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Permanent Representation of Switzerland
to the Conference on Disarmament

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CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

Statement by

Ambassador Jürg Streuli

Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the Conference on Disarmament

Geneva, 9 September 2009

Mr. President,

Let me first thank you, and all the previous 2006 presidents, for their tireless efforts towards our common goal of adopting a work programme this year. We also appreciate the efforts by the seven coordinators who led our substantive discussions over the year.

You have guided us through difficult waters towards the adoption of the CD report. While the draft report, in our view, could be more forward-looking and more ambitious, we do support your efforts on finding a consensus. We can go along with the compromise language presented at the end of last week and believe the proposed text factually reflects what happened in this chamber after the six presidents were forced to acknowledge that the conference would not arrive at a consensus on the programme of work.

Mr. President,

I would like to support the statement made by Norway on September 2nd. The Norwegian delegation called for a number of reforms of the CD so that we can work more efficiently. They also called for more creative approaches on moving forwards and explored the possibility of incorporating civil society, which has in other processes played such an active and prominent role. I would especially agree that we should seriously reflect on the rules of procedures and the way the consensus principle can be used to disable progress on procedural matters. Indeed, a cynic would say that the consensus principle is the most efficient tool in this room as it has single-handedly blocked us from doing what we are here to do, namely negotiate.

So, was 2008 a lost year? In absolute terms: yes. We wasted time we could have used to negotiate a ban on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons. We wasted time we could have used on our other core agenda issues. And we wasted time we could have used to tackle additional disarmament and non-proliferation challenges. But despite this, we did not move backwards. We are now approaching the end of a year which brought us a small but important step forward. And crucially, at the beginning of 2009, there will be a strong and solid base from which to start our work.

A draft programme of work will be on the table next year and it will hopefully receive even more support than this year. Document CD1840 is the way forward and remains the best possible compromise to start our work. It builds on the approach of last year and elegantly combines the earlier documents which brought us so close to a breakthrough. Next year, we do not start from scratch but can build on the logic of CD1840. And once more, there is room for hope that next year is a year of change; change which can bring us back on the right track.

The right track, in the view of my delegation, is to initiate negotiations without preconditions on an FMCT. For a very long time now, Switzerland has stated that we see such a treaty as an essential third pillar to complement the existing nuclear regime. An FMCT, which under the proposed programme of work could be negotiated without any preconditions regarding scope and verification, should serve both disarmament and nonproliferation purposes. And this year's consultations, under the able guidance of Ambassador Tarui of Japan, showed that it is the clear priority for most delegations.

Mr. President,

Let me briefly say a few words about one of the most positive developments in the CD over the last few years: I am referring to the cooperation between the six presidents. The so-called P6 platform, which has now been used for three consecutive years, has again proved to be an effective instrument for coherently and successfully steering this body over the year. I strongly believe that if we want to break the deadlock in the coming years, we would be well advised to build on the P6 mechanism together with the appointment of coordinators for the seven items of the agenda. We are sure that the incoming presidents of 2009 will welcome co-operating in this spirit, and Switzerland, as one of the six presidents last year, would certainly encourage them to do so.

Finally, Mr. President, let me thank you personally and the entire team of the Venezuelan mission for all your hard work. Your task is of course not yet finished. After the adoption of the report here in the CD and the resolution in the 1st Committee in New York you will be needed to facilitate the transition to the first President of 2009. We wish you success in these final tasks of your presidency. Thank you, Mr. President.