focussed on the key elements of the proposed work plan with a view to hammering out a compromise. This is surely not beyond the capacities of the delegations assembled here given the right political will.

From our perspective it is important to fashion this work program from the materials at hand. The A5 proposal is the quarry from which we should select the building blocks for our Program of Work. Canada can accept the A5 as is, or any reasonable variant thereof that could command consensus support. In this regard, we have suggested that a stream-lined version of A5 consisting of renewal of negotiations on a FMCT under the agreed Shannon mandate, coupled with establishment of Ad Hoc Committees to discuss nuclear disarmament and Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space, would represent a solid, initial program to get the CD back into an operational mode. Such a starting package would not be prejudicial to eventual consideration of a range of other issue areas and might help to forge a consensus around a work program that reflects the CD's unique mandate and focus.

It is in this light, that we consider the proposal concerning landmines as presented by the US delegation. We followed with interest the announcement on FMCT negotiations, and will want to come back to this. CD member states will be aware of the important contribution the USA has made, and continues to make, in the efforts of the international community to address the humanitarian devastation wrought by landmines and UXO in many parts of the world. Canada and the US have worked as partners in this effort in many regions, not least in our own hemisphere where remarkable progress has been achieved. We and others have also worked constructively with the US on landmines-related issues in other fora, notably in securing agreement last year on the CCW Explosive Remnants of War Protocol. That partnership continues with regard to the US proposal for a CCW protocol on anti-vehicle mines, where we are one of some thirty co-sponsors of the American initiative.

At the same time, it is recognized that our two countries have adopted different approaches regarding the need for a global ban on anti-personnel mines (APMs); and Canada is joined with 142 other states parties in its commitment to a comprehensive ban under the Ottawa Convention. These differences have not, however, undermined our ability to work together on humanitarian mine action or to collaborate in fora like the CCW; and we have maintained - and remain committed to maintaining -- a constructive dialogue on our respective views on the Ottawa Convention itself.

It is in that spirit that we have explained, through informal discussions with US representatives here, in Ottawa and in Washington, the particular and fundamental difficulties that the US proposal tabled today creates for us and, we assume, for the 41 other CD members who are also parties to the Ottawa Convention, in our view. All representatives present will no doubt appreciate the implications this proposal has for parties to the Ottawa treaty's comprehensive, unreservable ban on all types of APMs— including its ban on all trade in all forms of APM. Clearly and simply put, such states will not be in a position to enter negotiations on a lesser ban, aimed at arresting trade in one category of APMs alone but implying the acceptability of trade in other categories of these weapons.

Against this background, Canadian officials in Ottawa, Washington and Geneva have sought in discussions with their American counterparts to suggest a range of possible alternative courses of action, whereby it might be possible to advance some of the purposes of the US proposal tabled here today. These alternatives include steps that might be taken among non-parties to the Ottawa Convention alone. And they range through initiatives that might be pursued with broader support, including that of Canada, in other fora such as the CCW, where we are co-sponsors of the US proposal on anti-vehicle mines (which includes a call for no trade in the specific types of mines covered by that proposal). Canada stands ready to work with the USA and other interested delegations on such alternatives.

Let me conclude by returning to the broader context of the CD: as I indicated earlier, we believe the principal current focus of this body should be on fashioning a Program of Work on the basis of the existing proposals before the Conference. To introduce a new and, for many here, a problematic proposal for negotiation, in absence of a comprehensive response to the existing outstanding proposal is frankly a complicating factor to our efforts to arrive at a generally acceptable Program of Work for the CD. We would therefore encourage the US delegation to reflect further on this particular initiative and to consider whether it, or elements thereof, would not be better suited for follow-up in other ways and/or in other fora, most notably the CCW where there exists a solid foundation on which to build something that would enjoy broad support from the outset.