
Conference on Disarmament

30 June 2009

English

Final record of the one thousand one hundred and forty-fifth plenary meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 30 June 2009, at 10.15 a.m.

President: Ms. Caroline Millar.....(Australia)

The President: I declare open the 1145th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

It is with great honour that Australia assumes the presidency of the Conference, especially at this important time when we have agreed on a balanced programme of work. I wish to thank my predecessors for 2009: Ambassador Trung of Viet Nam, Ambassador Chipaziwa of Zimbabwe, Ambassador Jazaïry of Algeria and Ambassador Moritán of Argentina. Their excellent efforts have led us to where we stand today.

Allow me to extend a very warm welcome to a very distinguished member of the Australian delegation, Mr. Gareth Evans. Mr. Evans has an impressive résumé, including as one of Australia's longest-serving and most dynamic foreign ministers, and he is integrally linked to Australia's history of involvement in nuclear disarmament.

As foreign minister, Mr. Evans was instrumental in bringing to a conclusion the Chemical Weapons Convention and initiating the Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons.

Mr. Evans is currently co-chairing — together with former Japanese foreign minister Yoriko Kawaguchi — the International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament. The Commission is a joint initiative of the Australian and Japanese Governments that aims to reinvigorate international efforts on both nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, in the context of both the 2010 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference and beyond.

Mr. Evans will address the Conference on the work of the Commission to date. This work covers the full range of substantive issues of concern to members of the Conference on Disarmament, as reflected in our programme of work.

It is my intention, following statements made by Mr. Evans and any other delegation that wishes to take the floor, to revert to an informal meeting during which Mr. Evans has agreed to answer any questions you may have with respect to the work of the Commission. I will then reconvene briefly in formal session to address some administrative matters.

Mr. Evans, you have the floor.

Mr. Evans (Australia): Madam President, as one of Australia's most distinguished diplomats, you fully deserve the great honour of taking the floor as President of this group.

I am one of probably only a few people around the world who remember when the Conference on Disarmament was actually a body that was achieving really substantial results. Australia was very actively involved, as some of you may recall, in bringing to conclusion the end game of the Chemical Weapons Convention, and I start out with the working assumption that there is nothing wrong with this institution; it is an institution that is perfectly capable of really delivering very substantive results. The only difficulties are the familiar ones of political will and the dynamics that lie behind the capacity of diplomats here to get on with the job that they came here to do. So I start from the premise of real confidence in the capacity of the Conference to translate its work programme into real results, and I wish it well in those deliberations, which we all hope will start sooner rather than later.

The International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament aims to contribute to the work of the Conference and other work in this field all around the world. What we want to do more than anything else, to put it in a nutshell, is to energize a high level of political debate about all these interconnected issues and to get them onto the agenda in a systematic and coherent way — in a way that simply has not been the case for the last 10 years or so, when, I think we would all acknowledge, as an international community we have been sleepwalking on a whole range of issues that concern us.

The appropriate question to ask about a commission like this right at the outset — and it is certainly a question that I asked — is this: What conceivably is the value added of yet another high-level group of the great and the good coming together to work on these sorts of issues? What can we do that has not been done before, by the Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, the Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission led by Hans Blix, the Tokyo Forum for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament, the Commission of Eminent Persons led by former Mexican President Ernesto Zedillo, and all the other such groups?

I think the answers to this question are perhaps the best way of introducing to you the work of the Commission. The first thing to mention in terms of value added is the timeliness of this enterprise. Whereas in the past there was perhaps a sense that all these panels and commissions were just trying to hold the line against a tide of indifference on these subjects, now I think we all have a sense that we are riding something of a wave, not least with the new United States Administration taking a very much more forward-looking approach to movement on these issues. And that has already been reflected in the decision of the Conference on Disarmament itself, with the rapid agreement of the Preparatory Committee for the NPT Review Conference on a work programme for next year, the commencement of negotiations between the United States and the Russian Federation on strategic arms reductions, and just a sense generally that things are beginning to happen. It is very important for this Commission to be working in this atmosphere: the sense of momentum will make it possible for us to make more of a difference than might otherwise have been the case.

The second contributor to our value, I think, will be the representative character of the Commission. Even though it was formally established as an initiative of just two Governments, those of Australia and Japan, who are supporting the enterprise with their resources, this is an independent commission, not purporting to represent the views of the Governments whose members are participating in it, and it is very broadly representative. We have all the nuclear-weapon States under the NPT; we have India and Pakistan as well; and we have a very good cross section, globally and regionally, of the key non-weapon States and those otherwise outside the system.

Beyond that, in terms of the Commission itself, we have a very distinguished advisory board, including among its members our Argentine ambassadorial colleague here. It has associated with it a series of research centres worldwide, from seven or eight major countries, which are contributing a steady stream of research and inputs to the work of the Commission. And it has a very comprehensive outreach programme. We have already met in regional consultative sessions, in Santiago for Latin America and in Beijing for North-East Asia, and such sessions are planned in the near future for South Asia, meeting in New Delhi, and for the Middle East, meeting in Cairo.

So there is a serious attempt to bring together all the currents of opinion that are out there and to reflect them not only in the membership of the Commission, but also in the work programme and the resources associated with the Commission.

The third element that makes this enterprise useful is the intended comprehensiveness of the product. When one looks back at reports by commissions in the past, they tended to focus either on the disarmament issue by itself or on the non-proliferation issues by themselves, or just the institutional issues associated, for example, with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), rather than on bringing together in a very systematic and evenly balanced kind of way concerns about disarmament, concerns about non-proliferation and concerns about the future of peaceful uses of nuclear energy (not just in the context of civil energy as a proliferation risk but as a major policy issue in its own right). And what I hope you will find in the Commission report is genuinely even-

handed and thoughtful attention being given to the whole range of those issues, with much focus on the interconnections between them.

The fourth element that really should add value to the Commission's work is that we intend to be very realistic in the way in which we approach our task: certainly, to harness our work to the idealism and objective of a nuclear weapons-free world, but also to accompany that idealism with a strong measure of pragmatism, reflecting the realities of the world around us, where there are many geopolitical factors that make it difficult to achieve, in the short term, the medium term and indeed the long term, some of the things we would like to see, for good reasons associated with people's own sense of security and the security of the world immediately around them. We have to be very, very conscious of those realities for all the key players that we are going to be calling upon for action. We have to empathize with them, to understand the circumstances in which they find themselves, and not think the job is done simply by articulating a series of high policy pronouncements combined with some attention to the technical issues of verification and so on, and think that we have achieved something. That has been done before. What we have to do is shape our work in accordance with the realities of the world out there, which you all represent.

Also in terms of the approach that we are adopting, I think it is very important that our report be readable and accessible to non-specialists. Most of us would acknowledge that far too much of the writing in this area, the contributions to the public debate by commissions and others, has been produced by specialists for other specialists using terminology and assuming a level of understanding of basic technical issues which frankly is just not there among most senior policymakers and those who are going to be making the key decisions in our respective Governments. We have to be much more sensitive than we have been in the past to the necessity to communicate whatever it is we are saying clearly, effectively and in a way which will actually have resonance. If we want to energize a high-level debate, we have to produce a product that is actually going to be read and understood by the high-level players.

The remaining thing I want to say about the value added of the Commission is that it will produce a report that is very action-oriented — not just a series of recommendations which are free-standing in their areas — drawing attention to the way in which the issues interrelate and trying to identify a very clear action plan as to who should be doing what and when, and how all the things come together. And because it is an action plan rather than just an exercise in analysis, we will certainly accompany the roll-out of our report with a programme of highly committed advocacy, going around to all the key institutions in all the key countries, making sure that our message and the particular plan that we are proposing is well understood.

The present intention, so far as the timing of this exercise is concerned, is for the major report of the Commission to be published by the end of this year or very early next year. The Commission has already met three times, in Washington, Moscow and Australia, and will meet again in Japan to work on the detail of our report in October. The hope is that we can produce a final document that will be widely available pretty soon thereafter. That is a rather ambitious undertaking because there is a long way to go, but we know that if we want to have some influence on the way the debate shapes up, particularly for the NPT Review Conference next May, we have to get whatever it is we want to say out in the public domain earlier rather than later.

As to the substance of what we will actually be proposing — obviously it would be a little premature to talk of this, because the Commission has not agreed on all its policy positions. We certainly have not agreed on language. But what I can say, I think, is this. At the outset, we will be evaluating and analysing the risks as we see them associated with four particular areas. First we will assess the risks associated with existing nuclear-arms States and the weapons that they possess: the risk of them being used, either deliberately or

by accident, misadventure or miscalculation, and the implications of that misuse. Second, as you would expect, we will be addressing all the risks that are associated with adding to the number of nuclear-arms States, i.e. the proliferation problem. Third, we will address the particular problem of terrorism and the use of nuclear devices by, in particular, non-State actors, as well as terrorists' motivations. And fourth, we will focus on the risk that might be thought to be associated with the anticipated rapid expansion of civil nuclear energy over the next few decades, the so-called "renaissance": here the so-called "three S's" — the issues safety, and more particularly security and safeguards — will be very much part of our report. We will be wanting to address other industry-related issues, like the possibilities of proliferation-resistant technology being evolved and whether that needs government-supported intervention or whether we can rely simply on commercial dynamics to produce it, and we will also of course be looking at the role of industry in the context of the great debate about multilateralizing the fuel cycle, or at least creating more options than we have at the moment for multilateralizing the front and back end of it. I will not say anything more on this occasion about the civil side of it, but addressing those issues will be an important part of our report.

We will, I expect, have a sense running throughout our report of the basic underlying risks associated with the very existence of nuclear weapons. We will need to tackle the very real sense of complacency — with which I think most of us are familiar among our wider publics and certainly among many of our Governments — that this whole problem, the whole issue of nuclear non-proliferation disarmament, is not really such a big deal, the sense that — and this is quite a familiar sentiment — "Yes, there are problems in the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and there are other issues of that kind, but maybe the general risks associated with the continued existence of nuclear weapons are overstated."

I think in this context the motive of our Commission will be very much the core message that emerged from the Canberra Commission back in 1996, and there will be a clear element of continuity between what we are saying and what was originally and very forcefully said then. This was, you will recall, "so long as any State possesses nuclear weapons, others will want them; so long as any State has nuclear weapons, they are bound one day to be used, if not by deliberate design, then by accident or misadventure; and any such use, by anyone at any time, would be catastrophic for this planet". We sometimes overlook the core elements, of that message, but they have to be at the very heart of what we are saying. Similarly, with the whole theory of nuclear deterrence. We are going to have to tackle this head-on, because there is clearly a widespread sentiment in a number of State quarters that nuclear deterrence has worked in the past and may continue to work in the future, not only to deter the use of nuclear weapons but also to help deter other forms of threat, from conventional or other forms of weapons of mass destruction as well. It is obviously very difficult to make any progress towards a world free of nuclear weapons if such sentiments continue to prevail, and what we will have to do in the Commission is address very squarely and deliberately the really quite sensitive set of issues that lie at the heart of deterrence theory and deterrence policy.

I think the short point that I would make at the outset is that whatever truth there may be — and this is arguable — in the proposition that nuclear weapons have had some deterrence utility in the past, that in itself cannot be any reason, even if one accepts that argument, for complacency about the future, because of the awful reality that nuclear weapons alone, in the armoury of human technology, are capable of causing such catastrophic havoc. We simply cannot assume, particularly in a world of an ever-growing number of nuclear-weapon States, that any kind of stability that might have existed in the past will continue in the future. But all of that will need to be thought through and worked through in detail, for there are very sensitive issues involved, and States have different perspectives on them.

In terms of translating all this into some kind of action plan, let me say that our thinking is — again to the extent that I can usefully spell it out at this stage — to focus on three phases: the short term, the medium term and the long term. The short term we are defining as through to 2012, a longer period than just the period between now and the May Review Conference, because there are a number of issues out there which have a high level of urgency and importance but which are realistically not going to be brought to serious fruition by as early as next May, although we still want to inject a sense of real urgency into the task of accomplishing them. We are inclined to define the medium term as through to around 2025, and the long term as beyond that.

In the short term there are the following key issues. First of all, securing a successful outcome for the NPT Review Conference next year: this has to be the immediate short-term objective for all of us. In that sense, I think the Commission is recognizing that there are two main sub-tranches of recommendations here that will have to be given weight. One is the familiar set of recommendations, which I am sure the Commission will want to embrace, endorse, refine and articulate, about strengthening the NPT itself in the light of all that we have learned about weaknesses over recent years, and that means addressing the issues of safeguards, verification, the whole question of the additional protocol, and maybe the need for something going beyond the additional protocol. We will need to address the issue of compliance and enforcement, and the question of greater reliance on the Security Council as an enforcement mechanism. And we will have to address the institutional question about the role of the IAEA in particular, as well as of other relevant institutions, when it comes to developing the effective operation of the NPT in the way in which they interact.

Beyond that, the other tranche of recommendations we think is necessary will go to re-energizing and re-articulating, maybe repackaging, the famous “13 practical steps” of 2000, which disappeared unhappily in the debate at the last Review Conference in 2005.

The Commission believes it is very important that some of the core sentiments of many of the steps are still relevant and the language has after all been negotiated in the past. We believe it is very important that they be re-articulated in a way that will give new energy and momentum, in particular to the disarmament side of the NPT, and form the basic doctrinal structure on which our future progress can be based. We also think it would be desirable if that set of recommendations or resolutions were crafted in such a way that they would be capable of subsequent acceptance by nuclear-arms States outside the NPT, and that they, too, would sign up to something that might be described as a new international nuclear consensus. That might be an ambitious objective, but it is one that we will certainly be exploring in the Commission.

There is another issue which will clearly arise in the Review Conference that has already been the subject of much debate, going back to the 1995 Review Conference, and that is the Middle East. This issue continues to have a salience and a centrality in the political debate which we all have to acknowledge, and we must try and find a way of dealing with it that does not inhibit the effectiveness of the conference.

All that is only a part of the short-term agenda: there are a number of other elements to be addressed as well for the next four years. I would mention the obvious necessity for us all to work very hard to find a solution over this period to the immediate problems concerning the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, and try and remove the sources of anxiety which presently exist about Iran’s intentions and resolve the very unhappy situation that has now developed and escalated recently with respect to the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea.

Another element to really focus on in the short term will be to see major progress in the bilateral United States-Russian Federation arms reduction negotiations, starting, we all

hope, with the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) follow-on the discussions that are taking place right now. But clearly, as those two countries between them possess something like 95 per cent of the world's stockpile of about 27,000 nuclear warheads, there is a real necessity — if we are serious about achieving progress on disarmament — for that bilateral process to go through many more steps than just those being contemplated right now.

There is also a necessity in this short-term framework — the next four years — to begin a serious process of multilateralizing disarmament strategy, initially through major strategic dialogues between the United States and China and through the engagement of the other weapon States and the other nuclear-arms States outside the NPT. What form that multilateral process can best take, and when it is realistic to hope for some kind of serious engagement by the players whose arsenals are very much lower in numbers than the “Big Two”, is a matter for discussion. I simply say for the moment that we believe it is very important to get a sense of momentum on that particular front and not just say that reductions by the Big Two to very low levels, or levels commensurate with those in other countries, are something that will have to wait for before anything else will happen.

There are two remaining major objectives in the short-term period. One is the big one of finally bringing the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty into force and effect. We are all hoping that the events in the United States will lead to a change of heart in the United States Senate and that this in turn will have an effect on other countries that presently are still to finally ratify, and whose ratification is required for entry into force. I hope that this is an area in which a number of the countries represented here who have not yet taken that step will be prepared to think about doing so, not just in response to other events, but as an initiative that they themselves can take to inject confidence and momentum into this whole process. This is a discussion I have already had with a couple of delegates here since I arrived yesterday.

The other remaining issue in the short term is the other great building block for both non-proliferation and disarmament: it squarely relates to the work of this Conference, the fissile material cut-off treaty. Delegates here know the issues — and the complexity of the issues — very well, but I just want to stress the extent to which the eyes of the world really are now turned to Geneva, turned to this chamber, this forum, with a high level of expectation and a high level of confidence that progress really will be made. The Commission will certainly be adding its voice to that hope and hopefully analysing some of the issues — including difficult issues like the treatment of stockpiles — which are clearly going to make this quite a difficult negotiation in the period ahead. But we certainly would like to see in the next four years, if not the conclusion — which would be the ideal — at least major progress on this, and we believe this would be a major confidence-builder for the international system as a whole.

In the context of the fissile material cut-off treaty, I should say that the Commission, my co-chair Yoriko Kawaguchi, with whom I enjoy very much working, and the other commissioners — understands very clearly that this treaty is not the only item on the work plan of the Conference and that there are other key issues of great salience and great significance: the whole issue of negative security assurances, the issue of outer space, and the larger context in which nuclear disarmament will be occurring, and indeed, for that matter, some of the issues of general and complete disarmament, because we have all become very conscious on the Commission of the continued salience of conventional weapons and imbalances in influencing the nuclear debate. All the other items on the work plan of the Conference are of real significance and real relevance and we certainly, in the Commission, believe that those issues should be taken very seriously indeed, even if we do not specifically focus on all of them in our report which will focus on the cut-off treaty negotiation. But certainly in terms of the substantive issues involved and the way they all

interrelate with each other, these associated matters are of great importance, and you can expect our Commission to be making that clear.

In terms of the medium term — and we have 2025 in mind in this respect — the objective is obviously to put in place all the remaining non-proliferation objectives that have not been able to be secured in the initial short-term time frame, but also to achieve major progress on the disarmament side. We see as defining the medium-term in this respect the objective of achieving by a certain date — 2025 — a dramatic reduction in the overall numbers of nuclear warheads, both deployed and in stocks, both strategic and tactical, down to the very low hundreds, hopefully, at most. We see the objective as not only to reduce the numbers but also to reduce to the maximum possible extent the deployment of such weapons and their degree of readiness. We also see it as hugely important that this be accompanied by universal acceptance of a doctrine that the sole purpose of such weapons as do exist in this minimal form should be to deter the use of such weapons against a State or its allies. If we can achieve a world in which the numbers are very low, the deployments are minimal to zero, the readiness is minimal to zero, and everybody has signed up to a doctrine of that kind and is organizing its military resources in a way that actually reflects that doctrine, I think that we would all acknowledge that we would be in a much better and safer world than the one we occupy at the moment.

But the story must not end there. There is a longer-term perspective. We, as a Commission, are not minded to put a date on it, simply because the contingencies and the conditions are so uncertain, but that is the shift finally to zero, from very low numbers to actually global zero. We want to be, as a Commission, fairly precise about spelling out just what those conditions are. We do not think it is good enough just to say “that is the mountaintop up there: let us at least get to the bottom of the mountain and then work out how to get to the top”. We have to understand now, as an international community, what the constraints and the difficulties are and will be, and work to overcome them. Some of them are technical, making effective provision for verification and giving an effective guarantee against any State breaking out in a zero-world. But they are also very obviously geopolitical, having to do with the way the world organizes its affairs, the confidence countries have in the stability of their own neighbourhoods, and the confidence they have in the overall strategic environment and their place in it. And we want to identify with as much precision as we can, as a Commission, just what kind of changes are going to have to occur on those fronts to actually get to where we really want to be.

So that, in broad outline, is how all the pieces come together. There will be a lot more detail in our report, as well as, I hope, a lot more analysis and a lot more argument, not just prescriptions thrown out, and I hope it will be put together and expressed in a way that is readable and accessible.

Running, finally, through all of this will be the theme that what we need here, as in every other area of international and domestic public policy, is an injection of political will, and we need to sustain that political will over the long haul that lies ahead. We have to create an environment in which everyone is serious about these objectives and everyone is serious about creating all the building blocks along the way. We have to get away from the environment we have been in where, frankly, seriousness has not been the description that springs most rapidly to mind when looking at the behaviour of major States or those who have been obliged to represent them in a number of forums addressing these issues. To get that sense of seriousness, to get that sense of sustained commitment, is really going to require a number of things on the political front. It is certainly going to require sustained leadership from those countries that are the biggest source of concern at the moment, because of the sheer weight of their nuclear armouries — the United States and the Russian Federation. Leadership from those two is crucially important. But the other nuclear-weapon States under the NPT and the other nuclear-arms States outside it, and really everybody

else, have a role to play too. The momentum has to be not only top-down, but has to come from peer-group pressure of the kind that can be very effectively applied through multilateral forums like this. And of course, the pressure also has to be, to some extent, bottom-up, from civil society: mobilizing those sources of action and commitment out there in our respective communities that keep Governments focused and honest and engaged in these matters. Finding ways to sustain that political energy is one of the tasks this Commission has set itself, and is probably the most difficult one of all.

As you can see, it is a fairly ambitious agenda that we are setting ourselves, and we do hope that in what we are doing we can make a difference. We have enormously appreciated, as a Commission, the willingness to consult with us and the degree of attention and interest our work has already generated. I and my co-chair from Japan and my other colleagues on the Commission are very, very keen to maintain a consultative relationship with all of the stakeholders in this issue, including this particular forum here in Geneva in the coming months.

The President: Thank you very much, Mr. Evans, for your very informative briefing on the work of this very important Commission, and as we move forward in the Conference on Disarmament, we hope some of the ideas and proposals emanating from the Commission will be able to inform our substantive deliberations.

I have one additional speaker on my list for today's formal plenary meeting. I should like to give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador of Japan, Ambassador Suda.

Mr. Suda (Japan): Madam President, I already took the floor of the Conference last week to make a couple of short interventions, but I did not avail myself of that opportunity to properly address the Conference as a new member. So, let me at the outset express my congratulations to you, Ambassador Millar, on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and let me assure you of the full cooperation of my delegation. I should also add words of praise to your esteemed P-6 predecessors for their outstanding efforts in steering the Conference out of its deadlock and back onto the path of substantive work. Particularly, I wish to thank the last president, Ambassador Moritán of Argentina, for his enormous efforts to pave the way for us to commence our actual work and for kindly introducing me to the Conference on 11 June. I also wish to thank the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva, Sergei Ordzhonikidze, and the members of the Conference for warmly welcoming me to Geneva.

I have asked for the floor today in order to express the deep gratitude of my delegation to Mr. Gareth Evans, co-chair, together with Ms. Yoriko Kawaguchi, of the International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament, for his timely and comprehensive briefing on the intensive work of the Commission, which the prime ministers of Japan and Australia jointly initiated last year. My delegation believes that his presentation today has already provided us with a wealth of useful ideas and encouragement that will feed into the negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty and the other discussions that are to commence pursuant to the decision in CD/1864.

Japan, as the only country to have suffered nuclear bombings, has consistently adhered to its three non-nuclear principles and has demonstrated its strong resolve towards achieving the total elimination of nuclear weapons. Every year we submit to the United Nations General Assembly a resolution on the total elimination of nuclear weapons, which receives overwhelming support among Member States. We actively promote the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Japan has faithfully implemented its IAEA safeguards agreement for over 30 years and has fully ensured international confidence in its peaceful use of nuclear energy. What is more, based upon our experiences, we encourage disarmament and non-proliferation education for civil society, particularly the younger generation. Against this backdrop, in April this year, the foreign minister of

Japan, Mr. Hirofumi Nakasone, presented 11 benchmarks that cover three fundamental areas for advancing global nuclear disarmament and announced Japan's plan to host an international conference on nuclear disarmament next year.

We are certain that the International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament will strengthen the recent positive movements in nuclear disarmament, and we anticipate that it will submit a very useful report after wrapping up its deliberations at the final meeting in Hiroshima, scheduled for this October. We strongly hope that the outcomes of the Commission's work will contribute to the success of the 2010 NPT Review Conference in the immediate term and to significant progress in the global efforts to realize a world free of nuclear weapons in the future.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Japan for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Malaysia.

Mr. Azril (Malaysia): Madam President, at the outset allow me to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. It is indeed an honour to have Australia presiding over the work of the Conference. Australia's credentials in the field of weapons of mass destruction and conventional arms control are well known. We welcome the updates on work done by former foreign minister Gareth Evans as co-chair of the International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament. We encourage you to continue the consultations in search of consensus, for which we commend your predecessor, Ambassador Moritán of Argentina, who conducted them so valiantly, steadfast to the end. Before us are the fruits of his tireless efforts – reflections of the aspirations within this chamber to start essential substantive work, translated in the form of draft decisions CD/1866 and CD/1867.

The Malaysian delegation is encouraged that draft decision CD/1866 successfully outlines, in a practical manner, the schedule of activities for the meetings of the four working groups and the special coordinators and has the balance needed. We view CD/1866 as the necessary prescription that would allow the Conference to begin substantive work — “preparatory work” — such as discussions on mandates, terms of reference, future scheduling, and other subjects. Given the limited time remaining, CD/1866 would allow us to commence practical work this year and facilitate further work next year.

Subsequently, my delegation is pleased that CD/1867 reflects equitable geographical distribution in the appointment of chairs and special coordinators. In this regard, we express our appreciation to the delegations that have come forward as potential candidates to chair the four working groups as well as to carry out the tasks of the three special coordinators as reflected in draft decision CD/1867. Malaysia is convinced that both draft decisions, CD/1866 and CD/1867, are a workable means to move forward, and fully endorses them.

We have passed one hurdle – the adoption of a programme of work, as reflected in CD/1864. We have proven to the international community that, after 11 years of impasse, achieving such a success is a difficult task, but not an impossible one. We therefore call on all delegations to demonstrate flexibility and to remain engaged in seeking ways and means to find consensus, for the impossible is not beyond us. The presentation just made by Mr. Evans highlights that such progress can be made. Above all, for now we need an injection of political will. We need leadership.

We look forward to the early adoption of both draft decisions. I assure you of my delegation's full support in your endeavours to move our work forward.

The President: I thank the representative of Malaysia for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I see that the representative of China has asked for the floor.

Mr. Li Yang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Madam President, China is very happy to see you assume the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament, and will continue constructively to support your work, so that we can achieve consensus as soon as possible on the next step in our substantive work over the long term. My delegation has listened carefully to Mr. Evans' extensive introduction to the work of the Commission, and would like to take this opportunity to make two preliminary comments.

First, China highly appreciates the constructive work done by the Commission and all its expert members since it came into being. We have noted that since its inception, the entire membership of the Commission has engaged in in-depth, constructive and forward-looking study and discussion of many important issues. While no concrete policy proposals have as yet been offered, on the basis of what Mr. Evans just described it would appear that a relatively realistic and achievable plan of action is in the making. I hope and believe that with the joint efforts of its entire membership, the Commission will be able to make even greater contributions to the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation processes.

Second, China will strongly support the work of the Commission, and will continue to work with it in a constructive manner. As is known by all, China has consistently advocated the complete prohibition and thorough destruction of nuclear weapons. In that sense, China's position and the purposes and goals of the Commission are completely congruent. This is also why we would like to send Mr. Wang Yingfan, our former Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs, to take part in the work of the Commission. I am confident that China and the Commission will continue to maintain a constructive working relationship, and that they will work together to carry forward the goals and purposes of the Commission.

The President: Thank you very much for your statement. I should now like to give the floor to the representative of the Philippines.

Mr. Domingo (Philippines): Madam President, I join our esteemed colleagues in expressing our pleasure at seeing you at the helm of the Conference on Disarmament as an affirmation of Australia's traditional leadership in disarmament and non-proliferation. I would also like to join our colleagues in thanking Mr. Evans for gracing us with his presence today and his presentation of a *tour d'horizon* of the Commission. We are very inspired by the short-, medium- and long-term goals set out in the Commission's plans. As the Philippines is the President-designate of the 2010 NPT Review Conference, we very much look forward to the substantive report coming out. It will be a vital input in our work.

Our delegation would just like to seek some clarification from Mr. Evans on the core membership of the Commission. What mechanisms are there, if any, for the participation of say, member States as a whole, or interested States such as ourselves, who may not be in the "core group" but would nevertheless be interested in interfacing with the work of the Commission? Also, what plans, if any, does the Commission have for interfacing with our work here with the disarmament community in Geneva? We also noted the mention of regional and subregional consultations: in our part of the world, there was mention of consultations in North-East Asia and South Asia. We were wondering if perhaps South-East Asia and Oceania would be included in those consultations, or if there would be another track for South-East Asia and the Pacific.

We would just like some clarification on those points, and, again, we would like to reaffirm our fullest support for the work of the Commission. We would also like to thank the Commission's co-chair, the Government of Japan, for its initiatives and plans for the Commission, and we look forward to working closely with the Commission towards a successful outcome of the NPT Review Conference next year.

The President: I thank the representative of the Philippines for his statement, and invite Mr. Evans to respond to the points raised by speakers.

Mr. Evans (Australia): We have not yet worked out a formal mechanism for getting what will be our final report into the United Nations system or the broader multilateral system. We are going to be looking at every available avenue, including all the obvious ones like the First Committee of the General Assembly and so on, but it remains to be seen how that will work. Certainly there is enthusiasm on the part of the Commission members to find the maximum possible array of formal vehicles as well as informal consultations to make sure that our recommendations are heard and understood and are out there in the debate. In that context, for example, I addressed side meetings of the Preparatory Committee in New York just a few weeks ago, and the members of the Commission have been quite active in a number of institutional contexts. Similarly, with formal mechanisms, we are continuing consultation here with the Conference on Disarmament. We have not thought through any formal arrangement on that. Certainly, for the duration of the Australian and, I hope, subsequent presidencies, the Commission will want to stay closely in touch with the Conference and hopefully seek another opportunity, perhaps early next year, to go through the substance of the final report and see how that plays out with the current stage of the deliberations of the Conference.

In terms of other regional meetings, I think the fact that South-East Asia has escaped our attention so far for a regional meeting just suggests that it is a part of the world which has not generated quite as many anxieties as the other four that have been mentioned, although of course, as with Latin America — which we have already consulted — one of the things we are keen to do is to learn from the experience of putting together a nuclear-weapon-free zone. And of course the South Pacific weapon-free zone is another monument to cooperation of that kind, and I am sure we could learn something from that experience.

So I will give some thought to what we need to do to fill in those gaps, but the point made by the representative of the Philippines is well taken, and I appreciate the general interest shown by the Conference in outreach from us. That is much to be preferred to “yes, well, thanks very much, but we will put that on the shelf and not take any notice of it”.

The President: Thank you very much, Mr. Evans. I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Hosseini (Islamic Republic of Iran): Madam President, I take this opportunity to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference. I also commend the work done by your predecessor, Ambassador Moritán of Argentina.

Following the statement by Mr. Evans, I wish to make some points. We welcome all dignitaries from capitals to participate in the work of the Conference on Disarmament and to share their views with us on the work of the Conference. However, I would like to clear up one point. We consider Mr. Evan’s speech today as the expression of a national view by a delegation. Any participation by other entities in the work of the Conference should be decided by consensus. The rules of procedure are clear on that point.

In the course of Mr. Evans’ speech some reference was made to my country, and I have to say that the comments were not accurate and do not reflect the realities on the ground. We had expected to hear about nuclear disarmament, which is the highest priority of the work of the Conference on Disarmament, and I think Mr. Evans himself gave very good examples to show that as long as nuclear weapons exist, they might be deliberately or accidentally used. This is a reality. We know that there are some countries possessing nuclear weapons. We know that there are some countries under the umbrella of nuclear weapons, indirectly or directly benefiting from nuclear weapons for their security. I wonder how the Commission that was described today to us by Mr. Evans will resolve this puzzle.

Mr. Evans (Australia): I am not sure that it is quite fair to say that anything I said today about the Islamic Republic of Iran was inaccurate, because all I said was the fairly obvious proposition that Iran is a country of concern at the moment to the wider international community, obviously because of the unresolved issues with Security Council resolutions. That speaks for itself. There are also obviously concerns about what the Islamic Republic of Iran's longer-term intentions are.

Anyone familiar with my own personal work on these issues will perhaps know that for a long time I have been arguing that we should not make any assumptions at all about the Islamic Republic of Iran's determination to acquire nuclear weapons. On the contrary, it is perfectly reasonable to contemplate a negotiated outcome to the concerns that exist, which would reassure the wider international community that it is in fact not the intention of the Islamic Republic of Iran to acquire nuclear weapons and that while it may be rather keen on having fissile-material production capability, which is something that the NPT presently does allow it to do, it is not to be assumed that anything will follow from that. But it has to be acknowledged that this is an issue of concern. It is generating a lot of anxiety, not only in the Middle East but in the wider world, and it is just one of those issues on which the wider international community would like, I think, to have a rather greater degree of comfort than it has at the moment. That is what I meant in a sense by saying that this issue should be resolved within the next four years in a way with which everybody is comfortable, as opposed to the situation at the moment where there is still, for whatever reason, good or bad, a rather high level of discomfort.

I hope that the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran appreciates this response in the spirit in which it is offered. I have been to Teheran myself, and I have spoken to a number of Iranian ambassadors and senior officials, including Mr. Jallili and Mr. Larijani. I am very familiar with the whole cast that is involved in this, and I have had many conversations in the United States and Europe on this issue, trying to persuade everybody to adopt a slightly more calm and moderate view towards its resolution. I hope that these efforts will bear fruit in due course, and I hope that some of that tone will be reflected in the Commission report, although we still have to spend some time working through that issue.

The President: I would like to thank the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran very much for his comments, and Mr. Evans for his responses. I see I have the Ambassador of the Syrian Arab Republic on my list.

Mr. Hamoui (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): Thank you, Madam President.

I wish to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference. We know you as one of the very prominent ambassadors who have worked with great dedication and effort during the past three years to give impetus to the work of the Conference. I would also like to thank all of the ambassadors who presided over the Conference before you and, in particular, His Excellency the Ambassador of Argentina, who has made tireless efforts to advance the work of the Conference. I also wish to thank the members of his Mission for their tangible efforts.

I also wish to thank Mr. Evans for his observations this morning. I would particularly like to welcome him among us as he is a prominent international figure. We greatly appreciate his efforts in the International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament. We felt quite encouraged by his words and hope that the Commission will achieve its objective of nuclear disarmament.

I have two simple questions that I wish to put here regarding the upcoming Conference that will be held in Cairo, dedicated to the Middle East region. What are the aims of this Conference, and which States, authorities and persons will be invited to attend?

The second question concerns the nature of the relationship between your Commission and the International Atomic Energy Agency. Can we say that the two institutions are complementary, or do you think that they are in competition? Thank you, Sir.

Mr. Evans (Australia): Thank you very much for the question. The intended round-table conference in Cairo, in September I think, is intended to bring together 30 or 40 participants from around the region, both first- and second-track: Governments and also think tanks and other researchers who can contribute usefully to our deliberations. Every major country in the region will certainly be invited, and I do hope they all feel it possible to attend. We are looking at quite small numbers from each country, maybe four or five people at most, and possibly less than that, but a total complement, as I said, of no more than 30 to 40 people so the discussion can be free-flowing and intense.

As for the experience so far of that sort of format in Latin America and North-East Asia, there have been surprisingly productive occasions when a lot of issues have been out on the table and people have felt able to speak rather freely and to explore options rather than stick to country positions, and I rather hope that will continue to be the case.

Essentially the Commission is in listening mode on these occasions. We are still in the process of formulating our views, fully understanding regional dynamics and the different perspectives of the key players, and it is important for us to be knowledgeable about that before we take our final position.

In terms of the IAEA, I would not see at all any kind of competitive relationship between the Commission and the IAEA. In fact, the disposition of the membership of the Commission is to be highly supportive of the IAEA and to want to argue that its resources should be increased to ensure that it can in fact do fully and properly the job that we want it to do under the NPT. There are issues about whether the jurisdiction of the IAEA should be wider than it is at the moment, in particular, for example, whether it should be the monitoring agency, or the verification agency, in the context of any fissile-material treaty that may be negotiated. I think the view of the Commission at the moment would be supportive of not multiplying institutions beyond necessity and, generally speaking, if it is possible to do it within an existing framework and to give it from another source, a different, and additional treaty obligation, I think that is a position with which generally we would start in sympathy. But if there are strong views to the contrary, the Commission has by no means decided this or any other such issue, and is very interested in hearing those views. Maybe again the regional conference will be an occasion for that.

The President: Thank you very much, both to the Syrian Ambassador for his comments and to Mr. Evans for his response.

Are there any other delegations who would like to take the floor in this formal session before we suspend the meeting and reconvene it in informal session at this point? I see none.

We will therefore reconvene in an informal meeting within a few minutes to allow for some further questions and answers with Mr. Evans. I will then reconvene the formal plenary for some administrative matters following the informal session.

The formal plenary meeting is suspended.

The meeting was suspended at 11.20 a.m. and resumed at 12.20 p.m.

The President: I now reconvene the formal plenary meeting.

Australia's objective as President is to ensure that the Conference makes the best use of the time available to us in 2009. To that end, it is my intention to convene a formal plenary meeting on Thursday, 2 July, at 10 a.m. At that meeting I would encourage delegations to make substantive statements on the issues covered in our programme of

work. This should help guide forthcoming deliberations in the four working groups and on the issues for which the special coordinators will be responsible, once the working group chairs and the special coordinators are appointed and the schedule of activities agreed. To this end, I would hope that members of the Conference will be in a position to adopt at Thursday's meeting the list of working group chairs and special coordinators as well as a calendar.

Some delegations have raised legitimate concerns about the draft decisions in CD/1866 and CD/1867. I am continuing to consult with delegations to address these concerns. I appreciate, too, that some delegations have yet to receive instructions from capitals.

In this context, I should like also to emphasize that, as set out clearly in CD/1864 on the programme of work, decisions on the appointment of the chairs and special coordinators, and on the calendar, are for 2009 only. The 2010 Conference on Disarmament will need to take its decisions on a programme of work, on subsidiary bodies and on who will chair them and on a calendar of activities.

If we are able to take a decision this week for the remainder of 2009, delegations will be able to prepare during the July break to enable us to undertake substantive deliberations in August.

In light of the changed circumstances, since my colleague from Argentina proposed for adoption the draft calendar of work contained in document CD/1866, I would now like to circulate a revised draft calendar. This draft document will be circulated as CD/1866/Rev.1 and it simply provides for the fact that we have not started work in the working groups and special coordinators this week. That is one simple deletion of the first page.

Would any delegation like to take the floor at this time? I see none.

I should like to thank once again everyone for their contribution to a very rich debate this morning and advise that the next formal plenary meeting will be held on Thursday, 2 July, at 10 a.m. in this meeting room.

The meeting is adjourned.

The meeting rose at 12.25 p.m.