Statement
by

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Mr. President,

- The CD must not give up its efforts to find agreement on a Programme of Work which essentially means agreeing on the topic or topics it wants to work on to elaborate new instruments in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation.

- My delegation believes that it is the duty of all of us, and in particular of every President, to make an effort to seek consensus on a Programme of Work.

- We therefore welcome the fact that you, Mr. President, have made a determined effort in that direction.

- Last Friday we had a discussion in WEOG with you concerning the particular approach you have taken, which has been dubbed the “simplified programme of work-approach”. I noted with appreciation then your stated intention to base yourself in your efforts on what appears to command consensus. Many colleagues took the floor on that occasion and I am certainly willing to make the points I made then once again in plenary today, also in light of the textual proposal you circulated yesterday. This is on a personal basis, since we are still awaiting instructions.

Mr. President,

- In going about the task of finding consensus on a Programme of Work, we need to keep in mind the fundamental point about the task of the CD:

- For this I invite us all to go back to the outcome document of SSOD I which is very clear on that point:

- In section IV entitled “Machinery” the CD is designated as the “multilateral disarmament negotiating forum” (Para 120), in contrast to the UN Disarmament Commission, which is designated as the “deliberative body” (Para 118).

- What follows from that?
- It follows that Programmes of Work, which are in actual fact mandates, which the CD gives itself, make only sense if they spell out in reasonable clarity what subjects the CD intends to focus on in terms of fulfilling its negotiating task.

- Unfortunately the CD has not managed to do exactly that in a sustained way in the last 17 years or so – Germany regrets that profoundly indeed!

- We are of the view that many in the CD have made this task unnecessarily difficult by blocking certain items on the agenda altogether from being identified as negotiating topics, or by making all kinds of linkages between different items or by insisting on a degree of small print, which continues to stand in the way of finding consensus.

- In that particular sense we have been and we continue indeed to be in favour of simplifying things, by which we mean to focus on the essential in a Programme of Work!

- But there is a minimum standard which we as CD must uphold – namely to give us a reasonably clear tasking in the sense SSOD I has defined – that is a mandate to negotiate new instruments in the field of disarmament!

- Germany is relatively relaxed about how exactly one formulates this – perhaps even the word “negotiate” as such is not absolutely necessary – although of course we would very much like to see it in the Programme of Work – as long as it remains clear that we work on new treaties or conventions.

- Seen in this light I rather doubt whether it will lead to much to try to solve the problem of the CD by adopting a Programme of Work now which would somehow only bless what we have been doing in the past 17 years in the absence of agreement on a negotiating mandate by agreeing now to “develop proposals” on all four core issues on our agenda at the same time, because that will in my judgement de facto be understood as meaning to continue to just “discuss” these items. One can well argue that delegations have always “developed proposals” in their statements in the last 17 years.

- The CD has been discussing its items and can continue to do so without a “Programme of Work”; we have also had informal working groups doing that in an organized way which were chaired by colleagues who also reported on these discussions. Just to give you an example of this I would draw your attention to the document CD/WP.560 of 7 June 2010, which sets out a very clear structure for informal discussions of all agenda items chaired or coordinated by various colleagues.

- Let me sum up:

- We must not give the impression to the international community as if the CD had solved its 17 year old problem of not being able to agree on what topics it wishes to work out new legally binding instruments next by now taking the short cut of reducing our level of ambition to only “develop proposals” on all four core issues, because = this would be very difficult to implement in practice with a view to the limited resources of many delegations, = the danger would just be too great that such a “low common denominator”, as it has just been called by some delegations, will only lead to a continuation of the discussions we have had for years on end without a serious prospect of getting into proper negotiations.
I would therefore agree with H.E. the Foreign Secretary of India, who said in his statement before the CD today that “the best way to revitalize this Conference is to allow the commencement of substantive negotiations.”

- Finally, I would like to express our sincere appreciation for the important statement the Secretary General of the CD, Mr. Tokayev, has made today, which we will study very carefully.

Thank you.