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DISARMAMENT COMMISSION

VERBATIM RECORD OF THE ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-EIGHTH MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Monday, 16 May 1988, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. HEPBURN (Bahamas)

- Oral progress reports from Chairmen of subsidiary bodies (continued)
- Programme of work

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

ORAL PROGRESS REPORTS FROM CHAIRMEN OF SUBSIDIARY BODIES (continued)

The CHAIRMAN: Since our first progress report last Tuesday, 10 May, all subsidiary bodies have been working for almost one week. As scheduled, today we shall again receive oral progress reports from chairmen of subsidiary bodies, so as to assess the state of affairs on various subjects and to decide our work programme for the final stage of our deliberations.

I now call on the Chairman of the Contact Group on agenda item 4 regarding the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament.

Mr. MARTYNOV (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic), Chairman, Contact Group on Agenda Item 4 (interpretation from Russian): The Contact Group on Agenda Item 4 has had an opportunity during the past week to hold four meetings. During those meetings we continued work on a specific series of recommendations which were laid down for work during the first stages of our discussions. Unfortunately, on most of the proposals put forward the group was not able to reach unanimous positions. Throughout the remaining two meetings, which will be held today and tomorrow, the Group intends to conclude consideration of several other recommendations on which so far there are encouraging expectations. We expect to complete our work on time and tomorrow to adopt the report of the Group.

The CHAIRMAN: I now call on Ambassador Jayasinghe of Sri Lanka who will speak on behalf of Ambassador Perera on agenda item 6, regarding the nuclear capability of South Africa.

Mr. JAYASINGHE (Sri Lanka): The Working Group on South African nuclear capability has had three meetings since we met on the last occasion. The group finished the second reading of the Chairman's text and at present is on its third reading. During these meetings the Group was able to agree on three paragraphs in addition to the paragraphs agreed in previous years - in all, seven paragraphs.

(Mr. Jayasinghe, Sri Lanka)

The remaining 12 paragraphs are being discussed at informal meetings with a view to narrowing down differences. The negotiations on these paragraphs are linked to the key issue of whether or not South Africa has nuclear-weapon capability. The ability to reach agreement on them will depend on the possibility of finding a formula to reflect the differing views, or on a negotiating group decision to make concessions, which remains a remote possibility at present. The group will meet this afternoon and tomorrow. At tomorrow's meeting it will adopt the report to the Commission.

The CHAIRMAN: I now call on the Chairman of the Consultation Group on agenda item 5 regarding reduction of military budgets.

Mr. MELESCANU (Romania), Chairman, Consultation Group on Agenda Item 5: Since our last progress report our consultation group has had two meetings. Different formulas, which seemed at the working level to be an acceptable basis for agreeing on a text for paragraph 7, still under consideration, were drafted. However our first attempt was not successful because the text of the paragraph that was drafted was not acceptable to all delegations. We now have a revised text under consideration. A meeting of the group is scheduled for this afternoon, during which we hope to be able to take up the new compromise formula for paragraph 7. We hope we will be able to report on time according to the schedule agreed for the Disarmament Commission.

The CHAIRMAN: I call now on the Chairman of Working Group II on agenda item 7 regarding the role of the United Nations in the field of disarmament.

Mr. ENGO (Cameroon) (Chairman, Working Group II on Agenda Item 7): As we reported to you towards the end of last week, the Working Group is still involved in intensive consultations at the level and in the more informal atmosphere of the Contact Group. We are still grappling with some rather delicate questions and the

(Mr. Engo, Chairman, Working
Group II on Agenda Item 7)

inter-relationship between questions regarding machinery. It had been hoped that solutions found to some of those critical issues might improve the atmosphere and enhance the chances of tackling the broader principles, which are referred to as political questions - the first declaratory part. These consultations are still at a rather delicate stage and I hope very much that by the end of this morning it will be possible to have a text that one can look at regarding the machinery and at the same time launch a programme of intensive consultations for the political questions.

We appealed to ourselves, through the Chair, at the last brief meeting we had to look back to the mandate of the Commission to understand the form in which we should present our recommendations. It is not enough for us to produce a document outlining the positions of States. We can see that in documents and we can imagine what it has been. The Commission is asking all the working groups to produce findings and recommendations, and not to produce a summary record of what has happened; that certain delegations feel one way and it was concluded this way. Obviously we must pursue matters to a logical end. If one comes to the conclusion that an institution is not working, it is not enough to spend time and effort mentioning the fact that such an institution is not working. It is more interesting for the international community, especially in forums in which they will attempt to resolve existing problems, to be seized of specific problems - that is to say, if an institution is not working we must at least give some guidance on what our thinking is and why we think the institution is not working. Then we must say what we think can be done. At least if we cannot reach the stage of analysing what we think can be done or saying what alternatives are open, let us set out in very clear form what we find is wrong and what should be addressed. I have spoken at length on this matter and I believe, having regard to the dedication that has

(Mr. Engo, Chairman, Working
Group II on Agenda Item 7)

been shown by the members of Working Group II and those who are involved in the contact groups, that they will re-examine the suggestions that have come out in the provisional documents and I hope that at the end of this week we will be able to provide something to help the Commission make further endeavours in this field.

The CHAIRMAN: I now call on the Co-ordinator of the Consultation Group on Agenda Item 8 regarding naval armaments and disarmament.

Mr. EKEUS (Sweden), Co-ordinator, Consultation Group on Agenda Item 8:

The Consultation Group has had three meetings since its last report to the plenary meeting of the United Nations Disarmament Commission at which it held open-ended consultations. At the beginning, we discussed the objectives and the possible measures necessary to realize those objectives in a free exchange of ideas. Towards the end, we started to draft a report. In that task, the Chairman's report from last year was the agreed basis for the work. It appears that we have been quite successful in the task. However, one major problem remains to be resolved. The Consultation Group will meet again on Wednesday and I hope that we can use the intervening time to resolve the remaining problem.

The CHAIRMAN: I call on the Chairman of Working Group III on item 9, regarding conventional disarmament.

Mr. MELLBIN (Denmark), Chairman, Working Group III: Last Tuesday, 10 May, I reported that Working Group III, in dealing with conventional disarmament, on the basis of the achievements of last year's session, had identified the problems that still had to be resolved if the Working Group were to fulfil its task.

Today, I have to report that although solutions to some problems have been found, other problems remain unresolved, and a few additional ones have appeared. Therefore, progress until now cannot be considered satisfactory.

In the course of today and tomorrow, I shall try to engage the Working Group in an all-out effort to reach agreement on a substantial and comprehensive report to the United Nations Disarmament Commission. However, for this endeavour to succeed it is indispensable that a spirit of co-operation and flexibility prevail on all sides.

In my judgement, it should still be possible to find agreed solutions to all the problems yet unresolved, without jeopardizing the national interests of any

(Mr. Mellbin, Chairman, Working
Group III, Denmark)

country. If this judgement is correct, the outcome will depend upon the political will of delegations, in particular of all those delegations that have been most active in the discussions of the Working Group.

The CHAIRMAN: I call on the Chairman of Working Group IV on item 10 regarding verification in all its aspects.

Mr. ROCHE (Canada), Chairman, Working Group IV: Working Group IV has held a total of six meetings at which we gave thorough discussion to the three aspects of the mandate that we have received on verification, namely, principles, provisions and techniques and the role of the United Nations in verification. We have begun discussion of the draft report. A revision of our draft report, now in its entirety, Conference Room Paper No. 2, is being distributed to our meeting this morning. We shall continue our consideration today and Wednesday and I am confident that the intensive consultations that are now taking place with respect to certain points in the report will be satisfactorily resolved and that we shall be able successfully to report to the Commission on the item Wednesday evening.

The CHAIRMAN: With respect to the Consultation Group on item 11 regarding guidelines for confidence-building measures, in my capacity as Chairman of this Consultation Group, I wish to say that the Group met four times and considered various proposals in connection with three remaining unadopted paragraphs, namely, paragraphs 2.3.3, 2.3.4 and 2.3.6, contained in annex II of the Commission's 1986 report, document A/41/42, entitled "Draft guidelines for appropriate types of confidence-building measures and for the implementation of such measures on a global or regional level".

During the course of the deliberations on those paragraphs, a number of proposals were put forward with a view to reaching agreement or a consensus on these paragraphs. I felt that the delegations in the Group have continuously

(The Chairman)

differences still exist, there is the feeling on the part of delegations that at our next meeting, which is scheduled for tomorrow, the Group will conclude its work and fulfil the mandate entrusted to it by the General Assembly in resolution 42/39 F and, therefore, submit the report to the Commission with specific recommendations to the forthcoming third special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. That is my report on the Consultation Group on agenda item 11.

Before going to the next point, I should like to thank the Chairmen of the Working Groups and Consultation Groups and the Co-ordinator of the Consultation Group on agenda item 8 for their reports. We must have these reports, and we do have them. I would point out one thing, however; I think it most important that during periods when members may not be having meetings, perhaps informal consultations could continue, especially among those delegations that are responsible for some of the problems or differences that exist. Rather than trying to resolve such differences in the Working Group as a whole, informal consultations might prove useful. I know that members have been following that practice, and I would recommend that they continue to do so.

In the reports given, I think we have identified the problems. We seem to know what the solution is, but evidently we are not ready to reach an agreement on them. Sometimes we tend to work under pressure or when there is a crisis and I hope that we would not allow ourselves to fall into that trap and feel that it is only at the last minute that we can reach an understanding.

It has also been pointed out that we have a mandate, and that is to present some recommendations to the third special session. It is not a summary report that we are to present. Someone asked me the other day: what should we do if there is nothing to report? My one comment in that respect has always been that we cannot report more than what has taken place and there is no need to try to say something

(The Chairman)

when nothing is taking place. We need to know exactly what the picture is. At the end of most of the reports, I have heard the word "hope". I suppose it is something that we must rely on and I trust that in the remaining days we shall be able to reach an understanding that will mean positive recommendations to present to the third special session.

I wish once again to thank members for their co-operation.

PROGRAMME OF WORK

The CHAIRMAN: The Committee now has before it the timetable for the final stage of our work which the Secretariat distributed last Friday. It is obvious that we have a very tight schedule ahead. In order to complete our work on time, I should like to remind all members that all subsidiary bodies must conclude their work and finalize their respective reports as scheduled, so that the Secretariat will be able to process those reports most efficiently and make them available on Thursday for consideration. I must say here that the Secretariat has been understaffed and working under very difficult conditions, to the extent that in some cases we even have one Secretary responsible for two working groups. Hence, members can imagine the kind of pressure on the Secretariat has been under in order to produce the report. I hope therefore that members will co-operate in completing their work on time so that we do not have any delays in terms of our own presentation.

Meetings have been scheduled for both Friday morning and Friday afternoon. I hope, truthfully, that we will not need both meetings, but they have both been scheduled for adoption of the report and making concluding statements. Delegations which wish to make such statements should inscribe their names on the list of speakers with the Secretariat today. The deadline for the list is Thursday, 19 May, at 6 p.m. I hope that the spirit will not move many members to make concluding statements.

If there are no other comments, I shall now adjourn the meeting.

The meeting rose at 10.40 a.m.