



Intersessional Work Programme
Standing Committee Meetings May 27-31, 2002

Closing Remarks by Ambassador Martin Dahinden

Mrs. President

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, dear friends

We have come to an end of a rich week of discussions. It was good to see all of you here in Geneva. I think we will now return to our work remembering the many useful exchanges of views and new ideas.

Like last January there was a surprisingly important attendance. 437 persons did register for participation. And there was, of course, a number of people who did not register as well. At a certain moment on Monday morning I was even afraid, that the room might be too small.

Even so we might disagree with Woody Allen when he said that eighty per-cent of success is showing up - attendance is an important indicator. Translation contributed significantly to it. I would like to thank the European Union that made it possible.

You have chosen for this week a new format for the agenda.

“There is nothing more difficult to take in hand, more perilous to conduct or more uncertain in its success than to take the lead in the introduction of a new order of things.”

Perhaps you have recognised this advise. It is not from Cecilia Sanches or from one of the co-chairs - but has been written by Niccolo Machiavelli in 1532 in his famous book “the Prince”, when he was of course not thinking of the intersessionals.

I do not know on whether those who have prepared the agenda were guided by Machiavelli or by something else. But it worked well. Particularly to begin the meeting with a focus on the Status and Operation of the Convention. It is like writing a text. The first sentence - the so called topic sentence – sets the tone for the rest.

The discussions we had were more lively than in most meetings that take place in Geneva. However, I think that we should speak even more spontaneously and directly.

In my previous jobs I had often to prepare – together with colleagues - for meetings of ministers. This was a similar challenge. We then discussed, invented and tried all sorts of tricks to make ministers discuss spontaneously – with very limited success I have to admit. The only promising suggestion we actually never tried out was to let the ministers meet only at a lunch or diner table, with no space left for speaking notes. - This was an anecdote and not a suggestion for the conduct of the next intersessional meetings.

Let me thank you for the kind words many of you have addressed to the Centre and to its staff. I will convey it to my col-

leagues that have worked this week, sometimes very early and sometimes very late as well.

I wish you a safe journey home and hope to see you at the Meeting of States Parties in September or during the next intersessionals in 2003!