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# Conference on Disarmament

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## Working Paper

### On the Dual-Track Approach to the Work of the Conference on Disarmament

**Submitted by the President of the Conference on Disarmament, H.E. Ali BAHREINI, Ambassador and the Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations Office and Other International Organizations in Geneva**

#### I. Introduction

1. In accordance with Rule 9 of the Rules of Procedure, the Islamic Republic of Iran took over the Presidency of the Conference on Disarmament (hereinafter, the Conference) for a four-working-week period (18–29 March, 13–24 May).
2. Since the beginning of the 2024 session of the Conference, the President and his team have been following the developments in the Conference and listening carefully to the views of each concerned delegation. The President was also enquired about the most appropriate way to proceed with the Conference's work.
3. Given the current situation in the Conference and to solicit member state' views and observations on the Conference roadmap during Iran's tenure, the President initiated intensive, inclusive, and transparent consultations with the Regional Groups and members of the Conference. The President has had also the privilege of having close consultations with the other Presidents of the 2024 session in P6+2 format. Additionally, in a further attempt to demonstrate the Conference's effectiveness, the President followed a dual-track approach by advancing the Program of Work while deliberating substantive issues.

#### II. A Dual-track Approach

4. The President of the Conference assumed the presidency in a situation where, despite the commendable efforts of the two previous Presidents, the Program of Work of the Conference was yet to be approved. In the absence of a Program of Work for the Conference, the President was confronted with the question: in the third month since the beginning of the Conference, what approach could be most appropriate to continue the work of the Conference.
5. Rule 28 of the Rules of Procedure stipulates that “on the basis of its agenda, the Conference, at the beginning of its annual session, shall establish its Program of Work...” The President's interpretation of Rule 28 of the Rules of Procedure was that if the Program of Work isn't approved at the onset of the annual session, this rule doesn't preclude the subsequent Presidents from continuing consultations to reach a decision on the work of the Conference. Furthermore, the Rule 23 of the Rules of Procedure stipulates that “Whenever the Conference deems it advisable for the effective performance of its functions,

including when it appears that there is a basis to negotiate a draft treaty or other draft texts, the Conference may establish subsidiary bodies, such as ad hoc sub committees, working groups, technical groups or groups of governmental experts, open to all member States of the Conference unless the Conference decides otherwise. The Conference shall define the mandate for each of such subsidiary bodies and provide appropriate support for their work.”

6. After extensive consultations and having shared this perception and interpretation of Rule 28 with the delegates, the President concluded that, firstly, the President's endeavors to develop a decision on the work of the Conference shouldn't be confined solely to the beginning of each annual session. Continuing consultations during the subsequent Presidency's tenure could potentially bring the Conference closer to a consensus. Secondly, alongside efforts aimed at achieving a Program of Work, to optimize the use of our allotted time, the Conference could consider planning thematic discussions within the agenda items. To this end and to provide the Conference with a possible level of predictability, in close consultation with the P6+2 and member states, the President developed a structured plan for the discussions under the Conference's agenda items.

7. The President recognizes that the thematic discussions cannot substitute for a decision on the Program of Work. Rather, as a makeshift they provide flexibility to hold discussions that contribute to the Conference's mandate in the absence of a decision on the work of the Conference.

8. The outcome of these conclusions led the Iranian Presidency to adopt a Dual-track approach.

9. The first take from all the consultations is that a common understanding exists on the importance of the adoption of a decision on the Conference Program of Work. Such a decision can convey a strategic message, not only by overcoming a long impasse in the work of the Conference as the single multilateral negotiating body on legally binding instruments on disarmament, but also by demonstrating its ability to assume its responsibilities and role in promoting international peace and stability. This development brings the Conference back on the right track, which is long overdue.

10. Another take is that continuity in the work of the Conference, especially in deciding on its Program of Work does matter. So, instead of starting from scratch, the next Presidents can build up on the previous efforts. This can help our job and will contribute to the evolving nature and result of the work.

11. Accordingly, the President decided to continue the work initiated by the previous Presidents who dedicated significant effort to capture a consensus on a draft decision on the work of the Conference.

12. After all, to meet genuine expectations and respond to the broad support for the President's work, the President was more persuaded to continue consultations. Even if consensus is not reached, these efforts aim to ensure the Conference follows the right and sustained direction toward a Program of Work.

13. Emphasizing the importance of a Program of Work is neither prejudicial to the positions of the member state, nor an attempt to disregard the concerns and priorities of any member state. After all, the Conference needs a freely arrived-at consensus.

### **III. State of the Play and Conclusion**

14. On the Program of Work, some delegations advocated for re-adopting the 2022 decision. A few delegations, without objecting to the 2022 decision, proposed amendments to its text, requesting a reference to past efforts and reflecting the importance of continuity in the work of the Conference.

15. To address member states' concerns and observations and bridging the gaps, the President tried several texts and formulations with the aim of reaching the consensus.

16. As a result of consultations and efforts to include all member state views and observation, the President informally shared the text as an outcome of extensive consultation

with Regional Coordinators and concerned delegations. The President acknowledges with appreciation the engagement and constructive cooperation in this exercise, that the attached draft decision is the result of collective efforts of all member states. Several delegations have contributed to this process by sharing proposals, demonstrating flexibility, and expressing support for the President's general approach.

17. The President is of the view that the draft text does not disregard the concerns and observations of any side and attempts to meet different views and accommodate the stated concerns. The advantage and strength of the attached draft decision lie in the fact that no delegation objected to it, though this does not necessarily mean every member state is fully satisfied.

18. The President recognizes that the current draft decision has fostered significant and constructive engagement among the delegations.

19. Consequently, the President believes that the draft holds merit and warrants presentation to the Conference.

20. Accordingly, the President, aiming for more consideration and engagement and without any prejudice to the past and future positions of any member state, has the pleasure of sharing attached the Draft Decision on the Work of the Conference on Disarmament with the Conference.

The Conference on Disarmament,

*Cognizant* of its role as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum established by the First Special Session of the General Assembly devoted to Disarmament (SSOD-I),

*Noting* that it provides its Member States with a platform to engage in negotiations, on the basis of the rule of consensus,

*Recalling* rule 28 of its Rules of Procedure which calls on the Conference to establish its programme of work on the basis of its agenda,

*Recognizing* the longstanding impasse on the commencement of negotiations on any agenda item, and the urgent need to advance the substantive work of the Conference, with the prospect of resuming the negotiations process,

*In order to* provide a programme of work for the Conference which does not prejudice any past, present or future position, proposal or priority of any delegation, while being aware of previous efforts in the CD,

*Conscious* of the need to conduct its work in a balanced and comprehensive manner,

In pursuance of its agenda contained in CD/2382, decides:

1. To establish, in accordance with rule 23 of its Rules of Procedure, four Subsidiary Bodies on agenda items 1 to 4, and a fifth Subsidiary Body on agenda items 5, 6 and 7, in order to advance the substantive work on all agenda items in a comprehensive and balanced manner, bearing in mind its mandate in accordance with the Final Document of SSOD-I,
2. The Subsidiary Bodies will be chaired by Coordinators appointed by the Conference, under the guidance of the President on the basis of equitable regional distribution,
3. The Subsidiary Bodies shall meet in accordance with rule 24 of the Rules of Procedure, and shall conduct their work in accordance with rule 18, with even allocation of time, and shall agree on the specific topics to be considered,
4. In accordance with rule 35 of the Rules of Procedure, the Subsidiary Bodies shall remain open to all Member States of the Conference on Disarmament and to those non-Member States that the Conference has invited to participate in its work during the 2024 session,
5. The reports on the progress achieved including any recommendations for continuing the substantive work of the CD on the agenda items, and agreed on by consensus in Subsidiary Bodies, would be submitted by Coordinators to the Conference on Disarmament,

through the President, for adoption by consensus and due reflection in the annual report of the Conference on Disarmament to the General Assembly of the United Nations,

6. To appoint, on the basis of equitable geographic distribution, the following coordinators of the Subsidiary Bodies:

Subsidiary body 1: Cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament, [...]

Subsidiary body 2: Prevention of nuclear war, including all related matters, [...]

Subsidiary body 3: Prevention of an arms race in outer space, [...]

Subsidiary body 4: Effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, [...]

Subsidiary body 5: New types of weapons of mass destruction and new systems of such weapons; radiological weapons - Comprehensive programme of disarmament - Transparency in armament, [...]

7. This decision applies only to the 2024 session, without prejudice to any subsequent decision at the beginning of future annual sessions of the Conference on Disarmament.

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