

**Statement by Mr. Rivasseau, Ambassador,
Permanent Representative of France to the Conference on Disarmament
In plenary session of the Conference on Disarmament**

Geneva, February 23rd 2006

Mr. President,

Let me first welcome you to the assumption of the chair of this body and express you the support of my delegation for the three upcoming weeks. A significant work has been accomplished under the presidency of your predecessor, the Ambassador Rapacki, with whom we endeavored to establish the rules of the game for the 2006 session, even if these are only indicative rules. Now, we have to implement them in order to have fruitful exchanges which will focus on the agenda items and which will allow progresses of the debate within this body.

1) Mr. President,

The first question that is now on the table is the search for an agreement on a program of work for the Conference on Disarmament.

We know the different proposals that have been presented to this body as well as the ones that have been informally discussed. They all have their strengths and weaknesses, their proponents and opponents. As the CD President noted, at the present stage, none of them seem to reach consensus among CD members and there is even no agreement on the treatment of any issue within the framework of the agenda in accordance with article 30 of the rules of procedures.

That is why, Mr. President, my delegation is of the opinion that we should continue considering all propositions in an open-minded way. We still think it is significant, at the beginning of each session, to have a step back and reflect, in a detailed and calm manner, on the principles and the method that should rule the adoption of a program of work and on the mistakes to be avoided. The rule of the game this year is to build confidence among ourselves, move forward as much as possible, every time it is possible, toward negotiations in accordance with this forum's purpose. A significant preparatory work is ahead of us.

2) On the substance, I quote the President of the Republic who, in his speech given on January 19th at l'Île Longue, recalled that "we continue to support the international efforts in favor of general and complete disarmament, and in particular, the negotiation of a treaty banning the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons". This constitutes a clear priority for the French Mission. We all know the French commitment on this issue which materialized by the dismantling of the facilities in Marcoule and Pierrelate. In the same spirit, we have reiterated the continuity of our commitment to this negotiation in the first Commission of the UN General Assembly in 2004 and 2005. It is, for us, a particularly significant commitment because, with the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), it was made in 1995 at the moment of the indefinite prorogation of the NPT.

Moreover, an appropriate place must be devoted to the “out of the box” ideas. It is in this spirit that, with Switzerland, we have proposed that the CD work on the issue of civilian critical infrastructures. Likewise, we support the Australian initiative aiming at addressing the MANPADS issue at the CD.

Finally, Mr. President, we continue with the EU to support the Resolutions concerning the prevention of an arms race in outer space (PAROS).

Mr. President,

The path you proposed to us, with the five other presidents, seem to include the elements for possible progresses toward our common goals. We all have the responsibility to follow it in order to achieve this end. More than ever, open-mindedness, creativity and dynamism are necessary. We have to go further than the P-6 presidency platform. We now need to get a return on this platform, in the limits of the political parameters we know. In brief, we believe that the CD can do a lot better.

Thank you Mr. President./.