

CD Adds Five Members

- [Arms Control Today](#)

Though unable to start any negotiations since resuming its third and final working period of the year on July 26, the 61-member Conference on Disarmament (CD) expanded its membership to 66 on August 5. Membership for the five new states—Ecuador, Ireland, Kazakhstan, Malaysia and Tunisia—had been blocked at various times during the past year by Iran, Pakistan and India. With the September 8 close for negotiations fast approaching, U.S. Ambassador Robert Grey welcomed the new members, but ruled out any further membership expansion until the conference has demonstrated that it can do substantive work—such as completing a fissile material cutoff treaty—at its current size. In addition to the organizational problems inherent in a committee with 66 independent members, the CD faces the challenge of having to operate by consensus, meaning that each new member represents another potential veto of the conference's work.

Originally an 18-member body in 1962, the conference last expanded in June 1996 to its previous size of 61 with 23 new members. On August 12, Malaysia noted that 21 countries are still awaiting membership.

After agreeing in August 1998 to start fissile cutoff negotiations, the conference was expected to resume those talks this year. However, as a result of U.S. resistance to working on preventing an arms race in outer space, the refusal of the nuclear-weapon states (except China) to negotiate on nuclear disarmament, and the unwillingness of some states to start any negotiations without passage of a comprehensive work program, this year will probably see a repeat of 1997, when the CD held no formal talks.

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