

Conference On Disarmament Unable To Reach Consensus On Draft Programme Of Work

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The Conference on Disarmament this morning held a public plenary, the last under the Iranian Presidency.

Ambassador Mohsen Naziri Asl of Iran, outgoing President of the Conference on Disarmament, said Iran's main focus during the presidency had been looking for agreement on a comprehensive and balanced programme of work. Three weeks of intensive consultations had brought him to the conclusion that for the time being the best feasible approach was the pragmatic, or as it was called by some, the "clever" approach, which would attempt at simplifying the programme of work while treating all core issues in the same manner and avoiding any divisive mandate. Iran had prepared the text of a draft decision for a programme of work and had distributed it at the beginning of the week in the meeting with the other Presidents and the regional group coordinators and China. He regretted that the proposal contained in his draft programme of work was not accepted by all members, adding that Iran would not insist on any formal action on the text in this plenary meeting. Iran attached great importance to the credibility of the Conference and did not want another failure that might undermine the credibility and integrity of the Conference.

In the discussions, Kazakhstan said that the proposed draft incorporated the simplified approach and that they were ready to support it. Nevertheless, it had been simplified to such a degree that a whole concept of negotiations had become hardly visible. Russia said that the President was acting wisely and Russia welcomed the fact that Iran did not put the draft proposal to a vote. Syria said that it saw in the draft an opportunity for the Conference to start substantive work and to break the deadlock through holding detailed discussions. Pakistan said it supported proposal CD/1952 as a realistic and pragmatic document which would enable the Conference to start substantive

work, even without starting negotiations. China said that the Conference should continue to try to reach consensus on a programme of work and China would support the incoming President in continuing this effort, while taking the interests of all parties in mind in order to reach a breakthrough.

New Zealand said that the proposal made by the Secretary-General of the Conference at the previous plenary meeting on the establishment of an informal working group with a mandate to produce a programme of work was worth further consideration. Iraq said it was essential that all Member States showed flexibility and willingness to compromise so that the Conference could play its role. Sri Lanka said it attached the utmost importance to the work of the Conference and that, in order to preserve its role, the adoption of a comprehensive programme of work was vital. Germany said every President had the obligation to make an effort to reach consensus on a programme of work and expressed appreciation to Iran for deciding not to go to a vote on CD/1952. Switzerland said the events of the past few days had highlighted that the methods of work of the Conference did not facilitate its work, but rather made it more difficult. Algeria said the draft programme of work was pragmatic, balanced and realistic, but the necessary conditions for reaching consensus on it were simply not present. Cuba regretted the low level of flexibility demonstrated by delegations which resulted in no consensus.

Several speakers praised the Iranian Presidency for all efforts taken to find consensus on the draft programme of work. A number of delegations welcomed the recommendations made by Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva, Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and Personal Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General to the Conference, at the plenary on 18 June, in which he proposed: first, the establishment of an informal working group with a mandate to produce a programme of work urgently; second, the establishment of a subsidiary body in accordance with article 23 of the rules of procedure, to examine and make proposals on the improvement of the working methods of the Conference; and third, the designation of a special coordinator to examine and make proposals on expansion of the membership of the Conference and on the possible role that civil society may play in its work. Mr. Tokayev's statement in full can be found [here](#).

The next plenary of the Conference will be held at 10:30 a.m. on Tuesday, 25 June, when the Conference will be addressed by the Minister of Foreign

Affairs of Iraq, Hoshyar Zebari, and the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Angela Kane.

This will be the last plenary in the second part of the 2013 session of the Conference on Disarmament. The third and last part of the session will be held from 29 July to 13 September.

Statements

Ambassador MOHSEN NAZIRI ASL of Iran, outgoing President of the Conference on Disarmament, said Iran strongly believed that the Conference on Disarmament, as the sole multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament, should uphold its credibility and maintain its relevancy to international peace and security despite its current difficulties. Iran was fully aware of the complexity to break the impasse in the Conference and to reach consensus on the programme of work. Iran's main focus during the presidency had been looking for agreement of the members on a comprehensive and balanced programme of work. Three weeks of intensive consultations had brought Iran to the conclusion that for the time being the best feasible approach was the pragmatic, or as it was called by some, a "clever" approach. Iran had prepared the text of the draft decision for a programme of work and had distributed it at the beginning of the week in the meeting with the other Conference on Disarmament Presidents and the regional group coordinators and China. Iran said it had originally identified that the text had the common denominator of all positions reflected in the consultations, despite the "hesitancy" of a few members.

Iran attached great importance to the credibility of the Conference and it did not want to create a situation in which another failure in the adoption of a programme of work undermined the credibility and integrity of the Conference. Iran specified that it decided not to go to a vote on such draft because further recent consultations had indicated that some members still needed some more time to go along with various parts of the proposed draft. From the national point of view, Iran would have strongly preferred a programme of work that included a negotiating mandate for a Nuclear Weapons Convention.

Kazakhstan said it had given careful consideration to document CD/1952 that was presented by the Iranian Presidency. The proposed draft incorporated the simplified approach and Kazakhstan was ready to go along

with it. CD/1952 was not necessarily ideal from Kazakhstan's national perspective as it would have preferred to have much stronger language, envisaging negotiations on nuclear disarmament, a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty, the prevention of an arms race in outer space and negative security assurances. The draft programme of work had been simplified to such a degree that a whole concept of negotiations had become hardly visible, except for a hint to possible negotiations in the second paragraph. Kazakhstan would be grateful if a strong reference to negotiations, at least to the responsibilities of the Conference as the single multilateral negotiating forum, could be possible somewhere in the first two paragraphs of CD/1952. Kazakhstan also believed that improvements in the working methods and rules of procedure of the Conference on Disarmament were important, and welcomed the proposals presented by the Secretary-General of the Conference on 18 June.

Russia expressed its appreciation to the Iranian President for his work in preparing a programme of work and valued the intensive consultations with the participation of the regional groups. Document CD/1952 was an attempt to find consensus in the Conference. Russia noted that some delegations had suggested in the past that consensus was not a good basis for work. Russia belonged to the majority group that believed that the rules of procedure were one of the fundamental tenants of the Conference, which guaranteed that the interests of each State were taken into consideration. The President was wise to see that consensus to date did not exist in the Conference on his draft programme of work and Russia welcomed that Iran did not put it to a vote. Russia was prepared to engage in negotiations on three of the four core issues of the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament. Russia understood that they had to work on the basis of consensus in order to uphold the security interests of all States. The approach taken in the draft concerning a discussion-based agenda was the only pragmatic and practical way forward. Russia recalled that, in the case of the Chemical Weapons Convention, when pre-negotiating activities were carried out for years and without a negotiating mandate. In this vein, Russia suggested bringing back to the CD the work being undertaken in the OEWG on taking forward multilateral disarmament negotiations, which does not have a negotiating mandate, as well as the discussions to be carried out in the GGE to make recommendations on possible aspects that could contribute to but not negotiate a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. Russia had carefully studied the specific proposals put forward by the Secretary-General of the Conference

on 18 June and said that it supported them. Russia urged colleagues to continue the active quest to find a solution.

Syria thanked Iran for its efforts and transparent consultations seeking to reach agreement on a programme of work and thanked the President for submitting the draft programme of work. Syria would have preferred to adopt a negotiating mandate on nuclear disarmament, which was its primary goal. But the draft programme was balanced as it addressed the four core issues. In light of the present stalemate, Syria saw in the draft an opportunity for the Conference to start substantive work and to break the deadlock.

Pakistan expressed its deep appreciation and admiration for the Iranian President and the pragmatic and constructive approach that he used during Iran's presidency. Pakistan supported proposal CD/1952 as a realistic and pragmatic document which would enable the Conference to start substantive work, even without starting negotiations. Even though the ideal situation was to negotiate, the absence of consensus on any one item did not mean the Conference should be in a deep freeze. Rather, members of the Conference needed to engage in constructive work in a structured manner. To this purpose, any discussion on the four core issues would be useful as discussion could lead in the long term to negotiations. Pakistan recalled the Chemical Weapons Convention, for which discussions lasted several years and constituted the basis for negotiations once all States were ready to engage in negotiations. Pakistan understood that there were different approaches to a programme of work as every State had its own national interests. Pakistan believed the four core issues should be treated equally and it was unfortunate that certain delegations tried to impose their view that only one issue as being the only one ripe for negotiation. Pakistan concluded by saying that the Conference must take the security interests of all States into consideration and that Pakistan respected those that had said that CD/1952 did not protect their security interests. At the same time, however, Pakistan asked for respect of its own national security interests.

China said that it had always supported the work undertaken in the Conference to reach a comprehensive and balanced programme of work and that it was willing to join all parties in this common effort. Reaching consensus on a programme of work was the priority for the Conference. China noted that this year quite a few Presidents had made very good attempts in this respect. China supported the Conference on Disarmament as the sole multilateral forum for disarmament negotiations and stressed that

the Conference should start negotiations at an early date. In the current situation, however, the Conference should take a pragmatic and realistic approach to start substantive work in order to start negotiations in the future. China thanked Iran for the proposed programme of work and the discussions conducive to bridging the gaps and finding a solution acceptable to all parties. China took note of the fact that the President had indicated differences among members of the Conference and stressed that the Conference should continue to try to reach consensus. China, for its part, would support the incoming President in continuing this effort, while taking the interests of all parties in mind in order to reach a breakthrough. China hoped States could take a flexible approach.

New Zealand regretted that once again it was not possible for the Conference to agree on a programme work. Seeking such a programme was the work of the President. Since New Zealand joined the Conference in 1996, its priority had been to start negotiations. New Zealand supported the start of negotiations on a fissile material (cut off) treaty because it could contribute to negotiations on nuclear disarmament. The draft programme of work presented by the President took a different approach. New Zealand did not object to this approach, but it wanted the Conference to start substantive work and not to be bound by the consensus rule that could take it down to the lowest common denominator. The proposals of the Secretary-General of the Conference had merit and New Zealand supported them.

Iraq welcomed the President's professional approach in leading their meetings to try to unblock the Conference after 16 years. It was essential that all Member States show flexibility and willingness to compromise so that the Conference could play its role. Iran stressed that the Conference was the sole multilateral negotiating body on disarmament issues. It was now time to redouble their efforts to reach a balanced programme of work and to make headway on the main issues, while giving priority to nuclear disarmament. Iraq supported any proposal or initiative that was agreeable to all States which would allow the Conference to play the role that it was set up for. Iraq appreciated the President's transparent efforts to revitalize the Conference.

Sri Lanka thanked the President for the manner in which he had held in inclusive and transparent consultations. Sri Lanka appreciated the President's efforts with draft programme CD/1952 and said that focused debates on all the agenda items could help the Conference. The draft

proposal attached equal importance to all four core issues. Sri Lanka attached the utmost importance to the work of the Conference and in order to preserve its role, it was vital that they started on a comprehensive programme of work.

Germany thanked the President for his work and efforts in trying to get the Conference back to work by seeking consensus. It mentioned that every President had the obligation to make an effort in that regard. Germany expressed its appreciation for the President as he had held extensive debates on the draft proposal and had ultimately decided that in light of the absence of consensus on the draft, he would not put it to a vote. He believed that the President acted in the best interest of the Conference.

Switzerland thanked the President for his efforts. Switzerland, taking note with regret that the Conference remained unable to agree on a programme of work, said that it would be ready to start negotiations on all four core issues on the agenda. In its view, to be of value, a programme of work should take them forward in the area of substance. The events of the past few days had highlighted that the methods of work of the Conference did not facilitate its work, but rather made it more difficult. Switzerland was not questioning the rule of consensus. It specified that it was difficult to find agreement on a programme of work for one person only. The attempt at finding a programme of work should instead become a collective approach, one in which delegations took ownership of the proposals. Switzerland commended the Secretary-General of the Conference for his thoughtful proposals, including setting up a subsidiary body to look at the methods of work, and urged delegations to consider them.

Algeria expressed its appreciation to the President for his tireless efforts through his presidency, and for tabling document CD/1952. It offered the Conference with a new approach with regard to the programme of work. Such an approach was pragmatic, balanced and realistic. As it had stated in the consultations with the President, Algeria was prepared to join any consensus on a programme of work that would allow negotiations on the agenda items of the Conference, or that would lay the basis for negotiations. Algeria deplored that the Conference was not ready for consensus on a programme of work and that the necessary conditions for such consensus were simply not available. Algeria called on the next President of the Conference to use this document as a basis and to focus on this pragmatic approach. Everyone knew the two points of disagreement, and the next

President should focus on these points that prevented the Conference from being able to adopt a programme of work.

Cuba was grateful for the work that the President had done and for the transparency that had characterized his presidency and the efficient way in which he had guided the Conference. Cuba regretted the low level of flexibility demonstrated by delegations, which resulted in the absence of consensus.

Ambassador MOHSEN NAZIRI ASL of Iran, outgoing President of the Conference on Disarmament, said before concluding, that he wished to express his thanks and appreciation for all the kind words addressed to him and to his delegation. He thanked the P6 who worked together and had been most supportive. He was also thankful to the Secretary-General of the Conference for his sustained and valuable contribution. The next plenary of the Conference will be held at 10:30 a.m. on Tuesday, 25 June, when the Conference would be addressed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Iraq, Hoshyar Zebari, and the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Angela Kane.