

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE ONE THOUSAND AND SIXTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 28 February 2006, at 10.20 a.m.

President: Mr. PARK In-kook (Republic of Korea)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 1006th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

We have learned with deep sorrow that on 23 February 2006 at least 56 people were killed and dozens injured when the snow-laden roof of Basmanny market in Moscow collapsed.

Two days later, on Saturday, 26 February 2006, a six-storey building housing shops and offices collapsed in the Bangladesh capital, Dhaka. At least 19 people were killed and more than 50 were injured in that accident.

On behalf of the Conference on Disarmament and on my own behalf, I wish to express our most sincere condolences and deepest sympathy to the families of the victims and to the peoples and the Governments of the Russian Federation and Bangladesh.

This morning I welcome the 30 new Egyptian diplomats from the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs now in training in Geneva.

In accordance with the timetable of meetings for my presidency, this week the Conference on Disarmament will proceed to a focused debate on nuclear disarmament. I should like to remind you that I suggested that delegations make their interventions under the sub-item "Assessment of the implementation of nuclear disarmament".

With regard to the arrangement of sessions, I would like to inform you that during the consideration of the timetable of plenary meetings of the Conference for the current week, the Coordinators of the Group of 21 requested that four plenary meetings be scheduled for the current week, that is, two meetings today, Tuesday, and two meetings on Thursday. This proposal was considered at the Presidential consultations held on Friday, 24 February, and subsequently accepted by the Coordinators of all the groups as well as China. Upon this development, the secretariat communicated the approved timetable to you, through the Coordinators of your respective groups. I appreciate timely and flexible consultations in a spirit of cooperation.

With regard to the meeting this afternoon, I have been informed by the Permanent Representative of Malta, Ambassador Borg, that due to unforeseen circumstances, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Malta has had to postpone his visit to Geneva, and therefore he will not address the Conference today. However, as I have already stated, the plenary meeting for this afternoon has already been scheduled and will be held.

I have the following speakers for today's plenary meeting: the Syrian Arab Republic, Italy, Egypt, the Russian Federation, Argentina, Iraq, on behalf of the Group of 21, Brazil, France, Australia, Japan and Myanmar.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic, Ambassador Bashar Ja'afari.

Mr. JA'AFARI (Syrian Arab Republic) (translated from Arabic): Mr. President, I should like, first of all, to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference and to confirm our willingness to cooperate with you fully in order to bring this Conference, the sole multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament, out of the impasse in which it has been stuck for many years. I should also like to thank your predecessor, Ambassador Rapacki, for the excellent efforts which he made to revitalize the work of the Conference, and to associate myself, in advance, with the statement that the Ambassador of Iraq will deliver on behalf of the Group of 21.

This session on the subject of nuclear armaments follows on the heels of the failed seventh NPT Review Conference and World Summit, which were held in New York last year. Both events failed to reach any agreement on measures or commitments aimed at achieving disarmament in general and nuclear disarmament in particular. In the light of this worrying setback for international discussions on this very vital topic, we should like to recall some important facts. Firstly, the States parties agreed, at the 1995 Review Conference, to extend the Treaty indefinitely in exchange for the adoption of a resolution on the Middle East aimed at making the Middle East a nuclear-weapon-free zone. At the time, the Review Conference agreed to pursue efforts to strengthen the Treaty, and to make it universal, to adopt principles and objectives for its implementation and to establish a nuclear-free zone in the Middle East that resembled those established by the Rarotonga, Bangkok, Pelindaba and Antarctic treaties.

In the period between the 1995 and 2000 Review Conferences, Arab States non-parties to the NPT acceded to the Treaty, because of the positive outcome of the 1995 Review Conference, the adoption of the resolution on making the Middle East a nuclear-weapon-free zone, and because of the commitments made at the Conference. In that connection, we should like to point out that, in 2005, for the twenty-sixth year in succession, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted a resolution - resolution 60/52 - calling for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone area in the Middle East. The aims and purposes of this annual resolution reflect the aspirations of the States of the region and are consistent with the resolutions adopted by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the Security Council.

In contrast to these positive international and regional developments, Israel remains the only State in the Middle East which has not acceded to the NPT and which continues to refuse to subject its installations to IAEA's comprehensive safeguards regime, in spite of the grave threats which such installations pose to the security of States in the region, including Israel itself. In this anomalous situation, thanks to the fact that some major Western nuclear States have continued to supply Israel with the latest technology, Israel now has eight nuclear reactors on a piece of land measuring not more than 25,000 square kilometres. This situation is unprecedented anywhere in the world. These Western countries express concern over the proliferation of nuclear weapons, but continue to supply Israel with enriched uranium, heavy water and other nuclear technologies.

(Mr. Ja'afari, Syrian Arab Republic)

The 2000 Review Conference welcomed, inter alia, the accession of all Arab States to the NPT. It called on Israel, the only State in the Middle East not to have acceded to the NPT, to accede to the Treaty and subject all its installations to the IAEA comprehensive safeguards regime. However, Israel with overt and veiled support from major nuclear States and in flagrant defiance of other nuclear States, whether members of IAEA or the Conference on Disarmament, continues to defy the wishes of the international community and to repudiate its values and laws. Indeed, it has deliberately buried nuclear waste in the occupied Syrian Golan in flagrant violation of international law.

The General Assembly has consistently adopted the resolution entitled “Dangers of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East”, which receives overwhelming support year after year. The most recent such resolution was resolution 60/92, in which the General Assembly notes that Israel remains the only State in the Middle East not to have become a party to the NPT and reiterates the importance of Israel's acceding to the NPT and subjecting all its nuclear installations to the IAEA comprehensive safeguards regime.

Syria, in the framework of the League of Arab States, the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the United Nations, and through its adoption of many draft resolutions and initiatives, has worked earnestly to rid the Middle East of all weapons of mass destruction, primarily nuclear weapons. In this respect, we should like to mention the many Arab initiatives that have been launched, the most recent being the initiative which Syria submitted to the Security Council on behalf of the Arab Group in December 2003. The initiative, which took the form of a draft resolution on making the Middle East a zone free of weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, remains before the Security Council in blue print and has not been adopted because major Powers on the Security Council blocked it for political reasons that have nothing to do with protecting international peace and security.

As stated in the preamble to resolution 60/76 of 8 December 2005, on the follow-up to the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons: “the continuing existence of nuclear weapons poses a threat to all humanity and ... their use would have catastrophic consequences for all life on Earth, and ... the only defence against a nuclear catastrophe is the total elimination of nuclear weapons and the certainty that they will never be produced again.”

Here, my delegation would like to express its grave concern over the dissemination of military doctrines that focus on the possible use of nuclear weapons and the new threats made by some nuclear States about using these weapons against non-nuclear States. Instead of complying with, and implementing, the ICJ advisory opinion by engaging in negotiations leading to complete nuclear disarmament under strict and effective international control, some States concentrate solely on non-proliferation, in a highly selective way, while they go on building up their arsenals, both quantitatively and qualitatively, and developing tactical nuclear weapons. They continue to issue threats about using these weapons, in breach of prior commitments and their obligations under international law and international humanitarian law. Worse still, the right to use nuclear power for peaceful purposes under IAEA supervision has itself become hostage to a policy of double standards.

(Mr. Ja'afari, Syrian Arab Republic)

Syria has already expressed its readiness to join a consensus on a comprehensive and integrated programme of work based on the A5-initiative. We continue to believe that this initiative is the most appropriate basis for our future work. However, we also believe that nuclear disarmament remains our first priority and that the establishment of a subsidiary body at the Conference on Disarmament to discuss the subject of nuclear disarmament is the least that we should all expect. The establishment of a nuclear body with a negotiating mandate would be a real and effective step on the road to nuclear disarmament.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic, Ambassador Ja'afari, for his statement and the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to Ambassador Trezza of Italy.

Mr. TREZZA (Italy): Mr. President, this is the first time I am taking the floor under your presidency. Let me congratulate you and express my best wishes for a successful presidency. You can count on our support and on our cooperation. Let me also pay tribute to your predecessor, Ambassador Rapacki of Poland, who gave a great impulse to the work of this Conference in the last months.

I wish to associate myself with your condolences for the tragedies which took place in Moscow and Dhaka, as well the tragic landslide which took place in the Philippines recently. Let me also welcome the delegation of young Egyptian diplomats who are present in the gallery, and I hope that they will benefit from attending our deliberations here today.

A few weeks ago we celebrated the 1,000th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. Some wondered whether there was much to celebrate. As I said on that occasion, we should not underestimate the results achieved in the past by this Conference, especially in the field of weapons of mass destruction. The total prohibition of whole categories of WMDs, namely chemical and biological weapons, and the elimination of their stockpiles, is, in our opinion, one of the most remarkable results ever achieved in the field of international disarmament. The results are not as satisfactory when it comes to nuclear disarmament, to which this session is dedicated.

A halt to the horizontal spread of nuclear weapons and the limit of five to the number of countries entitled to keep nuclear arsenals was achieved in Geneva through the NPT. The prohibition of nuclear testing was also successfully negotiated by this Conference. In addition, a number of unilateral, bilateral and multilateral commitments have led to significant reductions during and after the end of the cold war, in particular in Europe. A significant set of confidence-building measures makes nuclear surprise attacks less likely. Nuclear-weapon-free zones and security guarantees are an important complement to the existing nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. A category of nuclear missiles has been completely prohibited, several countries have renounced their nuclear arsenals or their nuclear programmes and have joined the NPT as non-nuclear-weapon States. They have established the precious principle that the possession of nuclear weapons is reversible. The importance of these engagements, which we sometimes tend to take for granted, should always be kept in mind.

(Mr. Trezza, Italy)

On the other hand, nuclear terrorism remains a possible threat. One country has announced its withdrawal from the NPT and declared possession of nuclear weapons. Clandestine nuclear activities have come to the surface. The Director General of IAEA has been requested to make reports to the Security Council on one country's nuclear activities. The NPT Review Conference and the United Nations General Assembly summit of last year ended without giving any substantial impulse or guidance on disarmament and non-proliferation issues.

The mixed record achieved so far and the persistent difficulties make us believe that, unfortunately, a total prohibition of nuclear weapons through a single multilateral engagement, is not around the corner. A step-by-step approach is more realistic. The graduality of the disarmament process was originally contemplated by article VI of the NPT, which mentions negotiations on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament. This approach was confirmed by the decisions adopted at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference and by the final document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference, which - due to the inconclusive NPT meeting of 2005 - still remains the latest consensual instrument leading to nuclear disarmament (at least for States parties to the NPT). By agreeing on 13 practical steps for the systematic and progressive efforts to implement article VI of the NPT and the 1995 Decision on "Principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament", the international community has acknowledged that the best way to achieve nuclear disarmament is through a phased approach. The multifaceted nature of the nuclear weapons issue justifies this approach, which is widely shared. I would dare to say that it is consensual. This should not make us forget the ultimate goal of the total elimination of nuclear arsenals.

We must recognize that in the past six years international reality has changed. New threats have emerged. International terrorism has shown its tragic potentialities. Clandestine nuclear activities and traffic have brought to the surface the risks that possession of the complete nuclear fuel cycle could entail. The validity of some multilateral verification mechanisms has been called into question. New cooperative measures have been devised - in particular through the G8 Global Partnership - to eliminate WMDs, including nuclear weapons.

Some of these developments have had traumatic effects and have not yet been metabolized by the international community. This can be one of the explanations for the lack of substantial results from the NPT Review Conference and from the General Assembly summit of last year. After those inconclusive results, the ball of nuclear disarmament is, more than ever, in the court of the Conference on Disarmament.

This is why Italy welcomes these sessions focused on nuclear disarmament issues and shares the aspirations of those who advocate more efforts to eliminate nuclear weapons. We will continue, with our European Union partners, to encourage progress in this field, bearing in mind the strategies and common positions on WMD and nuclear issues which have already been presented to the CD by the presidencies of the European Union.

(Mr. Trezza, Italy)

In order to reach an understanding on a programme of work in the CD, we support the establishment of subsidiary bodies, one of which should have the mandate to deal with nuclear disarmament.

Let me conclude by saying that agenda item 1 of the CD also refers to the issue of “Cessation of the nuclear arms race”. Cessation of the nuclear arms race was one of the results achieved at the end of the cold war. Not only has the nuclear arms race ceased but significant, although insufficient, reductions have taken place. We must avoid a new nuclear spiral, and we cannot return to the times of the cold war. The most promising and realistic way to do so is to “cut off” the production of fissile material for purposes of nuclear explosions. We have a clear indication in the 2000 NPT document to conclude a negotiation on an FMCT. We shall be dealing with that issue in the coming sessions. I confirm that such a negotiation, which is pertinent to the issues on which we are presently focusing our discussion, is and remains our priority in the Conference on Disarmament.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador Trezza of Italy for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to Ambassador Shoukry of Egypt.

Mr. SHOUKRY (Egypt) (translated from Arabic): Mr. President, I wish to sincerely congratulate you on your presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and to reaffirm the willingness of the delegation of Egypt to support all your earnest efforts to revitalize the work of this Conference. We are keen to make a constructive and positive contribution to end the crisis that this Conference is facing and to serve the interests of all the parties in accordance with the agreed terms of reference and the mandate of the Conference. In this context, Egypt welcomes the adoption of the agenda, on 24 January, and reiterates its readiness to proceed on the basis of the proposed timetable for the proceedings and in accordance with the agreed agenda and the Conference’s rules of procedure.

The continuing stalemate at the Conference on Disarmament is a source of great concern to Egypt, especially at a time when international and regional security challenges are growing in scale and seriousness. Nevertheless, and in spite of the substantial changes in the security climate, many countries, including Egypt, continue to work to preserve the multilateral framework for disarmament. This is reflected in our continuing attachment to the Conference on Disarmament as the only multilateral forum for negotiations on disarmament. Here, we should like to express our support for the statement of the Group of 21 which will be delivered at the Conference today, the statement of the Group that was delivered on 15 March 2005, and the statement of the Arab Group, delivered on 23 June last year.

The real problem of the Conference on Disarmament is the lack of political will in some States to continue efforts to achieve concrete results in the field of disarmament and in accordance with agreed priorities. Such positions cannot be reconciled with calls to end the stalemate at the Conference by dealing with disarmament issues selectively. I believe that it is clear for all that no real progress at the Conference can be achieved unless equal consideration is

(Mr. Shoukry, Egypt)

given to the interests and priorities of all parties; this is the basis for any multilateral endeavour. We must therefore retain the Conference's annual agenda as it is, because it is the backbone of our work in the Conference. There must also be an end to attempts to circumvent or bypass the agenda, since they upset the finely balanced agreement on the agenda items which was achieved by consensus, and because the agenda is the basis of our work here and a reference that should not be touched. Moreover, we take disarmament issues seriously, both by our words and our deeds. Our priorities and cooperation on these issues must be taken seriously if we are to achieve international and regional peace and security in cooperation with all the parties in the Conference.

Nuclear disarmament remains a priority for Egypt, both regionally and internationally, because we are convinced that so long as there are nuclear weapons we will never achieve real peace and stability. In this regard, we should like to express our disappointment at the Conference's failure to heed the calls addressed to it by the Sixth NPT Review Conference, urging it to establish a subsidiary body to deal with nuclear disarmament and begin negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty. We furthermore reiterate our commitment to achieving the objectives set forth in the Final Document of the Conference, particularly the 13 steps on nuclear disarmament, which continue to stand as commitments.

Nuclear disarmament must remain at the top of the Conference's priorities, in accordance with the priority given to it in the Final Document of the First Special Session on disarmament. States members of the Conference must shoulder their international responsibilities by continuing efforts to achieve general and complete nuclear disarmament. This can be achieved by negotiating the FMCT. We look forward to seeing the Conference shouldering its responsibilities for concluding a comprehensive convention that is of real value from the nuclear disarmament perspective, and not just a partial measure. The treaty must incorporate all the elements of other successful disarmament treaties in order to ensure that it is effective and implemented to the letter.

One of the main challenges which our modern world faces is developing an international system that can bring peace and security to everyone in the international community. There is no doubt that this noble aim becomes even more difficult to achieve in a fast-moving world faced with rapid global changes. It is also made difficult by the tendency, especially in the field of disarmament, to deal selectively with vital issues that are the very underpinnings of disarmament. We believe that growing trends in this direction threaten past achievements and the future prospects for multilateralism. We look forward to an end to these destructive tendencies, that are based on self-interest, so that we can contain their adverse impact on the Conference's work and restore faith in joint efforts to promote the shared principles that we cherish and that should consolidate international peace and security.

At the same time, Egypt is fully convinced of the importance of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty as a vital element in disarmament and non-proliferation. It has proved its effectiveness in combating and curbing nuclear proliferation for over a quarter of a century. The fact that the overwhelming majority of States have acceded to the NPT is a sign of their belief in its importance in ridding the world of the spectre of nuclear war.

(Mr. Shoukry, Egypt)

The regional dimension of disarmament, especially nuclear disarmament, is of the utmost importance to us, given the threats posed by the ongoing insecurity in the region. We believe that a regional approach to disarmament will ultimately lead to better security at the international level. The Arab States rejected the nuclear option by acceding to the NPT, and agreed to the indefinite extension of the Treaty in 1995, because they were convinced that peace and security could be guaranteed by implementing the resolution on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. In that context, the Final Document of the Sixth Review Conference was very clear; it reaffirmed “the importance of Israel’s accession to the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the placement of all its nuclear facilities under comprehensive IAEA safeguards, in realizing the goal of universal adherence to the Treaty in the Middle East”.

Egypt believes that all practical steps must be taken to achieve the universality of the NPT. It calls on all the members of the international community, especially States with a special responsibility for maintaining international peace and security, and the CD, to bear their responsibilities in accordance with items 1 and 2 of the agenda. The spurious excuses proffered by some, and attempts to impose conditions in order to subvert this objective, are not compatible with regional realities. They are merely further proof of double standards at work and will have dire consequences for the future of the non-proliferation system as a whole and the credibility of our future options. The failure by certain countries to abide by their commitments will only jeopardize international and regional security, destabilize the non-proliferation regime and deny the international community the opportunity to work together to combat the dangers that we all face.

In conclusion, I should like to welcome the confidence-building approach and the priority given to it this year by the Conference. However, it must be based on reciprocity and equality for all and not on the interests of one party at the expense of another. It is also important to develop constructive dialogue between regional groups and between delegations via regional groups in order to create a climate of trust, which we sorely need, given the obstacles that have recently hampered our multilateral work.

Finally, I should like to thank you and my colleagues and to welcome the group of visiting junior diplomats to the Conference. I am confident that this visit at the beginning of their career will have a very large impact on their future.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador Shoukry of Egypt for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to Ambassador Loshchinin of the Russian Federation.

Mr. LOSHCHININ (Russian Federation) (translated from Russian): First of all, Mr. President, I would like to convey my appreciation to you and all the members of the Conference for the condolences you expressed to us on the tragic events and the incident that took place in Moscow.

(Mr. Loshchinin, Russian Federation)

We welcome you to this important post, and wish you every success, bearing in mind that your success will be success for all of us, and you can count on the support and cooperation of the Russian delegation.

We have repeatedly declared Russia's willingness not to object to the five Ambassadors' proposal on the programme of work of the Conference, if it supplies a basis for consensus. In this context, we do not object either to the proposed mandate for work on the issue of nuclear disarmament. We understand the importance of this issue for the international community, and we confirm our commitment to the obligations we have assumed, including those under article VI of the NPT.

First, the most important issue. Russia is fulfilling its obligations regarding step-by-step reductions in nuclear arsenals first and foremost through agreements with the United States, as well as on a unilateral basis. In recent years, this process has gained new momentum. We would like to mention the contribution to this process made by Belarus, Kazakhstan and the Ukraine, which have given up nuclear weapons and joined the Non-Proliferation Treaty as non-nuclear States.

At the recent NPT review conference, Russia submitted a large amount of specific information on the reduction of our nuclear weapons. This may be tiresome for my listeners, but I cannot refrain from citing a number of important figures, which confirm that in the area of nuclear disarmament very significant processes are under way, to which we cannot close our eyes. At present, compared with 1991, there has been a more than fivefold reduction in the total number of nuclear weapons in stockpiles in Russia. Russia's non-strategic nuclear arsenal has been reduced fourfold as compared to the levels in the Soviet Union in 1991. Russian non-strategic nuclear weapons today are deployed exclusively within our national territory and are concentrated in the central storage bases of the Russian Ministry of Defence.

The most important contribution to nuclear disarmament remains the indefinite treaty on the elimination of medium-range and shorter-range missiles. Under this treaty, we have completely destroyed land-based missiles in two classes, with ranges of 500-1,000 km and 1,000-5,500 km - a total number of 1,846 missiles and 825 launch installations. Let me repeat: these missiles no longer exist and have been eliminated as a class. Implementation of the provisions of the Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty continues, and is ahead of schedule. Under the treaty, by 5 December 2001 the level of strategic offensive weapons was due to stand at no more than 1,600 vectors and 6,000 nuclear warheads. In fact, by that date the actual levels were 1,136 and 5,518 respectively.

We are pursuing our policy for the further elimination of strategic offensive weapons. As is well known, the Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty imposes an obligation on Russia and the United States to reduce and limit their strategic nuclear warheads to a total of not more than 1,700-2,200 units for each side by 31 December 2012. This is a very significant

(Mr. Loshchinin, Russian Federation)

reduction. The Moscow Treaty, together with the Russian-American declaration of 24 May 2002 on new strategic relations, is a major step forward towards nuclear disarmament, of great significance for the shaping of an international system of security in the twenty-first century. The SORT Treaty on strategic offensive reductions ensures the pre-eminence of the process of nuclear disarmament and arms control and is a major contribution to the realization of article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons by Russia. As a result of Russia's implementation of its policy of steadily reducing its nuclear weapons, by the middle of 2005 we had destroyed a total of 1,328 launch facilities for ICBMs and submarine-launched ballistic missiles, 2,670 missiles, 45 strategic nuclear submarines and 66 heavy bombers. By 1 January 2006, the Russian side had 927 units of deployed vectors for strategic offensive weapons and 4,399 warhead units. These figures will be steadily reduced.

I would like to point out that Russia believes it important to ensure that the process of reducing nuclear weapons is irreversible. An important measure to ensure irreversibility is the reuse of weapons-grade fissile material which is no longer required for defence purposes. Russia is taking measures to prepare for implementation of a programme for the reuse of superfluous weapons-grade plutonium declared to be no longer necessary for weapons purposes. A key condition for the initiation of this programme is the availability of adequate multilateral financing. In Russia we are working to halt the last few Russian industrial uranium graphite reactors used for producing weapons-grade plutonium. The material produced by these reactors is not being used for weapons purposes. In Russia, highly enriched uranium released as a result of strategic arms reductions is being converted on a large scale into reactor fuel, that is, low-enriched non-weapons-grade uranium. In September 2005, in accordance with an agreement concluded between the Governments of Russia and the United States of America on 18 February 1993, 250 tons of highly enriched uranium, which is roughly the equivalent of 10,000 nuclear warheads, were converted into low-enriched uranium. By 2013, a total of 500 tons of highly enriched uranium will be eliminated in accordance with this agreement.

Our steps towards nuclear disarmament have been accompanied by corresponding structural changes in the nuclear weapons sector in Russia. We have halved our corresponding production capacity, which is no longer required for defence purposes. We attach particular importance to ensuring the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which Russia has ratified. This treaty can act as a reliable bulwark against the qualitative improvement of nuclear weapons and boost the irreversibility of the ongoing reductions. This treaty is also one of the most important components of the system of international security and a means of combating the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. We commend those States which have signed and ratified the Treaty. At the same time, we cannot but be alarmed that this important instrument has still not entered into force. We hope that the remaining 11 States on the list of 44 will take the necessary steps to accede to the Treaty as soon as possible. It is also important that, in the meantime, the moratorium on nuclear-weapon test explosions and any other nuclear explosions should continue to be observed.

(Mr. Loshchinin, Russian Federation)

All Russia's nuclear weapons, including the non-strategic weapons, are under secure control. Their safety is ensured through a range of organizational, administrative and technical measures. We have done everything to prevent unauthorized access to these weapons, including strict limitations on information about them, and we have ensured the safe protection of places where nuclear warheads are stored. Russia has developed and implemented a range of measures to prevent terrorist actions. We periodically carry out comprehensive inspections of all facilities presenting a nuclear or radiation risk. An example of Russia's responsible attitude to the safe storage and transport of nuclear weapons was provided by the special exercises held in Russia in August 2005 with participation by 49 observers from 17 States. Let me say that this was an unprecedented act of transparency. We hope that other States which possess nuclear weapons will take similar steps.

Through its practical actions, Russia is demonstrating its commitment to its obligations under article VI of the NPT. We are interested in the strict observance and the strengthening of this most important treaty. All the fundamental elements of the treaty - nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful use of atomic technology - are closely interlinked. As was shown by last year's review conference, the NPT remains an irreplaceable component of international security and stability. Although the review conference was unable to come up with specific recommendations for the further strengthening of the NPT, it reaffirmed the main issue: the new challenges and threats to the non-proliferation regime can and must be resolved on the basis of the NPT.

Russia calls upon all States to comply strictly with their obligations under the NPT and the IAEA safeguards agreement, and to devise effective measures to prevent the illegal trade in nuclear equipment, technology and materials. In this context, we support the work of the United Nations Security Council's 1540 Committee, and highlight the importance of the full implementation of resolution 1540 by all States Members of the United Nations. Here we emphasize once again that the tasks of preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and combating terrorism must be carried out in strict compliance with international law, taking into account the legitimate interests of States. Russia has consistently advocated the strengthening of the IAEA safeguards system and the universalization of the Additional Protocol, which would allow the Agency to monitor the use of nuclear materials and equipment for strictly peaceful purposes and would ensure transparency in national nuclear programmes. Russia has developed and is implementing a national programme of scientific and technical support for IAEA safeguards. Together with the United States of America, Russia is implementing a project to solve the problem of the security of high-risk radioactive sources as part of IAEA's plan of action to combat nuclear terrorism. Russia has signed the International Convention to combat acts of nuclear terrorism, which was drawn up in the United Nations at our initiative. We are grateful to all States for their broad-based support for this convention, which will provide a solid basis for international cooperation in combating terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

(Mr. Loshchinin, Russian Federation)

Preventing nuclear weapons and nuclear materials from falling into the hands of terrorists is a new danger, and we must give priority to neutralizing it. It is our hope that the discussion of nuclear disarmament issues under your leadership will allow us to move forward on this issue.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador Loshchinin of the Russian Federation for his statement and for the warm words addressed to me. I now give the floor to the representative of Argentina, Mr. Marcelo Valle Fonrouge.

Mr. VALLE FONROUGE (Argentina) (translated from Spanish): Mr. President, allow me to congratulate you on taking the Chair and to assure you that you have the support of my delegation in carrying forward the work that will make it possible to begin negotiations regarding arms limitation and disarmament instruments.

The following statement contains brief additional comments and restatements of the ideas already expressed in the presentation on this agenda item made by our delegation on 22 June 2005 in this same forum.

On the basis of the negotiations that have taken place in good faith, the nuclear-weapon States should reflect the unequivocal commitment to the objectives of nuclear disarmament. Though we consider it desirable that advances in the field of nuclear disarmament should occur within the context of the relevant disarmament forums, we welcome any progress in reducing arsenals, including those that are achieved at the bilateral level. We hope that greater efforts will be made, that the international community will be informed of the new actions, and that the measures adopted to this end will take account of the principles of irreversibility, transparency and verification in order to give effect to the obligation entered into under article VI of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and the additional responsibility incumbent upon them as they are also permanent members of the United Nations Security Council.

There exists a series of practical steps for the systematic and progressive efforts to fully eliminate nuclear weapons. These include calls to carry out the signatures and ratifications necessary for the speedy entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the immediate initiation of negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material. We urge States to promptly take the necessary steps to ensure the universalization of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and reiterate the need to maintain a moratorium on nuclear-weapon tests.

The establishment of a subsidiary body responsible for dealing with nuclear disarmament constitutes a step forward in the tasks involved in compliance with article VI of the NPT. An undertaking not to be the first to use nuclear weapons is a first step and a sine qua non for moving along this path, with a view to achieving general and complete disarmament. Any regime of disarmament has been preceded by a ban on use, for example, the ban on chemical

(Mr. Valle Fonrouge, Argentina)

weapons. Argentina rejects the arguments that make progress in the field of nuclear disarmament conditional on progress in the conventional field. Thus, as our delegation has maintained over the years in all competent forums, we deplore the security doctrines which allow for the use of nuclear weapons. Such policies can undermine the effectiveness of horizontal non-proliferation.

Argentina considers that nuclear-weapon-free zones contribute significantly to international peace and security, by placing some areas off-limits to the use or threat of use of these weapons. The meeting on nuclear-weapon-free zones held in Mexico last year, in 2005, helped to draw the attention of the international community to the work that has been undertaken by the different nuclear-weapon-free zones. We call for those zones to be fully supported both by the States of the regions concerned and by the nuclear Powers by means of protocols, bearing in mind that the Secretary-General of OPANAL has sent notes to that effect to the nuclear Powers.

As far as Argentina is concerned, the use of nuclear weapons in self-defence in response to an attack using conventional weapons cannot be justified under international law, because it is not proportionate to the objective of the defensive action as acknowledged by the United Nations Charter in Article 51, as has repeatedly been stated by the International Court of Justice, which has emphasized the requirement of proportionality as an essential element of self-defence. We urge the nuclear-weapon States to review the interpretative declarations they made on signing the additional protocols to the Treaty of Tlatelolco with a view to their complete withdrawal.

I would like to say that Argentina supports the establishment of a subsidiary body in the CD on negative assurances, so that States which renounce nuclear weapons obtain a commitment from the nuclear-weapon States that such weapons will never be used against them. The options could be by means of an agreement negotiated in the context of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, or through a protocol to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons itself.

And in this regard, we repeat that an agreement on guarantees of this nature should never detract from the guarantees already agreed upon by the nuclear-weapon States in the context of the nuclear-weapon-free zones and in the context of the Security Council resolutions.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Argentina, Mr. Valle Fonrouge, for his statement and also the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to Ambassador Baba H. Al-Shibib of Iraq, who will speak on behalf of the Group of 21.

Mr. AL-SHIBIB (Iraq): Mr. President, since my delegation is taking the floor for the first time under the presidency of the Republic of Korea, allow me to congratulate you upon the arduous task that you are assuming with full dedication and adequacy. Please rest assured of my delegation's full support and cooperation.

(Mr. Al-Shibib, Iraq)

I also would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to Ambassador Rapacki of Poland, the previous President of the Conference on Disarmament, for all the tireless efforts which he has exerted into revitalizing the Conference during his presidency.

Given the great importance the Group of 21 attaches to nuclear disarmament, it is an honour and a privilege for me, as well as for my delegation, to deliver a statement on this issue.

The G-21 welcomes the initiative by the six presidencies of the 2006 session of the CD to have structured debates on the items of the agenda.

Today's plenary meeting, devoted to the issue of nuclear disarmament, is of particular importance to our Group. We hope that we can make use of this opportunity to address this issue in a substantive manner and redress the recent missed opportunities to tackle the nuclear disarmament challenges. In this regard, the G-21 regrets the lack of agreement on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation at the 2005 World Summit as well as other disarmament forums. The G-21 considers that the mere existence of nuclear weapons and their possible use or the threat of their use represents a continuous threat to humanity. As long as nuclear weapons exist, the possibility of their proliferation will remain. We are convinced that both nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation require urgent progress, particularly through multilateral negotiations.

The Group emphasizes that nuclear disarmament remains, as before, the highest priority for the CD. The Group has put forward proposals, as contained in CD/1570 and CD/1571, for the establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament to start negotiations on a phased programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons within a specified framework of time, including a nuclear weapons convention. Despite the fact that the mandate for nuclear disarmament in the A-5 proposal, as contained in CD/1693/Rev.1, falls short of these expectations, the Group has expressed its willingness to join consensus on the basis of that proposal.

We recall the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice in 1996 which concluded unanimously 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".

We express our serious concern about the lack of expected progress following the unequivocal undertaking made during the 2000 NPT Review Conference by the nuclear-weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals leading to nuclear disarmament.

The G-21 States parties to the NPT deeply regret the lack of political will that prevented the 2005 NPT Review Conference from achieving substantive results. In this perspective, the practical steps toward nuclear disarmament agreed by the 2000 NPT Review Conference remain valid and require accelerated implementation.

(Mr. Al-Shibib, Iraq)

The G-21 calls upon all States to fully comply with their commitments regarding nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation and to refrain from any act that may lead to a new nuclear arms race, such as the development of new nuclear weapons or new types of nuclear weapons or their modernization.

The G-21 stresses that the fundamental principles of transparency, verification and irreversibility be applied to all nuclear disarmament measures.

The Group also stresses the need for a diminishing role for nuclear weapons in security policies to minimize the risk that these weapons will ever be used and to facilitate the process of their total elimination. The G-21 expresses deep concern over nuclear policies which expand the possibilities of the use of nuclear weapons and lower the threshold of resorting to the use of such weapons.

Stressing the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the G-21 calls for the upholding and maintenance of the moratorium on nuclear-weapon test explosions or any other nuclear explosions.

The G-21 is concerned over the continuing impasse in the CD over its programme of work and calls once again for the necessary political will to enable the CD to resume substantive work, with the immediate establishment of an ad hoc committee on the pressing issue of nuclear disarmament.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador Al-Shibib of Iraq, who spoke on behalf of the Group of 21, for his statement and also the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to Ambassador da Rocha Paranhos of Brazil.

Mr. da ROCHA PARANHOS (Brazil): Mr. President, allow me to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency and assure you of the full cooperation of the Brazilian delegation in your work. I also wish to again pay tribute to your predecessor, Ambassador Rapacki, for his efforts to organize substantive work throughout this year with the six Presidents' initiative. My delegation would like to associate itself with the statement just made by the G-21. I also wish to commend you on your initiative of inviting us to engage in a structured discussion on nuclear disarmament, which is of the utmost priority for Brazil in this forum. From the beginning, let me express the hope that this exercise can lead us to a political commitment by all members to try to narrow down differences on a programme of work for the CD. As in previous statements, Brazil fully supports the A-5 proposal.

Without prejudice to the possibility of addressing additional elements in the forthcoming meetings, I would like to stress that my delegation's remarks in today's session are limited to what you have yourself proposed, that is, the sub-item entitled "assessment of the implementation of nuclear disarmament".

In this respect, it is a deeply frustrating fact that we are constrained to acknowledge that little progress in this field, if any, has been achieved in the last few years.

(Mr. da Rocha Paranhos, Brazil)

The end of the cold war gave rise to hopeful expectations that nuclear disarmament could be pursued as a realistic objective and that nuclear-weapon States would adopt new steps to fulfil their obligations in the light of article VI of the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Nonetheless, the lack of political will, in a small number of capitals, even to abide by what was decided by this Conference in the 1990s and to further negotiate treaty law on nuclear disarmament remains the basic impediment to any significant political movement in this body.

At this stage, it would be superfluous to exhaust the argument about the lack of political will. It suffices to stress that the last important document successfully negotiated within this body, the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty, which dates back to the mid-1990s, has not yet entered into force.

The establishment of an ad hoc committee unanimously agreed by this body in 1995 (the Shannon mandate) on a “ban on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices” has been permanently delayed.

The absence of substantive work in the CD for so many years, as well as the lack of results at the 2005 NPT Review Conference and also at last year’s United Nations summit, are clear examples of this perplexing, disturbing and unjustifiable lack of political determination to move forward in the area of nuclear disarmament.

The situation is further aggravated by the fact that non-nuclear-weapon States are witnessing with a sense of deep frustration the perception of a clear shift of focus by some of the nuclear-weapon States from previous commitments regarding nuclear disarmament to an almost exclusive emphasis on counter-proliferation. Such an equivocal perspective seems to consider nuclear disarmament as irrelevant and outdated.

We could not disagree more with this notion, because, without any rational basis, it justifies the maintenance of huge nuclear arsenals, which can only ensure less international stability.

Unfortunately, rather than reducing the prominence of nuclear weapons in their security doctrines, some nuclear-weapon States have undertaken new weapons research programmes and introduced new targeting doctrines.

Moreover, indications of interest in the development of new kinds of far more sophisticated nuclear weapons add an even more worrisome element to this scenario.

The lack of progress in promoting the creation of new nuclear-weapon-free zones is also deeply regrettable. As a founding member of the very first international nuclear-weapon-free zone in an inhabited part of the world, the Treaty of Tlatelolco, Brazil, attaches great importance to this issue.

(Mr. da Rocha Paranhos, Brazil)

Brazil favoured at the last NPT Review Conference due consideration of several issues that would facilitate the ultimate goal of a world free of nuclear weapons, but it was not possible to appropriately discuss substantive issues, much less to agree on a substantive final document.

The implementation of the “unequivocal commitment” to nuclear disarmament and to provide full and transparent reporting of effective steps taken in the field of nuclear disarmament remain elusive goals.

In assessing the implementation of nuclear disarmament - and this is the issue we should be discussing here - non-nuclear States - and we are the huge majority in this chamber - cannot pretend to take centre stage and report on actions in areas in which they cannot possibly bring any added value. We cannot disarm or report on disarmament of those that are already disarmed.

Let us hope, nonetheless, that the discussions on this issue can help us to have new indications of progress in key areas, such as: (i) reporting on the implementation of commitments adhered to in the field of nuclear disarmament (I would like to add here that in our view reporting is not a concession, but an obligation); (ii) additional measures in the field of de-alerting and decommissioning; (iii) steps taken with a view to promoting the creation of new nuclear-weapon-free zones; and (iv) information on the status of implementation of commitments adhered to in the field of strategic and non-strategic weapons. These are just some indications of what work in terms of assessment could be done.

To conclude, my delegation is of the opinion that transparency in information-sharing and political will have to be used as the key political elements to help us to move forward and should guide our discussions in the coming weeks.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador da Rocha Paranhos of Brazil for his statement and for the kindly addressed words to the Chair. I now give the floor to Ambassador François Rivasseau of France.

Mr. RIVASSEAU (France) (translated from French): Mr. President, I thank you for the opportunity we have been given to provide further details of our assessment of the fulfilment of commitments entered into in the nuclear field. At the beginning of our annual session, we were invited to identify subjects that could be taken up under a timetable for structured, in-depth debates to be held throughout the year 2006. In the absence of agreement on a work programme, this initiative was a continuation of the efforts made by the Norwegian President last summer, seeking to focus our discussions on identified subjects. As I have already said here, my delegation is prepared to participate actively in in-depth, iterative discussions on the main subjects identified by the members of this Conference.

My delegation has no difficulties in coming here again today to inform the Conference on Disarmament of our achievements in terms of nuclear disarmament which fall within the framework of the obligations to which we subscribed in the NPT, and in particular article VI.

(Mr. Rivasseau, France)

We have already spoken on this subject in 2004, in an informal session, in response to an invitation from the Mexican President. We also did so more formally during the five-yearly NPT review conference. In this connection, I would like to mention a brochure on France's activities that has been distributed on this occasion. A few copies are still available at the back of the room for colleagues who have not yet acquainted themselves with it. For the most part, the information contained in the brochure remains valid.

We repeated this presentation when Norway was in the Chair of the Conference on Disarmament in June 2005, and I returned to the subject recently on 7 February last.

The 2006 session of the Conference on Disarmament will help us move forward along the path of the search for an operational agreement on the programme of work only if we can move beyond rhetoric. We must avoid repeating for perhaps the fourth time, well-known positions on a generic item on our agenda. We need to move beyond that, and that is what I will strive to do. With these preliminaries, let me briefly remind you of the context within which France's action falls.

First of all, our position is in keeping with the "common position" of the European Union at the May 2005 NPT Review Conference, which for the time being binds each of the 25 member countries of the European Union. It is in that framework that I will be making my statement.

Our action also falls within the framework of the practical fulfilment of our obligations. We are guided in particular by the programme of action and the resolution that we agreed on at the time of the indefinite extension of the NPT in 1995. It is worth recalling here the three principal points that are relevant to our discussion today: conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, negotiation of the treaty banning the future production of fissile material and the determination to move forward systematically and step by step in order to reduce nuclear weapons overall and secure general and complete disarmament. For us, the path of promise would be the path which would identify the true challenges of our time in the nuclear field. We have been invited to do so by our colleague the Ambassador of Russia, who, in his statement of 2 February last, broadened his approach to cover non-proliferation matters. The crises of nuclear proliferation today constitute one of the main challenges to international security. Over the past two decades, several non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the NPT have violated their obligations and developed clandestine nuclear programmes. Could we not encourage the Conference on Disarmament to play its role in this area fully? France, for its part, is totally determined to continue the application of all the provisions of the NPT and its three pillars (disarmament, non-proliferation and peaceful uses) and to work to make it universal.

If we focus on the proposals on the table, if we seek dialogue and build trust, as the Ambassador of Egypt called on us to do, to carry out this consolidation which was urged on us at the beginning of our session, I would say that in keeping with the commitments entered into, since that is what we are here to discuss today, one issue has been identified as being most ripe

(Mr. Rivasseau, France)

and most suitable for the early launching of negotiations: the fissile material cut-off treaty. We believe that the cut-off is logically the next tangible and practical step to which the Conference on Disarmament can contribute in the field of nuclear disarmament. This is our commitment, a commitment that has not yet been fulfilled but a commitment that France has worked for more than any other nuclear-weapon State.

When agreement was reached in 1995 for the launch of negotiations on the cut-off, the international community had two objectives in mind. First of all, in terms of nuclear disarmament, to freeze stockpiles and make the existing moratoria legally binding and extend their scope in the framework of the report of the Special Coordinator and the mandate contained therein. But there was a second objective in the area of non-proliferation. The idea was, using an approach applied identically to all, to prevent non-member States of the NPT from acquiring a military nuclear capability. There was also a need, as recent experience has shown, to extend and strengthen checks and verification of non-proliferation among non-nuclear-weapon States. We are obliged to recognize today that the cut-off will only marginally, very marginally, meet these non-proliferation expectations. The drawing up of the additional protocols, which, together with the system of generalized safeguards, now set the standard for verification, on the one hand, and the nuclear tests in South Asia, on the other hand, have created a new landscape. Verification of non-proliferation is now being carried out independently of a cut-off treaty. And as far as the States of South Asia are concerned, their situation now falls within the problem area of nuclear disarmament.

Let me sum up: the cut-off is first and foremost a nuclear disarmament treaty like the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. That is why I am concentrating on this issue, since for us, the fulfilment of our nuclear disarmament obligations involves first and foremost the cut-off. You will also realize why the idea - an idea that may perhaps have been understandable in 1997 - that, in addition to the cut-off, the balance to be respected between disarmament and non-proliferation required the Conference on Disarmament to take measures complementary to the cut-off in the area of nuclear disarmament, is no longer relevant today. It is a holdover from a situation which no longer prevails. The call for an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament parallel to the ad hoc committee on a cut-off no longer makes much sense in our eyes. Indeed, the wording goes beyond even what was contemplated in 2000.

We also know that some States have enduring reservations regarding the launching of cut-off negotiations. I respect those reservations because, as we know, they are based on legitimate national security perceptions. For those States, this proposal to create an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament retains a technical advantage, because it raises the stakes. I respect that approach, but the wish I wanted to voice here is that the discussions on this issue should be more transparent. For the revitalization of the Conference on Disarmament also requires greater frankness, mutual respect and the trust we must restore amongst ourselves. The time when we can discuss openly the reservations that some of us have, for honourable reasons, with respect to launching of the cut-off, is the time when we will be able to try and start lifting those reservations. We hope that this year will offer us an opportunity to do so.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador Rivasseau of France for his statement and suggestions. I now give the floor to the representative of Australia, Mr. Craig MacLachlan.

Mr. MACLACHLAN (Australia): Mr. President, as this is the first time I am taking the floor under your presidency, I wish to assure you of my delegation's full cooperation in your efforts to guide our work, and may I also join others in acknowledging the considerable efforts of your predecessor, Ambassador Rapacki, and also in extending our condolences to the family and friends of victims of the tragedies in the Philippines, Moscow and Bangladesh?

Australia is committed to the goal of nuclear disarmament through balanced and progressive steps. All States have a role to play, but it is the nuclear-weapon States that must take the lead in reducing the size of their arsenals. Importantly, several of these States have taken steps towards nuclear disarmament.

Australia welcomes the concrete measures of the START and Moscow treaties, as well as those unilateral reductions taken by other nuclear-weapon States. But we look to the nuclear-weapon States to make further transparent and irreversible efforts towards the elimination of nuclear weapons, in essence towards fulfilling their end of the NPT bargain between themselves and the non-nuclear-weapon States.

Much is made of this bargain. But we should be clear that it is not the only bargain underpinning the NPT. There is also a bargain between non-nuclear-weapon States to never seek or acquire nuclear weapons. This is central to the NPT and its non-proliferation aims. It is also vital to nuclear disarmament, for there cannot be a world free of nuclear weapons without complete and permanent assurances of non-proliferation.

In recognition of this reality, Australia has long supported efforts by all States to promote an environment conducive to nuclear disarmament. Clearly much more can be done in this area.

A fissile material cut-off treaty would strengthen disarmament - and non-proliferation - by capping the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons.

The entry into force of the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty would contribute to nuclear disarmament through a permanent ban on nuclear weapons testing. Moratoria on testing are welcome, but they are no substitute for the CTBT.

And States can assure others of the peaceful intent of their civilian nuclear programmes through concluding an Additional Protocol with IAEA - recognizing that the combination of a comprehensive safeguards agreement and an Additional Protocol represents the NPT safeguards standard.

Australia was the first country to ratify and implement an Additional Protocol, and we will make the AP a condition of nuclear supply in consultation with our partners. In reaching the goal of nuclear disarmament, it is only natural that those States that possess nuclear weapons

(Mr. MacLachlan, Australia)

take the lead. But there is a role for all States in ensuring that the international environment is conducive to the lasting elimination of nuclear weapons. Our work in this forum must take into account this reality if it is to develop effective responses to the challenges of nuclear disarmament.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Australia, Mr. MacLachlan, for his statement and his assurance of cooperation. I now give the floor to Ambassador Mine of Japan.

Mr. MINE (Japan): Mr. President, since this is the first time I speak under your presidency, allow me, first of all, to congratulate you on the assumption of the presidency at this critical juncture of starting the P6 initiative on structured debate throughout the year. This week's session under your presidency could set the tone for the whole exercise, and let me assure you of my delegation's full support.

Japan has been advocating the necessity of longer presidencies for conducting any substantial work at the CD, especially in the absence of agreement on a programme of work. Therefore, you can imagine how much hope and expectation Japan has for the coordinated efforts of the P6 initiative. We believe that the result of this year's work will naturally lead the CD back to normality. Furthermore, I am honoured to be chosen as one of the Friends of the Presidents. Let me assure you that I am fully committed to undertaking this task in support of this year's Presidents.

We are facing challenges in the field of nuclear disarmament. It was regrettable that the 2005 NPT Review Conference concluded without adopting a consensus document on substantive issues, and that the Outcome Document of the 2005 World Summit found no consensus on nuclear disarmament or non-proliferation. As members of the CD, a body of limited membership, all CD members must unite their efforts to improve this unfortunate situation concerning nuclear disarmament.

It is widely known that Japan places the highest importance on nuclear disarmament. As the only country to have suffered nuclear devastation, Japan recognizes that it has a moral responsibility to the international community to actively campaign for the total elimination of nuclear weapons, and has conducted vigorous diplomatic efforts to realize this aim. Our basic position on the promotion of nuclear disarmament is best represented by the resolutions submitted to United Nations General Assembly every year since 1994. Japan believes that an incremental and realistic approach will best serve the promotion of nuclear disarmament.

Last year, we redrafted our annual resolution in stronger yet more concise terms. This resolution, entitled "Renewed determination towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons", was not only adopted by 166 countries - the highest number of countries since its submission - but also gained support from countries of varying positions. This demonstrates that there already exists common ground in the international community on specific guidance in promoting nuclear disarmament. I would like to highlight a few of them in relation to the CD.

(Mr. Mine, Japan)

First of all, States are encouraged to take further steps leading to nuclear disarmament, to which all States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons are committed under article VI of the Treaty, including further reductions in all types of nuclear weapons. Since the establishment of the NPT, nuclear disarmament has been a prime responsibility of the nuclear-weapon States. Therefore, if the nuclear-weapon States do not fulfil their commitment to advance nuclear disarmament, the credibility of the NPT regime will be seriously undermined.

In the process of working towards the elimination of nuclear weapons, the application of irreversibility, verifiability and increased transparency is crucial. Some progress has been made in the field of nuclear disarmament. Japan highly values the Treaty on Strategic Offensive Reductions (the Moscow Treaty) and encourages both Russia and the United States to take further steps towards its full implementation, and to undertake nuclear arms reductions beyond those provided for by the Treaty. The next NPT Review Conference in 2010 is two years before the Moscow Treaty obligations must be implemented. Accordingly, it provides an excellent and timely opportunity for the States parties to review the progress of nuclear disarmament under the Moscow Treaty, as well as the respective nuclear disarmament measures by the other nuclear-weapon States. Furthermore, the international community would like to see the United States and Russia conclude by that time a new agreement which prescribes nuclear disarmament beyond the Moscow Treaty. I hope the other nuclear-weapon States will make similar or further efforts in the reduction of nuclear arsenals. The nuclear-weapon States must revisit their commitments made at the 1995 and 2000 NPT Review Conferences.

It is generally said that since the high of more than 60,000 nuclear warheads in the late 1980s, that number of warheads has dropped significantly to the current level of about 20,000. (Certainly that is an estimate. I stand to be corrected.) However, the further reduction of nuclear arsenals, leading towards their total elimination is a clear necessity. In this regard, greater transparency in the process of nuclear disarmament is essential. I believe the CD offers a good opportunity for the nuclear-weapon States to inform CD members on efforts to reduce their nuclear arsenals, including both strategic and non-strategic nuclear weapons.

Likewise, the nuclear-weapon States should further reduce the operational status of nuclear weapons systems in ways that promote international stability and security. In addition, diminishing the role of nuclear weapons in security policies is essential to minimize the risk that these weapons will ever be used and to facilitate the process of their total elimination. In this regard, I appreciate that a few nuclear-weapon States made their presentations on their efforts on nuclear disarmament today and that the French delegation made a presentation on their new nuclear doctrine at the CD plenary on 7 February. I hope the other nuclear-weapon States do the same. Such initiative would help promote transparency concerning the nuclear policies of the nuclear-weapon States, and would be effective use of the CD.

Second, the CD must start the negotiation of an FMCT as soon as possible. Since I will be touching upon the FMCT at a later date, I will not go into detail on this issue. But I would like to stress that the FMCT is the most realistic multilateral legal disarmament measure envisaged at this moment.

(Mr. Mine, Japan)

Third, in order to advance nuclear disarmament, gaining the understanding and support of future generations, as well as civil society as a whole, is vital. Japan encourages all States to undertake concrete activities to implement, as appropriate, the recommendations in the report of the United Nations Secretary-General on disarmament and non-proliferation education and to voluntarily share information on efforts they have been undertaking to this end.

Over the past 20 years, Japan has invited under the United Nations fellowship programme more than 580 various government officials to visit Hiroshima and Nagasaki. I hope this programme has helped to provide insight into the reality of nuclear weapons. Moreover, Japan has sponsored a United Nations Conference on Disarmament Issues in a different local city each year since 1989, providing a valuable opportunity for disarmament experts from around the world to exchange views and enhance awareness of the importance of disarmament at the regional level. Furthermore, Japan has invited disarmament and non-proliferation experts to give lectures to high school students, civic leaders and atomic bomb survivors (*hibakusha*). Sharing information at the CD on national and international efforts on nuclear disarmament education would be appreciated.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to call on States not parties to the NPT to accede to it as non-nuclear-weapon States, without delay or conditions. Moreover, pending their accession, I urge them to take practical steps in support of the NPT and refrain from activities that undermine its objectives. If the international community ceases to press the non-NPT member States to accede, it could lead to their recognition as de facto nuclear-weapon States, further weakening the NPT regime. I fully recognize that this is a plenary of the CD and not part of the NPT process. Nevertheless, the CD created the NPT, and the NPT is the cornerstone of the legal framework for promoting nuclear disarmament.

Likewise, all States that have not yet done so should sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty at the earliest opportunity with a view to its early entry into force, and it is important to maintain existing moratoria on nuclear-weapon test explosions pending the entry into force of the Treaty. Japan has repeatedly urged relevant countries to sign and ratify the CTBT, and it is important for the international community to consolidate their diplomatic efforts.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador Mine of Japan for his statement and warm words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to Ambassador Nyunt Maung Shein of Myanmar.

Mr. SHEIN (Myanmar): Mr. President, as I am taking the floor for the first time, I should like to extend my warmest congratulations to you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. I am fully confident that, under your wise and able leadership, we will achieve fruitful results in our work. I wish to assure you of the fullest support of my delegation in the discharge of your responsibilities.

(Mr. Shein, Myanmar)

Our tribute also goes to the P6 for their combined efforts and initiatives to lead us to reach agreement on a programme of work of the Conference.

At the outset, I wish to state that my delegation associates itself with the statement of the Group of 21 on nuclear disarmament, delivered by the representative of Iraq today.

It is most timely that we have commenced our focused structured plenary meetings to discuss further the agenda items of the Conference on Disarmament. It is the view of my delegation that nuclear disarmament remains the highest priority on the international arms control and disarmament agenda. We are glad that our deliberations today will be focusing on nuclear disarmament.

Here, I wish to reiterate our long-standing position on nuclear disarmament.

Myanmar consistently attaches paramount importance to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. We firmly believe that the continuing existence of nuclear weapons poses the greatest danger to mankind and to the survival of human civilization. It is our conviction that the best and the only genuinely effective defence against a nuclear catastrophe is the total elimination of these ominous weapons.

We should, therefore, call upon member States, especially the nuclear-weapon States, to reaffirm their commitment to the goal of the total elimination of nuclear weapons. We believe and support the ICJ advisory opinion that there still exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to an end negotiation leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control.

While welcoming the important role of bilateral negotiations on nuclear disarmament between the nuclear-weapon States, the Conference should, at an early date, commence multilateral negotiations on nuclear disarmament in view of the global nature of the problem.

In this context, we call for the establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament in the Conference on Disarmament at an early date and the commencement of multilateral negotiations on a phased programme of nuclear disarmament leading to the total elimination of these weapons.

It is therefore that my delegation fully supports the proposal of the Group of 21, as contained in documents CD/1570 and CD/1571, on the programme of work and a draft decision and mandate for the establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament.

We recognize that nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation are interrelated and mutually reinforcing. We should, therefore, maintain the effective regimes of nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation in a sustainable, balanced and coherent manner. A systematic and progressive process of nuclear disarmament is, indeed, a prerequisite for the strengthening and effective enforcement of nuclear non-proliferation.

(Mr. Shein, Myanmar)

In our view, the nuclear-weapon States should and must honour their “unequivocal undertaking” declared at the 2000 NPT Review Conference to achieve the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals. The will to fulfil this “unequivocal undertaking” has yet to be demonstrated by the full implementation of the “13 practical steps” as stipulated in the Final Document.

Cognizant of the priority and importance of nuclear disarmament to the international community, my delegation has been tabling a traditional draft resolution on nuclear disarmament at the General Assembly of the United Nations since 1995. Our resolution enjoys the broad support of co-sponsors from NAM countries. Moreover, the resolution was adopted by the sixtieth General Assembly by a nearly two-thirds majority, reflecting the strong sentiments of the majority of Member States regarding this issue. Regrettably, however, no substantial progress has been made so far on the implementation of nuclear disarmament.

This year we will again continue to present our resolution and will join hands with all like-minded Member States in our resolve to totally eliminate nuclear weapons.

We are living in a world afflicted by security issues threatening the very existence of all mankind. The threats facing us cannot be solved by one nation alone. It is imperative that we should redouble our concerted efforts to face these challenges and find the ways and means to overcome them.

You may recall that the first session of the United Nations General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD-1), held in 1978, clearly sets forth that the priority in disarmament negotiations shall be nuclear weapons. The United Nations Millennium Declaration also resolved to strive for the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons. In the light of the current international security environment, priority should be accorded to nuclear disarmament.

We are, indeed, frustrated at the failure of the 2005 NPT Review Conference to achieve substantive results in May of last year. We are also disappointed with the lack of reference to nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation in the Outcome Document of the High-level Plenary Meeting of the sixtieth General Assembly. This could clearly be interpreted as a lack of political will on the part of the major Powers but not as a lack of interest by the international community as a whole on this vital issue.

It is our hope that, with the concerted efforts of the P6, the Conference will soon commence its substantive work during the 2006 session. We wish to reaffirm our readiness to participate constructively in all efforts aiming at reaching agreement on a programme of work. We also wish to call upon all member States to show their utmost flexibility and demonstrate their political will towards achieving our common objectives.

Let us, therefore, rededicate ourselves and renew our firm commitment to multilateralism in the field of arms control and disarmament.

(Mr. Shein, Myanmar)

Before concluding, I wish to commend, once again, the P6 for their initiatives and timetable for focused structured plenary meetings while intensifying our concerted efforts to find agreement on a programme of work.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador Shein of Myanmar for his statement and kind words addressed to the Chair and the P6. I now give the floor to the representative of the United States of America, Mr. Thomas Cynkin.

Mr. CYNKIN (United States of America): Mr. President, first allow me to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the CD and to assure you of our full cooperation and continued support. I should also like to extend through you our very sincere condolences to those who suffered in the recent tragedies in Bangladesh, the Philippines and in Russia.

I also want to pass on through you the sad news that our friend Ed Cummings passed away yesterday morning at Bethesda Naval Hospital in Washington from complications of pancreatic cancer. I know that many of you knew Ed. He was a long-time attorney in the Office of the Legal Advisor of the United States Department of State. He served as Legal Advisor at the Geneva Mission for many years, and through the CCW he travelled here numerous times on issues related to the law of war, about which he was one of the world's leading experts. His constantly positive encouraging and proactive approach was an inspiration, and we are poorer without him.

I wanted to turn to the topic of nuclear disarmament. Ambassador Loshchinin spoke eloquently earlier about our joint effort on cooperative threat reduction. Let me start by touching on that first very briefly. I should like to just give you a very factual presentation, noting that since 1992, the United States has expended more than \$9 billion in non-proliferation and threat reduction assistance to States of the former Soviet Union. Our assistance to the former Soviet Union has resulted in more than 6,000 strategic nuclear warheads being removed from deployment. It has resulted in the elimination of 1,000 ballistic missiles, the destruction of 600 air-to-surface nuclear missiles, 126 bombers and 27 ballistic missile submarines. I should also note that G8 leaders, as part of the Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction, pledged in 2002 to raise \$20 billion over the next 10 years for related projects, initially in Russia. The United States commitment is for half the goal, or \$10 billion.

I should like to go ahead now with a few comments about our own programmes for nuclear disarmament. I think the facts are out there, but in the interest of transparency, let me proceed to spell them out.

First of all, the United States has dismantled more than 13,000 nuclear weapons since 1988. When the START Treaty was signed in 1991, the United States and Russia, each had deployed over 10,000 strategic warheads. Both reduced this level to below 6,000 by December 2001. United States and Russian operationally deployed strategic warheads will be

(Mr. Cynkin, United States)

further reduced to between 1,700 and 2,200 by 31 December 2012, as agreed by Presidents Bush and Putin and codified in the 2002 Moscow Treaty. Upon completion of the Moscow Treaty reductions, the United States will retain only about one fifth of the strategic nuclear warheads that we had deployed only in 1991.

The overall United States nuclear stockpile is shrinking at the same time, and I should add that it is an onward and ongoing process and that it is possible that the numbers I am giving have already been overtaken by events, so I apologize. But what we do have is that in May 2004, President Bush approved a plan that will cut the stockpile by almost one half from the 2001 level. By the end of 2012, the United States stockpile will be the smallest it has been in several decades. Please note that these reductions represent nearly a factor of four since the end of the cold war.

In total, the United States non-strategic nuclear weapons in NATO have been reduced by nearly 90 per cent since the fall of the Berlin Wall. The number of United States non-strategic nuclear-weapon systems has been reduced from 13 to 2, one of which is not deployed under normal circumstances. I should note that United States Navy surface ships no longer deploy with nuclear weapons. In 1991, NATO based five different types of United States nuclear weapons on its soil. Only one type of these weapons remains in Europe today. Non-strategic nuclear-weapon storage sites in Europe have been reduced by 80 per cent. In 2003 the United States dismantled the last of 3,000 tactical nuclear warheads, artillery shells, warheads for short-range missile systems and navy depth bombs in fulfilment of the 1991 Presidential nuclear initiatives.

Now I should also note that under our nuclear delivery system reductions since the end of the cold war, the United States has eliminated 1,032 launchers for strategic ballistic missiles, 350 heavy bombers and 28 ballistic-missile submarines. Those reductions continue today. In the last several years, four additional submarines have been taken out of strategic service and had their ballistic missiles removed.

Last fall in the First Committee, when the United States announced that it was deactivating its Peacekeeper ICBMs, only one delegation chose to acknowledge that fact. That was the delegation of Bangladesh, for which we are grateful. No other delegation in this room chose to acknowledge that fact, and while I do not mean to be critical of that, I think it is indicative of the fact that while unfortunately we continue to hear a lot of empty rhetoric about how little progress has been made, it seems to fly in the face of the facts. The fact is that my delegation welcomes full engagement and discussion on nuclear disarmament, precisely because any objective review of the facts should lead to the conclusion that the actions of the United States over the past 20 years have established an enviable record of nuclear disarmament.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of the United States of America, Mr. Cynkin, for his statement and kind words addressed to the Chair. This concludes my list of speakers for this morning's plenary session. Does any delegation wish to take the floor at this stage? Israel, you have the floor.

Mr. LEVANON (Israel): I would first of all like to express my and my delegation's sincere and deepest condolences at the passing away of Ed Cummings. He will be missed. I ask the representative of the United States to please transmit our condolences to his family.

I am going to be brief because I was not supposed to take the floor at this particular stage, but the repetitive inaccurate information presented by the first speaker of this morning's session, the SAR representative, compels me to make some factual clarifications.

The repetition of Israel's opposition regarding the creation of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, as described by the distinguished representative, is in fact inaccurate and does not reflect reality.

For the record, I would like to remind this august Conference that every year Israel joins the international consensus for the creation of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. In all our declarations, and among them my own statement made at the general debate in the First Committee last fall, I clarified in detail what the conditions needed for the creation of such a zone were. So as I already said in my speech, we clarify and give the position of Israel regarding this particular issue.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Ambassador of Israel, Mr. Itzhak Levanon. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of the Syrian Arab Republic, Mr. Bashar Ja'afari.

Mr. JA'AFARI (Syrian Arab Republic) (translated from Arabic): I apologize for asking for the floor one more time but it seems, however, that every time we try to shed light on the real problems affecting our region we are confronted with this repetitious statement by Israel, which says that our information is not accurate. The fact is that I am not the one saying that Israel refuses to establish a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East; it is the international community that says it. A huge arsenal of international resolutions have been adopted in New York, by our Conference in Geneva and at IAEA. The scores of resolutions passed are not Syrian, Arab or Middle Eastern resolutions. Their purpose is not confined to exposing Israel's attitudes in a particular situation, but to protecting the security and stability of our peoples and the States of the region.

In my statement, I said that Israeli nuclear weapons are a threat, not just to the countries of the region, but also to the security of Israel itself. To say that Israel has joined the international consensus on the establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East is not only inaccurate, it is misleading. No conditions can be imposed before a State will agree to prioritize the maintenance of international peace and security. How can a State say: "I am in favour of establishing zones free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, but I have my own conditions"? The most important condition for Israel is that its nuclear weapons must remain in Israeli hands. These weapons are sponsored, protected, financed and supported by many Powers which say that they favour nuclear disarmament. At the same time, other States in the region are not even able to procure the means for using nuclear power for peaceful purposes. These are the conditions.

(Mr. Ja'afari, Syrian Arab Republic)

We also hear them say that the establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East is linked to the peace process - another inaccurate statement designed to mislead international public opinion. At the Beirut Summit in 2002, all Arab States expressed support for a just and comprehensive peace and the Arab initiative won the support of all the international community; the only party to reject it was Israel.

I should just like to recall one incident before I conclude. At the very moment that the Beirut Summit adopted the Arab initiative for peace, before the Presidents and Kings of the Arab States had left Beirut, Israel stormed Jenin, carrying out an infamous massacre in that Palestinian city. I beg the Israeli representative not to compel me to talk about this matter again, as we have a lot to say about the way that Israel misleads international public opinion.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador Ja'afari of the Syrian Arab Republic for his statement. I now give the floor to Ambassador Levanon of Israel.

Mr. LEVANON (Israel) (translated from Arabic): I do not believe that this Conference is the appropriate framework for discussing political issues. I request the representative of Syria not to do so. I did not speak of conditions, I spoke of circumstances.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you, Ambassador Levanon. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor? That does not seem to be the case.

This concludes our business for this morning. The plenary meeting of the Conference will be held this afternoon at 3 p.m. in the Council Chamber, under the same subtitle of "Assessment on implementation of nuclear disarmament".

The meeting rose at 12.35 p.m.