Statement
by
Ambassador Hellmut Hoffmann
Permanent Representative of Germany to the Conference on Disarmament
Geneva, 11 June 2013

Note: The following is a reconstruction of an impromptu statement.

Mr. President,

I have no prepared statement, in fact I did not have the intention to take the floor today.

Perhaps part of the problem of the CD is that we have far too many prepared and very long statements.

In view of what I have heard today and in the interest of stimulating an interactive debate I would like to put a question to the distinguished representative of Zimbabwe who has made even two statements today on behalf of the Group of 21.

But before I come to that I would like to thank the departing representatives of the Republic of Korea and the United Kingdom for their cooperation and friendship and I would like to wish them well for their personal future. I wish Ambassador Adamson all the best in her effort, as she put it “to make sense of it all” when she will go to Harvard soon, that is of what she has experienced here in the CD. I would ask her to copy me in when or - should one rather say if - she will indeed have found the sense of what we have been doing here in the last couple of years. That is indeed not an easy task! I wish to thank Ambassador Adamson in particular for her engagement in ATT matters – she was one of my favourite sparring partners, not least with regard to the ATT, going back to the discussions we had in New York in 2009, and I am pleased to congratulate her and the UK, which was very active on this front, on the adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty in the UN General Assembly a few weeks ago by a very convincing majority of votes.

Mr. President,

Let me now turn to the question which I would like to put to the distinguished Ambassador of Zimbabwe speaking on behalf of the G 21.
I hope I have not missed anything among the many familiar points and steps to be taken he raised in his two extensive statements - and if that were indeed the case, I would be pleased to be corrected.

Listing all his points about what should be done to advance nuclear disarmament he also said that the G 21 were in favour of full implementation of the NPT Action Plan of 2010.

Now, what I missed was any reference at all to the project of banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons purposes, which is an important element in the Action Plan and which is a project which has kept us busy in the CD for a long time, as we all know.

Of course, everyone is entitled to his opinion and also to changing his opinion – but I have to say I am genuinely puzzled over this omission. Let me try to explain why:

Within the last four years two programmes of work were either adopted or tabled for adoption in this Chamber. The first one was CD/1864 which was adopted by consensus under the Presidency of Algeria, a notable member of the G 21, in 2009, – but, as we know, never implemented. The second Programme of Work was CD/1933 Rev.1, which was tabled by the Presidency of Egypt, another notable member of the G 21, in 2012, which could unfortunately not be adopted because of the objection of one delegation.

I mention this because the gist or decisive feature of both texts was that they clearly defined the operational task the CD should take up, namely to negotiate or to work on or deal with – in this context I do not much care much about which of the verbs you use – a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons purposes.

I wonder if the distinguished representative of Zimbabwe or any other member of the G 21 could enlighten me as to why this fact seems to have done the famous disappearing act from the G 21 statements we heard today? I have noted that in the Syrian statement we just heard there was a very brief reference to this issue, but only along the lines that it was not true that the issue of fissile material was the only one “ripe for negotiation”. Can I say in this connection as an aside: Whatever one thinks about relative priorities – and we certainly agree that all topics on the CD agenda are important - I have never understood why NPT member states should have a difficulty in banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons purposes and for that matter to start negotiations on this topic immediately.

So, Mr. President, my questions is this: Are we supposed to conclude from the G 21 statements we heard today that the G 21 are actually backtracking from the fundamental approach taken in draft programmes of work which were tabled by Presidents representing members of the G 21?

Mr. President,

It seems to me that this is a fundamental question because if we do not arrive at a sufficient degree of clarity with respect to the fundamental approach we want to take as far as our operational task is concerned and if we do not achieve clarity about whether the fundamental operational approach contained in CD/1864 or CD/1933/Rev 1 is still valid – never mind how we express it in detail – I am afraid the CD will never manage to find consensus on a programme of work.

Thank you.