

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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ENGLISH

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

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 6 March 2007, at 10.15 a.m.

President: Mr. Juan Antonio MARCH (Spain)

The PRESIDENT (spoke in Spanish): I call to order the 1056th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

First of all I would like to welcome warmly the representatives of the NGO Working Group on Peace of the NGO Committee on the Status of Women, who, as in previous years, have attended a seminar to mark International Women's Day. In keeping with a long tradition, the participants in this year's seminar have addressed a message to the Conference on Disarmament.

(spoke in English)

For more than 20 years the Geneva disarmament community has been organizing International Women's Day seminars, which have been a platform for considering the perspective of women on disarmament, peace and security, and the role women can play in fostering progress in these areas. These seminars have usually been sponsored by the NGO Working Group on Peace and the NGO Committee for Disarmament, an organization which is composed of several hundred NGOs. Since 1984, participants in these seminars have been addressing their messages to the Conference on Disarmament, which were read out by the Secretary-General of the Conference or his deputy, and since 2005, by the Presidents of the Conference.

Since its establishment, the NGO Committee on Disarmament has been engaged in the examination and discussion of timely disarmament issues, bringing together diplomats, technical experts, United Nations and government officials, scholars, journalists and members of the public. Their publications serve as a valuable source of information on current disarmament issues for a broad audience, and their coverage of disarmament on the Internet has been reaching a wide international audience.

You may recall that in 2004 the Conference adopted a decision on enhancement of the engagement of civil society in the work of the Conference. Paragraph 4 of that decision stipulates that "after the [Conference on Disarmament] adopts a programme of work, it will allocate one informal plenary meeting per annual session to NGOs to address the Conference". Furthermore, paragraph 5 of the decision states inter alia that "[since] only NGOs whose activities are relevant to the work of the Conference will be able to address the Conference on Disarmament ... a formal selection process will be put in place to consider requests from NGOs to address the Conference".

In recent years, many delegations have been expressing their support for allowing a representative of the NGO Committee on Disarmament to read out the message from the International Women's Day seminar directly to the Conference on Disarmament. However, it has not been possible to revise or even supplement the 2004 decision.

In such circumstances, the Presidents of the 2007 session of the Conference have been considering what could be the best solution to this question - needless to say, the solution which could command consensus. We feel that since next year will mark the twenty-fifth anniversary

(The President)

of the initial relationship of these NGOs with the Conference on Disarmament, this forthcoming event might encourage member States to consider new arrangements that would allow such messages to be delivered to the Conference by an NGO representative. We believe that with a spirit of accommodation on the part of all the parties concerned, it will be possible to work out a new formula applicable to this particular case, and we, the P-6, are determined to spare no effort in this regard.

(spoke in Spanish)

So I would like to inform the Conference that the six Presidents for 2007 consider that next year, which will mark the 25th anniversary of the beginning of relations between this NGO and the Conference on Disarmament - although the first statement dates from 1984, and relations go back to 1983 - next year will be the 25th anniversary of these relations. All the Presidents of the Conference for 2007 consider that this is a sufficiently symbolic and sufficiently special date to draw the attention of all delegations and merit very particular attention and very particular consideration. At the same time, the six Presidents wish to express to the entire body of the Conference on Disarmament our hope that in the context of this exceptional, unique and symbolic date, the NGO will be able to deliver its statement directly to the Conference on that special occasion.

Having said that, I shall now read out the message addressed to the Conference on Disarmament by the participants in the International Women's Day seminar. I should point out that this message could have been read out in the plenary today, two days before International Women's Day, or in the plenary on the 13th, that is, five days after. The Presidents considered it would be better to bring it forward and read it out in the plenary today.

(spoke in English)

“In 1975 the United Nations first recognized International Women's Day, which has been celebrated by women since at least 1909. International Women's Day has been traditionally linked to women's engagement in political processes for peace and justice. This year, civil society around the world is marking International Women's Day by protesting war, campaigning for nuclear disarmament and demanding equal participation at all levels of decision-making. As we have done since 1984, we are bringing the voices of women to the CD.

“Non-governmental organizations have an important role to play in international decision-making. The participation of civil society in shaping our world and guarding its most precious ideas and values is vital. While governments remain the ultimate decision makers, it is the NGOs that allow citizens across the globe to partake in the political process and make their voices heard. The role of women's organizations, in particular, has been recognized as a building block to sustainable security - especially in United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 of 2000.

(The President)

“As the 2003 Canadian working paper on NGO participation in the NPT review process noted, ‘Nuclear disarmament NGOs make key contributions to building and nurturing public concern and thus political will, advancing global norms, enhancing transparency, monitoring compliance, framing public understanding, and providing expert analysis’.

“In 2004, NGOs were given a few more options for formal interaction with the CD. As you have seen this morning, we can distribute our documents in front of the conference hall, twice a year. We can submit documents as official documents of the Conference. Last year, the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom submitted a Model Nuclear Inventory to provide baseline data necessary for negotiating a fissile materials treaty. Greenpeace International submitted a model fissile materials treaty. NGOs are at liberty to provide food for thought, ideas that could help to break the CD from its stalemate and that can encourage creative solutions to international security challenges.

“The CD continues to be the world’s sole multilateral disarmament treaty negotiating body. It is the only body wherein all nuclear-weapons States - both those recognized under the NPT and those who remain outside the treaty - can sit down and come to agreements on how to increase our collective security. On 24 January 1946, the United Nations General Assembly passed its first resolution. Five months after the American destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, it is no surprise that this resolution sought to deal with ‘the problems raised by the discovery of atomic energy’. Resolution 1 (I) called for plans ‘for the elimination from national armaments of atomic weapons and of all other major weapons adaptable to mass destruction’. Sixty years later we still have no plan. It is you, the delegates in this room, who are charged with making that plan, and with taking steps to have it implemented.

“During the General Assembly in 2005 the CD appeared to be faced by a threat: either begin working or the work will leave and begin elsewhere. It seems to outsiders that because of that particular initiative, this body has begun to work. We fully recognize the creative and conscientious work of the six Presidents of 2006 and the continued collaboration and good work of this year’s P-6 team that have also moved this body to work. We know that it is not easy; however, we can no longer blame the ‘lack of political will’ for a lack of any forward progress. Right now, you’re preparing yourself for the ripe political moment. Now is the time to prepare the legal and technical groundwork. Another political opportunity - as there was in 1992, when the end of the cold war was pronounced, or in January 1946, when only one State actually had nuclear weapons - will emerge in due course. If the preparatory work has not been done on all the core issues of the CD agenda, then that political moment too will be lost.

“This body was charged with specific tasks, and it has not yet achieved these. The Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty, while negotiated, has still not entered into force. There has been a lot of discussion, and even a draft text of a fissile materials treaty, yet no negotiation. The need for a treaty preventing an arms race in outer space grows more

(The President)

pressing each and every day. While any item can be introduced in the plenary at any time, it is absolutely necessary for the 65 of you to get down to work and do what you've been charged with. Perhaps you should look at what you need to do to be able to sit down and negotiate. What is holding you back? Maybe, if you examined each of these pieces individually, you might find that you agree on a lot more than you thought you did.

"The International Panel on Fissile Materials, a new collaboration of independent nuclear experts from 15 countries, including both nuclear-armed and non-nuclear countries, has suggested a number of items that would further discussions and eventual negotiations in this body on a fissile materials treaty. These include: declarations by all nuclear-weapon States of their total fissile material stockpiles that would provide a basis for further balanced reductions in their nuclear arsenals; measures to limit the proliferation of national uranium centrifuge enrichment and reprocessing plants; and total or near-total elimination of the use of highly enriched uranium as a reactor fuel. This would greatly reduce the danger of HEU falling into the hands of potential nuclear terrorism.

"There are other unilateral steps that can be taken, and reported back to this forum, to move this disarmament agenda forward. United Nations Security Council resolution 1540 calls upon all States to criminalize WMD activities undertaken by non-State actors. National parliaments - supported by their governments - should go even further and adopt national laws prohibiting and penalizing all forms of nuclear-weapons activities, expanding the scope of such legislation to State actors. Nuclear-weapons activities are immoral and illegal, and the perpetrators of these activities must be held accountable. Taking such action, and reporting the results, challenges, and successes back to the CD would build confidence and demonstrate a modicum of 'good faith'.

"There are also a number of questions that should be considered when looking at how to move forward for our collective security.

"Let's for a second look at some of the regional security arrangements currently in place in the world. Just sit back for a moment, and think about how many States are covered under some kind of bilateral, regional or plurilateral nuclear sharing agreement. How many of the States in this very room sit under a nuclear umbrella? How many of you sit in a nuclear-weapons-free zone? As security assurances are one of the core issues under discussion in this body, it is important to bear those umbrellas in mind and to look for a moment at the actual value of this type of sharing. Is being protected by someone else's nuke really going to provide long-term security for your nation? Which is the trade-off? What must a nation relinquish in order to receive such protections? When nuclear weapons have been recognized as militarily obsolete, how are they in any way relevant to, for example, transatlantic relations (as in the NATO agreements)?

"We need to make clear to people and leaders everywhere that all nuclear weapons are created equal. They are all weapons of terror and should be seen, without exception or qualification, as immoral, illegal and illegitimate in all contexts and for all purposes.

(The President)

“This is also a confidence-building forum. It is here that States have the opportunity to share information, to increase their national transparency, especially around nuclear weapons and other related devices. It is in the spirit of increasing transparency that we suggest States build on the 2000 NPT Review Conference agreement around reporting requirements. The CD is a good body to build confidence and increase transparency, and this can be done when States submit reports to the Conference that are substantive and which detail measurable steps taken to implement their disarmament obligations, rather than declaratory statements: the NWS and annex II States (to the CTBT), in particular, to submit formal reports; insofar as participation in this practice grows, so will transparency; the NWS, in particular, to report on national holdings of warheads, both within national borders and without; delivery vehicles and fissile materials; the operational status of nuclear weapons; disarmament initiatives and reductions strategies; strategic doctrine; and security assurances.

“These measures would then serve a number of purposes. They would increase confidence that obligations undertaken under the very first United Nations General Assembly resolution and the NPT are being taken seriously. They would build a sense of security and open exchange which would facilitate negotiations in an open and transparent manner. This should include a requirement that a public disarmament impact assessment be submitted by all States to the International Atomic Energy Agency and the United Nations to accompany any planned investments in nuclear facilities and capabilities that are relevant to the development or maintenance of nuclear weapons or the production of fissile materials.

“If not here, then where? In his recent statement, Dr. Kim Howells of the United Kingdom indicated that it was the flexible framework of the CD that allowed for landmines to be discussed and eventually led to the mine ban treaty. However, it is fitting to remember, during this anniversary week, that the landmine convention was not negotiated in this body. This body could not move forward on it. Sometimes, we must look elsewhere to set the customary norms that allow for such treaties to come into being.

“We are seeing this type of movement again in regards to cluster munitions. The 23 February 2007 declaration signed in Oslo by 46 States is a progressive step forward and we applaud the goal of 2008 to conclude a new agreement banning cluster munitions that cause unacceptable harm to civilians. We hope that this can go even one step further, and ban cluster munitions outright.

“However, this body, the Conference on Disarmament, has been offered an opportunity to provide a great gift to humanity - a nuclear-free world. It is in this room that all of you with nuclear weapons sit. It is in this room that the gift to future generations must be given. In 2005, at the NPT Review Conference, a statement was given by youth representatives. An excerpt of that is here; hopefully it will remind you of the humanity that relies on your work.

(The President)

“We ask you: what do you intend to turn over to us, the next generation? Will you give us a world in which disarmament exists on paper while billions are spent to develop the ultimate in war technology and the means of mass murder? Will you give us nations that, while deploying and developing their own nuclear weapons, are quick to go to war when enemies appear to be obtaining similar weapons? Or will you give us a world united under a common constitution that limits military armaments and eliminates entirely the possibility of nuclear holocaust? Will you be able to explain your choice in good conscience to your children and grandchildren? Can you explain to us how a tiny minority is able to completely block negotiations for a nuclear weapons convention? How can it be that this minority is made up of governments that claim to champion democratic values?

“Remember again and again the preamble to the United Nations Charter, which all Members of the United Nations have signed! The most important of your tasks, obligations and responsibilities is established there: to preserve future generations from the scourge of war. But this is not possible if you bequeath to us a world full of nuclear weapons. We demand, in the name of all the children of our one world, the immediate, unqualified, total abolition of all nuclear weapons for the well-being of humankind and our common future. We are ready to step forward to a more peaceful and secure world for the sake of our common future!

“Are you ready to join us?”

That was the speech submitted by the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom on behalf of the NGO Working Group on Peace (part of the Geneva NGO Committee on the Status of Women).

(spoke in Spanish)

On behalf of the Conference on Disarmament and on my own behalf, I should like to thank the participants in the seminar marking International Women’s Day for their message and for their tireless and determined efforts in advocating disarmament, peace and security for all.

As you will recall, in 2004 the Conference adopted a decision on enhancement of the engagement of civil society in the work of the Conference, paragraph 3 of which states that NGOs shall be entitled at their own expense, twice per annual session, to make written material available to the members of the Conference outside the conference hall. In pursuance of that decision, the NGO Committee on Disarmament has organized today an exhibition of its written material in the hall outside the Council chamber. I take this opportunity to express our sincere thanks to the Geneva-based NGO Committee on Disarmament for this further contribution to our joint efforts in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation, and for their well-known and widely appreciated intellectual support and inspiration in this respect. I also wish, as President of the Conference on Disarmament, to thank the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom for its ongoing effort in the area of disarmament and its assistance to the international community in coming up with new ideas, new objectives and new debates on this important issue.

(The President)

I have the following speakers on my list for today's plenary meeting: Ukraine, Ambassador Bersheda, who will be speaking on FMCT; Cuba, Ambassador Juan Antonio Fernández Palacios, who will speak on nuclear disarmament; Colombia, Ambassador Clemencia Forero, who will speak on the treaty for the cessation of production of fissile material; Switzerland, Ambassador Streuli, who will be making a general statement; Peru, Mr. Beleván, who will be speaking about nuclear disarmament. So I begin with the Ambassador of Ukraine. Pakistan is asking for the floor.

Ms. JANJUA (Pakistan): Mr. President, I did not want to interrupt you, but before going on to the work of the Conference, I should like to make a comment on behalf of the G-21 with regard to the statement you have read out to the CD which has been submitted by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom on behalf of the NGO Working Group on Peace.

I would like to place on record the communication that was sent to you on behalf of the G-21. The communication stated that the G-21 considered that it would be appropriate for the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom to address the Conference on Disarmament directly to mark International Women's Day.

We have heard with interest the comments you have made right now. We understand that this has been the view of the P-6, three of which are members of the Group of 21. We hope that next year will be used, which is the 25th anniversary of the initial relationship between the CD and the NGOs, for examining this relationship and that this issue will be looked at seriously next year. We hope that next year will be used to draw up new arrangements that will allow the effective participation of the NGOs in the work of the CD.

The PRESIDENT: I thank you very much, the delegate of Pakistan, for your intervention, and I see Norway requesting the floor.

Ms. LUNDEMO (Norway): Mr. President, we would just like to be inscribed on the list of speakers.

The PRESIDENT: We will then continue with the list of speakers, and we will start by giving the floor to the Ambassador of Ukraine, Ambassador Bersheda.

Mr. BERSHEDA (Ukraine): Mr. President, please allow me to join previous speakers in extending to you my sincere congratulations upon your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. I am sure that your professionalism and wise leadership will help in identifying new ideas and approaches to strengthening and improving the effectiveness of the CD. I would like to assure you that the Government of Ukraine is ready to provide its full support and cooperation for achieving these common goals.

The Ukrainian delegation has reflected carefully on the absence of proper progress in the work of the Conference on Disarmament in the last years, and we can only deeply regret this situation. We have heard many explanations, including an absence of political will or of balance that would somehow address every delegation's interests. However, we proceed from the

(Mr. Bersheda, Ukraine)

understanding of the necessity to make an essential contribution to improving the international security environment. We believe that negotiating a legally binding ban on the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices cannot be delayed any longer.

The complexity of addressing multiple issues at the same time and at the same rate makes it unlikely that we will see progress for many years. It seems to us that the same issue has continued to appear in the NPT, in the United Nations General Assembly's First Committee and in the Conference on Disarmament. In our view, a concrete contribution to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation could be made by achieving agreement on a fissile material cut-off treaty.

Last year's CD session set the stage for negotiations to finally begin, and this year's organizational plan for the CD might prove to be a successful vehicle for this beginning. Ukraine believes this opportunity should not be lost. Obviously, the discussions on a fissile material cut-off treaty will be complex. Nevertheless, the goal of ending the production of fissile materials is achievable.

We call on all the members of the CD to concentrate on this very important and urgent issue and express our readiness to participate in the development of a future agreement.

This issue that we have been discussing since last month addresses concerns that all of us have. It is something we can agree on. And it is something we can all take pride in. There will still be more to do after agreement on such a treaty. However, our capacity and will to achieve more will be greatly supported by the success of a fissile material cut-off treaty now. My Government asks that we do not waste this moment. It is a building block for many other goals we will seek to achieve. We ask for an earnest commitment within the Conference to negotiate an FMCT now. The negotiation of an FMCT remains a key aspiration and a high priority for my country, particularly since Ukraine's voluntary decision to forswear its nuclear capability.

We welcome the submission by the United States of America of a draft treaty and regard it as a good basis for negotiating this important issue. We also associate ourselves with those delegations who call for a moratorium on the production of fissile materials for use in nuclear weapons, pending the conclusion of a cut-off treaty and its entry into force.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you very much, Ambassador Bersheda, for your statement, and I now give the floor to the delegate of Cuba, Mr. Pino Alvarez, on nuclear disarmament.

Mr. PINO ALVAREZ (Cuba) (spoke in Spanish): Mr. President, as my delegation is taking the floor for the first time during your term, allow me to congratulate you on taking up this responsibility, to wish you success and to assure you of our full cooperation. I wish to extend my congratulations to your predecessor, Ambassador Mtshali of South Africa, for the excellent way in which she conducted our debates. Likewise I wish to compliment the Ambassador of Norway, Wegger Strømme, for the work he has been accomplishing as coordinator of our informal debates on agenda item 1, "Cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament", which is of particular importance in the current global circumstances.

(Mr. Pino Alvarez, Cuba)

For Cuba, nuclear disarmament enjoys the highest priority in the field of disarmament, as was agreed by all the Member States of the United Nations in the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, held in 1978. This has been a position historically defended by the Non-Aligned Movement, and it was recently reiterated in the final document adopted in the context of its 14th summit conference of heads of State or government held in September 2006 in Havana, Cuba. The section of this document on disarmament and international security has already been published and distributed as an official document of the Conference on Disarmament under the symbol CD/1811.

It is contradictory that some States keep exerting pressure in order that the attention of the international community should be increasingly focused on horizontal non-proliferation to the detriment of nuclear disarmament, when the only sure and effective way to avoid the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is through their total elimination. Attempts are being made to replace disarmament with questions of horizontal non-proliferation and to impose the idea that non-proliferation is an aim in itself, when it should in fact be seen as a contribution to efforts to achieve the ultimate objective of nuclear disarmament.

Meanwhile, initiatives with dangerous implications are being put forward outside the traditional disarmament machinery without the vast majority of member States even having had a chance to participate in developing them. Such is the case, for instance, of the so-called Proliferation Security Initiative, about which my delegation has expressed its views on several occasions in the context of the Conference on Disarmament.

Cuba considers that the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons is illegal in any circumstances and on any occasion. The International Court of Justice's advisory opinion of 8 July 1996 regarding the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons is a historic document in the field of nuclear disarmament, and constitutes an important legal precedent that requires appropriate follow-up.

Military doctrines based on the possession of nuclear weapons are unsustainable and unacceptable. The very existence of nuclear weapons and the so-called doctrines of nuclear deterrence create an environment of instability and insecurity worldwide. The only solution to prevent new nuclear catastrophes from occurring is to eliminate nuclear weapons totally and completely and to ban their existence and hence their use for ever.

Despite the years which have passed since the NPT came into force, not only has the ultimate goal of the total elimination of nuclear weapons not been met, but very serious and worrying backsliding is taking place. Some nuclear Powers clearly lack the political will required to achieve the objective of eliminating nuclear weapons and prohibiting them for ever.

In this regard, the lack of progress in fulfilling the unequivocal undertaking given by the nuclear Powers at the 2000 review conference to ensure the total elimination of nuclear weapons is unacceptable. In this regard, we must all work together to ensure that the next NPT review cycle beginning in April this year in Vienna produces positive results in that direction.

(Mr. Pino Alvarez, Cuba)

Cuba considers that the adoption by the Conference on Disarmament of a balanced and comprehensive programme of work including the establishment of an ad hoc committee to begin negotiations on nuclear disarmament, is a fundamental and priority task. The proposals presented by the Group of 21 in this regard contained in documents CD/1570 and CD/1571 remain fully valid and useful.

During its 14th summit conference held in Havana, Cuba, in 2006, the Non-Aligned Movement reiterated its call on the Conference on Disarmament to agree on a balanced and comprehensive programme of work by establishing, inter alia, an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament as soon as possible and as the highest priority. Likewise it emphasized the necessity to start negotiations on a phased programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons with a specified framework of time, including a nuclear weapons convention. In this context, and as long as we make no progress on the above, the conclusion of a universal, unconditional and legally binding instrument on security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States cannot be delayed any longer.

In 2002, despite a dangerous international situation and permanent hostility towards our country on the part of the main nuclear Power, the only one on the American continent, Cuba became a State party to the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean, better known as the Treaty of Tlatelolco, and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Likewise, on 27 May 2004 Cuba ratified its safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency, as well as the corresponding additional protocol. These steps constitute further proof of Cuba's political will as well as our country's firm commitment to the total elimination of nuclear weapons from the face of the earth.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in Spanish): I thank the representative of Cuba, Mr. Pino Alvarez, very much for his statement and for his kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Colombia, Ambassador Clemencia Forero, who will be making a statement on the FMCT.

Ms. FORERO UCROS (Colombia) (spoke in Spanish): Mr. President, as I am taking the floor for the first time during your term, I would like to begin by congratulating you on taking on the leadership of the Conference on Disarmament and assure you of the support of the delegation of Colombia as you guide the proceedings.

In the years during which the members of the Conference on Disarmament have held intensive and thoroughgoing debates on the various agenda items, Colombia has always maintained a proactive and flexible position designed to ensure progress in the establishment of a programme of work. For that reason, as we have said on several occasions, we continue to hope that the devoted and ongoing work of the six Presidents will contribute to a growing convergence of wills and areas of consensus.

My country has always upheld a policy of general and complete disarmament, focusing in all subregional, regional and global forums and bodies on the need to destroy nuclear weapons

(Ms. Ucrós, Colombia)

completely as a means of ensuring the elimination of the threat of nuclear war. Accordingly, even though Colombia is not in any way a nuclear country, and even though we have not developed any weapons of mass destruction of any type, we have taken part actively in accordance with our principles in work aimed at moving forward with nuclear disarmament and preventing proliferation at all costs.

Consequently, we believe that the five Ambassadors' initiative is a useful tool which offers valuable elements that could make it possible to move forward in the work of the Conference. We consider that we must continue to work sparing no effort to achieve specific objectives in disarmament and non-proliferation - pillars that should be addressed with the same importance and on the same footing, taking into account the international context.

For this reason, one of the issues to which Colombia attaches priority importance in its development is that of beginning talks and negotiations on a fissile material treaty, which could make a significant contribution to enhancing international security. We could assert that there is greater political maturity in the Conference on Disarmament to take on this challenge and that we should begin this process promptly.

We need the international community to take practical steps, and a treaty on fissile material is one step forward that we could take to prevent such material from falling into the hands of terrorists.

We consider that a possible treaty that would put an end to the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons should be transparent, should address the question of stocks and should contain effective verification measures without prejudging the outcome, nor should that outcome be tied to that of other negotiations.

Several delegations have mentioned the very clear-cut example of the Chemical Weapons Convention, which established an effective verification system which, at the same time, allows for confidence-building between countries and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons itself; it generates opportunities for the exchange of best practices among national authorities. We believe that examples such as these could be of benefit to the negotiations on a fissile material treaty. We also observe and note with pleasure initiatives taken by the international community such as the meeting held in Oslo in June 2006 on reduction of the use of enriched uranium in the civilian nuclear sector. We consider that these efforts can make a positive contribution to work on the fissile material treaty, also taking into account the significant number of projects under way worldwide for plants for the civilian use of nuclear energy.

It is important to reiterate the urgent message of moving ahead on the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament. My country attaches special importance to the outcome that we might achieve progressively on each of the issues, in the interests of international peace and security.

(Ms. Ucrós, Colombia)

For this reason, my delegation is pleased to announce on this occasion the presence and participation of the Vice-President of the Republic of Colombia, Francisco Santos, who will be addressing this forum next week to share with you my country's position on various agenda items.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in Spanish): Thank you very much, Ambassador Forero, for your statement and kind words addressed to the Chair. I now call upon Ambassador Streuli of Switzerland.

Mr. STREULI (Switzerland) (spoke in French): I would like to start by thanking and congratulating the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom for its statement, which is full of common sense and specific practical suggestions. This statement shows clearly that non-governmental organizations can make a useful contribution to the work of the Conference on Disarmament (CD).

Mr. President, as I am taking the floor for the first time during a formal plenary meeting under your leadership, I would like to congratulate you on taking the Chair of the Conference on Disarmament. I assure you of the full support of my delegation for the smooth continuation of work among us, the six Presidents for 2007, the P-6, but also for the thematic discussions under the guidance of the seven coordinators.

At the start of the second round of discussions on the substantive items on our agenda, I would like at this stage to thank and congratulate Ambassadors Strømme, Trezza and Meyer for their very committed and enthusiastic coordination on agenda items 1, 2 and 3. If I may, I will concentrate today on these very items.

First, my delegation would like to take up certain aspects that we consider essential with a view to the resumption of the NPT review cycle next May. In this respect we must remember that the preceding cycle which ended in New York in 2005 ended on a disappointing note, as the States parties went away without arriving at consensus on a substantive final document. Since that failure, the world has seen various developments in the area of proliferation, disarmament and civilian use that we would like to enumerate briefly.

In the field of proliferation, the latest report from IAEA once again indicates that the Agency is not in a position to demonstrate the exact nature of the Iranian nuclear programme. IAEA admits that only enhanced transparency in respect of the additional protocol to the safeguards agreement would be able to resolve the remaining questions as well as new questions. We remain convinced that as far as the Iranian case is concerned, only a diplomatic solution will be able to resolve the issue to the benefit of world peace and security.

The situation on the Korean peninsula, in contrast, has been showing more positive developments in the past few weeks because a road map exists for a complete phased solution to the crisis through the implementation of the 2005 joint statement. Switzerland therefore encourages the States involved in the six-party talks to continue their efforts.

(Mr. Streuli, Switzerland)

As regards disarmament, in this atmosphere of uncertainty Switzerland considers that the decisions of certain nuclear-weapon States to allocate funds for the development or replacement of these weapons runs counter to the spirit of article VI of the NPT, as they reduce the chances of nuclear disarmament in coming decades. At the same time, they confer enhanced importance on nuclear weapons, which does nothing to facilitate efforts aimed at reducing the attractiveness of such weapons for other States that might be thinking of acquiring them.

In the area of civilian use, we have noted that for some years the production of energy from nuclear fuel has become the goal of more and more States. Consequently, the risks of nuclear proliferation will increase significantly in the near future, and this aspect of the nuclear issue will undoubtedly play an important role in the NPT review process that will resume this year. Switzerland is aware of the dangers of such a development. This calls for initiatives to be devised which will respond to the demand for non-proliferation and disarmament as well as for the application of the inalienable right to the peaceful use of nuclear energy under article VI of the NPT.

What are our expectations for the new cycle that will lead us up to the 2010 review conference? First of all, my delegation would like to point out that Switzerland continues to view the NPT as an essential tool for international stability despite its weaknesses and shortcomings. My country therefore attaches great importance to maintaining and strengthening the achievements of previous conferences. I am referring to the “Principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament” adopted by the 1995 Review Conference and the “13 practical steps” adopted by the 2000 Review Conference. In this context, Switzerland considers that special emphasis should be placed on the negotiation of an FMCT. This issue is the most ripe for discussion within the CD, and my country considers that we should spare no effort to keep up the momentum that is prevailing today. In conclusion, Switzerland hopes that this new cycle that will begin in Vienna in May and is due to continue next year in Geneva will make it possible to overcome the current challenges to the NPT and satisfy the security needs of all.

The importance of space for our societies has been constantly increasing. Space applications play an increasingly important role in the provision of essential services as well as in the smooth operation of many aspects of our day-to-day and/or economic life. The question of space security is therefore a topic that requires our full attention, which has been increasingly apparent during the discussions on item 3 of our agenda.

These considerations prompted Switzerland to support the resolutions of the sixty-first session of the General Assembly dealing with the prevention of an arms race in outer space (resolution 61/58) and the promotion of confidence-building and security-building measures in space (resolution 61/75). Furthermore, my delegation wishes to raise in this forum its concern at space developments that are currently under way. This situation highlights how important it is that the CD should also address this issue within a structured and substantive dialogue this year.

(Mr. Streuli, Switzerland)

Switzerland cannot but welcome the attention paid by the CD to the task of devising measures aimed at consolidating the principle of the peaceful use of space, as affirmed in the Outer Space Treaty of 1967, and support the efforts it is making to prevent an arms race in outer space.

Efforts to devise transparency and confidence-building measures in space constitute a particularly useful approach at this stage. Such measures can provide some response to States that are concerned at the vulnerability of their own satellites, and can reduce tensions motivating those seeking to deploy space weapons.

In particular, the task of devising rules of conduct governing activities in space requires our attention. The relevance of codes of conduct devised for other environments, in particular the marine environment, has already been demonstrated. Such a document could include measures aimed at improving the regulation of space traffic, preventing dangerous manoeuvres or banning those that could raise suspicion as to their peaceful intent.

Greater transparency as regards space activities would also make it possible to enhance confidence, especially as regards satellite launching, trajectory or function. Instruments on which we could draw already exist, such as the Convention on Registration of Objects Launched into Outer Space or the Hague Code of Conduct against the Proliferation of Ballistic Missiles. The question of the implementation and universalization of these instruments arises in both instances.

Drawing up measures to prevent the creation of space debris is also a step that should promote confidence-building. This issue already poses a risk for the long-term use of space. The Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space is working on guidelines aimed at mitigating this problem, which should be submitted to the forthcoming United Nations General Assembly for approval. Given the significant amount of debris generated by the use of weapons in space, particularly kinetic energy weapons, the CD should focus in particular on the rapid institution of a moratorium relating to a ban on testing such devices.

The various confidence-building and transparency measures that I have just referred to also relate in one way or another to the functions and activities of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space. This state of affairs is explained by the essentially dual nature of many space applications, being both civilian and military. The development of interaction between the CD and that United Nations body therefore seems to us both welcome and relevant.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in Spanish): I now give the floor to the representative of Peru, the delegate Mr. Beleván.

Mr. BELEVAN (Peru): Firstly, Mr. President, because my delegation is taking the floor for the first time during your term, allow me to congratulate you on taking up this important role at a time when the Conference on Disarmament is endeavouring, by means of imaginative solutions, to resolve the paralysis which is preventing us from fulfilling the functions entrusted to the members of this multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament matters.

(Mr. Beleván, Peru)

Through you, I should also like to reiterate the appreciation and support of my delegation for the initiative of the six Presidents for 2007, who, under the leadership of the distinguished Permanent Representative of South Africa, presented a timetable of activities with a view to allowing the Conference on Disarmament to fulfil its main function, that is, to negotiate on disarmament. Peru will strive, without raising procedural obstacles of any kind, to contribute to securing an agreement which would make it possible to resume the path of negotiation. My delegation also reiterates its absolute flexibility, in a constructive spirit which we hope will be shared by all the members of this beleaguered multilateral body, in order to adopt a speedy decision which will enable us to begin the negotiating process that is essential today to restore the significance of the Conference on Disarmament.

We are grateful for the statement of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, which you kindly read out, Mr. President. As has been said on various occasions and in various forums, my country believes that the participation of civil society on matters related to disarmament is very important.

As some of those present will remember, during its term as President of the Conference, Peru drew some conclusions on the basis of the consultations which were carried out, as well as the responses received to the questionnaire we distributed to all delegations during the inter-sessional period, and here I would simply like to make a brief summary. At the time my delegation stated that the package solution, in all its possible variations, on which work had been under way for several years in the different proposals on the programme of work, seemed to be the cause of the paralysis which is affecting the Conference on Disarmament. My delegation therefore considers that, in the present circumstances - and these have not changed, indeed they have become more acute - it is necessary for all the members of the Conference to re-examine the approach under consideration. We are persuaded that a first step in this direction was the coordinated work of the Presidents for 2006, as well as the appointment of the Friends of the Presidents.

Before moving on to the main subject of this statement by my country, I wish to point out, and simply because it was mentioned by the distinguished delegation of Cuba, that Peru has expressed a general reservation with regard to the section on disarmament and international security because it is not in keeping with my country's foreign policy in this area. This reservation has been distributed to the members of the Conference in document CD/1812.

On this occasion I wish to refer specifically to the subject of disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation, processes which are substantively related and mutually reinforcing. In recent years we have become aware of illicit programmes for the production and acquisition of weapons of mass destruction which involve not only States but also networks of non-State actors. The post-cold-war world not only faces tendencies towards nuclear proliferation but also has to deal with conduct which is unusual to say the least, such as that of a State which denounced the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and then tested a nuclear weapon as well as delivery systems. The world is also facing the threat of the potential access of international terrorists to weapons of mass destruction.

(Mr. Beleván, Peru)

In 1947, the *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists* began to place the Doomsday Clock on its cover. Over more than 50 years this has been an indication of imminent nuclear danger which attempts to reflect the changing international situation. The hands of the clock have moved 19 times and now show five minutes to midnight, as a result of the deplorable and reprehensible events of the past year. Ironically and more than 15 years after the end of the cold war, the clock has only been closer to midnight four times, in 1949, 1953, 1981 and 1984.

This should prompt an urgent response from the international community to strengthen and ensure the effective application of international treaties on disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation, as well as to immediately begin negotiations that will make it possible to take practical steps towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons. Clearly, given the unpredictability resulting from the alarming proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the responsible and institutional response should be the development and consolidation of a solid framework of multilateral security. But paradoxically we are witnessing a progressive weakening of the legal nuclear non-proliferation regime. This is not only a result of the events already referred to, but also the attitude of States which are striving to evade their contractual obligations and the behaviour of others which are beginning to change their nuclear policies.

Allow me, then, to make a brief digression on some of what Peru considers to be the main multilateral instruments related to the topic of disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. As we have said on many occasions, my country believes that the NPT is the cornerstone of the nuclear non-proliferation regime, a clearly necessary step to achieve the ultimate objective of general and complete nuclear disarmament.

When the NPT was opened for signature in 1968, two basic obligations were established. Firstly, that no non-nuclear-weapon State should acquire such weapons or assist in their acquisition. And secondly, the five nuclear-weapon States were given a temporary right to hold such weapons, on condition that they progressively dismantled their nuclear arsenals. Both commitments need to be fully honoured.

Peru, a country committed to the NPT since the outset, having deposited its instrument of ratification on 3 March 1970, greatly regrets the fact that the last Review Conference was not able to reach agreement on a final document. We would have liked to see the interesting discussions which took place in the context of the meeting reflected. Accordingly, we hope that, and we shall strive actively to ensure that, the review process on which we shall embark in April this year will make it possible to resume the strengthening of all the aspects of the Treaty.

One of those important aspects is to strengthen the mechanisms for the control and transfer of technologies, which will permit the full realization of the right to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, as set out in article IV of the NPT. The existence of a group of international suppliers monitoring the transfer of what is considered to be dual-use technology to other NPT States parties is viewed with misgiving by some developing countries, but it may serve as a basis for the creation of a larger group which will enable greater participation by States

(Mr. Beleván, Peru)

committed to international security in decision-making on the transfer of technology. We need to find innovative and original mechanisms which will make this more equitable participation possible.

In this respect, my country believes that the role of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) can be strengthened to serve as the principal conduit for the transfer of nuclear technology with a view to increasing cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. We consider that the new challenges and realities require a review of the role which this important agency should play in the future in the areas of physical security of nuclear waste, illicit trafficking in nuclear material and verification of nuclear-weapon-free zones, among others. As an indication of its total transparency on this matter, Peru in 1999 signed the additional protocol to the safeguards agreement with IAEA, an instrument which makes it possible to strengthen and increase the efficiency of the system as well as to contribute to the objectives of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Another important step on this long road towards general and complete nuclear disarmament would be the prompt entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), which my Government considers to be essential. The Peruvian Congress ratified it in 1997, and we hope that the States listed in annex 2 of that instrument which have not yet ratified it will proceed to do so in the near future. The entry into force of the CTBT will be a decisive step to prevent the continued development of nuclear technology for warlike purposes.

Likewise, as we have said on various occasions and in various forums, the continued development of delivery systems for nuclear weapons also constitutes a major threat which we need to face. Without the delivery systems, the weapons lose much of their value. In that regard, Peru, faithful to its unequivocal commitments to nuclear disarmament, has signed the Hague Code of Conduct against missile proliferation and stands ready to develop that instrument further.

Bearing in mind the above, my country will continue to proclaim the general principles which govern our foreign policy concerning disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation, and to call on all States in the international system to comply with all their obligations.

However, we are aware that the incremental approach is the most appropriate for practical steps to recommence substantive work which will lead to realistic solutions to the problems raised by developments on the international stage in the fields of disarmament and non-proliferation. In that regard, my delegation considers that the prompt commencement of negotiations on a treaty on fissile material is essential. My delegation once again reaffirms its flexibility with regard to the establishment of a subsidiary body of the Conference to consider this important subject without preconditions of any kind, on the understanding, of course, that all subjects which are raised in any way by delegations during the negotiations will be addressed properly.

I also believe that any future legally binding international instrument on the subject of fissile material must necessarily fulfil the double objective of disarmament and non-proliferation.

(Mr. Beleván, Peru)

This will make it possible to satisfy the security priorities of the international community as a whole. My country's position on the various elements of a possible treaty on fissile material is well known because it has been set out in this forum on previous occasions. In any event I can state that it is very similar to what has been said just a few moments ago by the distinguished Ambassador of Colombia.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in Spanish): I thank the representative of Peru for his extensive and substantive statement and ...

(spoke in English)

... I now give the floor to Ambassador Strømme of Norway.

Mr. STRØMMEN (Norway): Mr. President, I highly appreciated the NGO statement just delivered by you at the beginning of this meeting. Norway places great emphasis on meaningful action between civil society and governments. We believe such dialogue is necessary to respond adequately to the great challenges we face today.

This is also true for challenges related to disarmament and security. It is our hope for the future that representatives from civil society will be invited to contribute regularly to the efforts of this body. When the Conference on Disarmament starts to work again, it will be useful to receive views and expert advice from NGOs and academia.

In the meantime, representatives from civil society should be able to share their concerns with the Conference on a regular basis. We hope to interact directly with representatives of civil society and hear them voice their views themselves. Although we enjoyed you reading out the NGO statement, Mr. President, we find that practice quite peculiar and difficult to understand. The same goes for the not so obvious link between International Women's Day and an annual NGO statement. It is our hope that these two events can be delinked.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Norway very much for his statement and I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic, Mr. Abdulmaola Al Nuquari.

Mr. AL NUQUARI (Syrian Arab Republic) (spoke in Arabic): At the outset, allow me to express our deep appreciation for the way that the President has guided the work of this Conference. Allow me also to associate myself with, and support, the statement made by the distinguished representative of Pakistan on the participation of NGOs. Thirdly, we express our appreciation for the statement made today on behalf of NGOs. It was an important and comprehensive statement. Allow me also, Mr. President, to echo what you said in your statement expressing the hope that next year will be more promising as far as participation of NGOs in our work is concerned.

We do hope that the decision adopted in 2004 on NGO participation will be developed further so as to pave the way for wider participation by NGOs in the work of the Conference.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in Spanish): I thank the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic for his statement, which brings us to the end of today's list of speakers. Does any delegation wish to take the floor at this stage? If not, I will provide the Conference with a number of items of information of interest from an organizational viewpoint.

First, I would like to inform you that the collective wish we expressed at the beginning of this 2007 session to have greater involvement by eminent political representatives in the Conference on Disarmament and to make use of the week of 12 March, which will be a week in which the high-level segment on human rights will also be held in the Palais des Nations, has produced positive results, and I would like to say we can be proud of the approach we have adopted. I wish to inform the meeting that 11 distinguished personalities are already confirmed during the week of 12 March, and I invite delegations to make an effort with their capitals with a view to expanding this list, and I also inform you that the Chair will spare no effort to accommodate all the delegates at the most convenient times and with an appropriate audience in the Conference on Disarmament.

In this regard, I wish to announce that on Monday 12 March at 3 p.m. the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of Ecuador will make a statement and that after her intervention the informal meeting on negative security assurances will be held. Consequently the latter will begin immediately afterwards, probably around 3.20 p.m. So that meeting would be affected, but very slightly.

There will be a special plenary on Monday, 12 March at 3 p.m., followed by the informal meeting of the coordinator as scheduled on our programme.

On Tuesday, 13 March, in our plenary, we shall hear the Vice-President of Colombia, Francisco Santos, the Parliamentary Secretary and Special Representative on Mine Action of Australia, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Latvia, the Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Poland, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran and a senior political representative of Viet Nam, yet to be confirmed.

On Wednesday, 14 March at 3 p.m., before our informal meeting on NSAs, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nigeria and the Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea will make statements. Consequently, we shall convene a special plenary on Wednesday, 14 March at 3 p.m., at which, I repeat, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nigeria and the Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea will speak, and when those two statements are concluded, the informal meeting with the coordinator on negative security assurances will begin.

And on Friday, 16 March at 12 noon, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Spain, Mr. Miguel Angel Moratinos, will make a statement. On that day we will organize the radiological weapons meeting with the coordinator Ambassador Draganov. It will begin at 10 a.m. and end at 12 noon, continuing with a special plenary with the statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Spain.

(The President)

I would also like to inform the Conference that on the afternoon of Thursday the 15th, there will be no informal meeting with the coordinator for radiological weapons and that the first meeting on radiological weapons in this second round of the first part will begin on Friday, 16 March at 10 a.m. In this connection I would like to add, as I have already said, that all necessary arrangements will be made to ensure the smooth and efficient organization of the informal plenary meetings scheduled earlier for this particular week, but that there is extensive capacity to accommodate additional speakers and thus clearly show the vitality that the Conference on Disarmament is acquiring again. Consequently, I would like to make a last appeal to delegations to make a last effort in that respect.

I would also like to inform the Conference of developments in the proceedings so as to prepare for what will be the tenth week of the Conference on Disarmament, in which we will carry out an evaluation of the status of our proceedings in each of the areas in which the coordinators are conducting their work, as well as the future orientation of the work of the Conference on Disarmament next year.

In this respect, the six Presidents have agreed that it would be useful to embark on the holding of conversations with each of the delegations to the Conference on Disarmament, in order to learn their perceptions of the development of the current proceedings, and consequently I wish to inform you that the various Presidents will share this work out between them to talk to different delegations individually on the basis of a questionnaire drawn up in advance, a questionnaire whose value and purpose is simply that of questioning the delegations on a uniform basis and using the same criteria, while the sharing out of functions between the Presidents will enable us to have the results by the end of next week. Consequently, the various Presidents will contact different delegations immediately after this plenary, if there is no objection, and we hope to have this "evaluation" finished by the end of next week.

The week after, we shall probably hold further conversations on the basis of very specific issues or questions which have emerged as those which merit the greatest interest, and we trust that through this process in the week of 26 March we shall be able to have a presentation, a report from the P-6 to the Conference on the current situation and prospects for the future.

That said, I wonder whether any delegation wishes to put forward any comment or make any statement. The delegation of Algeria has the floor.

Mr. KHELIF (Algeria) (spoke in Arabic): At the outset, I should like to associate the Algerian delegation with the statement by the distinguished representative of Pakistan concerning participation by civil society in the work of the Conference. We regret that the time is still not ripe for this participation, that representatives of civil society have to listen from the gallery and that they are still not able to address the Conference directly. We hope that we will find a solution to this problem over the next few years.

With regard to the forthcoming consultations which the presidents will be holding with all delegations, you indicated that the consultations will be based on a questionnaire. We would like a copy of the questionnaire before the consultations begin, if that is possible.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in Spanish): I thank the representative of Algeria. I wish to mention to the Conference that the questionnaire is for the internal use of the Presidents, in the sense that when dividing up the work between the six Presidents, it is important that the type of questions should be along the same lines, let us say, using the same criteria, but it is absolutely for internal use. The representative of Algeria has the floor again.

Mr. KHELIF (Algeria) (spoke in Arabic): Mr. President, we respect your views and those of the six Presidents, but, as far as this document is concerned, I am afraid that we may have to ask for more time during the consultations to review and study these questions closely. To save time, we would have liked a copy of the questionnaire before the consultations. However, you do have the last word on this.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in Spanish): I thank the representative of Algeria. Obviously, when the President who is conducting consultations with your delegation presents you with the questions, you have every right and you are free to respond in the way you consider most appropriate and in your case perhaps you could say that the question requires further time for consultation with your capital and provide the reply later on. So you are entitled to carry out the consultations on your side in the way you consider most appropriate. The representative of China, Mr. Li, has asked for the floor.

Mr. LI (China) (spoke in Chinese): Mr. President, the Chinese delegation has taken note of the ideas you have just enunciated with a view to bringing the Conference forward to the next stage in its work. In this connection our delegation would like to express the following two points of principle.

First, we hope and trust that the ideas and suggestions that you are putting forward will help maintain a spirit of transparency and democracy in the work of the Conference on Disarmament, that they will respect the views and positions of all delegations and that they will take due account of their needs and concerns.

Second, my delegation still believes that the proposal by the five Ambassadors is capable of accommodating the concerns of all sides and entirely fulfils the requirement that it should be comprehensive and balanced in its approach. Accordingly, in our view basing our work programme on this proposal offers an effective way of breaking the deadlock in the Conference on Disarmament.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in Spanish): Thank you very much, Mr. Li, for your statement. I give the floor to the delegation of Pakistan.

Ms. JANJUA (Pakistan): Mr. President, thank you for the information you have provided. We just seek a clarification. One, these consultations that are going to be held by the Presidents, the P-6, the intention is to look at a programme of work, or to look at what is the intention of these consultations? And if the intention is to look at the programme of work, then we would agree with our colleague from China that the A-5 provides an interesting solution.

(Ms. Janjua, Pakistan)

The second point I wanted to make was that I agree with my colleague from Algeria that since these questions or whatever is to be asked would require some reflection on the part of delegations, it would be extremely important that these are circulated in advance so that delegations have an opportunity to reflect on them before responding to them, because on this questionnaire that you referred to depends the work of the CD for the rest of the year. So we would appreciate it if we get, in the interests of transparency, these questions in advance.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the delegate of Pakistan very much. I would like to mention that we have seen this round of consultations as a totally normal proceeding for the preparation of week 10. It is a way of getting more input from all the delegations. So it is nothing let us say, special, it is something totally in line with the preparation of week 10, and with the desire of the six Presidents to integrate, to the maximum, all the feedback from each and every delegation. So the question of transparency is totally preserved in the sense that these consultations are going to be held with each and every delegation. The questions that are going to be addressed are absolutely the same, so each and every delegation will know all the questions, and it is only on the perspective of the Presidents to prepare the evaluation on week 10. It is a totally normal proceeding.

About the question of delivering the questions in advance, as I mentioned to the delegate of Algeria, it is nothing to do with transparency, because we think that transparency is totally ensured by the fact that the very same questions will be addressed to each and every delegation, so all will know absolutely the same. It is more connected with the idea of distributing the task among the different Presidents and to address the different consultations absolutely along the same lines. But we want to know the reactions to these different questions in a direct way, and obviously you always have the right to go to your capitals for further consultations.

I will now give the floor to the delegate of the United Kingdom.

Mr. DUNCAN (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland): Mr. President, thank you for that latest information. I am encouraged by what the platform of the P-6 has done in the past few weeks and is planning to do in terms of taking forward our collective endeavours to get the Conference on Disarmament back to work.

A moment of personal reflection: I have been particularly encouraged by the way that the presidencies have tried to build trust and confidence that everyone's agenda item will be covered and has been covered. Perhaps there have been slight slips on the way, but in general terms, this has been fulfilled and it is moving forward in a very constructive manner. We are encouraged to hear that you are now embarking on a process of further consultation.

Of course, having gone through this period of testing out the mechanism designed by the current P-6, we do come to a point where we have to make a decision, and the decision for all of us collectively - and it is perhaps worth reminding ourselves - is: what do we want for the future of the Conference on Disarmament? We can, of course, go backwards and sit on old positions, or we can take the essence of those decisions and see if we can invent something which protects all the interests of those concerned.

(Mr. Duncan, United Kingdom)

The Conference has tried for over 10 years to get this organization up and running. I do not think anyone doubts that in the twenty-first century there is a need for an organization of this type. It is up to us collectively to find that solution and draw on that experience of the 10 years to find the way through. I am not sure that going back to the old formulas, the old terminology, will necessarily be helpful, but some of the essence of those ideas may indeed be parts of things that we would want to take forward.

But as I say again, thank you to the presidencies for your collective efforts in taking this matter forward. I think it is time for decisions by all of us, and we will know what responsibility we carry if we fail to take this forward in a constructive and an imaginative way.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you, Ambassador Duncan, for your intervention. Cuba has the floor.

Mr. PINO ALVAREZ (Cuba) (spoke in Spanish): Mr. President, first of all I would like to thank you for the information that you have provided us with concerning the intention of the six Presidents to conduct this process of exchange with all the delegations which are members of the Conference on Disarmament, as well as the assurances that you have given us that this will be a transparent process, as of course we are sure is your intention.

My delegation endorses what was said by the delegation of Algeria and the Ambassador of Pakistan about the need to have this questionnaire sufficiently in advance so as to have time for reflection, but of course we will leave it in your hands to determine how to organize this process of consultations. However, when we come to the bilateral conversations we would like to have the questionnaire in writing at least so as to facilitate the process of consultation with our capitals, and we would also like enough time to be able to respond and give an assessment on each of the questions included.

Also, and now I am referring not only to the issue of the questionnaire but also to the report that the Presidents will be preparing at the end of this process, which I understand will constitute part of the basis for the analysis we will carry out in week 10, it would be very useful if we could have that report in good time so as to be able to study it carefully and thoroughly and consult our capitals on it, as it will be an extremely important document that will to some extent mark the course of our discussions in week 10. I repeat, this report will be the basis on which we will analyse the future work of the Conference, but another basis will be provided by the deliberations that we have had throughout all these weeks working in the formal context of the plenary and the informal context under the various coordinators for each of the items on the agenda of the Conference.

Lastly, we hope that this process, for which we assure you of our full support, will lead to the adoption of a solution that will take into account the concerns and priorities of all the members of the Conference on Disarmament.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in Spanish): I thank the representative of Cuba for his statement. I would like to make a comment to delegations, and that is that what I have announced is a course of action which is absolutely normal, and I would say ordinary, for the proper preparation of the evaluation in week 10. This step relates to the wish of the Presidents to incorporate as much as possible of the information from the delegations and to mark the inclusive nature of the value of all opinions. Consequently I would like to emphasize to delegations that, as I understand it, this is not a fundamental and important document, as the representative of Cuba said, but one more mechanism available to the Chair in order to ascertain the opinions of the various delegations. In keeping with this wish to obtain homogenous information from all the delegations, the questions that will be put to the delegates will be the same, and that is an internal prerogative of the Presidents in terms of how to conduct these consultations, and consequently this is a completely internal paper. As I have already mentioned to the representatives of Algeria and Pakistan, delegations can reply to these questions in the manner they consider most appropriate at that moment or allowing themselves time to reply. But in any event I expect that these will not be very complicated questions - they are questions relating to the development of the proceedings and how they are perceived by each and every delegation.

I now give the floor to the Ambassador of South Africa.

Ms. MTSHALI (South Africa): I firstly just want to pay homage to our President, who is trying very hard to make it quite clear that this is just a follow-up process, a process that during the time that I was in his position I made it quite clear that the Presidents would always work in a very transparent manner with all members of the Conference, and therefore this step was already identified during the very first week of the CD session, which was that after we had gone through the first and then halfway through the second round, closer to the tenth week, the P-6 would engage in further informal consultations with the members of the CD. The only clarification that our President made now was to indicate that we would ask the same questions of everybody. This should give absolute clarity that we will not ask different questions, and we do ask for your indulgence to allow for this very brief consultation to take place. It is a small number of questions. Really it is only asking you to reflect on your assessment, since we all participated in the informal sessions when it commenced. So it is really nothing to raise a flag of concern about. It is merely a continuation of the informal consultations that we promised you we would undertake before the tenth week.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you very much, Ambassador Mtshali. I now give the floor to China.

Mr. LI (China) (spoke in Chinese): The Chinese delegation takes note of the comments made in this meeting by certain other delegations to the effect that there is no merit in our preserving certain notions from the past. If I might give my personal reaction to these comments, I would say that the key consideration in deciding whether or not to maintain these notions from the past is whether or not they are sound and reasonable. In international practice we have preserved many notions from the past, such as some of the ideas and principles in the Charter of the United Nations: we shall uphold these not merely for the time being, but for the next

(Mr. Li, China)

100 years and more. If, however, certain notions are wrong or make no sense, then we cannot maintain them for a single moment. It is not up to any given delegation or group of delegations to determine whether or not a notion is correct. Just because one delegation believes that a notion makes no sense does not mean that it actually makes no sense: that decision must be discussed by all member States.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in Spanish): Thank you very much, Mr. Li, for your statement. I now give the floor to Ambassador Landman of the Netherlands.

Mr. LANDMAN (Netherlands): I remember that in the prelude to our first presidency, there were months of work by one single person, massively supported, I must say, by her closest collaborator, but still it took months and months. My understanding indeed in the statement made by you, Mr. President, that you would use identical questions is because you are splitting this time. You do not have months and months. You are splitting it among yourselves as the six Presidents. Of course, if you want a correct idea for yourself of how to think about the past weeks, these questions have to be identical. And it seems also to me that the evaluation is based on those who have attended, so I think this is not so much a thing for capitals, and certainly, I guess that when I look to the systematic you set out at the beginning, we are not fixing for eternity what we are going to do. I think it is for the second part of the session, that is, the second seven weeks - and we have three-part sessions. But surely, I understood also very clearly from your statement that if one or another question is felt to be requiring more reflection, I am sure - and I see this was also the case in the previous round - that delegations can come back on it and contact the person who has asked the question and say "after reflection" this and that. That is my opinion. So indeed I think that you are in every sense to be commended for the very delicate and thorough way in which you want to take into account each and everybody's opinion.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you very much, Ambassador Landman, for your intervention. It is really in this line that these consultations are going to take place. So thank you for clarifying what I tried to say before.

I will now give the floor to Mr. Khelif of Algeria.

Mr. KHELIF (Algeria) (spoke in Arabic): The purpose of my statement was not in any way to call into question the impartiality or transparency of the Presidents. It never crossed my mind that the Presidents would ask delegations different questions. All that I was suggesting was that we should have clear questions and that we should not waste any time, because the tenth week is upon us. There is already a precedent. During the Peruvian presidency, for example, we had a document of this kind before the meeting; so, this is nothing new. However, as I have already said, if the Presidents want to take a different approach, they are free to do so. In the end, as was agreed at the beginning of this session, we will discuss a report that represents the views of the Presidents, and not a decision of the Conference.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in Spanish): I thank the representative of Algeria very much for his statement. I thank him for his flexibility and I would like to repeat that this exercise is designed to ensure that all delegations feel particularly at ease, provide their information within

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an entirely normal context of preparation for week 10 with as much information as possible, from you, as well as from the coordinators and the Presidents themselves as a whole. Rest assured that this will be a very positive exercise for each and every delegation and that once it has been accomplished, I believe it will enable us to have important additional information.

I would also like this exercise to be seen as totally in line with the exercise performed by the Ambassador of South Africa previously. The only difference is, as the Ambassador of the Netherlands said, that at that time Ambassador Mtshali had several weeks available for the purpose, whereas we have only seven working days, and that the only way we can address or obtain the information from the 63 delegations is through a division of work among the Presidents and if all of them are working on the same basis.

I now give the floor to the Ambassador of India.

Mr. PRASAD (India): Mr. President, I would first like to congratulate you on your presidency. The P-6 collectively have done a great job this year carrying on from the very constructive way work was organized last year in extremely difficult circumstances. We, as the constituents of the CD and speaking for the Indian delegation, have every hope and expectation that the P-6 and the collective presidency will carry on in the same way as they have done so far. We are all committed, as the Ambassador of the United Kingdom said, to take forward the current effort in a constructive way. And the sense of what we are trying to do is to begin substantive work. And how we begin to do substantive work is very clearly defined in the rules of procedure of the Conference. Also, I am in complete agreement with you that how you organize the consultations is a very normal part of how the CD's work is conducted. Every President individually or the presidencies collectively have the right to conduct consultations in precisely the manner they want to conduct them. But you have decided, Mr. President, to discuss the modalities and the format of consultations on the floor of the Conference, and the collective presidencies are conveying to us that these consultations are going to be held in a transparent way on the basis of the questionnaire. Therefore, it seems to us, the Indian delegation, somewhat non-transparent if the questionnaire is not shared. We are not asking for the questionnaire to tear it apart. We are asking for the questionnaire to help the collective presidencies get a better understanding of what we are trying to convey to the presidencies in a shorter period of time.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you very much, Ambassador, for your intervention. I will give thought to your considerations. I now give the floor to Ambassador Meyer of Canada.

Mr. MEYER (Canada): Mr. President, let me indeed extend my sincere congratulations to you in steering us forward. I thought in listening to the comments from delegations here this morning that it was a little bit reminiscent of the situation in school when the students have been told by their teacher that an exam is going to be coming forward, and there is an effort to sort of cajole the teacher into revealing the nature of the questions. I think I can assure all colleagues that if they have participated conscientiously in the classes up to now, been attentive about doing their homework, etc., there should be no surprises in what emerges from this little interaction. I do hope we can continue to cooperate with the collective presidency as they have so adroitly led us so far into whatever next stage of consultations they deem appropriate.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you very much, Ambassador Meyer. I am totally sure that all delegations will get the highest score in this examination.

I now give the floor to Australia.

Mr. MACLACHLAN (Australia): Mr. President, it is not on this issue, but in fact on your helpful briefing about next week's programme of work or schedule of meetings, shall I say. It is just to inform the members of the Conference that regrettably we learned this morning that our Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs will not in fact be able to address the Conference next week as you had foreshadowed.

The PRESIDENT: We are sorry, but we are sure that we will find another occasion.

Is there any other delegation that wishes to take the floor? If that is not the case, we adjourn the meeting and our next meeting will be on 13 March at 10 a.m., but before that, there will be the special plenary on 12 March at 3 p.m. to hear the address of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ecuador.

The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.