SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 8th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 4 June 1990, at 3 p.m.

President: Mr. JAYASINGHE (Sri Lanka)

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General exchange of views (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.25 p.m.

GENERAL EXCHANGE OF VIEWS (continued) (PTBT/CONF/M/3 and 6)

1. Mr. AGUILAR (Venezuela) said that the Meeting was being held at a particularly favourable time in international relations, when confrontation between the super-Powers was increasingly giving way to co-operation. The frequent contacts between the leaders of the two countries, such as the summit meeting recently held at Washington, D.C., had led to the signing of major agreements in the field of arms control and disarmament.

2. Although modest progress had been made, the trend could not be described as irreversible. There were still many obstacles to overcome, including the insistence of the nuclear Powers on maintaining some nuclear capacity as an instrument of their controversial policy of deterrence, which condemned mankind to continue living under the threat of a nuclear holocaust. Accordingly, the eradication of the risk of nuclear war, remained the most pressing task facing the international community.

3. Like the majority of other countries, Venezuela believed that the most effective means of halting and reversing the nuclear arms race was the conclusion, at an early date, of a comprehensive nuclear-test ban treaty. Despite extensive discussions, it had not been possible to undertake substantive efforts towards that goal, as evidenced by the stalled deliberations of the Conference on Disarmament.

4. The conclusion of a comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty would prevent the development of new nuclear-weapon systems to replace those eliminated under the existing or future disarmament agreements. His country objected to the idea that a nuclear-test ban should be viewed as a long-term objective, to be implemented only after major reductions in the existing nuclear arsenals. Such a narrow approach would allow the continued development of ever-more sophisticated nuclear weapons. Hence, the aim was not to limit nuclear testing, but to achieve the discontinuance of all nuclear tests in all environments for all time. For that reason, his country had joined with others in sponsoring the proposed amendment (PTBT/CONF/M/3) to the Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapon Tests in the Atmosphere, in Outer Space and under Water.

5. The Amendment Conference and the decisions which it would adopt could help to convince those Governments which had not yet done so to adhere to the Partial Test Ban Treaty. It would also strengthen and ensure the continued viability of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, particularly during the year in which the fourth conference to review the operation of that Treaty was scheduled to be held.
6. Mr. OKEYO (Kenya) welcomed the positive outcome of the recent negotiations between the United States and the Soviet Union, including the agreements to reduce their stockpiles of long-range nuclear weapons. Those agreements provided a good basis for the Amendment Conference and for other negotiations aimed at reducing the number of intercontinental strategic weapons and destroying all chemical weapons. His country joined other non-nuclear-weapon States in calling upon the two super-Powers to spare no efforts in the implementation of their agreed objectives.

7. The question of a comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty - the only effective way to halt the technological momentum of the nuclear-arms race - was of paramount importance. The conclusion of such a treaty would enhance the credibility of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

8. It was the pressure exerted by the non-nuclear-weapon States and anti-nuclear organizations which had led to the signing of the Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapon Tests in the Atmosphere, in Outer Space and under Water. The principal aim of that Treaty, which had not yet been achieved, was the discontinuance of all test explosions of nuclear weapons for all time. The Partial Test Ban Treaty was not an end in itself, but a means to an end, namely, a comprehensive test ban in the overall context of general and complete disarmament.

9. The cessation of testing would strengthen the non-proliferation régime and provide an incentive for those States which had not yet done so to adhere to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. On the other hand, the failure to achieve a comprehensive test ban would increase the scepticism with which those States viewed the Treaty, and would have a negative impact on its future. He hoped, however, that the Fourth Review Conference of the Parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty would give a strong impetus to the Amendment Conference to consider amendments to the Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapon Tests in the Atmosphere, in Outer Space and under Water.

10. One of the contentious issues which impeded the conclusion of disarmament agreements was the so-called deterrence doctrine. Even the staunchest advocates of that theory would agree that since 1985 there had been a sustained improvement in the relations between East and West. In view of the recent political and ideological upheavals in Europe, it was time for a re-examination of the need for strategic alliances such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the Warsaw Treaty Organization.

11. Another disputed issue was verification. Although verification was an integral part of arms limitation and disarmament agreements, it should never be used as a pretext for not pursuing the goal of a comprehensive test ban. In that connection, he drew attention to the positive contribution of the group of governmental experts on the role of the United Nations in the field of verification.

12. The current stage of the amendment effort testified to the commitment of many non-nuclear-weapon States to the achievement of a comprehensive nuclear-test ban. Without their participation, the future of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons would be in jeopardy in 1995.

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13. The President said that the Meeting had thus concluded the general exchange of views.

The meeting rose at 3.55 p.m.