

## Draft Dodging, Robert Zuber

The final day of the Prep Com was devoted to a review of the latest Draft Chair's Summary prepared by the Chair, which incorporated much of the previous days' discussions and seemed to find considerable informal and formal support by states.

There were objections of course. In some cases, delegations both lamented the lack of time needed to digest the Draft and then provided very specific criticisms of its contents. This seems incongruous on the surface but perhaps not as much as initially assumed.

While the Chair acknowledged the problem associated with diplomats having to respond to a Draft without sufficient guidance from capitols, it is assumed (by us at least) that most of the controversial matters would already have been vetted with diplomatic colleagues back home. The Draft, after all, is intended to provide guidance not (as some delegations seemed to imply) to create a controversial or preemptive blueprint for summer negotiations.

Our view is that, as a rule, objections not raised are more toxic to a consensus disarmament process than those put on the table. In the case of the Arab Group and others, objections should be seen both as an effort to keep consensus options fully in play and as a statement of willingness to be fully active at the summer Review Conference.

As Mexico noted, the Draft is not a consensus document. It is useful as a guide to the Review Conference but does not seek to bind the hands of delegations. For us, this seems to us to be a document with contents largely consistent with the PoA process itself – implementation that is hopeful but incomplete, effective but not fully binding.

When Pakistan spoke of the need to consolidate implementation in local and regional contexts, this is of course the core value of this endeavor. And nothing happened this week to jeopardize future progress. No funding was pulled off the table. No objections were raised that were deal breakers for delegations. No existing commitments were dismantled. No irreparable rifts between stakeholders took place.

It wasn't perfect. It didn't solve all problems. But it did no harm. And it reinforced for many delegations the degree to which illicit small arms are, indeed, the true weapons of mass destruction. This Prep Com represented another opportunity for delegations to learn how to work together to enhance what is for now an effective process with no legal standing but with much creativity and generosity with which to conduct its work.

Moving forward, delegations have at their disposal a Draft that can both organize and promote a successful meeting in August. This is not a Draft to dodge, but a draft to use as guidance to build a new generation of PoA related commitments.