

X CONFERENCE OF DEFENSE MINISTERS OF THE AMERICAS

MINUTES OF THE PLENARY SESSION

In Punta del Este, Department of Maldonado, Republic of Uruguay, on the 10th day of October of 2012, at the Conrad Hotel Convention Center, the President of the X Conference of Defense Ministers of the Americas, Mr. Eleuterio Fernández Huidobro, National Defense Minister of the Republic of Uruguay, opened the Plenary session of this ministerial meeting at 9:45 a.m.:

In the presence of the Members of the Board of Directors of the Conference: the Protempore President, Mr. Eleuterio Fernández Huidobro, National Defense Minister of the Republic of Uruguay, the Secretary General, Dr. Jorge Menéndez, Vice Minister of Defense of the Republic of Uruguay, the Vice President of the X CDMA, Defense Minister of the Republic of Peru, Dr. Pedro Alvaro Cateriano Bellido, and Ambassador Dr. Ricardo González Arenas,

The Secretary General, Dr. Jorge Menéndez, took the floor to make some remarks about the way in which the draft agreements on Thematic Axis I, Natural Disasters, Protection of the Environment and of Biodiversity, were developed.

In that regard, he said that it is the role of the Secretary General to monitor and supervise the progress of the Conference and the work of the Executive Secretariat, which includes - among others - the task of preparing the documents. The Working Committees, together with the Protempore Secretariat and the Assembly of Member States, are the bodies of the Conference (art. 5). The job of the Working Committees is to analyze the contents of the Thematic Agenda, and make recommendations if they consider it appropriate to do so, or submit reports to the plenary (art. 7).

When the Working Committees make recommendations, according to art. 67 of the Regulations, they must include them in a document called “draft agreement”, containing such suggestions and recommendations (art. 67, para. 3). It is up to the Assembly of the Conference to make decisions with regard to the recommendations; should it endorse

them, it will include them in the Final Declaration, which is the document indicating the agreements, recommendations, conclusions and acknowledgments (art. 67, para. f).

Therefore, the Protempore Secretariat was of the view that the documents issued by the Working Committees should be drafted as recommendations, according to their nature as described above. The Assembly of the Conference was now required to adopt decisions thereon.

Further, it stated that Proposal number 1 had been amended, and where it read “The Defense Ministers of the Americas decide”, it should read “The Working Committee on Thematic Axis I recommends”.

Next, Brigadier General Jorge Robles Mella submitted a proposal on behalf of Chile about the “Mechanism for the Exchange of Information on Support Capacities in the Field of Natural Disasters”.

Next, the Moderator of Thematic Axis I, Artillery Colonel D.E.M. Edgar Rodríguez Ruiz, introduced the Draft Agreements prepared by the Working Committee on the aforesaid Thematic Axis.

The matter was submitted to the Assembly for consideration.

The Delegation of the Republic of Chile took the floor to say that there were no objections regarding the substance of the matter, and that all States were in agreement. Whereas the acceptance of Proposal number 1 would eventually lead to its adoption, the acceptance of Proposal number would imply the further study of the matter, which meant that there would be an even longer delay than provided for in the mandate given by the IX Conference of Defense Ministers held in Santa Cruz de la Sierra. Finally, the Delegation requested a recess in order to achieve consensus.

Chile’s proposal was accepted and the Plenary session was suspended for half an hour.

The Plenary session was resumed at 11:30 a.m.

The Secretary General, in order to settle the differences raised by draft agreements 1 and 2, introduced the text proposed by the General Secretariat for the draft Declaration of the Defense Ministers of the Americas on Thematic Axis I, Natural Disasters, with the support of the President of the Conference.

The matter is submitted to the Assembly for consideration.

The Delegation of the United States of America took the floor and expressed the wish that the Draft Agreements prepared by the Working Committee on Thematic Axis I were put to a vote.

Next, the Delegations of Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Canada and Colombia took the floor, and said that they shared the view of the Delegation of the United States in that the abovementioned Drafts should be put to a vote.

Next, the Delegation of Uruguay took the floor and said that it would be in a position to endorse the proposed Mechanism, which was consistent with its national legal system. Uruguay respected its sister countries and believed that they should continue to hold negotiations on the matter; however, in order to facilitate consensus, it would support the draft Declaration proposed by the General Secretariat.

The Dominican Republic took the floor and said that the Mechanism was important and Draft number 1 was viable.

The Republic of Paraguay took the floor and mentioned the need to respect the agenda and to recognize the efforts made by the host country in order to reach a conclusion. It requested a vote.

The Republic of Argentina took the floor, and said that it did not object to a hemispheric mechanism to respond to natural or man-made disasters, but that it had certain reservations related to its own legislation with regard to the creation of such a mechanism at the CDMA level. It expresses that Argentina is willing to assist any sister country suffering a natural disaster but the hemispheric body must be in charge of coordinating such tasks, i.e. the OAS, making reference that Resolution 2750 of the recent General Assembly approved the preparation of an "Inter-American Plan for Disaster Prevention and Response and the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance".

It points out that progress should be made without holding a vote and that proposal No. 2 is not an obstacle to the assistance mechanism for natural disasters but a proposal it wishes to promote from the OAS.

The Delegation of Jamaica took the floor to express its support to draft agreement number 1.

The Delegation of Nicaragua took the floor and said that, in order for decisions to become effective, they had to comply with the respective national legal systems; and that draft number 2 was the one that better responded to the needs in this field. The delegate thanked Uruguay for its efforts to reach consensus.

The Delegation of the Republic of Mexico took the floor to express support for draft number 1.

The Delegation of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela took the floor to express support for draft number 2.

The Delegation of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines took the floor and said that it would be better to achieve consensus on the issue under discussion.

The Delegation of the Republic of Costa Rica took the floor and said that the adoption of decisions should not be mistaken for the practical implementation of ideas already expressed within the context of the OAS. It requested that the matter be put to a vote.

The Delegation of the Federative Republic of Brazil took the floor, commended the work done by Chile and said that natural disaster prevention and relief activities were an integral part of cooperation programs among the countries represented at the meeting. It added that some clarification was needed about the way in which an inter-American mechanism in this field would interact with other national and regional mechanisms, and, in particular, in the case of Brazil, with the South American Defense Council. Within this context, the proposal on Thematic Axis I should be improved further and be subject to the corresponding adjustments.

Next, draft agreement number 1, on Thematic Axis I, Natural Disasters, Protection of the Environment and of Bioersivity, was put to a vote, and was approved with the affirmative vote of nineteen (19) Member States (Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Canada, Republic of Chile, Republic of Colombia, Republic of Costa Rica, Republic of El Salvador, United States of America, Republic of Guatemala, Republic of Honduras, Commonwealth of Jamaica, United Mexican States, Republic of Paraguay, Republic of Peru, Dominican Republic, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Republic of Trinidad and Tobago); the negative votes cast by seven (7) States (Republic of Argentina, Plurinational State of Bolivia, Federative Republic of Brazil, Republic of Ecuador, Republic of Nicaragua, Republic of Suriname, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) and two (2) abstentions (Co-operative Republic of Guyana and Republic of Uruguay) were placed on record.

The Plenary session was suspended until 2:10 p.m.

At 2:10 p.m., the Secretary General, Dr. Jorge Menéndez, Vice Minister of Defense of the Republic of Uruguay, reported that the Defense Ministers of the Americas expressed their satisfaction for the reaffirmation made by the Defense Ministers of Chile and Peru within the context of the X Conference of Defense Ministers of the Americas, in the sense that their countries would respect the judgment to be issued by the International Court of Justice in The Hague on the legal dispute concerning the delimitation of their maritime boundaries.

Such a Statement is a very positive message for the hemisphere, that reinforces the climate of trust, stability and peace prevailing in the continent.

The President of the CDMA congratulates the Republics of Chile and Peru for this message and requests that it is placed on the relevant record.

The Delegation of the Republic of Colombia says that it welcomes the agreement achieved between Peru and Chile, but considers it unnecessary to place it on the Minutes of the Plenary Session.

The Ministers and Government Representatives sign below four copies of the present minutes in the Spanish, French, English and Portuguese languages.

Eleuterio Fernández Huidobro
PRESIDENT OF THE X CONFERENCE OF DEFENSE MINISTERS OF THE
AMERICAS, DEFENSE MINISTER OF THE REPUBLIC OF URUGUAY