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Oral History Interview with Konrad Scharinger

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Summary:

Deputy head of the nuclear non-proliferation section of the economic department in the German Federal Foreign Office.

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Konrad Scharinger

Germany

Oral history interview conducted by Michal Onderco by Skype on 29 August 2017

Michal Onderco:

Thank you very much for finding the time and for taking the pain to install Skype for me.

Konrad Scharinger:

I think it is better to do it face to face.

Michal Onderco:

I am very pleased that you found the time to talk to me and that you are willing to share your wisdom with me.

Konrad Scharinger:

I am quite ready to do it. But tell me a little bit about the project. You are collecting a lot of oral statements from participating sides, I assume.

Michal Onderco:

Yes. So what this project tries to illuminate, tries to better understand what happened in the 1995 at the NPT Review Conference. And so for this project, we interview the top level diplomats from the most important countries that took part in the Conference, not only from Europe, but also from the United States, Canada, South Africa, China and so on and so forth. So we try to understand what their recollections are and how they understood the Conference at the time.

Konrad Scharinger:

Yes. But you said only Review Conference - I think also the Extension Conference, of course.

Michal Onderco:

Yes, of course.

Konrad Scharinger:

But you know, for me it is a little bit of a difficulty, I tell you. This happened almost 25 years ago, but this is a situation for all of these participants. I have no access to my reports, I have no access to the intermediate documents. And as I told you in my first [e-mail], I was only a working member of our delegation. So our head of delegation was Ambassador Wolfgang Hoffman, the head of our [Conference on Disarmament] delegation in Geneva and I was deputy head of our non-proliferation section in the economic department of the Federal Foreign Office. So this is the situation.

And of course, I participated only in certain committees during the PrepComs and then during the Conference. Because in the German case, the situation was as follows: the responsibility for the NPT was divided up in that time, between the Federal Foreign Office and the Ministry of Research and Technology. They were the overall competent authority.

But for the NPT as a treaty and the Review, and especially the Extension, it was the responsibility of the Foreign Office, of course. And within the Foreign Office, there was

once more a division of labor between the disarmament department and the economic department. We had at that time, we don't have any more, we had this disarmament department. A part of the responsibility was with the economic department, and I was a member of the economic department. I was responsible for the nuclear safeguards, and the peaceful uses. And a colleague of mine from the Disarmament section was responsible for the disarmament issues. So this was a rather complicated setup. In other administrations, I think it was, of course, one responsibility and so on. But it did not hamper our work. I mean, we worked together very closely.

Michal Onderco:

When did you start thinking about the 1995 Conference or when did you become personally involved with the issue?

Konrad Scharinger:

I became involved in March 1993 when I took over the post of deputy head of the nuclear non-proliferation section of the economic department in the FFO. I came at that time, in March 1993, I came from our permanent mission to NATO in Brussels and I worked in this unit until 1997. So this was four years. And as I said, I started on, I think it was the 15th of March. I remember this date very, very precisely because the problem at that time was: I started my new post on Monday, I think this was the 15th of March, and on Friday 12h March, North Korea left the NPT, they asked to leave.

So the first weeks for me were very busy with reacting to the North Korean step. Because when I arrived on Monday in the Foreign Office, I came in from Brussels, the first thing at 9:00 I was called to the director and he told me "you are responsible for the North Korean issue". And on Wednesday 17th I participated already at a special Governing Council of the IAEA in Vienna. So this was the start.

And from day one also of course the NPT Conference - the Review and Extension Conference - was my responsibility. I participated in all four PrepComs. There were four PrepComs, normally there were three PrepComs. But because of the additional work, we had four PrepComs, and I participated also in the Extension and Review Conference, in New York.

Michal Onderco:

How did Germany start the plan, or the strategy, for the Conference?

Konrad Scharinger:

I mean, it was very clear from the beginning that we wanted indefinite extension. We wanted an extension, if possible, indefinite extension. If possible, indefinite extension without conditions and the optimum was, of course, to have a decision by consensus and this was the final result. I mean, some people are saying there were conditions. The Mexicans and others were talking about extension plus and so on. But, if you are looking at the decisions, there was no formal linkage between these different decisions.

They were adopted piece by piece, step by step, there is only a linkage between the Principles and the extension review, but there is no formal link to the decision via the extension. So it was a sort of, I mean, some people call this conditionality, but it was only a informal [unintelligible] and no formal conditionality. And we never had any, we had never any idea or we never thought about putting any conditions on it.

This comes, of course from our very special situation, I think, as Germany. I felt always that in 1970, or before 1970 when the treaty was negotiated, the aim was of

course was to stop proliferation. But there was also a special emphasis, I think on Germany and Japan as now. So I think we never even thought about it to put any conditionality. So our aim was always to have an indefinite extension, and if possible without conditions.

Michal Onderco:

So the 1995 Conference happened right after the end of the Cold War. There was the end of super power competition, there were new countries joining NPT. Germany was reunified, there was North Korea. How did all of these developments influence how Germany was thinking about the extension? Or did that matter at all?

Konrad Scharinger:

I think it mattered because, of course, there was still the danger of proliferation. I mean, North Korea was very, very fresh at that moment, of course. And at the same time we were in those days also discussing the Iraqi problem, the whole 93+2 issue, the Additional Protocol to extend the safeguards also to undeclared facilities, and not only the declared facilities.

I mean, North Korea was a problem, Iraq was a problem. Everyone talked about Libya as a possible problem, not very clear. Of course Pakistan and India and so on. So there was still the feeling that the NPT was for us an important international treaty to stop proliferation. So there was, I would say in Germany there was from all parties, in the Foreign Office and in the parliament, there was full support for the NPT and for indefinite extension.

Michal Onderco:

You already started talking about the Parliament. And one of the things that I noticed very clearly in the German delegation to the Conference, is that you had a lot of people on the delegation. There was civil society, there were academics, there were parliamentarians. How do you see the input of these all different non-diplomats into your delegation?

Konrad Scharinger:

I would say the Parliament is always in the background because we had, at that time we had of course to report to the Foreign [Affairs] committee and there was a subcommittee on non-proliferation. And the Foreign Office and the head of delegation had to report regularly to this committee. So Parliament was always involved in the whole thing. But I think they didn't have to put any, let's say, pressure on us because the position was very clear. And there was no, I think there was no division of opinion between the Parliament and the ministries, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The most, I would say, the most important contribution came from academia and this was Harald Muller, I don't know if you know him, from the Hessische Stiftung Friedens- und Konfliktforschung. He was very close.. I mean, you know these parliamentarians were members of the delegation at the end, at the Conference in 1995, in May.

But Harald Muller, who was really, he is really a specialist in non-proliferation issues, he was really integrated into our delegation, participated in formal sessions in the United Nations, participated in delegation and so on. So he was a real asset for us.

Michal Onderco:

How did you start to cooperate with other countries prior to the Conference? Many diplomats, when I speak to them, they say well, the United States was doing a lot of lobbying. But then others are telling me that Germany was also very active in lobbying other countries.

Konrad Scharinger:

That's true. I mean, you know, we had the EU presidency in the second half of 1994. And my "Referat", my section, was responsible for the non-proliferation working group in Brussels. There was a non-proliferation working group. I even chaired and our idea was, this was a new instrument at that time to have a Common Action [on] operation of the NPT Conference. So we introduced this idea to have such a European common action.

As I said, it was a new instrument. And to my knowledge, and at the end the Council decided such an action, it was a very simple decision saying - I don't have the text now in front of me and I never have seen the text once more - but it said only the European Union will work together to extend. And there was a lot of concern, especially on the British side. They feared, of course, and I think also France, that they would be obliged to do certain things that they wouldn't like to do. They were rather reticent to accept this.

But at the end, as I said, it was a very simple text and it was accepted. And for us, it was a sort of symbolic act of European unity as refers to this Conference. So this was one part. I mean, the European Union very much prepared the whole thing. It was a topic in all of the working group sessions and so on. And we even divided the demarche action, you know, all over the world. The British worked in the Commonwealth countries, France covered the Francophone countries and so on, and Germany... So we really coordinated actions in foreign countries to demarche for this indefinite extension.

Michal Onderco:

Which countries was Germany allocated?

Konrad Scharinger:

I mean, it was always like this: the Brits and France, let's say, concentrated on countries with which they had traditional ties, I mean, Francophones and the old Commonwealth. And the rest of it was, of course, divided up, Belgium had also certain countries. From the rest a part was taken care of by Germany. This was about the process. So it wasn't very complicated to divide up the goals and the countries. We had a certain number of countries.

And at a certain stage, I think it was in 1994, together with our deputy head of the disarmament department, we even traveled to Sri Lanka to have a meeting with Dhanapala. And we traveled to Jakarta, because Indonesia had the presidency of the NAM during the preparation. We also visited on the same trip Tehran, because we thought, the Iranians are very critical and influential delegation, [that] was important. So we had also talks in Tehran, so to prepare ourselves, to hear what they are thinking and so on. I think Indonesia was a very important country at that time in this process.

Michal Onderco:

How did you perceive the process as it was going during the PrepComs? Did you think that this was going towards indefinite extension or was there a lot of reticence?

Konrad Scharinger:

You know, I really must confess that for a working group member of the delegation it was very difficult for me, to have a feeling of what the situation is. I mean, the whole, I think the whole decision at the end was a very informal process which was directed by Dhanapala, and the heads of delegation. And our ambassador, Mr. Hoffman, was participating in this small group who crafted this whole package. I mean, I think we had the impression that indefinite extension during the preparation, [in] April, May, 1995, that there was a majority for it and that if there would be a vote, we could have

a majority.

Of course, there was already at that time I think the idea of Dhanapala to, if possible, to have a consensus and no vote. There were others, I think, who had the same idea. Because if you have a vote saying 120 block for yes and 40 or 50 no and abstentions, this would have not been a good idea.

I must tell you that there was a lot of diversion, how should I say, I was very busy with a very special problem. You know, there were no rules of procedure for the Extension Conference. And this [caused] a lot of concern: how do you organize the decision, a possible vote and so on. So we invested, I myself and a lot of delegations, invested a lot of time into drafting a rules of procedure, special rules of procedure for the Extension Conference. In the end, it was without any use. These rules of procedure were adopted about three minutes before the real decision on the extension was taken. And of course, because Dhanapala having a consensus decision with no vote on, all the provisions in the rules of procedure for this Extension Conference were useless. But you know, you never know.

So I can remember that we sat for hours and hours to draft such Rules of procedure during different the PrepComs. And the problem was, of course, how do you decide which proposal is voted on first. I mean, there were different proposals for a possible extension. And what mode of decision, how do you decide, secret ballot or roll call or whatever or consensus.

These were the two major points, how do you organize the vote. And at the end it was, of course, obsolete because, it was decided otherwise. I remember still, I worked with Therese Delpech from the French delegation. She is dead now, unfortunately. We worked for hours and even had bilateral contacts in between the PrepComs, how to draft these rules and so on.

Michal Onderco:

You have already alluded to the sort of process of how to extend it. One of the things that many interviewees mentioned, other mentioning other sources, is that the Western Group had held a meeting with Russians in Geneva in '94 where there was a decision made to sort of push through resolution, to establish a resolution to show force. Were you at that meeting?

Konrad Scharinger:

I don't think so. I suppose this was not an official working PrepCom meeting, but one of these private meetings, informal meetings. I would say, you know, my ambassador, Ambassador Hoffman, participated rarely in these formal Main Committee 1, 2 [or] 3 meetings. He really was talking to heads of delegation in the couloirs, discussing positions in informal meetings. And this is how it was done. I mean, you know, the general debate was, of course, going on with all of the statements.

And we followed, of course, one of our members of the delegation followed of course these statements, because you could hear and recognize what the positions were and what possible compromises could be crafted. So you followed, of course, the general debate. And we worked, of course, in these different Main Committees, I, II, and III. But the main thrust and the main focus was, of course, the extension. And most of this was done in informal meetings in fact, in back rooms and so on. Only at the end it became clear that the decision could be taken in this fashion.

And one thing which, I remember well was, as I said, the rules of procedures were adopted. The next decisions was on the extension. And Dhanapala called up this text and said "is there a consensus?" and he hammered down immediately. I mean, he didn't give one second. He didn't look whether one person would have shown up his

arm or his flag, He wouldn't have realized it. So he was really eager to hammer it down and he did it, you know. In a fraction of a second he hammered down, and didn't give any possibility to say something, to make objections. And this was how it was done.

Michal Onderco:

Before the Conference, there were very important discussions about the different modes of extension. The fourth PrepCom, South Africans have floated around an idea of a rolling extension conditional on certain performance. How do you remember that? Do you remember it?

Konrad Scharinger:

Not very well. I only remember where different extension modes. I mean, the rolling 25 or one extension for 25 and later on then the possibility to once more decide on it and so on. But I don't remember exactly how this was made and I don't remember even if we have discussed it, and so on. I mean, in a way we were fixed on this indefinite extension and then you get in a mode where you say all these other proposals, we have only to try to fend them off, and to try to get ours.

This was, I think this was our way of thinking, you know. Because there were a lot of these - yeah, different options of how to do it. And of course there was always a sort of head count. And I think there was very early on -- but I can't say at which time - the feeling that we could do this, the indefinite extension.

Michal Onderco:

But also a willingness, for example, to push through a vote if need be?

Konrad Scharinger:

I think we would have done it, if necessary. Yeah, I think yes. But as I said, the disadvantages of the vote were also very clear for us, and therefore we were very glad that this idea or this proposal of Dhanapala at the end succeeded. What was also very clear was: I still remember because the decision on the extension I don't remember was either taken on Wednesday or on Thursday - I think on Thursday. And the Conference, of course, continued and the review part became then a little bit more important.

But I participated in the night following the decision, we negotiated in one of the Main Committees, II or III, where I participated, the text. And what I felt was that after the extension decision, there was no, how should I say, there was no readiness whatsoever on the side of the nuclear powers to make any compromises.

So even, you know, in the safeguards and peaceful uses drafted text, we had still some square-brackets, but there was no readiness whatsoever to come to a result. And this is why at the end there was no final, there was no final declaration of the Review Conference part. The main problem, was of course, I think the main problem was in the Main [Committee] I, in the disarmament. But even in the verification and safeguards and peaceful uses committee, you could feel that the readiness to compromise was exhausted and there was no readiness to compromise anymore.

Michal Onderco:

How do you see that as a diplomat? Because Germany is an important part of the Western Group. So very often you hear that criticism from NAM countries, but not very often from a country like Germany.

Konrad Scharinger:

I would say we were really disappointed. Because it was such a sharp change of mood and attitude on the side of the nuclear power states. You could have the feeling they

reached their goal and that is it, you know --

Michal Onderco:

I saw the debates that were held in the Parliament at the time and there is a lot of really, a lot of pressure on, a lot of emphasis that is put on disarmament. How much did the balance between non-proliferation and disarmament matter for Germany?

Konrad Scharinger:

I mean, it matters of course for us. And you can see that and now with this discussion about forbidding the nuclear arms and so on. It is always a very difficult balance as a major NATO country, and as a partner in NATO. So of course there is and was this demand to have disarmament and going to zero as soon as possible. But we never did it, let's say, in a fashion which was not taking into account the other obligation we have within this military alliance.

I can imagine, I don't recall, but we did certainly report to the Disarmament committee of the German parliament. If there was criticism, there might have been criticism from the Greens and Social democrats which were in the opposition at that time, that we did not enough for disarmament and so on. But it was not, if I recall it correctly a very urgent demand or a problem for us. We were very satisfied about the result.

It was disappointing that we didn't get a review document and it was a really disappointing that the nuclear power states only aimed at having this extension and didn't care a lot about the review. I mean, I read later on that, Therese Delpech said "we are all so exhausted and so on and so on". But this was, you know, this was a little bit of a subterfuge or excuse of a representative of a nuclear power state.

Michal Onderco:

You traveled to Indonesia and to Iran before the Conference. How did you perceive the positions of these two countries? And did you see any sort of points of overlap between German position on one hand and the position of these countries on the other?

Konrad Scharinger:

I don't remember because I couldn't consult our reports and so on, so it was really a long time ago. But I think Indonesia and the NAM were at that time still very much on the track to have an extension with conditions concerning disarmament. And not only extension plus, but really conditionality of the extension, to really oblige nuclear power states in a more pressing form, to disarm in a more accountable manner. I think this was the Indonesian position. I don't recall any special position of the Iranians at that time.

Michal Onderco:

You also said that you chaired a committee, the EU working group on non-proliferation. Was there a lot of division or was that sort of a discussion among friends?

Konrad Scharinger:

In the working group, in this working group it was mainly a discussion among friends. As I said already, there was a sort of reticence and there was some doubts from the British side and others [about] this common action thing. These non-proliferation working groups, they had always a very long agenda, about ten or fifteen points. And this Common Action for the NPT Conference was only one [point on] the agenda.

Much more important were the daily EU, the daily EU meetings during the PrepComs and the Conference. And I would say even more important were the WEOG meetings, the Western and Others meetings. The routine was to have at 8:00 the EU meeting, one hour and at 9:00 the Western and others group meeting. And normally the negotiations in the New York and Geneva, PrepComs, and during the main conference started at 10:00.

And I remember that the Western and Others were the most important ones. And it was under the chairmanship of the Brits. There was one guy from London who did the whole process, you know, from '93 to '95. He was very knowledgeable and he was a very good negotiator. And there, of course, you had very different ideas and concepts and there, of course, there were the nuclear power states, especially of course the United States and Great Britain and France. And you had on the other side the big non-proliferators and disarmament countries, like Canada, New Zealand and Australia. And there it was, where the substantial negotiations and exchange of positions took place, in the Western and Other Group. There you could feel what really was going on and of course, the American reported about their demarches, about their headcounts and so on. And the Canadians brought in their proposals and so on. I mean, these were the real important and substantive discussions in the Western and Others Group.

Michal Onderco:

Well, you mentioned already the Canadian proposals. And there is a certain discussion about whether the Principles of objectives have the intellectual origin in Canada, or in South Africa, or elsewhere. Do you remember the initial discussions about - when do you remember the first time you heard about the document that later became the Principles and objectives?

Konrad Scharinger:

I don't remember. I can't tell you. I would lie if I would say I know it. I don't know it. Let's say this is a vague impression I have still that the Canadians, the New Zealanders and the Australians were very active, almost like a group itself. I mean, these were the big independent, disarmament people who really pushed for good decisions.

Michal Onderco:

When these documents started to be negotiated, how did Germany see them, the two decisions, one on Principles and objectives and the other one on the strengthened review process?

Konrad Scharinger:

This is much a too detailed question for me. I can't tell you. I don't know, I don't really know.

Michal Onderco:

You mentioned that you were working at the Ministry of Economy and Germany was, during the Cold War, it didn't really have the best record on non-proliferation and was quite happy to, sort of, sell the sensitive technologies all over the world. And that changed later. Did the industry provide any sort of input in the run-up to the 1995 Conference?

Konrad Scharinger:

I have to correct one detail. You said I worked in the Ministry of Economy. I worked in the Foreign Office in the Department of Economy. I mean, in our department, in another unit there was done all of this work concerning export control, you know, MTCR and Nuclear Suppliers Group. This was within the Economic Department. It is

true what you said that we had, that there were reproaches that we did some exports, but I mean, this was a very sensitive topic. And let's say the controls which were exerted by the ministries were improved and strengthened when this information came in. When this information came in, there was a lot of pressure from the Parliament. There was a lot of pressure from the Minister, from Foreign Minister Genscher, not to be exposed to approaches that we export weapons and sensitive material to countries. There were some cases, there were a lot of cases and I think there were a lot of cases where there were companies exported things which ended up in countries where they should not end up, and the companies did not know. On the other side there were, of course, also cases where the companies exported and deceived intentionally the controlling institutions.

So at the end, the network within the ministries, the Ministry of Economy, Foreign Ministry, and the different implementing agencies was strengthened. And I think then we had an effective export control. You can never be 100 percent sure that an export ends only there where it should and not at an illegal spot, or with any illegal country.

Michal Onderco:

Did industry have any sort of input? Because the Parliament had, the civil society, was industry in any way involved?

Konrad Scharinger:

Yeah. I don't - you know, in my unit there was never a representative of industry pressing us or giving us advice or making proposals or whatsoever. If this was done, it was done in another way. I mean, either directly to the Minister, but I have no information about these procedures and meetings. I mean, really, I was at that time, not at the political level of the Ministry, but on the working level. And we had our laws, we had our orders and we tried to implement it as well as possible.

Michal Onderco:

Yes.

Konrad Scharinger:

But I never met anybody or had a meeting where people from industry were there and saying you should organize the NPT Conference in another way and we should have other aims and this overall aim which you are following. That an indefinite extension is wrong or whatever - never.

Michal Onderco:

You already mentioned that Germany was involved in sending some of the demarches to some countries. How were these received in these countries?

Konrad Scharinger:

I don't know. I mean, you know, normally you send out your ambassador or you say in your text which goes out to the embassies, "try to meet on the highest level the responsible person". So this was either done by the ambassador or his deputy or in bigger embassies, by the head of a department, the economic department and so on. And normally you get feedback saying "we did this demarche and they reacted positively, but the final decision would be taken during the Conference or during the PrepCom". So I would say, I don't recall.

I mean, these were 20 or 30 countries. Normally you get the feedback, "we implemented the demarche, they took note of our wishes and of our demands and they will take them into account", These are the normal responses. I mean, there might have been certain cases which they said yes, we have the same idea to have an indefinite extension and others would have said perhaps no, we want

conditionality and so on. But I don't recall. I mean, we kept lists where we documented the demarches made and the reactions. I would have had a look into these lists.

Michal Onderco:

I am asking because sometimes my interviews have cited, in many of these countries, especially in the smaller NAM members, there is basically a tendency of going with NAM flow.

Konrad Scharinger:

Yes, yes. I mean, this is always the case that you say we will have a NAM meeting there and there on the ministerial level and so on and they will decide on it and we will align with the majority of NAM and so on. But you know, NAM at that time, I don't recall the exact number of membership at the time, but this was already at that time a very big group. And it was not like a monolithic block where you could always take it that they take a decision and they implement it.

I mean, this is a big block, they are discussing matters and there might come out a sort of direction of how to act. But it was never like this that they took a decision already very early on, a very clear cut decision, and they implemented it. Because I mean, we have now the same difficulty within the European Union when we are 28 members. They have such diverse positions that at the end there is only a core position and then you push in this direction, but never a very clear a uniform decision that you are implementing. And I think that this was also the case.

In our discussions it was, of course, always present that this is a big group, they have a lot of votes. But there has also always been [the realization] they won't vote in a unified way or it is not very likely that everyone makes the same decision.

This also depends, of course, whether you have a secret ballot or a roll call. In a secret ballot if there are different positions for instance within the European Union, but also within NAM, or within the African group, countries will vote differently. In case of a roll call, the group pressure is, of course, much stronger.

Michal Onderco:

Yes. Shortly before the Conference, Harald Muller in cooperation with some academics from a group called Project for Promotion of Nuclear Non-Proliferation organized a workshop near Frankfurt where a bunch of diplomats from European countries were invited to sort of learn about the NPT. Did you participate in that meeting?

Konrad Scharinger:

No. I did not participate, I didn't get any invitation.

Michal Onderco:

Okay.

Konrad Scharinger:

We had very close contact with Harald Muller. As I said, he even participated in preparatory meetings in the Foreign Office and so on, was really included into the delegation. He did not always agree with our position. He gave advice, he had his ideas, he had his positions, but we did not always follow. We heard his positions, but we didn't always follow him.

But I think we were not invited. We had very close contact with Harald. So I think he

did not, he didn't see any necessity to invite us, but I don't know.

Michal Onderco:

At that time did you also see a certain lack of expertise in the NPT matters in some of the newly democratizing countries in Europe?

Konrad Scharinger:

I don't know. I mean, there were at that time, they were not yet members of the European Union. I still remember when I opened my working group in the second half of '94. I think Austria, Sweden and some other countries became new members. So I welcomed Sweden and Austria and some other countries, into our working group. So this was the situation at that time, you know. So I don't know, but I suppose it was not easy for them.

They were alone - they were in the Eastern Group, of course, but didn't follow any more the Russian directives. And on the other side, they were all young, new people there in all of these ministries. But I don't recall, I mean, the role they played. The Chairman, Chief of the Main Committees and of the PrepComs were divided up between the different regional groups. I don't recall that we had any Eastern group head. I mean, the first PrepCom was shared by a Finnish guy I remember, but I don't recall that there was any Eastern European who really stood out.

Michal Onderco:

The head of the drafting committee was a Pole. His name was Strulak.

Konrad Scharinger:

He don't recall him. This is not a negative statement.

Michal Onderco:

After the Conference ended and there was a decision of the indefinite extension. Was the German government satisfied with the outcome?

Konrad Scharinger:

Totally, yeah. I still remember when the decision was taken, everyone stood up, and applauded immediately after the decision. Then at the real final end on Friday, I think it was on Friday during mid-day, the Conference had already dissolved. The whole German delegation assembled, the whole German delegation assembled in the General Assembly Hall. And I think we even smuggled in some bottles of champagne, and we had a glass of champagne in the General Assembly Hall, the German delegation. So this shows a little bit that we were really elated, about the result and that we made it. So for us, it was a success.

Michal Onderco:

What were your expectations at the time for the future? I mean, you already suggested that there was a lot of sort of political commitment, packed into the decisions, the Principles and the strengthened review process. Did you at the time have any expectations about how this will play it in the future?

Konrad Scharinger:

No. I did not really. And you know, to prepare myself for this interview, I browsed through the documents of the 2000 and 2005 Review Conference. I still, I think I was still participating at the first PrepCom in 1997, in New York, for the 2000 Conference. You know, the first PrepCom is always very business-like thing. And you only try to adopt the agenda and to organize the work. It is not yet a substantial discussion.

So during my stay in this non-proliferation unit, I only got a first smell of the next step. But I read now that 2000 was very satisfactory and 2005 was a total catastrophe. I mean, in 2000 they had a review, a final document. In 2005 they didn't succeed to even attempt that. But at that time I worked already [elsewhere]. My next post was in Washington and I worked in Washington during the Clinton and Bush administration. I mean, with Bush there was really a hiatus and a change of the position and this was the main change in 2005. I mean, we met, because I was then the director of the North American Desk, we met Bolton, the U.S. representative to the United Nations, and he was a very tough guy and not a multilateral guy.

And of course 2005 the non-success was due to the disappointment, I think, of the NAM and all of the non-nuclear power states about the non-implementation of the points that were adopted in 1995 mainly in the Principles and in the declaration or in the resolution on the Middle East. No steps to disarm. I mean, the only thing which was successful was the establishment of CTBT

Michal Onderco:

Well, even CTBT is not yet fully successful.

Konrad Scharinger:

Yes, because America is not a member, is not a treaty member.. But you know, in 1995, after the extension, I mean the joy about this positive decision was overwhelming, I think. And everyone had the feeling that we have taken a really important and almost historic decision. And this was, what I want to say: that there was a very positive feeling - on our side, I would say.

Michal Onderco:

Well, you already alluded to the decision that was made on the Middle East. And there is, of course, a lot of dissatisfaction that comes from that decision on the Middle East. At the time in Germany, and Germany being the country that has a very particular relations with a number of Middle Eastern countries, including Israel, how did you expect that the Middle East resolution is going to unfold in the future?

Konrad Scharinger:

I can't tell you because I am not really, I am not a Middle East expert. This was very, I think this was something that was very special special topic between the United States and Israel. You are right, we have of course very special relations to Israel. And of course, there was always the hope that there might be a peace process, or some progress.

And I think at that time I recall I think there was much more positive thinking and much more hope than now. There were developments at the time which promised that everything goes into the right direction. If you read in this Middle East resolution that there should be a nuclear weapons free zone, if possible until the next Review Conference, in five years, you could see this somehow, how should I say, optimistic view, at that time.

I think it was already at that time perhaps unrealistic and the past twenty years tell us that it was, in this form, it was unrealistic.

I am not a specialist as concerns Middle East issues. I know that it is, and it was a very important part of the decision taking. I was later, from 2012 till 2015 ambassador in Vienna at the IAEA. And there Egypt and the Arab states, every year during the IAEA General Conference are proposing a resolution on the nuclear capabilities of Israel.

So this is a topic, which was not solved at that time, it was not solved in between, and it is a problem which is going on. So I would say the hopes of the Arab side, by this resolution to make some progress as concerns the Middle East peace process, and especially the Israeli nuclear capabilities, these hopes have not materialized or have not come up to be implemented. This is why they are until now, I mean this is 24 or 25 years later, every year proposing this resolution on the Israeli nuclear capabilities. That shows a lot of the disappointment of the Arab states. But they have not reached a certain political goal.

Michal Onderco:

I have reached now the end of my questions. Is there something I should have asked about and I didn't? Is there something big and important that I am missing?

Konrad Scharinger:

No. I think we touched upon a lot of things and you almost transgressed my limit of knowledge. As I said at the beginning, it is 25 years ago. I didn't write a daily report, personal thing. I don't have access to my reports and to the documents. So it is difficult to reconstruct in a way what happened. But as I said, the main thing was Germany had this very clear position and we cooperated very closely in the European Union and also the Western and others group and we were very satisfied about the results.

Michal Onderco:

Thank you very much for your time and for all the wisdom.