

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE ONE THOUSAND AND NINETY-SIXTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva
on Tuesday, 4 March 2008, at 10.05 a.m.

President:

Mr. Ahmet ÜZÜMCÜ

(Turkey)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 1096th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. Today we will continue with the plenary meetings during which the Conference will be addressed by a number of dignitaries from member States.

I would now like to extend a warm welcome to our first speaker today, His Excellency Mr. Maxime Verhagen, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands. He comes from an important site in the disarmament community. The Netherlands hosts the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. Last year on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the Convention, Mr. Verhagen recalled that although it was important to celebrate the past decade's achievements, numerous challenges remained in the field of chemical disarmament and non-proliferation in the future. Excellency, you have the floor.

Mr. VERHAGEN (Netherlands): I welcome the opportunity to address the Conference on Disarmament. When Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon spoke to you a little over a month ago, he made it clear - in no uncertain terms - that he was deeply troubled by the lack of progress here in Geneva, and I share his view. The Conference on Disarmament has been at an impasse for quite some time, and the programme of work that would enable it to get back on course is still up in the air. We need to stop just saying "no" to proposals and get to work.

The Secretary-General has urged us to make this a breakthrough session. He has called on Foreign Ministers and political leaders to come to Geneva and encourage a return to productive work. Ladies and gentlemen, I am heeding that call. The Netherlands stands ready to work constructively towards a new agenda on disarmament and non-proliferation. Let us forge a fresh consensus.

To achieve international peace and security, both disarmament and non-proliferation are indispensable. The two are interlinked. The continued proliferation of weapons of mass destruction poses a threat to global security. I am certain we all agree these serious challenges require our detailed attention. Also, the presence of large stocks of nuclear weapons does little good, while entailing diverse risks. It is our joint responsibility to reduce and ultimately eliminate these dangers. As far back as 1948, the American General Omar Bradley said that the way to win an atomic war is to make certain it never starts.

I recently read, with great interest, an appeal by a group of intellectuals with a background in politics to overcome the reliance on nuclear weapons globally and ultimately eliminate them as a threat to the world. This is an encouraging outreach and a necessary initiative to end the decade-long standstill in the political debate on arms control. My distinguished colleague Sergey Lavrov reiterated the need to continue nuclear disarmament in his statement to this Conference less than a month ago, adding that many of the ideas expressed by this group of intellectuals are in line with Russia's initiatives. This is a very encouraging sign.

Today I therefore call on all groups and countries to pursue this goal and work together. This also includes those outside the Euro-Atlantic area. Do come up with broad-based initiatives to help move the debate forward. It is a responsibility which all of us have, not just some.

(Mr. Verhagen, Netherlands)

The Dutch Government certainly shares the vision of a world free of nuclear weapons, but we are aware of the hurdles ahead.

The entry into force of the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty could be part of this push forward. Ratification of the CTBT by all annex 2 States is hampered by political will, not by strategic considerations any more. So I urge the relevant Governments to take this step.

The upcoming Review Conference of the Non-Proliferation Treaty in 2010 allows us to make serious headway. At that Review Conference, we must find common ground and agree on the threats that face us and on the need to intensify international cooperation to confront these threats. It is extremely important that we make progress on nuclear disarmament, on non-proliferation and on the peaceful use of nuclear energy. The international fabric of treaties in this field needs further strengthening. IAEA is of vital importance for the full implementation of the NPT.

I fully support the discussions within IAEA on the nuclear fuel cycle and its peaceful use in particular. With the prospect of growing demand for nuclear energy and subsequent demands on IAEA, we should start thinking about an international regime which is both non-discriminatory and strengthens non-proliferation.

In this regard I express my deep concern about Iran's nuclear programme. The concerns of the international community led the United Nations Security Council to adopt a third resolution on Iran yesterday. All countries should abide by international agreements. The statement by the permanent members of the Security Council and Germany underlines their sincere intentions to offer everything reasonable to re-establish a respectful relationship between Iran and the international community. Iran will have to abide by this newly adopted resolution. If it does not, additional measures will have to follow.

Progress on nuclear disarmament requires political will on the part of the States that possess nuclear weapons, especially the two States that possess 95 per cent of the world's nuclear stocks: the United States and the Russian Federation. I call upon these parties to embrace their responsibility and show renewed commitment to the process. They have taken bold steps in the past to this end, and they should do so again.

I hope for an equally constructive attitude from the Non-Aligned Movement, which stands to benefit from disarmament and non-proliferation, as we all do. All of us have responsibilities to the multilateral system. Let us show our constituencies that we are ready to give and take. It is time for a strategy on both disarmament and non-proliferation, jointly strengthening the two of them.

Thanks to the efforts of the Chairman, Ambassador Amano, and many constructive delegations, we were able to conclude the first Preparatory Committee with a balanced and substantive Chairman's report. I now look forward to a more constructive meeting of the second Preparatory Committee in Geneva in April and May. I am convinced that we have an excellent Chairman again, and I wish Ambassador Yelchenko the very best with his challenging tasks. The Netherlands will support him.

(Mr. Verhagen, Netherlands)

Missile proliferation is a growing problem. We need new political initiatives and concrete steps to create more security and stability.

In this area, too, the major Powers need to move forward, to build confidence and work towards the further elimination of intermediate-range and shorter-range missiles. The proposal to make the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces Treaty a multilateral treaty is an interesting one, and we look forward to discussing it. We call upon the United States and the Russian Federation to continue the process of nuclear disarmament after the end of the START and SORT treaties on the basis of a sound legal foundation with a verification mechanism.

Since 2002 we have an important and broadly supported tool for combating the proliferation of ballistic missiles capable of carrying weapons of mass destruction: the Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation. This Code aims at increasing transparency and trust among subscribing States by implementing specific confidence-building measures. I would like to take this opportunity to call for a renewed national commitment to implementing the Hague Code of Conduct. The implementation of this instrument is falling short of expectations, and I would strongly urge all signatories, 128 in total, to reverse this trend. The prior announcement of missile launches would be a very positive step in this respect.

I remain strongly committed to working towards universalizing and strengthening the Code, and will write a letter to that effect to the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the 127 other signatory States.

I would now like to turn to the programme of work, on which delegations have been working for two years and which represents, in the words of the Secretary-General, a “balanced and carefully crafted” proposal. One major priority is a treaty banning the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. The rationale for an FMCT is simple: it promotes disarmament through ending a fresh supply of plutonium and highly enriched uranium for weapon production. The prohibition of the production of fissile material was already included as a goal in the NPT Conference of 1995. Four of the nuclear-weapon States have declared that they no longer produce fissile material for weapons. This conference on disarmament is the body where we should start negotiations. All five NPT nuclear-weapon States should agree amongst themselves to cease production of fissile material for weapons and open their facilities for such production to IAEA safeguard inspections, building on the practice of Euratom inspections in France and the United Kingdom. I welcome the United Kingdom contribution in this field.

The Netherlands is also prepared to engage in substantive discussions on how to prevent an arms race in outer space, as well as other matters included in the draft package now on the table. With respect to the Russian/Chinese proposal for a new treaty on the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space, the Netherlands has a clear stake in increasing international security in outer space. The question is how we can best achieve this. I believe certain steps still need to be taken towards effective international negotiations on a new treaty on international space security. A code of conduct, or a set of best practices guidelines, is a pragmatic and realistic way to enhance security in space, and will serve as a valuable confidence-building measure today. The European Union is currently in the process of drafting such an instrument. An important element

(Mr. Verhagen, Netherlands)

is the elimination of the shortcomings in international law on the use of outer space. Naturally, any additional measures should be complementary to the existing legal framework. I sincerely hope that such an instrument can strike a good balance between competing interests and find universal acceptance.

I applaud Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's personal involvement and commitment to the Conference on Disarmament. I would also like to express my strong support for the High Representative on Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Sergio Duarte, and his office, for all their good work and their relentless positive spirit. They set quite an example. To further support Mr. Duarte's work I intend to co-finance the promotion of the United Nations study on disarmament and non-proliferation education, and possibly other initiatives of the Office of Disarmament Affairs. Mr. Duarte is currently in The Hague for consultations with my Ministry before travelling on to Geneva tomorrow.

Ladies and gentlemen, you belong to an important multilateral forum for global negotiations on disarmament and non-proliferation. Allowing it to remain in limbo would be a tremendous stumbling block, not to mention a disgrace. Your mission is as relevant as ever. I express my hope for a constructive attitude from all States in the CD, including those possessing nuclear weapons and the Non-Aligned Movement.

I encourage you to look beyond past failures and to draw inspiration from past accomplishments as we aim for future success. Together, as responsible partners of the world community, we can make it happen.

The PRESIDENT: On behalf of the Conference on Disarmament, I would like to thank you, Mr. Minister, for your statement and for your words of encouragement.

I shall now suspend the meeting for a couple of minutes so that I can escort His Excellency the Minister out of the Council chamber.

The meeting was suspended at 10.20 a.m. and resumed at 10.22 a.m.

The PRESIDENT: May I call the meeting to order?

On behalf of the Conference on Disarmament and on my own, I would like to extend a warm welcome to His Excellency Mr. Marat Tazhin, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan is indeed a success story in the field of nuclear disarmament. Excellency, you have the floor.

Mr. TAZHIN (Kazakhstan): Mr. President, first of all I would like to thank you for the opportunity to address such a distinguished audience. I believe that the Conference on Disarmament has been and remains the main forum for disarmament and non-proliferation negotiations.

(Mr. Tazhin, Kazakhstan)

The history of independent Kazakhstan is inseparably linked with disarmament. On the eve of independence in August 1991, President Nursultan Nazarbayev signed the historic decree on the closure of the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site. Nowadays, the wisdom and rectitude of this decision has become more and more obvious.

Kazakhstan set an example of great responsibility in respect of current and future generations, convincingly demonstrating that it is not nuclear arsenals, but a peaceful foreign policy, internal stability, economic and political development that is in fact real security.

A prominent leader of the last century said: "Generals always prepare for the last war." I ask to be excused if there are any generals seated in this hall, but I should say that Kazakhstan was preparing for a new world, and we hope at the end of the day, a nuclear-weapon-free world, thus naturally becoming a vivid example of mankind's increased responsibility in the face of the threat of total destruction.

Shutting down the nuclear test site was only the first step of what later became the essence of Kazakhstan's disarmament policy. In 1992 we signed the Lisbon Protocol, confirming our commitment to join the Non-Proliferation Treaty as a non-nuclear State. Kazakhstan has completely fulfilled its obligations.

In December 1993 our Parliament ratified this Treaty, and a year later Kazakhstan obtained security guarantees from the nuclear Powers. In 1996 we joined the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty. In natural appreciation of our efforts, Kazakhstan was accepted into the Nuclear Suppliers Group in 2002. Kazakhstan also joined the International Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation, the Proliferation Security Initiative and the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism, which saw its third meeting held in Astana, the capital of Kazakhstan, last year.

In September 2006, Kazakhstan, along with other Central Asian States, signed the treaty on a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. The creation of the new non-nuclear zone is a significant contribution to stability and security in Asia. This successful regional initiative equally refers to the potential strength of the Non-Proliferation Treaty as well.

The accession of Kazakhstan to the Biological Weapons Convention last June was yet another step that demonstrated the consistency of our national policy in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

As an active participant in the disarmament process, Kazakhstan regretfully notes the lack of real progress. The work of the Conference on Disarmament has been paralysed for the last decade. There is stagnation in the nuclear disarmament process. The international community has failed to effectively solve the issues of disarmament and non-proliferation, mostly due to the absence of consensus, despite the presence of political will.

(Mr. Tazhin, Kazakhstan)

First of all, it refers to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, the main instrument of nuclear non-proliferation. The Treaty has failed to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and the appearance of the new de facto nuclear countries. The threat of nuclear weapons falling into the hands of terrorists has significantly increased. One has seen no evidence of the nuclear Powers meeting their engagements on the reduction of their nuclear arsenals.

Inequality, which is at the core of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, results in the fact that the nuclear Powers see no point in observing disarmament obligations. This feeds a destructive attitude, feelings of the unfairness of the NPT in some regions of the world. The worst is that it gives serious arguments to those countries which aspire to possessing weapons of mass destruction.

In this regard, at the sixty-second session of the United Nations General Assembly, the President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, called upon the nuclear States to move towards a world free of nuclear weapons, thus creating an example for others to follow, as well as to undertake measures on maintaining the efficiency of the NPT and strengthening the nuclear weapon non-proliferation regime.

We are convinced that it is necessary to develop mechanisms with effective leverage on possessor States acting outside the NPT legal framework and to provide instruments to put pressure on those countries which would try to leave the Treaty in the future.

Kazakhstan recognizes the importance of the work done by the United States and the Russian Federation on the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START Treaty) to reduce their nuclear arsenals. Taking into consideration its expiration in 2009, it is necessary to speed up the negotiation process on the prospects of the Treaty. In our opinion, a new document or an agreement should contain concrete measures on the reduction of strategic delivery systems and nuclear warheads. We also welcome the practice within the Conference on Disarmament to openly discuss the status and pace of nuclear reductions. Nevertheless, it is not enough to ensure the irreversibility of the process. Many more efforts are needed to pave the way towards a nuclear-weapon-free world.

Taking into consideration the priorities of the disarmament agenda, Kazakhstan adheres to a realistic approach with regard to the situation at the Conference. Despite the lack of visible progress, we appreciate the efforts made over the past two years to craft what is known as the proposal of the 2007 Presidents. This proposal, as we understand it, enjoys the support of the majority of Conference members. For the sake of consensus, we are ready to continue working on it as a basis.

We believe the initiative to start negotiations to draft a fissile material cut-off treaty is well timed. We hope it can be an incentive for further progress towards nuclear disarmament. At the same time, this decision should not diminish the importance of the other three core issues: nuclear disarmament, the prevention of an arms race in outer space (PAROS) and negative security assurances.

(Mr. Tazhin, Kazakhstan)

Let me remind you that Kazakhstan has repeatedly proposed drafting an international binding document against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear countries. We are interested in further discussion on negative security assurances, as it is closely related to the nuclear disarmament process. We firmly believe that non-nuclear members of the NPT have a legitimate right to negative security assurances.

Last of all, I again want to say a lot of thanks to you for this rare occasion and for the possibility of explaining the position of Kazakhstan in relation to very important issues discussed here today.

The PRESIDENT: We thank you, Mr. Minister, on behalf of the Conference, for your comprehensive statement.

I shall now suspend the meeting for a couple of minutes in order to escort His Excellency the Minister.

The meeting was suspended at 10.33 a.m. and resumed at 10.48 a.m.

The PRESIDENT: On behalf of the Conference on Disarmament and on my own, I would like to extend a warm welcome to His Excellency Mr. Adrian Cioroianu, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Romania. Romania is, of course, one of the founding members of the Conference on Disarmament. Excellency, you have the floor.

Mr. CIOROIANU (Romania) (spoke in French): Allow me first of all to tell you how deeply honoured I am to be given this opportunity to participate in this plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

Next I would note my satisfaction at speaking before the Conference during Turkey's term in the Chair. Turkey and Romania have often cooperated closely on various items on the disarmament agenda. I take this opportunity to say that my country is ready to provide unreserved support for your efforts, as well as those of future Presidents, to restart the activities of this important negotiating forum.

At the same time, I should like to extend my sincere thanks to the Presidents of the Conference for 2007 for the efforts they made to get our work moving.

The Conference on Disarmament is the sole multilateral negotiating body on disarmament whose task is to play a fundamental role in ensuring security and stability throughout the world. The Conference, which has displayed in the past its significant ability to negotiate major disarmament treaties and conventions, must continue to play a useful role for the benefit of peace, security and stability.

It is in this context that, in the general opinion, it is regrettable that this body has been inactive for a number of years. Despite this deadlock, the Conference is the most appropriate, indeed I would say the most natural framework in which any problem relating to international peace and security should be resolved. Similarly, the Conference on Disarmament represents a very sensitive barometer reflecting changes in global security and the international climate in this

(Mr. Cioroianu, Romania)

area. This is one more reason why Romania, which is aware of the role that the Conference can and must play, joins with the vast majority of its members in hoping that positive developments will enable us to break out of the present deadlock.

The participation of Ministers for Foreign Affairs in the work of the Conference is only one of the approaches planned in order to unblock the situation. We are also aware that in a 65-member deliberating and negotiating forum where decisions are taken by consensus, it is very difficult to secure the universal support which is necessary for the adoption of a programme of work. But it is not impossible.

Romania is a country that is fully devoted to the principles of multilateralism, and has always endeavoured to be a constructive force with the necessary flexibility to reach common aims. Having occupied the Chair during one of the six Presidential terms of the Conference in 2006, my country is well aware of the challenges which the member States must meet in order to persuade the members to adopt the programme of work.

We also reaffirm our resolve to contribute to the efforts of the international community to reactivate the multilateral disarmament machinery. We are determined to make the necessary efforts to ensure the success of the Conference on a constructive and consensual basis.

Romania believes that the package of three documents from the 2007 session (L.1, CRP.5 and CRP.6) could constitute a solid basis for relaunching the activities of the Conference and breaking the deadlock. The smooth and speedy adoption of the agenda would seem to offer proof of a positive climate which would allow the work to move forward in a balanced and constructive fashion.

Allow me to convey to you my thoughts on a series of specific questions.

Negotiations on a treaty prohibiting the production of fissile material (FMCT), the review of the present situation as regards nuclear disarmament and the prevention of proliferation in space are questions that are closely linked to global security, and the Conference on Disarmament is the ideal forum for making progress in all these areas.

We consider that opening negotiations on the FMCT, which is a clear priority for many delegations, would make it possible to bring together conditions conducive to an intense and constructive exchange of views. We are convinced that an agreement on this subject would be an important step towards the elimination of nuclear weapons.

Romania believes that nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation represent two indissociable dimensions of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Each reinforces or weakens the other. We also hope that the meeting of the Preparatory Committee which will take place this year in Geneva will see the reaffirmation and strengthening of the measures adopted for the balanced and comprehensive implementation of the NPT.

(Mr. Cioroianu, Romania)

My country continues to consider that the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is a fundamental step towards nuclear disarmament. Despite the support of a very large number of States, the conditions required for its entry into force have unfortunately not yet been met. We believe that the CTBT ratification process is very important for securing general and complete disarmament. In this connection, Romania considers that the recent ratification of the Treaty by Colombia and Malaysia constitutes a major step towards attaining this goal.

The question of the militarization of outer space is a source of great concern. Proposal L.1 calls for substantive discussions on preventing the arms race in outer space (PAROS). Romania, which is currently studying with all proper attention the draft put forward by Russia and China for the treaty on the prevention of the placement of weapons in space, has long considered that it is increasingly necessary to reach an international agreement prohibiting the militarization of space. This is a very necessary exercise in preventive diplomacy, because space is the common heritage of mankind and must be reserved for peaceful purposes only.

We must address numerous security challenges at the global, regional and local levels. Our future depends on our ability to act together in a context of effective multilateralism.

Romania will continue to support this multilateral framework of disarmament and non-proliferation agreements, at both global and regional levels, and will continue to fulfil the obligations it has assumed under the weapons regimes to which it has become a party.

Romania is a party to the existing multilateral agreements in the area of weapons of mass destruction and non-proliferation, the Ottawa Convention, the Open Skies Treaty, the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) as well as other multilateral and bilateral treaties. My country recognizes the importance of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and its provisions concerning weapons which are excessively injurious or which may strike both military personnel and civilians. Since its entry into force, the Convention has proved to be an important instrument not only for disarmament, but also for international law. Recognizing the importance of the Convention, in November 2007 Romania became a party to Protocol V on explosive remnants of war, which will enter into force for Romania on 29 July this year.

Support for multilateral instruments should be reflected in support for the implementation of their provisions. In keeping with this principle, my country, along with its partners in the European Union, supports the universalization of the Convention on Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons as well as the Convention on Chemical Weapons.

In conclusion, I should like to share with you a few of the thoughts of Nicolae Titulescu, a Romanian diplomat, President of the League of Nations in 1930 and 1931 and a figure with very close connections to the city of Geneva, who considered that "the Conference on Disarmament is the key to mutual understanding among nations". I believe that these ideas remain relevant, because the efforts of the international community should be focused on ensuring a more just and more stable world.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in French): I should like to thank His Excellency the distinguished Minister for his important statement and for his kind words addressed to the Chair. I will now suspend the meeting until 11.15 a.m. to escort the Minister and also to await the arrival of the next Minister, the Foreign Minister of Iran.

The meeting was suspended at 11 a.m. and resumed at 11.15 a.m.

The PRESIDENT: On behalf of the Conference and on my own, I would like to extend a warm welcome to His Excellency Mr. Manouchehr Mottaki, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Over the past years, the Islamic Republic of Iran has regularly sent high-level officials to address the Conference, and Minister Mottaki was here last year. Excellency, you have the floor.

Mr. MOTTAKI (Islamic Republic of Iran): Mr. President, it is a great honour for me to address, once more, the Conference on Disarmament at this crucial juncture. Let me, at the outset, congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference and wish you success for the commencement of substantive work in order to achieve the lofty goal of a safe and secure world.

All members of the international community have common values and security interests in moving towards a safer world. In a world free from weapons of mass destruction (WMD), the security, prosperity and welfare of all nations would be better ensured. It would be quite different from a world where Powers seek absolute security for them and to that end continue to advance and modernize their nuclear arsenals. As the experiences of contemporary history prove, searching for absolute security would eventually end in negative results. It diminishes security, erodes confidence and trust among nations and paves the ground for new arms race and revival of militarism.

The international community, in our view, shows that there are major challenges which are the main causes of insecurity and the stalemate in the field of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control in the world.

Unilateralism and unilateral measures are the major challenges before the international community. Resort to military means rather than peaceful settlement of disputes, as enshrined in the United Nations Charter, is a dangerous approach that should be avoided in pursuing foreign policy objectives. In that regard, the military doctrines based on pre-emptive strikes are not justifiable and are in clear contradiction with the letter and spirit of the United Nations Charter. We should add to this list the imposition of illegitimate and unjustified sanctions against other nations, misuse of international bodies solely for self-interest, making baseless accusations against others under the pretext of so-called proliferation concerns in order to create a smokescreen to cover non-compliance with disarmament obligations and to deceive public opinion.

Lack of progress in nuclear disarmament, along with vertical and horizontal proliferation, constitute another key challenge to our world today. The maintenance of strategic and tactical nuclear forces and their continued modernization, as well as new military doctrines setting the

(Mr. Mottaki, Islamic Republic of Iran)

rationale for their possible use, particularly against non-nuclear-weapons States, represent the greatest threat to humankind. The States members of the Non-Aligned Movement have always emphasized that nuclear disarmament is the highest priority in the Conference on Disarmament. Today the international community is more than ever concerned by the continued existence of thousands of nuclear warheads in the stockpiles of certain nuclear-weapon States.

The international community has never recognized the position and potential of nuclear weapons by the five permanent members of the Security Council. The victorious countries of the Second World War considered for themselves the right of veto and imposed that rule on the international community. Today, the right of veto and the right to possess nuclear weapons has turned into leverage to bargain illegitimate rights.

Which countries endangered security in the Korean peninsula for decades by establishing nuclear arsenals in the region? By which logic did France, with the assistance of another nuclear-weapon State, equip the Zionist regime with a nuclear weapons capability? In this regard, I am taking into account the concerns raised over the former and existing French officials regarding the possible use of nuclear weapons. We propose that the International Atomic Energy Agency will include the issue of how the Zionist regime was equipped with nuclear weapons under its agenda. The Islamic Republic of Iran would cooperate in this respect with the Agency, along with other informed countries in the region.

Nuclear weapons are as illegal as chemical and biological weapons, and the illegality of nuclear weapons should be recognized through a legally binding nuclear weapons convention. Two categories of weapons of mass destruction have already been prohibited under the relevant legally binding conventions, namely the Biological Weapons Convention and the Chemical Weapons Convention. Now is the time to completely ban and eliminate all nuclear weapons. The Conference on Disarmament, as the only United Nations body that can deal with this issue and conclude such an international instrument, has a contribution to make in the field of nuclear disarmament by establishing an ad hoc committee with the mandate to begin multilateral negotiations on a "Convention on the prohibition of the development, production, stockpiling and use of nuclear weapons and on their destruction".

There is no doubt that the five nuclear-weapons States have primary responsibility in this context and, pending the conclusion of this convention and the total elimination of such nuclear weapons, the non-nuclear-weapon States should be granted effective negative security assurances through a legally binding instrument. In this line there is a need to establish an ad hoc committee in the CD to deal with the issue as well.

The Non-Proliferation Treaty does not provide the right for nuclear-weapon States to keep their nuclear arsenals indefinitely. They have obligations under article VI of the NPT, yet to be fulfilled. The advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice underlines clearly that "there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control". Furthermore, the extension of the NPT was realized only through a package of decisions, including the fulfilment of the nuclear-weapon States' obligations for the total elimination of nuclear weapons. Other members of the NPT legitimately ask this question. I particularly express

(Mr. Mottaki, Islamic Republic of Iran)

the following: What happened to these commitments as well as the unequivocal undertakings for nuclear disarmament? Turning a blind eye to each of these undertakings is, undoubtedly, a blow to the credibility and integrity of the NPT. We are particularly concerned about the lack of progress towards the unequivocal undertaking by the nuclear-weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals leading to nuclear disarmament, and urge them to abide by their legal commitments established under article VI of the Treaty. I particularly express the deep concern of my Government over the attempts to reinterpret the commitments of nuclear-weapon States under article VI of the NPT in order to attach conditions in fulfilling those obligations. These attempts deliberately ignore the letter and spirit of article VI of the Treaty. They are considered excuses to deny the obligations of nuclear-weapon States under article VI of the Treaty and would not in any way be acceptable by States party to the NPT.

Since 1974, based on the initiative of Iran, the Middle Eastern countries have decided to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region. Besides its security benefits, the realization of such a zone would promote the economic and social life of the people in this region through contributing to strengthening confidence in the region. A nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East is of strategic importance to the States in the region. It goes without saying that the adoption of the resolution on the Middle East was a decisive factor and main element in the extension of the NPT in 1995. Unfortunately, no concrete measure has been taken by the sponsors of this resolution towards the realization of such a zone in our region. Defying the international call to adhere to the NPT by the Zionist regime and its unsafeguarded secret nuclear facilities and its proliferation of nuclear weapons with impunity not only constitute the greatest threat to the peace, security and stability of the region but also is the sole obstacle to the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone.

In our view, the ultimate goal of any initiative and common efforts should be starting substantive work, particularly on 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 and all four core issues are treated on an equal footing. Any attempt to disregard this fundamental principle will not bear fruit and may just lead to more frustration among the member States.

The prevention of an arms race in outer space (PAROS) has been on the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament since 1982. We believe that the Conference on Disarmament can effectively contribute to that subject.

On 12 February 2008, a draft treaty on the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space and of the threat or use of force against outer space objects (PPWT) was presented in a timely fashion to this august body. The Islamic Republic of Iran welcomes the initiative on the prevention of the weaponization of outer space and hopes that the Conference on Disarmament commences, as soon as possible, its substantive work in this regard. We do hope that the efforts to prevent an arms race in outer space would facilitate further the exploration and peaceful uses of outer space, as a common heritage of mankind, for the benefit and interests of all countries, in particular the developing States.

(Mr. Mottaki, Islamic Republic of Iran)

In this connection, I would like to inform the Conference that on 4 February 2008, my country successfully launched its first research rocket "Kavoshgar 1" (Explorer 1) into space in order to prepare the ground for putting our first indigenously manufactured satellite, named Omid, into orbit for peaceful uses. The Islamic Republic of Iran enters into outer space solely to get some data to prevent natural catastrophic events, such as earthquakes, and improve its telecommunication systems for peaceful ends, as other capable countries do the same.

Negotiating a non-discriminatory, legally binding and internationally verifiable treaty on banning fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices is also one of the four core issues of the Conference which should be appropriately dealt with. We firmly believe that the famous Shannon mandate should govern any future negotiations on that subject.

In conclusion, I would like to say a few words on the recent development of my country's nuclear programme.

The recent report of the International Atomic Energy Agency has declared that all outstanding issues regarding the peaceful nuclear programme of the Islamic Republic of Iran have been resolved and confirmed for the eleventh time that there has been no diversion in the Iranian peaceful nuclear activities.

I would like to recall that the pretext which brought the Iranian nuclear issue to the agenda of IAEA, and then became the basis for the unwarranted and unlawful actions of the United Nations Security Council, was the ambiguities and allegations about the Iranian nuclear programme introduced by few countries who, by magnifying those ambiguities, attempted to call into question the peaceful nature of the nuclear programme of Iran.

The Islamic Republic of Iran for removing ambiguities from its peaceful nuclear activities and resolving the remaining issues, on 21 August 2007 reached an understanding on a programme of work with the Agency. On the basis of the programme of work, a specific list of six issues, including "Research on plutonium", "P1 and P2 centrifuges", "Source of contamination", "Uranium metal document", "Polonium-210" and "Gachine mine", was presented by the Agency to Iran.

The Islamic Republic of Iran, in implementation of the programme of work, has shown the utmost transparency and fully cooperated and even concluded the programme of work much sooner than the scheduled timetable. It is worth mentioning that the implementation of the programme of work needed 18 months, but the Islamic Republic of Iran implemented it within 6 months.

Despite initial agreement, which was supposed to address the past remaining issues, the Islamic Republic of Iran, on the basis of its goodwill, and in line with further cooperation with the Agency, considered also the present issues. Therefore, negotiations on two important legal documents, i.e. "Safeguards approach document" and "Facility attachment"

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for a Fuel Enrichment Plant in Natanz started and then concluded, and entered into force on 30 September 2007. On that basis, the operationalization of these agreements would provide the necessary assurances for the verification of enrichment activities in Iran for the present time and in the future.

The report of the Agency dated 22 February 2008 has clearly and evidently declared that all six issues called “remaining issues” are resolved and the Islamic Republic of Iran has answered all the questions posed by IAEA concerning outstanding issues. It furthermore confirmed that these answers were “consistent with the Agency’s findings” and IAEA “considers those questions no longer outstanding”. In this report, the Agency also declared that the current nuclear activities in Iran are under its monitoring and the Agency has been able to continue to verify the non-diversion of declared nuclear material and facilities in Iran.

Thus, all justifications and foundations for the United Nations Security Council’s actions have vanished, and it shows that the resolutions previously adopted by the Security Council lack any legal and technical justifications and originated solely from the political and malicious intentions of certain countries. Naturally, the continuation of this trend would undermine the credibility of the Security Council and would weaken the integrity and status of IAEA, which should be the sole competent authority for the nuclear activities of the member States. The Security Council’s action would represent another wrong step. The Agency’s report is a clear indication of the lawful, transparent, responsible and predictable behaviour of the Islamic Republic of Iran in its nuclear activities and also the fulfilment of its obligations and commitments in this regard.

As was reaffirmed by the NAM, the right expectation of the international community is that those States which misled international institutions with their baseless allegations and accusations, through their politically motivated actions and propaganda against the peaceful nuclear programme of Iran, should take corrective measures to remedy their mistakes.

Although we are not hopeful that the Council, with its discriminatory attitude manifested in its silence toward the human tragedy which is currently occurring in Gaza by the Zionist regime, can do such remedy. But if the Security Council is not able to defend right and justice, it should prevent the undermining of its credibility by breaking silence and avoiding the adoption of unjust positions.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate that the Islamic Republic of Iran, as a victim of weapons of mass destruction, joined with other peace-loving nations, spares no effort in realizing a world free from these inhuman and horrible weapons.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Mr. Mottaki for his statement and for the kind words he addressed in support of the presidency and the Conference.

I shall now suspend the meeting for a couple of minutes in order to escort the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The meeting was suspended at 11.45 a.m. and resumed at 11.50 a.m.

The PRESIDENT: On behalf of the Conference and on my own, I would like to extend a warm welcome to His Excellency Mr. Ján Kubiš, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic. Minister Kubiš was in fact here as Ambassador, as Permanent Representative of his country, in Geneva in the 1990s. So welcome back, Mr. Minister. You have the floor.

Mr. KUBIŠ (Slovakia): Mr. President, thank you very much for giving me the opportunity. It is good to be back after some 15 years, but of course it is not about recalling good experiences but also to state what the position of my country is.

I would like to start by expressing my appreciation to the previous President of the Conference on Disarmament, Ambassador Samir Labidi of Tunisia, and the Secretary-General of the CD, Mr. Sergei Ordzhonikidze, for their invitation to address this body. My interest to address the Conference on Disarmament follows the appeal made by the Secretary-General of the United Nations to Foreign Ministers and other political leaders to engage with the Conference on Disarmament. This aim is to return it to its mission of being again the multilateral forum of choice, indeed the single multilateral negotiating body, where the international community negotiates the issues of disarmament and non-proliferation.

No doubt serious and effective multilateral treaties can be generated by using other mechanisms outside the CD. The negotiation of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention is an example. While this Convention has become an overwhelming success in many important terms, it remains an exception. It notably lacks universality as important countries remain outside the Convention. Therefore, the need to return to the basic mission of the CD.

For Slovakia, it is regrettable that the momentum that was generated in the Conference on Disarmament in 2006 and 2007 seems to be waning. We do commend the P-6 of 2008 for not giving up on this situation. However, their role is much more difficult than ours was in 2006.

Consensus in the CD remains blocked as some of its members call for a more balanced approach in relation to their national interests. We have no doubt these national interests are legitimate. They should, however, be put into a wider context, at least in our opinion. We see the main virtue of the L.1 proposal, as interpreted by the accompanying documents CRP.5 and 6, in its well-thought-out organization of the existing priorities into a logical sequence. It represents a platform that enables everyone to address their own national interests at various stages of negotiations and substantive discussions. The more we delay the work based on the existing compromise proposal, the more we postpone the progress on the issues identified as the ripest for action by the CD.

Also, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon explicitly urged the CD members to seize the historic opportunity that had been crystallizing for a long time.

Let me now speak about other Slovakian activities concerning the arms control field. Having been a member of the United Nations Security Council in 2006-2007, Slovakia had the honour of presiding over the Committee established pursuant to United Nations Security Council resolution 1540 (2004). This body was created to address an important part of the threat to international peace and security posed by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction,

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their means of delivery and related materials in an integrated and comprehensive manner. The implementation of resolution 1540 has demonstrated that the spirit of multilateralism prevails in this area. The 1540 Committee has played, besides other functions, an active role in assisting many United Nations Members through a number of regional seminars in the area of non-proliferation.

Slovakia's tenure of the United Nations Security Council position was also marked by dealing intensively with some regional issues of WMD, and especially nuclear and missile non-proliferation. At the same time, we actively contributed to launching the work of appropriate United Nations Security Council subsidiary bodies, including the United Nations Security Council 1718 Committee.

The process of the entry into force of the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty unfortunately resembles the one in the CD. Let me recall that Slovakia was among the very first countries to ratify it. As we rank among the 44 countries listed in its annex 2, we consider this an important contribution to the efforts aimed at bringing this treaty into force. In our opinion the logical sequence between past negotiations of the CTBT here in CD a decade ago and the FMCT as the most ripe issue to be negotiated should be supported by increased effort towards an expeditious entry into force of the CTBT. While it is still pending, Slovakia endeavours to contribute to the preparation of its implementation by annually organizing various training courses and field experiments to simulate on-site inspections.

The same holds for the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). The civil protection training course in support of the objectives on assistance and protection under article X of this Convention has been conducted in Slovakia every year. I am honoured that Slovakia has been endorsed by the Eastern European Group as a candidate for the next Chairman of the OPCW Executive Council. With regard to the Biological Weapons Convention, Slovakia ranks among those countries that provide a CBM report every year. In 2007 a law on the prohibition of biological weapons was adopted in order to supplement the existing legislation in this field by a specific norm responding directly to the obligation stipulated in article IV of the Convention. At the same time, we maintain that progress in this field should be made through the elaboration of a meaningful verification mechanism based on previous efforts by the BWC Ad Hoc Group.

To pick up some highlights in the conventional sphere, let me mention that Slovakia has made a considerable contribution to the process of mine clearance. In recent years, Slovakia ranked among the top contributors in absolute terms, while in relative terms, we have managed to be even higher - in one indicator, in first place in the world. This illustrates our commitment towards fulfilling the objectives of the Mine Ban Convention.

Slovakia, fully committed to fostering and promoting the principles of international humanitarian law, joined the call to address the issue of cluster munitions. Underscoring the idea of complementarity, we are working diligently within the CCW and Oslo processes on the new norm prohibiting those cluster munitions that cause unacceptable harm to civilians. In our view,

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the instrument, or even instruments, must achieve a balance between legitimate defence needs and humanitarian concerns, and if it attempts to make a real change on the ground, it has to set the conditions for the main users and producers of this weapon system, as well as important donors, to come on board.

Last but not least, may I use this opportunity to mention that during its tenure as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, Slovakia paid special attention to the issue of security sector reform? Upon the initiative of Slovakia, the Security Council held an open debate in February 2007 that set in motion important processes. The Council adopted a Presidential statement stressing that security sector reform is critical to the consolidation of peace and stability, promoting poverty reduction, the rule of law, human rights and good governance and preventing countries from relapsing into conflict. The Council recognized the significant contribution made by the United Nations system to SSR and the increasing engagement of United Nations organs, funds, programmes and agencies in the field. It further emphasized the need for a comprehensive report of the Secretary-General on United Nations approaches to SSR. The Secretary-General presented his report a month ago, and it is being discussed in New York by the respective United Nations bodies, and I hope very soon that report will then find its way to the Security Council and to the General Assembly.

Also, today a seminar entitled “The United Nations and security sector reform: a year on from the Security Council open debate” is being held at the Palais des Nations, organized by the United Nations Office Geneva and DCAF.

Let me conclude by stating that Slovakia is fully determined to support all initiatives that are aimed at reinstalling the CD to its rightful place and at improving the global security environment in the most expeditious and realistic way in the present world full of uncertainties and mistrust. From this perspective we will continue working at the CD.

The PRESIDENT: I would like to thank Minister Ján Kubiš for his statement and for the kind words of support for the Conference’s work.

I shall now suspend the meeting for a couple of minutes in order to escort His Excellency the Minister.

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

The PRESIDENT: May I call the meeting to order please? On behalf of the Conference and on my own, I would like to extend a warm welcome to His Excellency Mr. Santos Calderón, Vice-President of Colombia. Almost a year ago Vice-President Calderón addressed the CD. I recall his speech where he emphasized that it was imperative that the Conference on Disarmament turned from rhetoric to action. We have not been able to fulfil that task yet, Mr. Vice-President. We look forward, however, to listening to you once more, and you are more than welcome to this chamber. You have the floor.

Mr. CALDERON (Colombia) (spoke in Spanish): Mr. President, Ambassadors, in my capacity as Vice-President of Colombia I would like to reiterate to you my country's full support for the work being done in the Conference on Disarmament under the leadership of Turkey, as well as support for the efforts of the platform of six Presidents to overcome the stagnation in the Conference.

In my country, issues such as the illicit trade in arms, munitions and explosives and access by terrorist groups to different categories of weapons are not just academic matters. They form part of our everyday reality and pose a serious threat to our population.

Just yesterday, our national police submitted an initial, still preliminary report, regarding the content of two computers found when Raul Reyes, second in command of FARC, was killed last Saturday, including messages from one commander to another indicating that FARC was apparently negotiating to obtain radioactive material, the raw material for generating dirty weapons for use in destruction and terrorism. This preliminary information, which is undergoing a strict and rigorous process of verification with international support, shows us that terrorist groups, drawing economic power from drug trafficking, constitute a very serious threat not just to our country but to the entire Andean and Latin American region. We are ready to provide any information that this Commission would like in this connection through whatever mechanisms are necessary so that you can see the basic information the Colombian police has on this matter.

For this reason Colombia's major priority is to restore security. It was to accomplish this task that we were elected in 2002, and, on the basis of the policy of democratic security, we have achieved an unprecedented reduction in all the indicators of violence and re-election in 2006 with the highest vote in the history of Colombia. We can say with satisfaction that we have consolidated control of our territory and restored the authority of the State throughout Colombia. We have devoted major efforts to the task of preventing terrorist groups from gaining access to weapons of all types. Major results have been achieved in the area of seizure and confiscation. For example, in the process of demobilization of the self-defence groups, they handed over 18,000 rifles as part of the peace process.

The most valuable and important instrument we have to strengthen this struggle and achieve better results is joint resolve to move beyond words and intentions to acts, to implement the abundant international legislation in this area decisively and promptly. I am referring to instruments such as the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons, in which the chapter on international assistance and cooperation contains very important recommendations for effectively combating this illicit trade. At the forthcoming biennial meeting of States that will be held in July in the context of the Programme of Action in New York, we hope, we need, we want to achieve concrete results.

According to official intelligence and investigative bodies, 80 per cent of the weapons that enter Colombia illegally are intended for these terrorist groups and 20 per cent for common criminals. This explains the importance of ensuring the full implementation of the Programme of

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Action and other regional instruments such as the OAS Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives and Other Related Materials.

From Colombia we call for the expedited implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 of 2004 on the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and efforts to prevent illegal armed groups from gaining access to them. Our country supported the adoption of the global counter-terrorism strategy in the United Nations General Assembly in 2006. Its plan of action calls for the strengthening of coordination and cooperation among States in combating crimes related to terrorism such as the illicit trade in arms, ammunition and explosives. It also sets out responsibilities and commitments for improving customs and border controls so as to prevent and detect the movement of terrorists and the means they use to attack the civilian population and, in the case of Colombia, democratic institutions.

I would also like to mention the proliferation of and illicit trade in portable air defence systems (MANPADS) and their components. The type of threats that I mentioned earlier indicate the urgent need to ensure the full implementation of the resolutions adopted by OAS and in the United Nations to prevent these weapons from falling into the hands of these terrorist groups, these illegal groups. The destructive power and their danger for civil aviation have already been demonstrated in terrorist acts in the recent past. All these are fundamental measures if they manage to secure the resolve and the commitment of all countries, since they would drastically reduce the scope and opportunities for action by such terrorist groups and would thus prevent the suffering of millions of persons.

As you are aware, we were co-sponsors of the five Ambassadors' formula which lay the basis for achieving a delicate thematic balance with a view to the adoption of a programme of work. Last year we supported the draft Presidential decision (L.1) which in our opinion reflects the handling of decisive issues such as nuclear disarmament, negative security assurances, prevention of an arms race in outer space and the beginning of negotiations aimed at concluding a multilateral and non-discriminatory treaty on the prohibition of the production of fissile material for the manufacture of nuclear weapons or other explosive devices.

We are of the view that the Conference on Disarmament is ready to resume its role as the sole multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament and avoid a further decline in its credibility. We call for political will on the part of member States to take up this challenge and begin this process, and we will continue to work actively so as to contribute to the disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation regime. As an indication of this commitment, we recently deposited the instrument of ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty at United Nations Headquarters in New York.

In the face of problems and challenges such as those I have mentioned, the proper implementation of international instruments and all other existing instruments to tackle terrorism is a fundamental issue for Colombia and for the security of its people. Colombia occupies second place among countries affected by anti-personnel mines worldwide. Terrorist groups are fostering the large-scale and indiscriminate use of these devices, which affect the civilian population and delay the economic and social development of communities. Since 1990,

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6,800 Colombians have been affected by anti-personnel mines and unexploded munitions. Of these persons, 1,500 have lost their lives as a result of accidents and another 5,300 are suffering from permanent disabilities. Of the survivors, 4,400 are members of the security forces and 2,300 are civilians, and among the civilians 650 are minors and 347 are women. These citizens fell victim to weapons that do not discriminate between combatants and non-combatants. These are devices that affect the lives and well-being of the population and seriously hamper development. The use of these devices, which are generally placed around schools, water points, roads, churches and other public places, upsets the lives of whole communities and poses additional threats to vulnerable populations.

Throughout its history, Colombia has shown its wholehearted commitment to international law. This has been clear in our national commitment to implementing the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. In the face of a crisis of this magnitude, the signature, ratification and strict implementation of the Ottawa Convention are priority issues in the policy for the promotion and defence of human rights pursued by this Government.

In order to fulfil the commitments under the Convention, Colombia has drawn up two national protocols for humanitarian demining: one for the clearing of minefields laid for the protection of the armed forces before Colombia ratified the Ottawa Convention, and the other for minefields laid by the armed groups that are operating outside the law. Today we have two groups, each of 40 men, engaged in humanitarian demining in various municipalities in Colombia. The protocols comply with international requirements in every respect and take into account such factors as security, quality, efficiency and protection of the environment.

We also took the decision to create the Department of Humanitarian Demining as a military unit devoted exclusively to carrying out such work. The Department provides technical advice to the Presidential programme for comprehensive mine action in matters relating to humanitarian demining, and now has four teams devoted to carrying out such activities. To date, we have successfully completed the destruction of 7 of the 34 protective minefields, and it is planned that the 27 remaining ones will be destroyed before 1 March 2011, the deadline laid down by the Ottawa Convention. This has not been and will not be an easy challenge. Comprehensive action against anti-personnel mines is certainly a long-term undertaking. A process that involves many public and private agencies which, through their work, seek to reduce the social, economic and environmental impact of anti-personnel mines and unexploded munitions in Colombia.

Colombia will continue to move forward in seeking to achieve security and comprehensive development for all citizens. We will continue to provide care for victims, proper medical care, rehabilitation and ensure their reintegration into society through productive projects. We are grateful for international solidarity and cooperation in pursuing these objectives.

I would like in this forum to confirm Colombia's intention to serve as the host country for the Second Review Conference of the Ottawa Convention, to be held at the end of 2009. Should we obtain the necessary support, the city of Cartagena de Indias has been selected by the

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Government as the venue for this historic conference, which will mark the tenth anniversary of the entry into force of this most valuable international instrument. We hope to have the support of all of you for this conference.

The PRESIDENT: I would like to thank Vice-President Calderón for his comprehensive statement and for his kind words of support to the work of the Conference.

I shall now suspend the meeting for a couple of minutes so that I can escort His Excellency the Vice-President.

The meeting was suspended at 12.18 p.m. and resumed at 12.25 p.m.

The PRESIDENT: I would like to extend a warm welcome to His Excellency Mr. Jonas Gahr Støre, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Norway, for accepting our invitation to address the Conference. Minister Gahr Støre was, I understand, in Geneva a decade ago in a different capacity. We welcome him today in this historic Council chamber. Excellency, you have the floor.

Mr. STØRE (Norway): Mr. President, thank you for being ready to listen to me. It is a great pleasure for me to attend the Conference on Disarmament at this particular moment in time, and since it is my first presence at the CD, allow me to make a comment on what I believe, as I have been preparing for this, is the context of our efforts to work towards the vision of a world without nuclear weapons.

In fact, in Oslo last week, we assembled a conference of about 100 participants, from 29 different countries, focusing on what it would take to revive that vision: what concrete steps are attainable to reach our shared vision, both in the short and in the long term?

The meeting was an undertaking by my Government, the Government of Norway, and the Nuclear Threat Initiative, led by former United States Senator Sam Nunn, and the Hoover Institution at Stanford University, led by former United States Secretary of State George Shultz, as well as with the active participation of the Director General of IAEA, Muhammed ElBaradei.

We had two days of intensive discussions - discussions that included both the idealists and the realists. That is, I think, how we need to approach this issue. And it struck me during those discussions that a new common ground may be emerging to address these critical issues - issues which continue to concern our very existence, but issues that have glided down the scale of international attention and resolve.

Perhaps new generations of political leadership have gradually dropped focus on nuclear weapons and the threat from proliferation after the cold war. Perhaps issues such as the fight against poverty, climate change, global health and other key issues of globalization have taken prominence. Perhaps we have been lacking imagination to frame the broad and shared security challenge that we all face in the presence of abundant nuclear weapons: the threat from proliferation and the scenario of nuclear technology and material falling into the hands of criminals and terrorists.

(Mr. Støre, Norway)

But my point is this: that the paradigm of mutually assured destruction served as an easy way to grasp the concept during the cold war. Today that very concept is gradually becoming obsolete in the face of a fragmented and complex nuclear threat scenario. But still we are far from agreeing on the new unifying concept that can help steer our action. We have the treaties, and we need to respect them, and we need to revise them. But we lack, I believe, the mobilizing road map that can marshal the political will and resolve needed.

As Secretary Shultz said in Oslo last week, "This is above all a political and diplomatic endeavour". His message was repeated when I attended a session of elder statesmen in London last Sunday - a meeting of key decision makers from the United States, Russian and European administrations during the last four decades gathered to discuss this precise challenge. At that meeting, I also had the pleasure to meet with Minister of State Mr. Saudabayev, who is present here today from Kazakhstan, and I believe Kazakhstan has demonstrated that national security does not depend on the possession of nuclear weapons.

Emerging with renewed vigour out of both the Oslo and the London meetings was the vision of a world without nuclear weapons. And we should not, of course, expect short-term results, but remember that it took this vision at Reykjavik in 1986 to launch a series of major breakthroughs in nuclear disarmament until the process came to a halt around the year 2000. A vision of a world without nuclear weapons for all is a vision of strengthened security for all of us.

Look to Latin America: by declaring Latin America a nuclear-weapon-free zone, a whole continent escaped the nuclear logic. The result for Latin American States was improved security and, equally important, States with scarce resources were able to give priority to large development agendas to the benefit of the public.

So I believe this is our key challenge: how to recreate the power of the vision of Reykjavik in a way that unites the idealists and the realists, to establish a road map relying on a representative consensus that identifies the concrete and implementable steps that we must take. So I thought I would use this occasion - and the privilege of being here - to share with you the five key principles emerging from our discussions at the Oslo conference last week. I list them as Norway's input to the work of the CD to inspire our reflections on concrete steps that can help end the endless deadlocks that have plagued us for all too long.

First, obvious observation: achieving the vision of a world free of nuclear weapons commands committed leadership at the highest levels. Leaders must engage with key domestic stakeholders, including security establishments, the scientific community and, in particular, the general public. And there I see the challenge: when I meet my colleagues that this is really not on their agenda - as I said in the introduction - because there are other topics that now take high command in international discussions.

Second, to sustain our vision and build momentum behind it, concrete and implementable steps must be taken now. Be they small, we need to be able to demonstrate small and implementable steps, and they must be taken unilaterally, if needed. Negotiations needed for deep cuts in nuclear arsenals must commence and continue. This means reducing the role of

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nuclear weapons in doctrines and in operational status, and this means fulfilling the promise of long-sought agreements like the CTBT and an FMCT, and outstanding commitments made in 1995 and 2000. To ensure the necessary confidence in these and other steps, we must be willing to undertake binding agreements with credible verification. And this, again, makes it necessary to engage the scientific community, which can assist us in doing precisely clever verification work. Taking disarmament seriously also means taking regional conflicts seriously. International efforts should focus as much on regional conflicts which have not gone critical as much as they do with those that have.

Third, moving ahead requires consensus among all States, nuclear-weapons States and non-nuclear-weapon States alike. Article VI of the NPT places the obligation to bring about disarmament on all States. No doubt States with the largest arsenals have a leadership role to play. But our vision will only be achievable if we are able to advance the agenda on non proliferation and disarmament together - not one without the other - and if we work together on reliable verification tools and collective security arrangements. If we draw on common purpose to work together among the military, among scientists, among diplomats and among governments, the benefits could be felt in many other fields as well. And that is why I do not see any conflict between the engagement for climate, poverty, health and all the rest in this endeavour, because the mechanisms will inspire each other.

Fourth, we should be faithful to the principle of non-discrimination. It is key to effective multilateralism. Nuclear weapons face us with collective dangers. We will be well served by non-discriminatory approaches to these dangers. We must confront proliferation with unity and resolve wherever it occurs. Then, we must fashion disarmament agreements that include all States. We must recognize that fuel cycle assurances will succeed only with a non-discriminatory approach that recognizes the right of all States to peaceful uses, and that is sensitive to the need of all States for energy security. It is with this spirit that we approach a fuel reserve under the aegis of IAEA. This is one example of a concrete and implementable step that can build momentum for common resolve. IAEA considers that 150 million dollars will be needed to make such a reserve operational. A hundred million dollars have been obtained. Last week Norway pledged 5 million dollars, 10 per cent of the remaining 50. I urge other States to make their contribution. Could that fuel reserve become operational, I think it would send a tremendous signal that the international community is ready to approach that very important dimension.

Finally, transparency should be at the heart of our global efforts. It is required from both nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States like my own. While it is a vital starting point for many of the practical steps we must take, it also is a means of building the vital elements of trust and confidence, without which our efforts to reach zero cannot succeed. And by the way, this is not a vision which will be obtained overnight, but without having that vision out there I believe we are not able to turn the logic which is now dominating the nuclear agenda. Greater transparency does not necessarily require legal instruments that can take months or even years to negotiate. It can be implemented by all States unilaterally, starting today. And I would urge the international community to support the new leadership in Russia and the incoming new leadership in the United States to address this issue as one of the first topics on their bilateral agenda.

(Mr. Støre, Norway)

On the basis of these principles, the Chairman's summary of the Oslo Conference made 10 policy recommendations. Let me share the short version of them with you today.

First, national leaders in all States should engage personally and they should seek to involve key domestic stakeholders - their populations in particular - at an early stage. The disarmament efforts will be an interdisciplinary endeavour, and national leaders should also seek to engage experts from all the relevant areas, including science, diplomacy, politics, law and the military.

Second, the United States and Russia are encouraged to reduce the size of their arsenals significantly so that nuclear weapons numbers are measured by the hundred, and not by the thousand. This should be effected by means of a verified, legally binding treaty. It is also important to engage China and eventually other States that possess nuclear weapons in a strategic dialogue to develop a cooperative approach to nuclear security.

Third, non-nuclear-weapon States should cooperate with nuclear-weapon States to develop the technology needed for verifying disarmament. And here we, as a non-nuclear-weapon State, are ready to make a contribution. Nuclear-weapon States should seize the opportunity presented by reductions in nuclear weapons numbers to demonstrate this technology.

Fourth, all States that possess nuclear weapons are encouraged to make every effort to reverse their reliance on these weapons as a contribution towards their elimination. They should also change the operational status of their nuclear weapons in order to increase decision time in the event that use is contemplated, and to take other steps to promote strategic stability.

Fifth, entry into force of the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty is crucial to preventing a new nuclear arms race. Until the Treaty enters into force, the existing moratorium on nuclear testing should be strengthened. Each State that has tested nuclear weapons in the past should pledge that it will not be the first to restart testing. In addition, funding for the CTBT's International Monitoring System must continue.

Sixth, a fissile material cut-off treaty, an FMCT, is vital to advancing disarmament and preventing proliferation. In addition to starting negotiations on an FMCT, the international community should consider the creation of a voluntary fissile material control initiative to enhance the security and transparency of all nuclear material, including material that may not be subject to an FMCT.

Seventh, eliminating nuclear arms requires a robust and credible non-proliferation regime. All States that have not yet done so should adopt a Comprehensive Safeguard Agreement and an Additional Protocol. In addition, they should sign, ratify and implement all relevant multilateral instruments to enhance the safety and security of their nuclear materials.

Eighth, in order to help avert the awful prospect of nuclear terrorism, all States that possess nuclear weapons are urged to take all necessary measures to ensure that their weapons do not fall into unauthorized hands.

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Ninth, we should aim to create a non-discriminatory system of nuclear fuel supply in close collaboration with IAEA, as I have just alluded to. In this regard, a serious and sustained dialogue between producer and consumer is needed so that consumers have an opportunity to explain their needs, and suppliers have an opportunity to tailor arrangements and incentives accordingly.

And finally, we should consider convening a broadly based, high-level intergovernmental panel on nuclear disarmament, analogous to and inspired by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, to advise governments on the core requirements for abolishing nuclear weapons. It cannot be a copy of the IPCC, but why not draw some inspiration from how that method has worked for the last 10 years, and with the credibility that has entailed?

We all share the responsibility of keeping the vision of a world free of nuclear weapons alive. Again, it will not happen overnight, but unless that vision is held out, we will not have another logic to pursue in our work. Norway will continue to work in all relevant multilateral forums to ensure that this vision is followed up with practical and concrete measures. We will also continue to work on a bilateral basis. Today, Norway and Russia, for example, cooperate in enhancing nuclear safety and security in north-western Russia, Norway's neighbour. We will also continue our excellent cooperation with the United Kingdom on strengthening disarmament verification.

If we are to achieve results, we must be ready to work in innovative ways. We must involve all stakeholders, including civil society. The Oslo Conference last week was indeed an example of such a partnership.

We need more cross-regional cooperation. We will not obtain results unless we build bridges and do more to identify areas of common ground. That is one of the main purposes of the seven-nation initiative that Norway is part of, with among others, the United Kingdom, Indonesia, South Africa, Chile, Romania.

Finally, let me take on another pressing issue: the common undertaking of creating a legal instrument to ban the cluster munitions that cause unacceptable harm to civilians. Today, there are more than 25 States reported to be affected by cluster munitions. After they are dropped and not exploded, they are nothing less than anti-personnel landmines spread around territories. Wars and armed conflict cause contamination of all kinds of explosive remnants of war, but few, if any, cause such extensive and unacceptable harm as cluster munitions - and often decades after the initial strike. Most cluster munitions casualties are civilians. Millions of people are directly or indirectly affected by the use of cluster munitions.

The humanitarian and socio-economic harm caused by cluster munitions is a consequence of modern warfare. Today's wars are often fought in populated areas, villages and farmland. We see this in Afghanistan, Iraq and Lebanon. The use of cluster munitions and large quantities of explosive remnants of war causes a high civilian casualty rate. As with nuclear weapons, an imminent danger is proliferation. Billions of submunitions are stockpiled. We must avoid a

(Mr. Støre, Norway)

situation where old and outdated types of cluster munitions are transferred to other countries. A new instrument on cluster munitions would, in our view, need to take the humanitarian consequences as a starting point and address the need to prevent new victims and to provide assistance to victims of cluster munitions and their communities.

This is the rationale of the Oslo process. Let me say that Norway is fully committed and actively ready to support the process inside the CCW process, but when that process is stalled, we cannot afford to sit, negligent, and just observe that stall. We have to take new initiatives. A ban on cluster munitions that have unacceptable humanitarian consequences is about fulfilling our humanitarian obligation to put a stop to the use of a weapon that severely harms civilians and impedes development.

The conference in Wellington last month gained broad support, both from countries affected by cluster munitions and from countries that possess such weapons, such as my own. Now we have a good starting point for the final negotiation leading up to the treaty in Dublin in May.

So, what we have today is a window of opportunity that we cannot afford to lose, an opportunity to prevent a humanitarian crisis similar to the one caused by landmines in the 1980s and 1990s. And at least we need to seize this opportunity together.

The PRESIDENT: We thank you, Minister Støre, for this statement. Norway is obviously one of the most important actors in the field of disarmament and arms control, and we thank you for sharing your vision and your thoughts about the different disarmament activities with us.

I shall now suspend the meeting for a couple of minutes so that I can escort His Excellency the Minister.

The meeting was suspended at 12.45 p.m. and resumed at 12.50 p.m.

The PRESIDENT: I have no more speakers on my list. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor? That does not seem to be the case.

One final note: I would like to invite you to be back here at 3 p.m. for the next formal plenary meeting.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.