

Japan

DELEGATION OF JAPAN TO THE CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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STATEMENT BY H.E. MR. ITSUNORI ONODERA

PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF JAPAN

Geneva, 17th March 2005

Mr. President,

First of all, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. Caughley, on your assumption of the Presidency. Let me assure you of my country's fullest support for your untiring efforts and initiatives.

It is a great honor for me to be invited to speak before this historical forum. Today, more than ever, this multilateral negotiating body has an urgent task to undertake. This Conference has produced various multilateral agreements on disarmament and non-proliferation. Those agreements constitute indispensable tools to secure international peace and security. Recently, however, these multilateral instruments have faced various challenges; loopholes have been unearthed. In this broader context expectations on the CD are truly high. The CD has already identified key subjects to be tackled. Nevertheless, it has remained at a standstill for almost a decade. This situation is a source of great disappointment and grave concern for the world. This stalemate should be overcome.

Mr. President,

This year, the year 2005, is of particular importance to the CD.

Firstly, it marks the 60th anniversary of the atomic bombings in Japan. The ever stronger voice of Japanese civil society is ardently calling for the elimination of nuclear arsenals. Japan is the only country to have suffered nuclear devastation. Japan has a moral responsibility to the international community to advocate the total elimination of nuclear weapons, and has conducted vigorous diplomatic efforts to realize concrete measures leading to this aim. In this practical and incremental approach, the CD has played, and should continue to play, a pivotal role to achieve such concrete disarmament measures.

Secondly, the 2005 NPT Review Conference will be held this year in May. The CD and the NPT regime are separate entities, with respective roles to play. Yet both are key

components of the current nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime and should therefore play mutually reinforcing roles. The commencement of substantive work in the CD is necessary to give a strong impetus to the upcoming Review Conference.

It is therefore an opportune moment for the CD to surpass its current stalemate and to respond to the world's expectations.

Mr. President,

Different reasons are given to explain the CD's inability to reach consensus on a program of work: differing priorities among the respective regional groups, so-called linkage problems or, simply, a lack of political will. In short, there is no consensus among CD member states on which issues are the most important for the CD to address.

I would like to make the following suggestions to push past this impasse and create a revitalized and productive momentum in the CD to return it to its substantive task.

Firstly, given the rapidly changing security environment, we can no longer afford to continue lengthy procedural discussions. The CD has to offer new instruments to deal with the imminent security challenges facing us today. From this perspective, the FMCT, prohibiting the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons, is extremely important, not only for nuclear disarmament, but also for nuclear non-proliferation. By halting the future production of fissile material, the FMCT will contribute to the elimination of a potential source of proliferation. For this reason, Japan considers the commencement of negotiations on the FMCT a priority for the CD. There may well exist different perspectives with regard to the possible substance of negotiations. However, no Member State, as far as I am aware, disagrees on the commencement of negotiations itself. Negotiations should begin without further delay, and eventual questions on verification can be resolved during negotiations.

Secondly, I would like to point out that, although the real cause of the stalemate in the CD could be attributed to a lack of flexibility from states, there may be room for improvement in the area of current CD procedures. More consistent and harmonized management by successive presidents could facilitate consensus-building. Concurrent with the United Nations reform currently underway, the CD should be examined in a new light to make its operation more efficient and result-oriented. Lack of self-restructuring in any organization can only lead to decline. International fora like the CD are no exception.

In this context I would like to remind you that the CD limits its membership to only 65 states. 23 countries are on the waiting list to enter. Membership was limited to ensure the efficiency of the forum. Thus, we have a strong moral obligation to proceed with negotiations in the field of disarmament for the sake of the international community as a whole.

Before concluding, I would like to draw your attention to the DPRK issue. While countries concerned were making diplomatic efforts to achieve a peaceful resolution to the nuclear issue through the Six-Party Talks, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the DPRK issued a statement on 10 February 2005 announcing that the DPRK would suspend its participation in the Six-Party Talks for an indefinite period and that it had manufactured nuclear weapons. This announcement is extremely regrettable, and the international community, including the Government of Japan, has already expressed its deep concern over the statement on several occasions, including the latest IAEA Board of Governors Meeting in early March.

The nuclear programs of the DPRK not only represent a direct threat to the peace and stability of the Northeast Asian region including Japan, but also pose a serious challenge to the international nuclear non-proliferation regime.

The international community must not accept, under any circumstances, any development, acquisition, possession, test or transfer of nuclear weapons by the DPRK.

The international community should further call on the DPRK to ensure the complete disarmament of all of its nuclear programs under credible international verification. It is important for the international community, including the IAEA, to deal squarely with the situation, so as to avoid any possible regrets in the future.

Japan firmly believes that the DPRK nuclear issue should be solved peacefully through dialogue. The Six-Party Talks currently represent the most realistic framework and should continue to be fully utilized.

Japan urges the DPRK to agree to the resumption of the Six-Party Talks at an early date without preconditions. Japan, together with China, the host country of the Six-Party Talks, and other partners, is ready to continue to make every effort for a resolution through diplomatic efforts, primarily by actively contributing to the Six-Party Talks.

Furthermore, Japan believes that, should there be no progress made towards resolving the DPRK nuclear issue, the international community should deal with the situation in a more befitting manner and with a greater sense of urgency.

Mr. President,

Japan ardently hopes that the sense of urgency to recommence negotiations, widely shared by members of the CD, results in the start of substantive work this year. I can assure the Conference that Japan will continue to play its part in the promotion of disarmament and non-proliferation and renew its strong commitment to constructive multilateralism.

Thank you.