

15 May 2012

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser,
President of the 66th Session of the General Assembly,
at the Opening of the Second Part of the 2012 Session of the
Conference of Disarmament**

Your Excellency Ambassador Minelik Alemu Getahun, President of the Conference on Disarmament,
Your Excellency Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to address the Conference on Disarmament (CD) today in this historical chamber, which has witnessed the negotiation of major multilateral arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation agreements.

Before I came here, I have learned about the difficulties witnessed during this year's session so far, but rather than reconsider my visit to address the Conference, I chose to remain confident that the leadership of Ambassador Alemu Getahun and your individual and collective sense of responsibility will eventually bring the work of this session of the Conference on Disarmament to a successful conclusion. In this regard, I commend the recent calls by H. E. Mr. Tokayev urging the Conference on Disarmament to continue to pursue a programme of work as its first priority, and to consider, as appropriate, the issue of procedural reform as means to build further trust and momentum in the work of the Conference.

Over its history, the CD has produced landmark disarmament instruments including the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

Since its establishment as a result of the first Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly devoted to Disarmament (SSOD1) held in 1978, the Conference on Disarmament remains the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum of the international community.

In the final document of SSOD1, the General Assembly confirmed its awareness of the continuing requirement for a single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum.

That awareness of the General Assembly obviously remains unchanged.

In its resolutions 65/93 in 2010 and 66/420 in 2011 on Revitalizing the work of the Conference on Disarmament and taking forward multilateral disarmament negotiations, the General Assembly

recognized that the political will to advance the disarmament agenda has been strengthened in recent years.

Yet, it has expressed grave concern about the current status of the disarmament machinery, including the lack of progress in the Conference on Disarmament, and stressed the need for greater efforts to advance multilateral disarmament negotiations.

Indeed, the failure of the CD in making substantive progress for well over a decade has undoubtedly put the credibility of this crucially important body at a high risk.

There is a need to exert more efforts and flexibility from all involved parties, to advance multilateral disarmament negotiations.

In the last two years, we have all witnessed important progress on bilateral, regional and multilateral levels.

One good example is represented in the fact that the Russian Federation and the United States negotiated and concluded a new treaty on the reduction and limitation of strategic offensive arms.

The States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) had a successful review conference in 2010, with concrete and promising steps have been taken on the question of establishing a Nuclear-Weapon-Free-Zone in the Middle East, an item on the Agenda of the UN General Assembly for decades.

These developments demonstrate progress and make a positive impact on the global security environment.

But it seems that this progress has been achieved in disconnect from the work done in the Conference on Disarmament.

The Conference has an unquestioned responsibility in the advancement of the international disarmament agenda, or in efforts to contribute to a nuclear-weapon-free world.

The Conference on Disarmament must do its part to advance the international agenda through its invaluable work.

At last October's First Committee Session, intensive discussions among delegations clearly revealed that revitalizing the disarmament machinery, including in particular the Conference on Disarmament, was an emerging and evermore pressing priority.

Many of you were part of these discussions.

The underlying message of these discussions was clear.

The continuation of the current deadlock has - and could very well continue to have - worrying implications on the role, function and even the very future of the CD.

The only way to avoid this is for the Conference to promptly take up its responsibility at this session through collective action.

The future of the Conference on Disarmament is in its Member States' hands.

The agreement on a programme of work is the least Member States can agree on, it is not a miracle.

The Conference already adopted a programme of work by consensus in 2009, represented in document CD/1864.

I invite delegations to use the programme agreed in 2009 as a least common denominator for negotiations aimed at adopting a 2012 programme of work without delay.

A number of very constructive proposals have been put forward and delegations should allow the President of the Conference to lead this effort in serious and inclusive consultations over a draft programme that is consensual, realistic and not necessarily ideal.

The perfect has been the enemy of the good for too long.

Overcoming this obstacle in the CD will represent a very positive sign in putting the disarmament machinery back on track and bringing nuclear disarmament back on its agenda.

I remain totally confident in the ability of the CD as institution to produce substantive outcomes. While I am equally confident that such ability requires collective action from all of you.

Before concluding, let me reiterate my full support to your work, and my preparedness to provide any help possible to revive the CD and enable it once again to fulfill the function for which it was established.

Disarmament remains a high priority on the General Assembly's agenda and with your work, you can substantially contribute not only to the advancement of this agenda but also to the advancement of international peace and security through negotiating new instruments that contribute to a safer world.

I thank you all and I wish you all the best in your work.