

Closing remarks / check against delivery

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Mr. President,
dear friends and colleagues

Francis Bacon - well known for his sentence “*knowledge is power*” gave once a quite remarkable definition of friendship, when he said: *friends are thieves of time*. Didn't we have an impressive and lovely crime rate this week!

One of the most interesting topics in history is what once was called by a French author the history of future - or more precisely, history of peoples thoughts about the future.

When the telegraph was introduced in the 19th century a Swiss member of parliament proposed to abandon diplomatic missions and to use telegraphs instead to convey messages to foreign governments.

The same wisdom guided in our time Ross Perrot during his campaign against President Bush's father. Perrot said: we do not need Embassies, we have fax machines.

It will not be a surprise for you that I have - as an Ambassador - a professional interest in being skeptical towards such statements and forecasts.

When I arrived in my present function almost three years ago, I heard quite similar things about the intersessionals. I was told that it would be a wrong investment to put much resources to support the Ottawa process. Some people predicted that the interest would soon fade away when time goes by and I would run the risk to sit alone in the room with some obscure activists.

Sitting today in front of you my skepticism on forecasts proves to be right. We had this year an unbelievable record number of registred participants. For the first we hit the 500 participants threshold. 5xx persons attended the meetings to be precise.

Mr. President,
dear friends and colleagues,

Do you remember the first day of the intersessionals? Do you remember the problems some of the speakers had to turn the microphone on or off. Some had even to move around to catch another persons mic.

I was then sitting in the conference room, getting angry and almost boiling from the inside, of course, without showing it.

In the evening I asked my staff what happened. I learned that there was a new function for the president of the meeting that allows cutting off other speakers, if need be.

Apparently the president manipulated this function without understanding the effects it has on others.

Looking ahead what might happen between now and the next intersessionals, I sincerely hope, that all presidents know what the effects on others would be, should they decide to push buttons.

(...)

Let me thank you for the many kind words you addressed to the Geneva Center and to its staff. We are all proud and delighted to work for you in the struggle against landmines and their victims.

I wish you a safe journey home and hope to see you again next May.