



Intersessional Work Programme
Standing Committee Meetings February 9 – 12, 2004

Closing Remarks by Ambassador Martin Dahinden

Mr. President,

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, dear friends

One of the most boring experience in my professional life - as a then young - diplomat was being involved in Review Conferences. In the nineteen-eighties this was basically a mixture of waiting and drafting. Not much of the real world transpired to the meeting room. I easily understood the US TV comedian who described conferences, as *"a gathering of important people who singly can do nothing, but together can decide that nothing can be done"*. (Fred Allen)

Over the last ten years, Review Conferences in general have changed significantly. The Nairobi Review Conference should and can set new ambitious standards. This is achievable as everybody seems to agree that the Review Conference should not only assess the functioning of the Convention but also

strongly reaffirm the commitments and - put in place an action plan, which I consider the most important outcome.

The content of the way ahead has not been defined yet. I am a strong believer in the force of good ideas. "*There is a boundary to men's passions when they act from feelings*" but there is "*none when they are under the influence of imagination.*" (Edmund Burke) This week was in my view very fruitful in terms of emerging new ideas and for breeding existing ones.

But as we all know - ideas and knowledge is not enough. It is a strange particularity of the human race that our ideas and knowledge exceed by far what we are able to exploit.

As a scholar of the history of economy I was once surprised to learn that a fully functioning steam-machine was stored in the famous ancient library of Alexandria.

People who lived two thousand years ago had the key to the industrial revolution in their hands, but they were unable to use it and to open the door to modern age. History, even contemporary history, is full of such examples.

Let us avoid such a fate for our ideas and translate them swiftly to action in the benefit of mine affected people and societies - without forgetting, of course, that *the ancestor of every action is a thought* (Ralph Waldo Emerson) and without confusing movement with action (Hemingway).

Mr. President, dear colleagues,

Like last time we were surprised by the big number of participants. 544 persons registered this time for the intersessional meeting.

It was a pleasure to have been with you this week!

I would particularly like to thank all the kind words addressed by delegates to the Geneva Centre and its staff.

I am very much looking forward to seeing you again in June.

Thank you !