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Translation of the reply of France's Ambassador to ACDN

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Translation of the reply of France's Ambassador to ACDN

Geneva, 19 August 2003

to Jean-Marie Matagne, president of ACDN,

Monsieur le Président,

I was interested to receive your letter dated of 15 August concerning the so-called A5 proposal aimed at relaunching the work of the Conference on Disarmament.

I can confirm to you that on August 7 at the meeting of the C.D. which I had the honour to attend, China, Russia and the Ukraine officially supported this proposal.

1. During the consultations that ensued, France, like other partners in the Western Group, viewed this development as an encouraging signal, even though we are far from an unblocking of the C.D. Indeed several members wished to reflect further on the consequences of the new Chinese position which essentially consists in becoming more flexible in its demand - rejected by the USA - for the negotiation of a treaty on the militarisation of extra-atmospheric space.

2. I will make sure to send you a copy of a French version of the modified proposal A5 as soon as we obtain it from the UN Secretariat - it is accepted practice that they alone can officialise this translation. For your information, I send herewith copies of the only documents in French which our delegation has, the initial proposal and the amendment proposal.

3. On behalf of the French nation, which as you know supports the opening of negotiations about fissile materials with explosive military uses (FMCT or "cut off" in English), my official delegation will make known its reaction in greater detail at a future session of the C.D. I will send you a copy of this intervention.

4. Rest assured that we are not unaware of your expectations. In the current difficult circumstances, after six years of blockage and at a moment when some countries - some of the most important ones - are reserved about multilateral disarmament, France's primary concern is to preserve the C.D. as the one unique disarmament forum by entrusting it with tasks that are useful for the future of humanity. It is in this spirit that we are engaging in this important debate.

I thank you for your understanding, and will be attentive to future communications,

yours faithfully,

François Rivasseau.