

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE ONE THOUSAND AND FIFTY-EIGHTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 13 March 2007, at 10.10 a.m.

President: Mr. Juan Antonio MARCH (Spain)

The PRESIDENT (spoke in Spanish): I declare the 1058th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament open. Today we will continue with a series of plenary meetings during which the Conference will be addressed by Ministers for Foreign Affairs as well as by other senior officials representing member States.

It is a source of satisfaction for the Conference on Disarmament to have so many distinguished political figures. Their presence among us testifies to the abiding commitment of their Governments to our joint efforts as well as the continued importance they attach to our forum. It is our sincere hope that the wisdom, political vision and words of encouragement of our distinguished guests will give a new impetus to our efforts aimed at launching the substantive work of the Conference.

At the beginning of our meeting, if I may, on behalf of the Conference and on my own behalf, I would like to extend a warm welcome to His Excellency Dr. Francisco Santos Calderón, Vice-President of Colombia, who will be our first speaker today. I also have on the list of speakers for today His Excellency Mr. Artis Pabriks, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Latvia; His Excellency Mr. Manouchehr Mottaki, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran; His Excellency Mr. Masayoshi Hamada, Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan; Her Excellency Ms. Anna Fotyga, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Poland; His Excellency Mr. Phan Binh Minh, Assistant Foreign Minister of Viet Nam; and His Excellency Mr. Vittorio Craxi, Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of Italy. Also on my list of speakers for today is His Excellency Ambassador Wolfgang Petritsch of Austria.

The first of our speakers this morning is the Vice-President of the Republic of Colombia. He has been Vice-President since 2002, when he was elected on the same ticket as the current President, Alvaro Uribe Vélez. I now give the floor to the Vice-President of Colombia, Mr. Francisco Santos Calderón.

Mr. SANTOS CALDERON (Colombia) (spoke in Spanish): Mr. President, I wish to assure you of Colombia's full support for the work being carried out under the stewardship of Spain in this forum.

Since 1996 Colombia has contributed in a committed way to the work of the Conference on Disarmament, the negotiating forum which is the interface for subjects of key importance for peace and international security. In the globalized world, the international community shares a large number of complex threats: access by terrorists to nuclear and radiological weapons, the global drug problem, illicit trafficking in arms, munitions and explosives and transnational organized crime.

Terrorism knows no boundaries. It can affect each and every one of our countries, hence the need to work in a concerted manner in this joint struggle to which we all have a responsibility to contribute. In Colombia, my country, illegal armed groups use terrorist practices to threaten the security of citizens, causing thousands of victims. These groups have unlimited

(Mr. Santos Calderón, Colombia)

access to all the weapons they desire, financed by the illicit drugs business. For our country, it is imperative that this Conference should move beyond rhetoric and get down to work, through effective efforts to agree on legally binding commitments that will prevent weapons from falling into the hands of terrorists. We cannot conceive what these groups might do if they had weapons of mass destruction or their components, or radiological bombs, at their disposal.

Compliance with commitments entered into by Colombia at the international level is a fundamental premise of its foreign policy, particularly in the case of resolutions issued by the United Nations Security Council. Consequently we must work internally to apply resolution 1540 of 2004 on the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

Colombia is aware of the need to strengthen international security, and has acceded to various legally binding instruments. Notable among them are the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean, the Convention on the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, the Convention on the Prohibition of Biological and Toxin Weapons, and we are currently in the process of ratifying the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism.

The Conference on Disarmament must recover its former importance and show the entire international community its ability to bring us together in our resolve. We are convinced of the urgent need to continue the dialogue which is leading us towards the multilateral negotiation of agreements on nuclear weapons and non-proliferation. Accordingly, in association with the reactivation of this Conference, Colombia has supported the five Ambassadors' proposal, of which we are co-sponsors, as a possible solution to the difficulties encountered in this forum. Many delegations have expressed their willingness to work with this proposal, some aspects of which that facilitate consensus can be modified with flexibility.

A subject of special interest to Colombia is illicit trafficking in small weapons and light weapons, on which we have displayed regional and global leadership, particularly since our term in the Chair of the Conference in 2001, which became a reference point in efforts to combat this scourge. The United Nations Programme of Action in this regard is the first major step towards devising effective responses to a global problem, seeking to remedy the absence of rules and enable monitoring mechanisms to be established.

Clear examples of the continuity and validity of the Programme of Action are the existence of an instrument for marking and tracing, the work carried out by the Group of Experts to study the viability of an agreement to regulate the role of intermediaries, and more recently the adoption by the General Assembly of resolution 61/89 of 6 December 2006, entitled "Towards an arms trade treaty: establishing common international standards for the import, export and transfer of conventional arms."

Despite the poor results achieved in the Review Conference of July 2006, the future of the Programme of Action is intimately linked to the political will of all States to combat this mortal traffic and civil society's ability to act.

(Mr. Santos Calderón, Colombia)

Colombia is fully committed to the national application of the Programme of Action. Despite its domestic difficulties, a series of processes of huge importance are under way in controlling small arms and light weapons.

In Colombia, the process of demobilizing the illegal self-defence forces which has covered 30,000 men, has brought about the hand-over of 18,000 weapons. Reintegrating these men into society is a complex task and requires national and international support. Recording and destroying all these weapons is equally complex. To deal with the challenges, Colombia requires cooperation and solidarity from the United Nations and the international community.

The problems of small arms and light weapons have been the subject of extensive discussion, in Colombia, in which national and local institutions as well as civil society have participated. Recently, President Uribe declared the year 2007 as “The year of life” for the country. This initiative encompasses a number of proposals to make headway in campaigns designed to promote disarmament.

In accordance with the recommendations of the Programme of Action, Colombia now has a national focal point in the form of a national coordinating committee to prevent, combat and eradicate illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons, which had its first official meeting on 6 February of this year.

At the global level, future tasks for the Programme of Action are to secure a genuine commitment from the international community in areas including supply, the transfer of weapons to non-State actors, bringing arms traffickers to justice and increasing technical and financial cooperation. We must deal with the oppositions between producer and consumer countries, between supply and demand, and between action by governments and action by society. We are all part of the problem, and so we must all be part of the solution.

One of the most important initiatives stemming from the Programme of Action is the arms trade treaty. In this regard, resolution 61/89 of 6 December 2006 opens up a space for reflection, consultation and discussion and decision-making processes on a large scale for the control of small arms and light weapons.

Colombia, as it has already stated on other occasions, supports this initiative, which will enable producing, consuming and transit countries to harmonize their legislation and adopt standards which will allow for better monitoring and responsibility in the area of sales, transport and purchasing of weapons and munitions, without affecting States’ legitimate defence and security needs.

Colombia considers that in drafting the text of the treaty it will be necessary to clearly establish the role of State and non-State actors in the global arms trade. We wish to play a very active part in this significant initiative as we have considerable experience in this area and a number of institutions that are ready and willing to contribute to the process of consultation and negotiation.

(Mr. Santos Calderón, Colombia)

In the area of anti-personnel mines (APMs), Colombia heads the list of countries with the largest number of victims of these devices in the world, as a result of the long period of violence the country has suffered. Likewise, the frequent use of improvised explosive devices and abandoned unexploded munitions has led to a substantial increase in the number of victims in Colombia. Recently, Landmine Monitor reported 7,300 victims worldwide last year, 11 per cent more than in 2004, of whom 1,100 were in Colombia. In addition, it declared FARC to be the non-State actor which lays the greatest number of mines in the world.

Use of anti-personnel mines has become the main combat strategy adopted by illegal armed groups. Such articles as balls, glasses, cups, gift boxes, toys, animals and all kinds of objects are among the main items that illegal armed actors use in putting together these devices. They appear to be inoffensive, but they cause incalculable damage to the civilian population, especially children, whose attention is attracted by familiar objects that they can play with. Tackling this scourge requires us to boost all-round efforts to combat anti-personnel mines so as to respond to the urgent demands of the communities of different regions of the country that are in danger owing to the actual or suspected presence of these devices.

After a number of significant steps forward in the legislative area, a new stage was begun in 2004 in raising awareness of the anti-personnel mine issue throughout Colombian society. This made it possible to mobilize material and economic resources which will help to enhance all-round care for victims. To this end, the national Government has taken major steps in coordination with civil-society institutions and organizations in this regard such as socio-economic rehabilitation of victims, training for employment and study of the supply of labour for those affected as well as the development of national standards for the provision of care to the disabled.

Currently, we are devising a rehabilitation plan for the armed forces whose aim is to provide all-round high-quality care to all members of the military who are suffering from any type of disability. We hope that this plan will prove a successful model that we can replicate for the rest of the country.

In the midst of the complex situation created by the activities of the illegal armed groups, the national Government continues to make headway in implementing the Ottawa Convention. In October 2004 the last stockpile held by the military forces was successfully destroyed. We have also adopted rules and regulations that facilitate the application of the Convention. The illegal armed groups must immediately abandon the practice of laying anti-personnel mines. It is an ethical and humanitarian imperative that the international community should call on these groups to cease the reprehensible practice of producing and laying mines which cause violence, death and indiscriminate destruction in our country.

I wish to inform you that domestic efforts have been complemented by the support we have received from the international community. On behalf of the Colombian Government, I wish to express our appreciation to all the countries which have contributed in solidarity to this cause and invite them to continue working with us.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in Spanish): I thank the Vice-President of Colombia for his important speech, and on behalf of the Conference on Disarmament I would like to thank him most sincerely for his statement today, which demonstrates the support of the Colombian Government of the work which takes place here and a very important political endorsement to continue moving forward with a much more positive and results-oriented approach.

I will now suspend the meeting for five minutes in order to escort the Vice-President of Colombia out of the Council chamber.

The meeting was suspended at 10.25 a.m. and resumed at 10.35 a.m.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in Spanish): We shall now resume the 1058th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. I wish a warm welcome on behalf of the Conference on Disarmament to the next speaker, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Latvia, Mr. Artis Pabriks.

Mr. PABRIKS (Latvia): Mr. President, today I am privileged to address the Conference on Disarmament - the only international multilateral disarmament negotiating body.

We know that each organization lives through optimistic and sometimes difficult times. I am glad to note that the CD is making an ultimate attempt to break a vicious cycle in which it has put itself for the past 10 years by trying to agree on a programme of work. Latvia believes that the valuable initiative of the six CD Presidents of the past year, along with a much more engaging approach proposed by the current sextet, which has also been accepted by members of this august body, should generate sufficient momentum to start the long-awaited negotiations.

We follow with interest the deliberations on all issues on the agenda, from nuclear disarmament and the ban on production of fissile materials to the prevention of an arms race in outer space, negative security assurances and transparency in armaments. We have noted and are carefully examining important contributions to the CD - elements of possible instruments and mandates recently proposed by several delegations. Equally, we appreciate the considerable improvement in the accuracy and timeliness of the information flow from the CD plenary meetings, especially through the updated website of the Conference.

The last couple of years have not been among the most successful in multilateral disarmament affairs. Latvia regrets that several important forums have not produced the desired results - the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference, the Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe Review Conference, and the Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) Review Conference, just to name a few. Success in the area of disarmament is measured in terms of expectations. While these regimes have not lived up to expectations, nobody is questioning their validity or relevance. At the same time we note with a certain satisfaction that the Sixth Review Conference of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention was able to agree on measures to strengthen national implementation of the Convention. However, the effective carrying out of these agreements remains a challenge.

(Mr. Pabriks, Latvia)

Latvia regrets the unsuccessful attempt to conclude an agreement on mines other than anti-personnel mines during the Third Review Conference of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. We hope that the CCW will live up to the expectations placed in it by the States parties to start negotiations on a legally binding instrument to regulate the technical and design characteristics and the use of cluster munitions, with a view to minimizing their humanitarian impact. Latvia considers the CCW as the most appropriate forum for addressing this issue, while acknowledging the potential positive effect of the initiative on cluster munitions taken by Norway and another 46 nations.

Latvia's economy and development is increasingly dependent on peaceful outer space technologies and applications. We believe that an arms race in outer space must be prevented. Such prevention is also an important condition for the strengthening of international security. We have appreciated the careful consideration of the issue of prevention of an arms race in outer space in the past two years by the Conference. We should make all efforts to explore, in a substantial manner, further possibilities for preventing an arms race in outer space.

Conventions and multilateral agreements have already covered much of weapons of mass destruction material and sources. The arsenals of the nuclear super-Powers are at their lowest levels in several decades. Latvia appreciates the detailed information given by the nuclear States on their nuclear stockpiles during recent meetings of the Conference. There has been good progress in the areas of prohibition and elimination of biological and chemical weapons. However, the proliferation of military technologies, arms and nuclear, biological and chemical weapons, as well as their means of delivery, is still one of the greatest challenges we face today. It is compounded by the dual-usability of many of today's technologies. All too often a thin line marks the difference between peaceful and military use of technologies. In the light of the rise of extremism and terrorism, the proliferation of WMD takes on a new meaning and urgency.

That is why we see that discussions within the Conference on Disarmament on a fissile material cut-off treaty are of paramount importance. Latvia believes that the commencement of FMCT negotiations is long overdue, and calls on the CD member States not to wait any longer.

However, it is not enough just to reach for new ground-breaking international agreements. It is not enough just to universalize. Honouring existing treaties is of no lesser importance. Without that, the foundations of the international non-proliferation regime face the danger of not being sound and solid. Without that, existing treaties risk becoming just hollow compilations of carefully crafted words. There are some recent positive developments in the area of fulfilling the commitments undertaken by States under the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Let me highlight the firm decision taken by the Government of Libya. However, and more alarmingly, there are disappointments as well. Iran has yet to convince the international community of the peaceful nature of its nuclear programme. As regards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Latvia views positively the resumption of six-party talks and hopes that these recent developments will provide a basis for a negotiated solution.

Since regaining its independence, Latvia's foreign and security policy has been aimed towards the elimination of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction to ensure stability and security in our region and globally. Latvia has actively pursued non-proliferation policies.

(Mr. Pabriks, Latvia)

One of the main activities in this field has been Latvia's stringent export control policies regarding WMD and dual-use materials. We see that strict export control regimes are the key to diminishing proliferation. Of course, one of the main enablers of success in this area is close and effective international cooperation. Latvia can boast a strong and effective strategic goods export control system, as well as considerable experience and expertise in the field. We are working with our regional partners to share and transfer this knowledge to the advantage of effectiveness of non-proliferation efforts in our region.

While the proliferation of WMD is at the forefront of challenges to be addressed in the coming years, we should not forget more traditional arms control issues. Latvia views the initiative of establishing common international standards for the import, export and transfer of conventional arms through an arms trade treaty as a necessary step towards curbing the proliferation of conventional weapons.

Since 1 January 2006 Latvia has been a member of the Ottawa Convention, and in the first six months after becoming a member we had already fulfilled all the requirements of the Convention regarding the destruction of stockpiles - years ahead of our scheduled commitments.

In concluding, I would like to leave the CD a reminder that there is a line outside its doors. Since 1982, 24 non-member States have applied for membership. Latvia is also one of them. Observership, which we have been granted by the CD, is a nice but, in our view, not sufficient gesture. We hope that the CD will decide on its expansion in the near future. Latvia stands ready to contribute to the greatest extent possible to the work of the Conference as a fully fledged member.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you very much, Minister, for your very important statement and for the encouragement to this body to proceed in such a way as to get efficient results. We also take note of your strong commitment to become a full member of the Conference, and in the name of the CD, we thank you very much for your time, effort and support.

I proceed now to suspend the meeting in order to escort the Minister out of the Council chamber. We will resume in five minutes.

The meeting was suspended at 10.45 a.m. and resumed at 10.55 a.m.

The PRESIDENT: I resume the 1058th plenary meeting of the Conference.

I would now like to give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, His Excellency Mr. Manouchehr Mottaki.

Mr. MOTTAKI (Islamic Republic of Iran): Mr. President, I would like to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and wish you success in discharging your arduous task to move the work of this august body forward. I would also like to extend my appreciation to the six Presidents of the Conference who could build upon the efforts of the CD Presidents of the previous year to propose an organizational framework for the work of the Conference and to appoint coordinators for all the items on the agenda.

(Mr. Mottaki, Islamic Republic of Iran)

The ultimate goal of these initiatives and of any other common efforts should be to get the Conference back to its substantive work, complete and comprehensive disarmament and in particular nuclear disarmament, through the adoption of a comprehensive and balanced programme of work in which the priorities and concerns of all member States are addressed.

The continued existence of thousands of nuclear warheads in the arsenals of the nuclear-weapon States and their programme for the development of new types of nuclear weapons, as well as the threat of possible use of them by certain nuclear-weapon States, demonstrate the insincerity of their declared policy.

The existence of an estimated 27,000 nuclear warheads in the nuclear-weapon-States' stockpiles - which is a great threat to the whole of humanity - cannot be overlooked. The lack of progress towards nuclear disarmament and the failure of certain nuclear-weapon States to fulfil their international obligations continue to be a source of threat for the international community.

It is worth mentioning that the only country that has ever used nuclear weapons still maintains a sizable arsenal of thousands of nuclear warheads, of which many are operational and the remainder in reserve or in stockpiles. Many warheads are deployed on land-based missile systems, bombers and submarines in a hair-trigger situation. Deployment of hundreds of tactical nuclear weapons, which consist of Tomahawk land attack cruise missiles and B-61s in several European countries, and the construction of new facilities for the production of new nuclear warheads, in particular, easy-to-use nuclear weapons (mini-nukes), are in clear contravention of the provisions of the NPT.

Moreover, transferring nuclear technology and materials to non-members of the NPT whose nuclear facilities are operating outside IAEA full-scope safeguards monitoring contributes to the proliferation of nuclear weapons. This would certainly weaken and undermine the credibility and integrity of the non-proliferation regime.

In the Final Document of the 14th Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement, held in Havana, Cuba, in September 2006, the heads of State or government of 118 countries "reiterated their call on the [Conference] to agree on a balanced and comprehensive programme of work by establishing, inter alia, an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament as the highest priority". Likewise, they "emphasized the necessity to start negotiations on a phased programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons with a specified framework of time, including a nuclear weapons convention". We stand by the common Non-Aligned Movement position.

We are of the view that it is now more urgent than ever for us to strive for peace and security and redouble our efforts and live up to our commitments: our commitments to the goal of creating a nuclear-weapon-free world. The misuse of the non-proliferation principle as a political tool can in no way lead us to the elimination of nuclear weapons. The recent military intervention by the United States of America against Iraq in our region is clear evidence of the failure of such a policy. The basic argument for the attack on Iraq was to combat weapons of mass destruction and to bring more security to the region. After years of searching for weapons of mass destruction in Iraq it is obvious that the preparation of such an attack was based on false or in fact forged information. On the other hand one can easily judge if there is more security or

(Mr. Mottaki, Islamic Republic of Iran)

insecurity in the region as the result of such a huge military operation. Those who have created such a situation in Iraq cannot disregard their responsibility. Despite the total failure of the previous NPT Review Conference, due to the disregard of the above-mentioned commitments and the unilateral approach adopted by some, we hope that the first Preparatory Committee for the Seventh NPT Review Conference will take practical steps for paving the way to a successful Review Conference.

We also attach great importance to the other three core issues of NSA, PAROS and an FMCT, which have been on the CD's agenda for a long time. The adoption of a universal, unconditional and legally binding instrument on security assurances against the use of nuclear weapons has been a long-standing goal of the non-nuclear-weapon States. It is a pressing issue on which the discussion needs to be reinvigorated at the CD.

On the other hand, there is an attempt to seek military and strategic superiority in outer space, which may lead to the weaponization of outer space in the near future, endangering global peace and security. Therefore, negotiating a legally binding instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space is also an urgent task for the CD.

Iran has consistently been a fervent advocate of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation for decades, and has actively and creatively contributed to international political and legal norm-setting at the global as well as the regional level. It was Iran who proposed the establishment of the Middle East as a nuclear-weapon-free zone and has vigorously pursued it together with other countries ever since. It is a great concern that after so many years since this initiative was introduced, and against the will of States in the region, the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East has yet to be realized. In spite of the international grave concerns, the Zionist regime continues to be the only one in the region that refuses to accede to the NPT, rejects international inspection of its nuclear facilities and refuses to place these facilities under IAEA safeguards. We strongly condemn the statement made by the Prime Minister of that regime on 11 December 2006 in which he publicly admitted the possession of nuclear weapons. This acknowledgement definitely has a negative impact on the efforts for the establishment of the Middle East as a nuclear-weapon-free zone. It is undisputable that nuclear weapons in the hands of the Zionist regime with a long and dark record of crimes and atrocities such as occupation, aggression, militarism, State terrorism, crimes against humanity and apartheid, as well as violation of all United Nations Security Council resolutions, pose a uniquely grave threat to regional and international peace and security and require being seriously dealt with by the international community through practical measures.

Regrettably, after the admission of possession of nuclear weapons by the Zionist regime, instead of condemning this acknowledgement and taking measures against that regime, the members of the European Union have lifted the 10-year-old sanctions imposed by the European banks regarding investment in the projects of this regime.

It is surprising that while no practical step is taken to contain a real source of nuclear danger in the Middle East, my country is under tremendous pressure to renounce its inalienable right to peaceful use of nuclear energy under the NPT.

(Mr. Mottaki, Islamic Republic of Iran)

The Islamic Republic of Iran is of the belief that the NPT contains both rights and obligations for its parties. No party to a treaty can be expected to carry the burden of its commitments while being deprived of its rights. The Islamic Republic of Iran, while committed to its obligations, is also determined to benefit from its rights. It is a legitimate and reasonable expectation that any party to the NPT may have. With regard to building confidence around our nuclear activities, my country has made every effort at its disposal. We accepted the inspections by the Agency even beyond our legal obligations. We even suspended our activities for more than two years in order to find a long-term solution with the EU3. But unfortunately, we have witnessed that suspension has turned out to be an instrument for imposing the arbitrary permanent cessation of our peaceful programme.

Our interlocutors, instead of working towards a constructive approach to resolve the issue, referred the case to the Security Council and derailed this issue from its legal framework. They made the suspension the key to resolving the whole of Iran's nuclear issue, but it should be asked: what was the result of the previous three-year suspension of my country's peaceful nuclear activities?

An issue such as Iran's nuclear issue cannot be solved through pressure or through Security Council resolutions. The durable solution to this issue is to follow logic, and to follow international law and regulations. My country is committed to a negotiated solution and is of the belief that the issue can be resolved through negotiations without any preconditions, as the NAM heads of State and government emphasized in their special statement in Havana.

Let me seize this opportunity - and in order to show our readiness to resolve the issue - let me underline that if the 5+1 countries refer back Iran's nuclear issue from the Security Council to IAEA, my country will be prepared to offer the necessary guarantees in order to create confidence regarding non-diversion of its nuclear programme.

If we can achieve a political understanding of the aspects of the solution, the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran will be ready to pave the ground for the commencement of the negotiations.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran for his very important address to this Conference and for the support he is giving to the work of this important body and for his desire that effective results can be achieved in the near future.

I shall now suspend the meeting to allow the Secretary-General of the Conference and myself to escort the Minister out of the Council chamber.

The session is suspended for two minutes.

The meeting was suspended at 11.15 a.m. and resumed at 11.20 a.m.

The PRESIDENT: I resume the 1058th plenary meeting of the Conference.

I would now like to extend, on behalf of the Conference and on my own behalf, a warm welcome to the next speaker, the Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, His Excellency Mr. Masayoshi Hamada.

Mr. HAMADA (Japan): Mr. President, just as Geneva is showing signs of spring breaking through, so too can we perceive the Conference on Disarmament finally showing signs of commencing tangible work.

The efforts by the international community on disarmament and non-proliferation are constantly being confronted with serious challenges posed by regional proliferation and the danger of non-State actors acquiring nuclear materials. We must, however, also take note of the disarmament and non-proliferation efforts that the United Nations and regional frameworks are utilizing.

Since this year will witness the start of the review process for the 2010 NPT Review Conference, 2007 will be an auspicious year for the NPT, which is the cornerstone of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. The NPT is one of the important frameworks for international peace and security. Although the NPT is currently facing a number of serious crises, there is no substitute for it, and our mission is to maintain and strengthen the Treaty. It was reassuring, therefore, that during the NPT seminar hosted by Japan in February this year the importance of maintaining the reliability of the NPT was unanimously recognized by the participants. As the country which puts up the Chair-designate for the first NPT preparatory committee to be held in April and May this year, Japan intends to energetically carry out its role as President in order to accomplish constructive discussions for the maintenance and strengthening of the NPT.

In addition to last year's focused deliberations, Japan welcomes the beneficial organizational framework introduced in the CD by this year's six-President initiative, and the concrete and active discussions that have taken place under that framework. On the other hand, for the CD to fully restore its role as "the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum" it is imperative that the CD member States expend greater effort to begin negotiations on a disarmament treaty.

The organizational framework introduced by the six Presidents has made discussions on the substance of every agenda item possible by the appointment of a coordinator for each specific issue over the course of this year. It is our belief that the current framework is well-balanced and comprehensive. Additionally, we are aware that to date, substantive discussions have been carried out according to the degree of maturity of each agenda item. Therefore, negotiations could be commenced on a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT), on which no country, including the nuclear-weapon States, has expressed a negative opinion with regard to its maturity. The CD must restore its primary role by taking the pragmatic approach of agreeing to what can be agreed upon.

(Mr. Hamada, Japan)

By prohibiting the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other explosive devices, an FMCT will not only limit the production of nuclear weapons by the nuclear-weapon States, but also prevent the appearance of new nuclear-weapon States. From the twin perspectives of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, it will become an important milestone. Furthermore, this treaty will significantly contribute to the stability of the international security environment. The early conclusion of negotiations themselves on an FMCT will be significant, and prompt action is required by the Conference on Disarmament in this regard.

The focused structured deliberations on an FMCT in May last year, as well as the informal meetings in February this year and last week, were productive and meaningful. Moreover, the proposed draft treaty and mandate circulated by the United States last year has already shown its potential as a good basis for deliberations, and already extensive discussions have taken place on this proposal. This has once again illustrated the fact that the FMCT has reached the stage for negotiations. Japan hopes that the discussions of the first part of this year's CD session can be used to launch negotiations in the second, and we are committed to actively contributing therein.

Japan is convinced that the Conference on Disarmament should continue deepening its deliberations on the other agenda items - nuclear disarmament, prevention of an arms race in outer space (PAROS) and negative security assurances (NSA). Japan is prepared to actively participate in discussions on any of those items.

In relation to nuclear disarmament, in addition to FMCT, the prompt entry into force of the CTBT is critical. Japan once again calls on the remaining 10 countries whose ratification is necessary for the entry into force of the CTBT to sign and ratify the Treaty at the earliest possible date. Japan has been actively pursuing the prompt ratification of the CTBT by these countries through bilateral talks on disarmament and non-proliferation. In this connection, Japan reiterates its condemnation of the nuclear test by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and emphasizes that a nuclear-armed DPRK cannot be tolerated. Although the agreement at the six-party talks in February is progress towards nuclear abandonment by the DPRK, efforts for the full implementation of the joint statement in September 2005 should be continued. The fifth Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the CTBT will be held in September this year, and Japan aims to heighten momentum towards the prompt entry into force in the lead-up to and within this Conference.

While Japan commends the nuclear disarmament efforts of the United States and the Russian Federation based on the steady implementation of the Moscow Treaty, we encourage both countries to make further reductions beyond those provided for in that Treaty. Likewise, we call on the other nuclear-weapon States also to make further efforts towards nuclear disarmament.

Turning our attention now to PAROS, since the advent of the space age, outer space has increasingly come to play a major role in our daily lives. Satellites have become indispensable to humanity, through their use for communication, navigation, mapping and many other beneficial functions. Consequently, it is vital that transparent explanations are provided on activities that can adversely impact the safe operation of space objects, including satellites.

(Mr. Hamada, Japan)

Finally, allow me to conclude by saying that this year the CD is off to a promising start. The CD, nonetheless, needs to advance its recent good progress one step further. This, of course, is reliant on the creativity, the flexibility and the concrete actions of the CD member States. For the complete rejuvenation of the CD, Japan is determined to continue its efforts in order to meet the hopes and expectations of the international community.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you very much, Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, for your important address to the Conference, for the encouragement to the Conference to continue with what has been described by you as a promising start and the support for this Conference to go into substantial work this year.

I will now suspend the meeting in order for the Secretary-General and myself to escort the Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan out of the Council chamber. The meeting is suspended for two minutes.

The meeting was suspended at 11.35 a.m. and resumed at 11.40 a.m.

The PRESIDENT: I resume the 1058th plenary meeting of the Conference.

I would now like to extend, on behalf of the Conference and on my own behalf, a very warm welcome to the next speaker, the Minister for Foreign Affairs for the Republic of Poland, Her Excellency Ms. Anna Fotyga. I give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Poland.

Ms. FOTYGA (Poland): Allow me to begin by expressing my great satisfaction at the honour of being here with you today. I would also like to assure you of my highest esteem for the efforts undertaken by the members of the Conference over the years with a view to ensure fulfilling its primary task, which is negotiating international disarmament treaties.

Let me start by extending words of high appreciation and wholehearted congratulations to this year's CD Presidents, and especially to South Africa, which held the first presidency of this year's session. As I have learnt, you have made outstanding efforts with prospects of revitalizing the CD. Cooperation in the formula of the platform of the Presidents has proved a valuable method of achieving synergy and coherence in seeking ways to reinvigorate the CD. The positive momentum attained by such cooperation serves as leverage for our future undertakings and offers a unique opportunity to turn our visions and expectations into reality. I am fully confident that this momentum can be sustained and further enhanced in the near future. Mr. President, you, along with your successors, may count on Poland's full support in these endeavours.

Furthermore, the appointment of coordinators is perceived by Poland as an important achievement of this year's CD Presidents and yet another step towards negotiations. The structured and focused discussions carried out so far by the CD have provided us with some important experience in understanding the substance of the issues to be tackled by the CD. I trust the time is ripe to enter the stage of more result-oriented work and use the enormous potential of the Conference on Disarmament to address the challenges of today's world.

(Ms. Fotyga, Poland)

It is also my belief that, according to the schedule set out by this year's Presidents, we are approaching the critical phase of evaluating the progress of work in the CD. This is the time when we should give some consideration to ideas which can carry us towards the ultimate goal of the rebirth of negotiations in the CD. Without a constructive and creative approach reaching beyond narrow national interests we will not fulfil this task. Only by doing this can we further contribute to building trust and confidence among States as well as bringing together our perceptions of security, which today seems indivisible and knows no borders nor limits. If we are able to share the view that security is a comprehensive and global notion, we will not question the vital role of the CD in addressing contemporary security problems.

Our determination to strengthen the international disarmament and non-proliferation architecture stems from an assessment of new security challenges. In a world increasingly endangered by new phenomena, such as terrorism, the proliferation of weapons, both conventional and weapons of mass destruction, the emergence of States in distress, the growing capabilities of non-State actors to attack States - just to name a few - security cannot be managed unilaterally by States. It is indeed the nature of such phenomena that imposes the need for an integral and comprehensive approach to security.

One can argue that many multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation frameworks were created in qualitatively different conditions and have become obsolete as the wave of modern history has brought new developments and new challenges. I would, however, be persistent in acknowledging that they retain their relevance in the contemporary world. The shortcomings lie, however, in their insufficient flexibility, or to put it more bluntly, inability to adapt to new security challenges such as the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction or terrorism. Seeking ways to ensure that existing structures stand up to modern security demands seems the most important task for us all today.

As the CD addresses specific security problems, it should also reflect on defining its role in international endeavours aimed at accommodating international security challenges. The CD should be a forum for dialogue and confidence-building amongst its members. Along with full-fledged negotiations being in place, the CD value added is envisaged by its role in contributing to designing effective disarmament machinery.

The Conference on Disarmament, located here in Geneva, is probably one of the best venues systematically to review the broad concepts of security. As outlined in the United Nations Secretary-General's report "In larger freedom", mandated by the heads of State in 2005, security today reaches beyond mere military doctrines. Human rights, the rule of law, health care, trade and development, energy needs - just to mention a few - are important elements of what we refer to today as "international security". Therefore, Geneva seems to be a natural and the most appropriate place to continue and strengthen constructive dialogue taking into account all these aspects. We should use the opportunity of having here the Conference on Disarmament, the Human Rights Council, the World Health Organization and many other intergovernmental as well as non-governmental frameworks.

(Ms. Fotyga, Poland)

The past seems to provide evidence that the CD has been the main venue for negotiating disarmament treaties of fundamental importance. Throughout the years the CD has retained its role as a forum where mutual dialogue and confidence-building efforts are carried out. Treaties such as the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty were real gains of this Conference.

Poland remains strongly committed to the ultimate goal of multilateral and effective disarmament. We continue to contribute to international peace and security by enhancing the international endeavours in the field of arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament. We are also working towards the further development of international as well as regional cooperation in this field.

My country perceives the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) as a unique instrument that for many years has played a fundamental role in efforts aimed at preserving the world from the threat of the proliferation of nuclear weapons. It is the true cornerstone of global security. The NPT Treaty is a vital tool in multilateral nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament endeavours, and it directly affects global peace and security. In the light of the emerging security threats and challenges, the credibility of the NPT will strongly depend upon its universal nature and integral character. The review of the NPT process in the coming years will also address the question of full recognition of States' right to use nuclear technologies for peaceful purposes, while diminishing acute proliferation risks. Poland has already started its active involvement in the coming review cycle with the prospect of fulfilling these goals during the 2010 review meeting.

At this point allow me also to refer to the International Atomic Energy Agency, which is celebrating the 50th anniversary of its establishment. Through the years, IAEA has served as a true guard of nuclear security, disarmament and non-proliferation, and therefore we should fully rely on its long-standing experience and expertise.

Let me here also express my sincere hope that the six-party talks held in Beijing last month will bring sustainable peace and security to the Korean peninsula. I am convinced that this is an important step towards the denuclearization of this region.

The goal of disarmament and non-proliferation is also being pursued by the commitments envisaged in the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). The entry into force of the CTBT as soon as possible should ensure further progress in the efforts of nuclear disarmament and confidence among States. Understanding the unique role of the Treaty, Poland will continue to advocate actions towards its universalization.

The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), whose tenth anniversary we shall celebrate in April this year, is a fundamental and effective pillar of the disarmament and non-proliferation architecture. Through the Convention we have been able to successfully ensure the total prohibition and elimination of this kind of weapons of mass destruction. The CWC serves as a beacon for other multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation instruments, such as the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, the successful review of which took place here in Geneva in November 2006. Those Conventions will serve their goals only if they are of a universal nature. Poland remains committed to the task of promoting these instruments.

(Ms. Fotyga, Poland)

No matter how important the CD achievements are, there are still things to be done, without which security for us and future generations is an empty word.

For Poland, the negotiation of a fissile material cut-off treaty is the main priority in the CD. Today there is no time to further consider if there is a need for such an instrument. Without an FMCT, the international non-proliferation and disarmament architecture remains incomplete and therefore cannot be fully operable and effective. Only by banning the production of fissile materials can we contribute to strengthening nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament endeavours. I hope that this august body will soon reach an agreement on starting negotiations on an FMCT, without setting any preliminary parameters, conditions or constraints. At the same time we believe that upholding the moratoria on the production of fissile material should contribute to improving regional and international security. Along with the discussions related to further nuclear disarmament in the context of ensuring the transparency and irreversibility of this process, discussions on negative security assurances seem essential.

As humankind is more and more dependent upon activities in outer space, it is time for the international community to be far-reaching in its visions. History speaks for itself in this respect. Today, almost 40 years after the entry into force of the Outer Space Treaty and 50 years after launching the first satellite in space, we have no doubts that activities in outer space open new opportunities for humankind. And we must spare no efforts to make those peaceful activities safe.

Allow me also to stress that, along with multilateral arms control and non-proliferation regimes, proliferation threats are also being addressed by new forms of international cooperation, such as the Proliferation Security Initiative, also known as the Kraków Initiative. Poland has spared no effort to ensure the success of the Initiative. Together with the authors of the United Nations Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change report, “we believe that all States should be encouraged to join this voluntary initiative”.

Let me take this opportunity also to refer to the developments witnessed under the Certain Conventional Weapons Convention (CCW). Last year’s Review Conference held here in Geneva failed to address sufficiently matters related to the use of mines other than anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions. Poland recognizes the challenge posed by the use of weapons of this kind. We stress the humanitarian concerns resulting from the use of cluster munitions. We see the urgency and necessity to conclude a legally binding international instrument regulating these matters. While sharing the ideals expressed by the collective of States present during the conference dedicated to this matter, held in Oslo in February this year, Poland believes that the problem can be addressed sufficiently only by means of effective multilateralism. The entire effort will serve its primary task only when we ensure that the instrument is agreed on a global level and all parties participate in it. I do hope that the discussions on this issue planned for the near future will offer us an opportunity to strengthen the existing well-established international mechanisms.

(Ms. Fotyga, Poland)

Poland also attaches great importance to the new initiatives in the sphere of conventional weapons, like man-portable air defence systems and the arms trade treaty, and will continue to promote these issues, as we believe that the challenges posed by the uncontrolled and irresponsible transfer of conventional weapons is no less than the threat posed by weapons of mass destruction.

As my final remarks, allow me to echo the words of Robert G. Ingersoll, who wrote in his work entitled Some Reasons Why that “there are neither rewards nor punishments - there are only consequences”. I think this is very much valid today. Rather than foreseeing rewards or punishments from our endeavours to revitalize the CD, we should thoroughly view the possible consequences of our passive postures. One does not have to have a very rich imagination to envision a world traumatized by the proliferation of fatal weapons, if we do not take the steps necessary to stop this dangerous development now. At the end of the day, history will make its own assessment of our work through the prism of the events that could be prevented should the CD get back to work. By prolonging our deliberations while being challenged by such important matters to be addressed as soon as possible, we will get nowhere. I encourage everyone to take this into consideration.

The PRESIDENT: I thank very much the Minister of Poland in the name of the Conference for her very important address to this forum, and I would also like to thank her for the words of encouragement and support to this Conference for more effective work and for the important task it is already accomplishing.

I will now suspend the meeting in order to enable the Secretary-General and myself to escort the Minister out of the Council chamber. The meeting will be suspended for just two minutes.

The meeting was suspended at 12 noon and resumed at 12.05 p.m.

The PRESIDENT: I resume the 1058th plenary meeting of the Conference. I would now like to extend, on behalf of the Conference and on my own behalf, a very warm welcome to the next speaker, the Assistant Foreign Minister of Viet Nam, Mr. Pham Binh Minh.

Mr. PHAM (Viet Nam): Mr. President, it is my honour to address the Conference on Disarmament today. First of all, I would like, on behalf of the Vietnamese delegation, to express our warm congratulations to you on the assumption of the presidency of the Conference. I am certain that your leadership abilities and your demonstrated diplomatic skills will greatly assist the Conference in overcoming its current impasse. I also would like to highly commend your predecessor, Her Excellency Ms. Glaudine Mtshali, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of South Africa, for her tireless efforts in preparation for the commencement of the Conference this year.

In the twentieth century, having undergone two devastating world wars, with enormous losses and sufferings, mankind earnestly desired to live in peace and security in order to build a prosperous world. The great efforts of peoples all over the world, among which was the establishment of the United Nations, constitute the bedrock of the maintenance of international

(Mr. Pham, Viet Nam)

peace and security. Humankind has long been aware of the special importance of disarmament to international peace and security. Disarmament is an effective protection of humankind from the losses and sufferings caused by war and conflicts, especially from the danger of the destruction of a nuclear war. It could release resources for development purposes and significantly help preserve the global environment. We are all pleased to note that important disarmament mechanisms and forums have been set up. Among them, the Conference on Disarmament has a special place, since it is the sole disarmament multilateral negotiating forum dealing with the important issues of nuclear disarmament, comprehensive and complete disarmament, disarmament of weapons of mass destruction, negative security assurances, prevention of an arms race in outer space, etc.

Over the last decades, a number of important international legal instruments on disarmament have been created to deal with different categories of weapons, especially weapons of mass destruction, and to promote disarmament at both the global and regional levels. However, the present process of disarmament causes serious concern. There is a danger of the arms race being accelerated with the introduction of new types of modern lethal weapons, on the ground, in the air, at sea and possibly in outer space. Disarmament is omitted in the declaration of the 2005 United Nations Summit. The last NPT Review Conference failed to come to a final agreement, and United Nations disarmament forums remain in deadlock. The fact that nuclear arsenals continue to be modernized, the threshold of nuclear-weapon use has been lowered and force is more readily used in international relations is part of the dynamics leading to the desire to acquire nuclear weapons, hence the new complications in the proliferation of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction in parallel with the risk of these weapons falling into the hands of terrorists. These require that nuclear-capable countries assume their important responsibilities towards international peace and security. They should double their efforts to reduce their nuclear stockpiles. It is regrettable that over the last decade, our Conference on Disarmament has not overcome the impasse in the programme of work and has been unable to hold substantive negotiations to reach any international legal instrument on disarmament. This situation underlines the urgent need to enhance bilateral and multilateral cooperation to promote disarmament in a comprehensive and participatory manner. Our Conference on Disarmament should be able to yield concrete positive results in both organizational and substantive areas. In this context, my delegation would like to appeal to all delegations to show more political will and offer more compromise for our mutual benefit.

The consistent policy of Viet Nam is to support and promote comprehensive and complete disarmament with top priority given to nuclear weapons and other types of weapons of mass destruction. Viet Nam supports non-proliferation and reductions of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, with the ultimate aim of their total elimination. Pursuant to this policy, Viet Nam has acceded to all the important international treaties on disarmament and strictly complied with them. Viet Nam has also joined the 1995 Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone. Viet Nam was among the first signatories of the 1996 Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, and Viet Nam ratified it in February 2006. And in November 2006, the President of the State of Viet Nam decided that Viet Nam would sign the additional protocol (AP) with IAEA. Viet Nam has also fulfilled the obligations arising from the resolutions of the United Nations Security Council on combating international terrorism and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

(Mr. Pham, Viet Nam)

In the current cause of renovation for national construction and development, the Vietnamese people wish to have peace and stability for cooperation and development towards the goal of “a prosperous people, a strong country, a just, democratic and civilized society” in Viet Nam, and regional and international integration. As a member country of the United Nations and the Conference on Disarmament, Viet Nam pledges to do its utmost to contribute to international efforts towards international peace and security, cooperation and development.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Assistant Foreign Minister of Viet Nam for his important address to the Conference, and say to the Assistant Foreign Affairs Minister that the Conference very much appreciates his words of support and encouragement for further work.

I shall now suspend the meeting in order to escort the Assistant Foreign Affairs Minister out of the Council chamber. We will resume in just one minute.

The meeting was suspended at 12.15 p.m. and resumed at 12.20 p.m.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in Spanish): I now wish, on behalf of the Conference and on my own behalf, a very warm welcome to the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of Italy, Mr. Craxi. You have the floor, Sir.

Mr. CRAXI (Italy) (spoke in Spanish): Thank you, Mr. President.

(spoke in French)

It is a great honour for me to take the floor in this historic and prestigious chamber speaking to a Conference, the Conference on Disarmament, which has such a glorious past.

I wish to pay tribute to you and your colleagues, the permanent representatives, the Secretary-General and all your predecessors for the remarkable work which has been done since the establishment of this body which has the mandate of negotiating treaties on disarmament and arms control.

Italy has been a member of this body since its establishment, when under a different name it was composed of only 10 States. The Conference on Disarmament in Geneva has negotiated most of the major disarmament treaties which have been concluded in the post-war period. I am referring to the NPT, which, looking forward to disarmament under article VI, restricted the number of countries which can possess nuclear weapons.

If we no longer need to worry today, at the global level, about the threat of chemical weapons, it is thanks to this Conference. If biological weapons have been totally banned today, that is also thanks to the CD. If nuclear explosions have become exceptional, that is due to the treaty which prohibited them, the CTBT, which was also negotiated in this forum. We would like to see its entry into force and its universalization as quickly as possible. These are remarkable results of which you can all be proud.

(Mr. Craxi, Italy)

We know that for a decade now, the Conference has not been able to embark on genuine negotiations. It has nevertheless continued to deliberate on what was negotiable. We also know that for the past three years there has been a crescendo in activities and initiatives aimed at relaunching negotiations.

Last year, it was possible to carry out structured focused discussions and to appoint the "Friends of the Chair". The establishment of coordination among the Presidents, elaborating on the "troika" that was established during Italy's term in the Chair in 2003, has conferred continuity and consistency on the guidance of your work. A step has been taken this year with the appointment of seven coordinators for the seven items on the agenda. We express great appreciation to last year's six Presidents and those of this year for this courageous and imaginative effort. We also thank them for having displayed their confidence in the Italian delegation by appointing the Permanent Representative of Italy as one of the "Friends of the Chair" and one of the coordinators this year.

Progress has been such that the time would seem to have come to enter a new phase, the phase of negotiations proper, in which we will have to identify the topic or topics that are most ripe for negotiation. Given the current strategic situation, Italy gives priority to nuclear issues. Chemical and biological weapons have already been banned thanks to this Conference. The same is not true for nuclear weapons. Our commitment in this sector was emphasized during the visit the Minister for Foreign Affairs Massimo D'Alema made to Hiroshima. He relaunched a major project involving disarmament and efforts to combat proliferation. In this spirit, I confirm that this is our priority here today.

We believe that the best way of pursuing this objective is to move on immediately to the negotiation of a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons.

We believe that the deliberations which took place over the past weeks on this issue show that this subject is based on a significant corpus of official documents, including a draft treaty, showing that the next stage can only be a process of negotiation. We therefore call on the Conference to begin as quickly as possible the negotiation of a treaty banning the production of fissile material on the basis of existing and future documents of the Conference on Disarmament.

The non-nuclear countries should be the first to take the initiative in the pursuit of a process which would not, of course, resolve all nuclear problems but would limit stockpiles of fissile material and would thus make a new nuclear spiral impossible. The nuclear Powers have indicated their readiness for such negotiations. There are therefore no more reasons or pretexts for not embarking on them.

As you know, the negotiation of the fissile material treaty should be the next consensual step scheduled by the NPT Review Conference in 2000 in order to achieve nuclear disarmament. This treaty will be an indispensable instrument for the cessation of a nuclear arms race in accordance with article VI and would give real added value to the disarmament process.

(Mr. Craxi, Italy)

We are aware that delegations have voiced other priorities, and we recognize their legitimacy. However, those other priorities should not constitute an obstacle to the negotiation of the fissile material treaty, which is already a consensus objective. Hence we need to find a formula and a framework where we can deliberate on the prevention of an arms race in space with a view to possible negotiations. While awaiting the presentation of more specific proposals, we believe that it would be desirable to deliberate on a possible code of conduct. There are other subjects apart from the fissile material treaty which can be discussed in the framework of nuclear disarmament. I am referring in particular to negative security assurances, which are regarded as useful by some delegations. We are in favour of further discussion of this question in the most appropriate framework, including the Conference on Disarmament.

Developments in the past few weeks give us hope for a turning point in the Conference on Disarmament, which would be all the more desirable since we are now on the threshold of the resumption of the review process for the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. There are great expectations for a message of hope being sent out by this Conference. Let us try together not to disappoint.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in Spanish): I thank the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of the Government of the Republic of Italy, Mr. Vittorio Craxi, for his important statement, his words of support to the Conference and his appeal for urgent, effective, tangible action to achieve new results in this important forum.

I will suspend this Conference for a couple of minutes so that I can escort the Under-Secretary out of the Council chamber.

The meeting was suspended at 12.25 p.m. and resumed at 12.30 p.m.

The PRESIDENT: I resume the 1058th plenary meeting of the Conference.

I will now give the floor to the last speaker on my list for today, His Excellency, Wolfgang Petritsch of Austria.

Mr. PETRITSCH (Austria): Mr. President, since this is my first time to take the floor under your able guidance, let me at the outset congratulate you, Mr. President, for the assumption of the presidency of this august body. I am confident that with your diplomatic skills and tenacity we will be able to move our common endeavour forward.

I would like to use this opportunity to express my sincere thanks and appreciation for the congratulations you have expressed in my absence during one of the most recent sessions. Indeed, it was a great honour for me to receive the European Human Rights Prize in Strasbourg, France. This prize was awarded to me for my work as the High Representative of the international community for Bosnia and Herzegovina, and not least for my efforts in one specific field of disarmament and humanitarian law: to work towards a mine-free world as well as presiding over the first Review Conference of the Mine Ban Treaty.

(Mr. Petritsch, Austria)

As you know, the Ottawa process, which finally led to this treaty, started pretty much 10 years ago. On 12 February 1997, an expert meeting commenced in Vienna to discuss the first draft of the Mine Ban Convention. Only some draft versions and months later, the Treaty was signed in Ottawa and subsequently entered into force on 1 March 1999.

Today the Convention counts 153 States parties, including the majority of those States that are most heavily affected by landmines, as Afghanistan, Cambodia, Angola and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Apart from its progress in terms of universal accession, the Convention has established an international standard which is also respected by the majority of those States that have not yet joined this important humanitarian instrument. The use of anti-personnel mines has thus been markedly reduced in recent years. Fewer mines are being produced, and trade with this hazardous weapon has almost completely ceased. In addition, the States party to the Convention have destroyed stockpiled anti-personnel mines and cleared vast tracts of mined land. And fortunately, the annual number of new mine victims is now significantly lower than it used to be. The Landmine Convention thus represents one of the most successful processes in international disarmament. It is unique for the way it was negotiated and the close involvement of civil society and non-governmental organizations. The Convention is unique as it is the first disarmament treaty which addresses the needs of survivors of these odious weapons. Article 6, paragraph 3, of the Convention stipulates that "Each State Party in a position to do so shall provide assistance for the care and rehabilitation, and social and economic reintegration, of mine victims ...". This provision also became the mode for article 8 of Protocol V on Explosive Remnants of War.

Austria attaches special importance to victim assistance. On 12 February of this year we organized an event commemorating the above-mentioned Vienna meeting 10 years ago to highlight this topic. This symposium was entitled "Assisting landmine survivors: a decade of efforts" and summarized the lessons learnt and identified remaining challenges as well as possible solutions to them. Currently Austria, together with the Sudan, is serving as co-Chair of the Convention's Standing Committee on Victim Assistance. In this capacity, we support an ambitious programme, including national workshops in a number of affected countries as well as a parallel programme for victim assistance experts at the upcoming intersessional meeting in Geneva. In this context, Austria also warmly welcomes the recent adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities - the first human rights convention to be adopted in the twenty-first century! I am pleased to inform you that Austria will sign the Convention during the official entry ceremony on 30 March in New York, and I would like to seize this opportunity to urge all States to do the same. These two conventions are of the utmost importance: they give a promise to survivors for a better life. In essence, they are a sign of hope for the world, for the victims of this odious weapon, the men, women and children wounded and maimed.

Let me now turn to the issue of cluster munitions. I would like to inform you that I had been authorized by the Austrian Federal President, acting upon a proposal by the Austrian Federal Government, to announce during the recent Oslo meeting a national moratorium on the use of cluster bombs and cluster munitions. The moratorium reads in its English version as follows:

(Mr. Petritsch, Austria)

“Declaration of the Republic of Austria concerning a moratorium on the use of cluster bombs and cluster munitions

“The Republic of Austria declares that the Austrian armed forces until the elaboration of an adequate international regulation renounce the use of cluster bombs and cluster munitions.”

It is to be noted that this moratorium will in no way interfere with Austria’s international military commitments in crisis management operations. Additionally, the Council of Ministers decided to uphold the comprehensive moratorium, even if a future international convention should fail to achieve such a far-reaching solution.

As another contribution to the establishment of a legally binding instrument on cluster munitions, Austria declared its readiness to organize a follow-up conference to the Oslo meeting, which in all likelihood will take place in Vienna in early December this year.

In conclusion, I would like to sincerely thank you, the P-6 as well as the coordinators for the individual agenda items for all the efforts and hard work undertaken to move the CD forward. Let me conclude by expressing our hope that the CD will be able to allow for the meaningful participation of civil society in its work and as a minimum that the traditional address of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom be delivered by a representative of this organization in person. Austria remains strongly committed to bringing the CD back to work and I would like to assure you of my delegation’s full cooperation and support in the weeks to come.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador Petritsch for his statement and for his kind words addressed to the Chair, and in the name of the CD we would like to congratulate him once again on his having received the European Human Rights Prize this year.

I will now give the floor to the representative of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea.

Mr. AN (Democratic People’s Republic of Korea): Mr. President, since this is the first intervention of my delegation under your presidency, my delegation would like to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference and wish you every success in your work. I assure you of my delegation’s full support and collaboration. My delegation would also like to extend its great appreciation to your predecessor, the Ambassador of South Africa, for her excellent work.

My delegation would like to respond straightforwardly to the statement by the Japanese representative. The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, the DPRK, is deeply concerned by the policy orientation of the present Japanese Government, which throws dark clouds over the promising peace and security of the north-east Asian region. The DPRK emphasizes that this negative policy orientation can never be tolerated.

(Mr. An, Democratic People's Republic of Korea)

The implementation of the agreement made at the six-party talks is the responsibility of all parties involved. If any one party hinders its implementation, pursuing its egocentric local political purpose, the agreement as a whole will be in jeopardy. We witness such an intentional move which might endanger the progress of the six-party talks, and again the DPRK underlines that such a move cannot be tolerated.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you to the distinguished delegate of the DPRK, Mr. An. With his intervention we conclude the list of speakers for today.

I will now briefly inform the CD about the next plenary meetings. On Wednesday, 14 March, at 3 p.m. sharp, we will have the next plenary meeting with the intervention of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nigeria, Professor Joy Ogwu, and also with the intervention of the Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Republic of Korea, Mr. Cho Jung-pyo. After that plenary meeting, the normal informal meeting with the coordinator of item 3 will continue. Then on Thursday, 15 March at 3 p.m., we will have the intervention of the Under-Secretary for Human Rights and Multilateral Affairs of the Republic of Mexico, Mr. Juan Miguel Gómez Robledo. And then on Friday, 16 March, at 12.20, the plenary meeting with the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Spain, Mr. Miguel Angel Moratinos. This intervention will follow the informal meeting with the coordinator of item 5.

This concludes our business for today, and I declare this plenary meeting adjourned.

The meeting rose at 12.40 p.m.