

OPENING STATEMENT
BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT
AMBASSADOR WEGGER CHR. STRØMMEN OF NORWAY
ON 16 JUNE 2005

Distinguished Colleagues,

We live at a time when terrorists have demonstrated that they are willing to use any method and any opportunity to kill innocent civilians, anywhere in the world.

At a time when terrorists are seeking access to nuclear material and weapons of mass destruction.

At a time when non-state actors are trading in nuclear material and other components that may threaten peace and stability.

At a time when, for the first time ever, we witness defection from the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

At a time when there has been cast doubt about compliance with the NPT-provisions by States parties.

At a time when the process of nuclear disarmament is too slow and not sufficiently transparent.

Distinguished Colleagues,

Taken the dangerous global security situation into account one should assume that the appropriate international response would be to enhance joint efforts to address the problems. But is that the case?

No. We are faced with an extraordinary paradox: the gap between real threats and active pursuit of solutions has widened. Obviously, some progress has been made, like the Proliferation Security Initiative and the Moscow Treaty. But at the multilateral arena we have become paralyzed. Last month the NPT Review Conference ended with a final report in which we agreed who had been present, but with no single substantive recommendation. This has not happened since 1990, but I dare say that we needed joint international action even more in 2005 than 15 years ago.

And what about the Conference on disarmament? As you know we may soon celebrate a decade without agreement on a programme of work for the conference.

Distinguished Colleagues,

People outside this chamber must wonder. Do not members of the CD find nuclear disarmament, prohibition of the production of fissile material for nuclear weapon purposes and all the other issues on our agenda important enough to pursue?

It may not be so hard to explain that different Governments have different security priorities. But it is harder to explain that we keep these priorities hostage of each other, to the extent that we end up in total deadlock and impasse.

Distinguished Colleagues,

We keep telling each other that "the CD must solve its problems". But this has become an obscure approach. The CD has no problem to solve. What is the CD? The CD is a conference room, a secretariat and a number of Government envoys.

The CD is a potential tool. No more. No less.

We must stop believing that the impasse of the CD can be resolved by clever procedural drafting exercises among ourselves.

Distinguished Colleagues,

The passivity in this chamber is nothing but a reflection of insufficient political willingness in a number of capitals to negotiate treaty law, as we are mandated to do, in the disarmament field. I am convinced that if new or additional political willingness is mobilized in these capitals in favour of arms control negotiations, they will let us, the delegates here in Geneva, know.

As your president I will be at your disposal, at any time. Please let me know if you have news from your capitals. I will spare no effort and stand ready to conduct any kind of consultations you may wish to have on a possible programme of work. But I hope they could be based on, even the slightest, modification of existing instructions and positions on the outstanding issues which we all are familiar with.

Meanwhile, I intend to convene 4 formal plenary meetings, in addition to this one. They will take place on Thursday 23. June, Tuesday 28. June, Thursday 30. June and Thursday 7. July. As customary, delegations are invited at every meeting to make statements about issues relevant to security and disarmament, including so called "new issues". If delegations wish to make statements on the four subject matters from the CD's agenda identified in the "food for thought"-paper, without prejudice to any order of priority between them or their priority in relation to other issues and bearing in mind that all of CD's agenda items are of utmost importance, I encourage ~~these~~ ^{the} delegations to do so in the following order: matters related to nuclear disarmament at the meeting on 23. June, fissile material cut-off on 28. June, outer space on 30. June and security assurances on 7. July. If delegations find it more appropriate to make statements following the order of the adopted agenda of the CD they are of course most welcome to do so in the order they prefer.

I thank you all.