

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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FINAL RECORD OF THE ONE THOUSAND AND EIGHTY-NINTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 12 February 2008, at 10.05 a.m.

President: Mr. Samir LABIDI (Tunisia)

The PRESIDENT (spoke in French): I call to order the 1089th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

At this plenary meeting I wish on behalf of the Conference and on my own behalf to express our warm welcome to His Excellency Mr. Sergey Lavrov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. Mr. Lavrov's presence amongst us today is in itself an exceptional event and an eloquent testimony of the particular importance attached by the Russian Federation to the work of the Conference on Disarmament and its work. The Russian Federation thus reaffirms its attachment and renews its encouragement to this unique multilateral disarmament negotiating body. It is with great pleasure that we receive Mr. Lavrov today. He is known to all as a distinguished political and diplomatic figure who has always striven to promote international cooperation. The Conference will therefore listen very carefully to the statement by the Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation today. Following Mr. Lavrov's statement, I shall give the floor to Ambassador Li Baodong, who will deliver a message to the Conference on behalf of His Excellency Yang Jiechi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China. After those statements, I intend to suspend the meeting and invite delegations to move to the hall for the inauguration, together with the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, of a sculpture offered by his country to the Palais des Nations. We shall resume our work after the ceremony. Mr. Minister, you have the floor.

Mr. LAVROV (Russian Federation) (spoke in Russian): First of all I would like to convey my greetings to all the participants in the Conference on Disarmament. I appreciate the opportunity to address this representative forum and to share views on the state of the disarmament and non-proliferation process. Unfortunately this situation cannot but cause general concern.

Scientific achievements and the introduction of advanced technologies are opening up unprecedented opportunities for addressing the most important task of any State, that of ensuring sustainable development and prosperity. The growing interdependence of a globalizing world and the emerging multipolar system are creating a favourable environment for expanding international cooperation with a view to taking maximum advantage of such opportunities for the benefit of all countries and all peoples. On the other hand, the new global threats and the aggravation of many existing ones, ranging from terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction to climate change, require a joint response from the international community. We are convinced that this is the imperative of our time.

Mankind simply has no reasonable alternative but to ensure security collectively. In financial and military terms, this task is beyond the capacity of a single country or any narrow coalition. The very logic underlying the evolution of present-day international relations proves the futility of unilateral and bloc-based schemes, particularly those based on force. Experience demonstrates that the champions of such schemes are incapable of guaranteeing security even for themselves, and show only the limits of such a unilateral response. But what is most important is that such actions do not strengthen stability but often undermine it, forcing other countries to take their security into their own hands. And as a rule, the accumulation of these factors, the accumulation of these unilateral actions leads - as I have already said - to a reduction in stability, and very often works against non-proliferation.

(Mr. Lavrov, Russian Federation)

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons is a pivotal element of the modern international security system. The second session of the Preparatory Committee for the review of the NPT will be held in a few months here in Geneva, and we, like all of you, I hope, are interested in making the work of this forum as constructive and efficient as possible - a forum whose task is to create favourable conditions for a successful Review Conference in 2010. What is important is to ensure the continued effectiveness of the Treaty, bearing in mind the unity of its three fundamental elements: non-proliferation, peaceful uses of atomic energy and disarmament.

Russian-American relations in the area of the limitation and reduction of strategic offensive arms are of key importance to real disarmament. There is not yet any certainty about how this process will evolve in the future. In December 2009, the SALT I Treaty will expire, and well in advance - as much as three years ago - we put forward the idea of developing and concluding a new fully fledged agreement on the further and verifiable reduction and limitation of strategic offensive arms.

Our goal is to preserve stability and predictability in strategic relations between Russia and the United States of America. We therefore suggest taking all the best elements of the existing Treaty to form the basis of a new agreement. Such an instrument, which should, of course, be legally binding, could set new, lower ceilings subject to verification on both strategic delivery vehicles - meaning intercontinental ballistic missiles, submarine-launched ballistic missiles and heavy bombers - and their warheads. So far we have been unable to arrive at acceptable solutions. We still have time, but we have less and less time.

We hope that our colleagues in the talks will pay heed to the call of such authorities in this field as George Shultz, Henry Kissinger, Sam Nunn and William Perry, who in a recent joint article convincingly argued the need to continue nuclear disarmament, strengthen international non-proliferation regimes and maintain strategic stability, including on a multilateral basis. Many of their ideas are in line with Russia's initiatives, though there are, of course, aspects that call for further discussion on the way to agreement on specific ways of resolving these far from simple tasks.

I wish to note specifically that we cannot but feel concerned over the situation where, with the looming prospect of the expiry treaty limitations on strategic offensive arms, increasing efforts are being made to deploy the global American anti-missile defence system. It is well known that there is an inseparable link between strategic offensive and defensive armaments, and ignoring this in future military planning is simply impossible. The desire to acquire an anti-missile "shield" while dismantling the "sheath" where the nuclear "sword" is kept is extremely dangerous. Specialists know this. If one adds to this equation the well-known concept of a "global lightning strike", involving a strike by strategic delivery vehicles equipped with nuclear or conventional weapons against targets at any point of the globe in a matter of one hour after the relevant decision has been taken, the risks for strategic stability and predictability become more than obvious.

(Mr. Lavrov, Russian Federation)

We think that strategic stability can no longer remain the exclusive domain of Russian-American relations. Although the Russian Federation and the United States will of course continue to play a leading role here, it is necessary to move beyond this residual bipolarity by opening up this sphere, the sphere of strategic stability, to all interested States which are prepared to actively cooperate with a view to strengthening common security. It is our strong belief that such cooperation should be based on equality, mutual respect, a constructive dialogue, joint analysis and the need to take account of the interests of all sides in the decision-making process.

Russia upholds and will continue to uphold these principles in its foreign policy. The same principles traditionally underlie the work of the Conference on Disarmament, this sole and indispensable international negotiating forum which possesses solid intellectual and professional potential. The Conference has made a substantial contribution to strengthening peace and security, disarmament and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery by developing highly important international legal instruments in this area.

However, the results produced by the Conference in the past cannot solve all current problems: new and very grave challenges and threats are emerging that call for an urgent joint response. Any delay is fraught with risks.

Like the great majority of other States, Russia is of course dissatisfied with a situation where the substantive work of the Conference has been blocked for the last 10 years, while there has been stagnation in the sphere of disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation. We are convinced that, given political will, this situation can be remedied. The key prerequisite for this lies in the creation of favourable international conditions for a disarmament process that can advance only on the basis of reciprocity, respect for the principle of equal security and compliance with international law.

Among the issues requiring the use of the Conference's potential is that of ensuring the predictability of military activities in outer space. Without efforts to prevent an arms race in space, the world's security will be diminished. We must all realize this. Strategic stability, which is central to military and political equilibrium in the world, will be endangered.

Activities in the exploration and use of outer space have substantially expanded lately in their scale and importance. In the interests of the further dynamic development of international cooperation in outer space, there is a pressing need for measures to prevent outer space from being turned into an arena of confrontation and to keep it free of any weapons.

Speaking last year in Munich, President V.V. Putin warned against the emergence of new destabilizing types of high-technology weapons and new areas of confrontation. He emphasized that the militarization of outer space could trigger unpredictable consequences for the international community, no less serious than at the onset of the nuclear era. Also in Munich, the President noted that a draft special treaty was being prepared to prevent such a development. This instrument was developed by us jointly with China and circulated informally among

(Mr. Lavrov, Russian Federation)

interested delegations in the Conference last June. We noted that the overwhelming majority of our partners reacted positively. Many States are looking forward to substantive work on this issue.

Today, the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China are officially submitting a draft treaty on the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space and of the threat or use of force against outer space objects to the Conference on Disarmament for consideration. Given its mandate, agenda and high expert potential on military issues in outer space, we believe that the Conference is the most appropriate forum for multilateral work on the draft treaty.

The draft takes into account the proposals made by member States of the Conference on Disarmament in the course of their joint work on the treaty elements which we submitted earlier together with China and together with a group of co-sponsors, and which have been fruitfully discussed here in the Conference for more than five years now.

We are submitting the draft treaty with an exploratory mandate. A mandate of this kind is supported by the majority of member States of the Conference and does not place any obstacles in the way of the search for a compromise on its programme of work. We hope that subsequently, when conditions are ripe, the work can be shifted into a negotiating format with the establishment of an ad hoc committee of the Conference on Disarmament on this issue.

Contemporary international outer space law does not prohibit the deployment in outer space of weapons which are not weapons of mass destruction. However, such weapons, if deployed in space, would have a global reach, high readiness for use, a capability for hidden engagement of outer space and Earth objects and the ability to render them inoperative. In contrast to weapons of mass destruction, such weapons would not be instruments of containment but intended for actual use. They would generate suspicion and tensions among States and would frustrate the climate of mutual trust and cooperation in outer space exploration.

Apart from this, the deployment of weapons in outer space by one State will inevitably trigger a chain reaction. This in turn contains the seeds of a new spiral in the arms race, both in outer space and on Earth.

The draft treaty prohibits the deployment of weapons of any kind in outer space, and the threat or use of force against outer space objects. The treaty is designed to eliminate existing gaps in international outer space law, create conditions for the further exploration and use of outer space, ensure the safety of outer space assets and strengthen general security and arms control.

The task of preventing an arms race in outer space is on the Conference's agenda, and we are convinced that it is time to seize the initiative and embark on serious practical work in this field. Otherwise, we may miss the opportunity. You all know, of course, that preventing a threat is always easier than removing it.

(Mr. Lavrov, Russian Federation)

Let us not forget that the nuclear arms race was started with a view to preserving the monopoly on this type of weapon, but this monopoly was to last only four years. However, even that time frame was sufficient to set world politics in “cold war mode”, which lasted for over four decades and resulted in a gigantic waste of material and other resources at the expense of solutions to the problem of development. Must history repeat itself?

All States have an equal and inalienable right to enjoy access to outer space, its exploration and its use. It is natural that the task of ensuring security in outer space should be a common one for all of us, and we must jointly address it in such a way as to promote international security and stability. We have no doubt that the treaty on the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space is an effective and realistic way to achieve that goal. We are ready to cooperate closely with all member States of the Conference without exception.

Another pressing issue that significantly affects strategic stability and international security is linked to missile proliferation. In October 2007, President V.V. Putin launched an initiative whereby the obligations set forth in the Treaty between the Soviet Union and the United States on the elimination of their intermediate-range and shorter-range missiles would become universal.

The initiative was supported by our American partners. Our common position was reflected in the joint statement on the INF Treaty which was circulated as an official document at the sixty-second session of the United Nations General Assembly and here in the Conference on Disarmament. The overwhelming majority of members of the international community welcomed it. However, we know there are States that for various reasons did not display willingness to support the initiative. We take note of their approach and would like to continue searching jointly for a mutually acceptable solution to the problem.

To this end, we propose that a multilateral agreement based on the relevant provisions of the existing INF Treaty should be drawn up and concluded. This universal instrument of international law could comprise the following basic elements:

Firstly, an undertaking by the parties not to conduct flight testing and not to manufacture any medium-range and shorter-range missiles or their stages and launchers.

Secondly, an undertaking by States parties to eliminate by an agreed deadline all medium-range and shorter-range missiles, their launchers and the associated supporting facilities and equipment.

Thirdly, rules should be laid down for counting and defining the types of medium-range and shorter-range missiles as well as their deployment and movements in the process of preparing them for elimination, and procedures for their elimination and verification of compliance.

(Mr. Lavrov, Russian Federation)

We will circulate the elements of the proposed agreement for study by member States of the Conference on Disarmament. We will do so informally at this stage. Above all we would like to receive tangible reactions. We are ready for a constructive dialogue and invite our partners to join us in this work.

The initiatives we are putting forward today form part of Russian foreign policy philosophy as applied to the issue of disarmament.

In the new century, the goal of any State is to play and to win through fair competition, rather than on the battlefield. Our foreign policy is oriented towards preserving the historic prospect which is opening up to us of a genuinely distinctive and independent form of development within the family of nations. This will be impossible without continuing accelerated social and economic growth in our country, which will be one of the major and key guarantees of our security. Externally, our security should be ensured by a more just and genuinely democratic architecture in international relations. Unfortunately, the world that shook off the “cold war” is quite unable to attain a new equilibrium. The potential for conflict, including in areas close to Russia’s borders, is very high.

Consequently, we have been consistently advocating the reaffirmation of the collective approach and the strengthening of legal principles in regional and global affairs on the basis of the United Nations Charter and recognition of the indivisibility of security and development in the modern world.

This is why we favour setting up open systems of collective security, and in the first place the formation of a single security space in the Euro-Atlantic area. We are convinced that we need security not from one another, still less against anyone, but security from the transnational threats which we all face.

This is why, as President V.V. Putin said recently, we will not allow ourselves to be drawn into a costly confrontation, including a new arms race, which would have a pernicious effect on the internal development of our country.

This is why we favour maintaining continuity in the process of disarmament and arms control, and its further development in terms of treaties and law, including at the multilateral and global level, in a spirit of strategic openness.

It is not Russia but life itself that is launching these challenges to all States without exception - first of all, to the major Powers, on which the world’s fate largely depends. Russia has made its choice, and is ready for joint constructive efforts.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in French): I thank the Minister for his important statement, which the Conference takes note of with particular interest. I would like also to thank him for his kind words addressed to the Chair.

(The President)

I now give the floor to the Chinese delegation, which will be delivering a message from His Excellency Mr. Yang Jiechi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China.

Mr. LI (China) (spoke in Chinese): We have just heard the distinguished Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Mr. Sergey Lavrov, present his country's views and positions on the current international security situation and on the work of the Conference on Disarmament. He also introduced the draft treaty on prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space and of the threat or use of force against outer space objects, jointly prepared by China and the Russian Federation.

My delegation would like to welcome Mr. Lavrov to the Conference and thank him for finding time in his busy schedule to visit the Conference on Disarmament to deliver his important statement. I am confident that this will help move our work forward and, at the same time, I would like to take this opportunity to convey to you the following message to the Conference on Disarmament from Mr. Yang Jiechi, the Chinese Minister for Foreign Affairs:

“Distinguished Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. President, Mr. Secretary-General, ladies and gentlemen,

“Although I am unable to be with you in person, please allow me, from distant Beijing and on the occasion of the Chinese Lunar New Year and the Spring Festival, to extend New Year's greetings to you all. It is my hope that, during this new year, our hard work will yield fruitful results for the Conference on Disarmament.

“As the sole multilateral negotiating body on disarmament, the Conference on Disarmament is entrusted with the important mission of promoting the cause of global arms control and disarmament. China attaches great importance to the Conference and has actively participated in the discussion on all the items on its agenda, prominent among which is that of prevention of an arms race in outer space.

“Outer space has become an integral part of the day-to-day life of humankind and it contributes to the well-being and social progress of all countries. Thanks to its unrelenting efforts over the years, the international community has been able to adopt a series of international legal instruments which have played a positive role in ensuring the peaceful exploration and use of outer space.

“Preventing the weaponization of outer space and an arms race in outer space and ensuring the peace and tranquillity of outer space are goals consistent with the shared interests of all countries. It is therefore essential that the international community develop new legal instruments to strengthen the existing legal regime on outer space. The United Nations General Assembly has, over a period of more than 20 years, adopted resolutions by an overwhelming majority which reiterate that the Conference on Disarmament must play a leading role in the negotiation of a multilateral agreement to prevent an arms race in outer space.

(Mr. Li, China)

“In view of the above considerations, China and the Russian Federation have jointly prepared a draft treaty on the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space and of the threat or use of force against outer space objects. It is our hope that the Conference will start substantive discussion and reach consensus on this draft as soon as possible. China stands ready to work with all other members of the Conference on Disarmament in pursuit of this goal. We also hope that, thanks to the joint efforts of all its members, the Conference will be able to make real progress in its work this year.

“Finally, we look forward to genuine progress this year in the work of the Conference on Disarmament, achieved through the cooperation of all its member States.”

Allow me to observe here that the above statement by the Chinese Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Yang Jiechi, clearly demonstrates the great importance which the Chinese Government attaches to the process of multilateral arms control and disarmament, and its support for the work of the Conference on Disarmament. It is China's sincere hope that the Conference will be able to agree, at the earliest possible juncture, on a generally balanced programme of work that is acceptable to all parties, so that it can embark on substantive work on all the important items of its agenda, including prevention of an arms race in outer space. We look forward to engaging in a detailed exchange of views with all other delegations on the draft treaty on prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space and of the threat or use of force against outer space objects, in the hope of moving negotiation of the treaty forward in a joint endeavour to promote and safeguard the peace and security of outer space.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in French): I thank His Excellency for having delivered the important message from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China and I thank him for the kind words and his best wishes from the Minister.

Distinguished delegates, I shall now escort you, with the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, His Excellency Mr. Sergey Lavrov, from the Council chamber into the hall containing the sculpture which his country is donating to the Palais des Nations and which symbolizes the preservation of peace for future generations. Delegations are invited to participate in this ceremony, after which the Conference will resume its work.

The meeting was suspended at 10.35 a.m. and resumed at 10.55 a.m.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in French): I call the plenary meeting to order.

The speakers from the following countries are on the list for today's plenary meeting: Canada, Belarus and Sri Lanka.

I now give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador of Canada.

Mr. GRINIUS (Canada) (spoke in French): Canada welcomes the opportunity afforded by the presentation by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Lavrov, to address anew the important issue of space security. As was noted recently by the United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, the members of the Conference on Disarmament must acknowledge that this body has made very little progress in its work in over a decade now. Canada fervently hopes that those members still blocking any progress based on the L.1 proposal before us will carefully reconsider their position.

We need to get back to work on the basis of this balanced and serious programme.

While Canada's first priority remains commencing early negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty, space security is a major issue for us as well, particularly in the light of the highly regrettable events which occurred last year.

[Mr. GRINIUS (Canada) continues in English]

In the context of the importance of space, Canada welcomes Russia's efforts to energize discussions on space via its draft treaty on the prevention of the placement of weapons in space. We responded to Russia's request for comments on the draft at an earlier stage, and indeed submitted detailed comments. We look forward to studying the draft PPWT to ascertain that our comments were taken into consideration.

Canada's support for the fundamental stated aims of this draft treaty are well known and long established. Clearly, however, the nature of the issues involved will require considerable detailed and complex discussion of a technical, legal and political nature on which no consensus currently exists. In our view, these aims - related to safeguarding the peaceful uses of outer space - will be best addressed to the extent they are seen by spacefaring nations as addressing real challenges in a pragmatic and focused manner.

For example, particular emphasis may be placed on transparency and confidence-building measures in the first instance. Canada has supported the Russian-led First Committee resolution on this subject and is one of the countries which has reported in detail under the resolution. To this end, we also strongly support various initiatives related to the issue of a space code of conduct, including that being proposed by the European Union. We believe a serious and detailed discussion from this perspective will also form an important substantive component of the CD's work on space in the coming months.

In this regard, we would note that a valuable and existing transparency and confidence-building mechanism which aims to serve precisely these goals is the Hague Code of Conduct. We commend Austria's valuable leadership role in the HCOC and Bosnia's chairmanship. We call on all CD members who are subscribing States to fully meet their commitments under the HCOC, including the issuance of pre-launch notifications in all cases. It may well be unrealistic to call for new TCBMs when existing ones that we have worked so hard to create, like the HCOC, are regrettably falling into disuse, whatever the rationalization may be.

Finally, Canada believes there is considerable merit to enhanced cooperation between the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and the CD. The dividing lines between civil and military issues in space are increasingly irrelevant in practical terms. Canada

(Mr. Grinius, Canada)

therefore encourages greater cooperation among the United Nations institutions that work on space-related issues and we look forward to more such interaction, including through expert presentations in Geneva. My delegation will work toward this end.

Once again Canada thanks our Russian colleagues for the opportunity to discuss this important aspect of the CD's space deliberations.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in French): I thank the distinguished Ambassador of Canada for his statement, and I now give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador of Belarus.

Mr. ALEINIK (Belarus) (spoke in Russian): Mr. President, since our delegation is taking the floor for the first time in plenary session during your term in the Chair of the Conference, allow me first of all to wish you every success in your activities as President and within the bureau of Presidents. We would also like to assure you and the bureau of Presidents of our full support for your efforts to obtain consensus on the programme of work of the Conference.

We also express support for the seven Ambassadors appointed as coordinators for informal substantive discussions on issues on the agenda of the CD. We are sure that they will be able to add value to last year's discussions on pressing matters relating to international security and disarmament and facilitate improvement in understanding of the concerns of the member States of the CD.

On the basis of 2007's work the CD is but a short step away from resolving its long-standing impasse situation. We believe that the Conference can and should fulfil its mandate not only as a deliberating body but also as a negotiating body. The energetic efforts undertaken by the P-6 in 2007 to secure approval of the programme of work of the CD led to tangible progress in the Conference, reflected in the drafting of Presidential decision L.1, complemented by documents CRP.35 and CRP.36.

Our delegation considers that, taking into account the unique level of support for this document, it should continue to be the basis for obtaining broad consensus this year. We believe that the content of L.1 makes it possible to conduct an active negotiating process in the CD on approval of the treaty on prohibition of the production of fissile material, as well as continuing substantive discussions on other key issues on the Conference's agenda. In this connection, we take the view that the CD should not lose the momentum created last year. The personal presence here of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and his statement at the opening of the CD was a meaningful signal for States to show political will and create the conditions to obtain compromise for the purpose of renewing the substantive work of the Conference.

Also noteworthy is the fact that in response to the United Nations Secretary-General's call, many delegations are sending representatives to the CD at a high political level, which certainly adds significance and authority to this body and gives an important additional stimulus which will make it possible to advance multilateral efforts in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation.

(Mr. Aleinik, Belarus)

I would like to note in particular the presence of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Sergey Lavrov, and his statement at today's meeting. We would like to take this opportunity to bear witness to the closeness of our two countries' approaches to the major issues on the international agenda, and particularly the key issues relating to international security and disarmament.

I would like to dwell in greater detail on two issues raised in the statement by the distinguished Minister.

First of all, the prevention of an arms race in outer space. We regard this as one of the highest-priority areas in the field of international security, arms control and non-proliferation. As each year passes, humanity increasingly depends on the results of space-based activities. These activities have become accessible to most States, including recently our country. As a result we are very interested in keeping outer space demilitarized and support strict compliance with existing international legal instruments that regulate the activities of States in the field of outer space law.

We also advocate the further development of these instruments and welcome new initiatives, for example the draft treaty on prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space and of the threat or use of force against space objects drawn up by the Russian Federation in cooperation with China. In our view, adopting such a treaty would make a major contribution towards addressing the problem of removing specific lacunas and unresolved issues in the context of the existing agreements in the field of outer space law. As supporters of the preventive approach, we take the view that the international community must take all possible steps to develop the proposed treaty before the presence of weapons in outer space surrounding the Earth becomes a fact. In our view, Russia's presentation of the draft treaty for consideration by the CD under an exploratory mandate will not place any obstacles in the way of the search for compromise on the programme of work of the Conference. Belarus is prepared to provide Russia with the requisite support in any negotiating process on the draft treaty.

Another issue that was mentioned today in Mr. Lavrov's statement is the initiative to make the Treaty on the Elimination of Intermediate-range and Shorter-range Missiles global in nature. Our country is a State party to this agreement and is complying with it strictly. Within this forum our delegation has several times mentioned voluntary steps undertaken by Belarus in the first half of the 1990s in the field of disarmament, including nuclear disarmament. These steps were taken despite the serious economic difficulties caused by the need to earmark considerable resources to minimize the consequences of the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power station. As a State which has consciously opted for non-nuclear status, we take a very positive view of the initiative to make such an important disarmament treaty as the INF universal. We are prepared to provide the necessary support to adapt the Treaty to contemporary conditions in order to strengthen the nuclear missile non-proliferation regime.

(Mr. Aleinik, Belarus)

I would like to emphasize that the two comments I have made are within the context of our position of commitment to universal, multilateral agreements within the United Nations system relating to disarmament. We believe that there is no alternative to such mechanisms when it comes to the practical application of a single set of rules for all States without exception, be they large or small, and accommodating their interests and concerns in the field of disarmament.

Finally, Mr. President, we have just joined with you in the official inauguration of the sculpture named “Preserving peace for future generations”, which the Russian Federation has kindly donated to the Palais des Nations. I believe that the title of this sculpture is highly symbolic and very relevant to the work of our Conference. I believe today we should all seriously reflect on what our Conference has done and particularly what it can do in order to preserve peace for future generations.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in French): I thank the distinguished Ambassador of Belarus for his statement and for his kind words addressed to the Chair and to the Conference. I now give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador of Sri Lanka.

Mr. JAYATILLEKA (Sri Lanka): I wish to begin my remarks from where the distinguished Ambassador of Belarus left off: the beautiful work of art that was unveiled just a few moments ago. That sculpture showed that the efforts to preserve peace require two hands, not just one: the globe protected in that piece of art by the two hands of humanity.

Now this reminded me of an underlying, implicit theme in the excellent constructive presentation by Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov today. Sri Lanka is pleased and wishes to congratulate the Foreign Minister on his initiative. We also wish to thank the Government of China for co-sponsoring the treaty on the weaponization of outer space. This is the kind of constructive, joint work in the cause of peace that Sri Lanka likes to see. But as I said, it takes two hands to preserve world peace.

Foreign Minister Lavrov signalled certain negative tendencies or dynamics in the global situation. I think we in the global South have watched a period ranging from the late 1980s, a period in which Russia made unilateral concessions, came up with proposal after proposal on the basis of the commonality of the threats shared by humanity, on the basis of new thinking. But, unfortunately, this period did not see a matching response from Russia’s partners. One bloc had died. But “bloc” thinking survived in another part of the globe. As a result, we witnessed power politics, strivings, hegemony, an attempt to unsettle Russia militarily, and in the absence of a balance in world affairs, we also saw the recrudescence of practices of naked invasion and occupation of our parts of the world.

Sri Lanka is pleased that Russia is once again resuming its rightful place in world affairs. We are proud, as Asians, that China has co-sponsored this draft treaty and that this cooperation between the world’s largest and most populous nations represents the kind of balance that we need in world affairs.

(Mr. Jayatilleka, Sri Lanka)

Sri Lanka contributed, as you know, to L.1 not inconsiderably. It is our position that L.1 should be a starting point and a basis for our future work. Our position may be summed up as L.1+. And the plus pertains to the concerns of those States that have not yet come on board. I once again urge the Conference not to dismiss these concerns as being those of a minority of States, particularly when one of those States contains the most populous part of humanity. I urged that perhaps a contact group or some other mechanism evolve from within the CD, which can separate these States, take on board their concerns, and modify and flesh out L.1 in order to take that effort to fruition.

Sri Lanka cannot also see why the FMCT should have greater priority than the draft treaty presented today to prevent the weaponization of outer space. We think that the CD should engage with no less zeal, as proposed by Belarus, with this draft treaty, and that would impart a necessary balance and transparency to our work.

That having been said, I once again wish to express our congratulations and thanks to Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, and also to Ambassador Li Baodong for his contribution to the important initiative that has been unveiled here this morning. Sri Lanka hopes that as the sculpture represents both parts of the world, we will eschew bloc politics and striving for unilateral hegemony, and join hands in copying our fragile globe and ensuring peace and stability.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in French): I thank the distinguished Ambassador of Sri Lanka for his statement and his words addressed to the Conference. I have no further speakers on my list.

I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of the Russian Federation.

Mr. VASILIEV (Russian Federation) (spoke in Russian): I would like to express gratitude to the delegations that have spoken in this room with kind words towards Minister Lavrov, and also to all the delegations that took part in today's meeting and the inauguration of the sculpture. We are also grateful to the Chair for its contribution to organizing today's event, and also to the representatives of the secretariat for the work they have done today. My delegation will pass on these kind words to Minister Lavrov; once again, thank you very much.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in French): I thank the distinguished representative of the Russian Federation for his kind words to the Chair and to the Conference. I have no further speakers on my list.

Does any other delegation wish to take the floor now?

It seems not.

I would now like to invite the Conference to take a decision on two additional requests received from non-member States which wish to participate in our work as observers during this session. These requests are contained in document CD/WP.547/Add.5, and are from Montenegro and Nepal.

(The President)

May I take it that the Conference decides to invite Montenegro and Nepal to participate in our work in accordance with the rules of procedure?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in French): This concludes our business for today. The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Thursday, 14 February, at 10 a.m. At that meeting I shall have the honour and pleasure to make my last statement as current President of the Conference on Disarmament.

The meeting rose at 11.20 a.m.