

OPENING STATEMENT BY INCOMING PRESIDENT
OF THE CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT,
AMBASSADOR JOSEPH AYALOGU
(NIGERIA) ON 24 MARCH 2005

Distinguished Delegates,

I would like to share with you my views on what the CD will be seized with during Nigeria's Presidency. But first, I wish to pay special tribute to my predecessors this year, Ambassadors Chris Sanders of the Netherlands and Tim Caughley of New Zealand for the excellent manner in which they have conducted the affairs of the CD. Their enthusiasm, commitment and diligence have inspired me tremendously. Both have tried to carry along the succeeding Presidents, a move that has not only contributed immensely in ensuring a smooth transition but also assisted in sustaining the momentum created by Ambassador Sanders at the beginning of this session. I intend to continue and build on that with the hope of moving the CD forward. Just as my predecessors did, I intend to keep my successor the Ambassador of Norway and others informed of the process.

I believe the current challenges facing the CD require a sober reflection on our part and a rethink of our positions, if we are to make any progress. The realities and challenges that confront our world would require multilateral solutions. Our collective security therefore, can only be realised, when all of us, that have been

entrusted to negotiate disarmament agreements by the international community, adopt the spirit of give and take. This is the only way to achieve convergence necessary to resume our work and to reassure the international community of the credibility of this body.

I am convinced there are opportunities to make progress, if we all are willing. I therefore intend to explore whatever options are available by continuing consultations with the Regional Coordinators and where necessary, individual delegations on the "Food-for Thought". In this regard, I need your cooperation and support.

The "Food-for-Thought" paper, which I personally view as an evolution of the A5 proposal, is a good initiative but it has not yet received the necessary support from all of us to enable us move our discussions forward. It appeared to have been chewed and swallowed by many. However, others appeared not to have chewed it at all, while others that chewed and swallowed have not allowed it to digest. I agree somewhat that with time there could be the possibility of more accommodation on the "Food-for-Thought" paper as it is or with some amendments. The difficulty is for how long can we wait. These options can only become evident and available if all delegations were to be open and forthcoming in stating their positions and proffering alternative proposals likely to facilitate consensus.

While therefore pursuing responses to the "Food-for-Thought" paper, I intend that if after two weeks, there were no positive indications of broad support for it, I would focus the search light on the A5 proposal. This is because since it was proposed, majority of delegations have indicated readiness to accept programme of work based on the A5. In that regard, I would explore possibilities of agreeing on a work programme based on the A5 whilst not disconnecting from the food for Thought track. This multi-dimensional approach may have its constraints but because there are some similarities between A5 and "Food-for-Thought" paper, I envisage the possibility that we might at the end of the exercise clearly identify and narrow down to where they diverge and concentrate our efforts, including through consultations, to achieve common ground on reaching a programme of work. I therefore plan to meet with

Regional Coordinators, in due course to elicit their groups' response to the following questions.

- (i) What are the problems in your groups in commencing discussions on the Five Ambassadors Proposal (A-5)? and
- (ii) What are the amendments if any, or the accommodation that your group is willing to make on the A5 in order to facilitate discussions?

Flexibility and mutual accommodation shown in response to the questions may allow us a window of opportunity to move out of the jinx in agreeing on a work programme. In responding to these questions, I urge the regional groups and delegations to look at the issues in a comprehensive and balanced way, in order to address the threats and challenges faced globally. I appeal for the spirit of give and take to guide responses to the questions. I realize that the problem we face is political but I am hopeful that the momentum generated by the High-Level Segment in this year will help us to move forward to advance the course of collective security and peace.

My tenure as President has coincidentally fallen within the period of the 2005 NPT Review Conference. It is common understanding that there is some synergy between the two processes i.e. the CD and the NPT Review Conference. The outcome of one can positively impact on the other. It would have been best for a positive change in the process of the CD so that the euphoria can possibly energize NPT. But perhaps time is too short to expect such changes in positions held over years by various delegations. However, I believe that the outcome of the NPT Review Conference should in many ways energize or catalyze the CD.

I thank all of you.