

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

The Conference on Disarmament (CD) is the world's principal multilateral disarmament negotiating forum. During the 1980s and 1990s, its members negotiated the Chemical Weapons Convention which totally prohibits chemical weapons, and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) which bans nuclear weapons test explosions or any other nuclear explosions. The U.S. Permanent Representative to the Conference on Disarmament is Ambassador Jackie Wolcott Sanders. Ambassador Sanders also serves as Special Representative of the President for the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

Deriving its existence *sui generis* from its original, limited membership, the CD is not a UN body, but an autonomous body that receives support from the UN system. It was established by its members in 1979, and it succeeds several predecessor organizations dating back to 1962. In adopting its agenda, the CD takes into account the recommendations of the UN General Assembly, and informs the Assembly annually of its activities. The budget of the CD secretariat is included in the UN budget, and the CD holds its meetings at the UN Palais des Nations in Geneva. All CD decisions are taken by consensus. The current Director-General of the UN Office in Geneva, Sergei A. Ordzhonikidze of the Russian Federation, also serves as the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament. Chairmanship of the conference rotates alphabetically among its member states, who serve as president of the CD for four working weeks. There are six presidencies during the year.

The CD meets each year in Geneva for a three-part annual session to consider and negotiate multilateral arms control and disarmament measures. The CD currently has 65 member states, with the latest expansion (by five) taking place in August 1999. The members represent every geographical region, and include the five nuclear-weapon states (United States, Russian Federation, United Kingdom, France, and China). There were 37 non-member participant states (observers) in the CD in 2003: they have the right to attend meetings of the CD's ad hoc committees, and can speak, circulate papers and make contributions, but cannot deny consensus on any issues. They have to renew their status as NMP states each year, whereas CD members maintain their status permanently.

The CD's overall task, as agreed by its members, is to promote the attainment of general and complete disarmament under effective international control. Its standing agenda covers: nuclear weapons; new weapons of mass destruction; radiological weapons; conventional weapons; reduction of military budgets and armed forces; disarmament and development; disarmament and international security; a comprehensive program of disarmament; negative security assurances; and collateral disarmament measures such as confidence building measures and effective verification methods. The CD establishes a program of work each year based on its standing agenda, and carries out its work in various ways, including ad hoc committees for detailed work on particular topics.

The CD and its predecessor bodies have served over the years as the focal point for negotiations leading to: the 1963 Limited Test Ban Treaty (banning nuclear-weapon tests in the atmosphere, in outer space, and under water); the 1970 Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT — halting the spread of nuclear weapons to countries that do not already possess them, and preventing the diversion of nuclear material from peaceful purposes); the 1972 Seabed Arms Control Treaty (prohibiting the emplacement of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction on the seabed); the 1972 Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (banning the development, production and stockpiling of bacteriological and toxin weapons); the 1977 Environmental Modification Convention (banning all significant hostile use of environmental modification techniques); the 1992 Chemical Weapons Convention (banning the acquisition, use, stockpiling, and transfer of chemical weapons); and the 1996 Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (banning nuclear weapons test explosions or any other nuclear explosions).

U.S. OBJECTIVES

The U.S. was an original member of the CD and its predecessors, and has looked to the CD to provide the venue, format and framework in which its members can negotiate realistic international instruments which improve international security conditions. To this end the U.S. seeks to persuade CD members to allow work to proceed on individual agenda items whenever possible. (Since 1997, some CD members have refused to permit work on any item to proceed until agreement is reached on a work program encompassing all CD issues. This has effectively blocked CD progress on virtually its entire working agenda.)



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CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION

The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) was the first treaty negotiated by the CD in its post-1979 configuration. It is an unprecedented multilateral treaty that totally prohibits chemical weapons and any activities aimed at or contributing to their use. The ban extends not only to chemical warfare agents as such, but also to the means of delivery. The CWC was concluded on September 3, 1992, by the CD, and opened for signature in Paris on January 13, 1993. As of February 2004, the CWC had 160 states parties including the United States, which ratified the treaty on April 25, 1997. The treaty entered into force in April 1997, and is administered by a special international body, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), which has its seat in The Hague.

The CWC is historic in the scope of its provisions and in the number of countries

involved in its development. The CWC is both a disarmament and a non-proliferation treaty. It bans the use, development, production, acquisition, stockpiling, retention and direct or indirect transfer of chemical weapons (CW). The Convention also prohibits preparations for using chemical weapons and assistance, encouragement or inducement of anyone else to engage in activities prohibited by the convention.

The CWC requires the destruction of all CW stockpiles and existing CW production facilities and the monitoring of the chemical industry to ensure non-production of CW. It contains effective verification measures, including on-site inspection of suspected violators. Inspection procedures provide for routine inspections of industrial chemical plants (which produce or could produce chemicals listed in the Convention), as well as “challenge inspections” – under which countries could be challenged to open up facilities suspected of producing chemical weapons to international inspection. Built-in safeguards, including sanctions, will deal with situations where the basic obligations have not been respected.

COMPREHENSIVE TEST BAN TREATY

The Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) was negotiated between January 1994 and August 1996 by the CD. The Treaty was opened for signature on September 24, 1996. As of February 2004, 170 states had signed the CTBT and 109 had ratified it. It has not yet entered into force. Of the 44 states required for entry into force, 41 have signed (all but India, Pakistan and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea) and 31 have ratified (but not China, the Russian Federation or the United States). The United States does not support the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and will not become a party to the treaty. The United States intends to maintain its moratorium on nuclear testing, in effect since 1992, and has urged all states to maintain existing moratoria on nuclear testing.

The CTBT would ban any nuclear weapon test explosion or any other nuclear explosion. The treaty establishes an organization – the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization – to ensure the implementation of its provisions, including those for international verification measures. The Organization includes a Conference of States parties, an Executive Council and a Technical Secretariat.

FISSILE MATERIAL CUTOFF TREATY

In December 1993 the UN General Assembly adopted by consensus a resolution recommending the negotiation of a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. In March 1995, the Conference on Disarmament established an Ad Hoc Committee (AHC) to pursue such negotiations. Subsequently, all the NPT parties endorsed the immediate commencement and early conclusion of such negotiations at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference. In spite of these auspicious beginnings, real negotiations have yet to commence. In the intervening years, an FMCT AHC was re-established only once – late during the 1998 CD session. The AHC has not been re-established since that time.

The United States has maintained a moratorium on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices since 1992.

NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

The CD's agenda also includes an item on Nuclear Disarmament, and many members of the CD have openly expressed their wish that the CD undertake multilateral negotiations in this area. The U.S. and other nuclear weapons states have replied that reductions in nuclear arms can best be carried out directly by the states which possess them, in view of the many complexities involved. The nuclear weapons states also point to the record of nuclear disarmament that they have achieved over the years and the ongoing efforts to continue this process. The nuclear weapons states have consistently reaffirmed the ultimate goal of eliminating nuclear weapons, and have worked within the CD to forward this goal where possible multilaterally.

ANTI-PERSONNEL LANDMINES

Many CD members are also interested in adding the issue of anti-personnel landmines (APL) to the CD agenda. Although the Ottawa Treaty banning APL in their entirety came into force in 1998, the treaty was not signed by most of the countries which are major APL producers and users; hence its provisions do not apply to them. The CD has agreed to add APL to its working agenda for the past several years, but has been unable to agree on a mandate for work in this area.

CD member countries that wish to work on APL in the CD have agreed that it would be appropriate to negotiate a ban on the transfer of such weapons. Although the Ottawa Treaty already includes such a ban as a part of its overall prohibition of APL, a treaty on this specific subject as negotiated in the CD would capture many states that have not signed the Ottawa Treaty. Such a step would forward the goal of stemming the supply of APL and thereby significantly reduce the humanitarian problem caused by APL. The United States has been active on landmines issues in a variety of fora outside the Conference on Disarmament. In particular, the United States negotiated an Amended Mines Protocol to the Convention on Conventional Weapons.

TRANSPARENCY IN ARMAMENTS

In 1991 the United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution 46/36-L entitled "Transparency in Armaments" (TIA), which initiated a series of activities related to promote openness and transparency in the field of military matters. One consequence of the resolution was the establishment of the UN Register of Conventional Arms. The resolution also requested the CD to take up the issue of TIA and specifically asked the CD to address interrelated issues arising from the excessive and destabilizing accumulation of arms. No time frame was attached to the CD's work.

The CD added TIA to its agenda in 1992, the first new agenda item in over ten years. TIA was also the CD's first agenda item related to conventional arms control. Since the topic was brand new to the CD, member states decided to conduct a year of informal meetings as a way of getting the CD introduced to the subject. In 1993 the CD established the TIA Ad Hoc Committee, which began working to develop practical means for increasing openness and transparency in military matters. During the 1994 session, efforts were directed at narrowing differences and determining where agreement could be reached. The Ad Hoc Committee has not been re-established in the years since then.

NEGATIVE SECURITY ASSURANCES

This agenda item, known as NSA, is dedicated to effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapons states (NNWS) against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. The CD's non-aligned members (the G-21) prefer these arrangements to take the form of a multilateral legally binding treaty. The nuclear weapons states (U.S., UK, France, Russia and China) have not favored such a treaty because of numerous problems involved, especially in verification; instead, they have provided individual assurances as appropriate, primarily through protocols to Nuclear Weapon Free Zone treaties. Nevertheless, the NSA Ad Hoc Committee continued to search for a basis to prepare a draft treaty that would provide acceptable assurances to the NNWS. At the same time, in April 1995, the five nuclear powers issued updated unilateral security assurances with a number of common elements. In April 1995, the UN Security Council also passed an updated and improved resolution on security assurances (UNSC Resolution 984). The NSA Ad Hoc Committee was re-established in 1998 but has not been re-established in the years since then.

RADIOLOGICAL WEAPONS

The CD also has on its agenda the negotiation of a ban on radiological weapons (RW), arms that could kill by dispersing radioactive materials without a nuclear explosion. Such weapons could include waste material from peaceful nuclear applications such as spent reactor fuel. In 1979 the U.S. and USSR jointly submitted to the CD major elements of a treaty banning the development, production, stockpiling and use of radiological weapons. Conclusion of a multilateral treaty within the CD was held up because no such weapons exist and because of questions about verifiability. Some states also insist that, under this agenda item, discussions be held on a treaty to ban attacks against nuclear facilities. The RW item is currently in abeyance in the CD.

PREVENTION OF AN ARMS RACE IN OUTER SPACE

A committee began work in 1985 to examine outer space arms control issues, including the current legal framework. The U.S. believes that existing legal regimes for outer space activities are adequate and that no changes are needed at this time. Under current circumstances, the U.S. does not believe any outer space topic has been identified that is suitable for negotiation in a multilateral forum such as the CD.

INTERNET

www.unog.ch/disarm/disarm.htm

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