
Conference on Disarmament

27 January 2011

English

Final record of the one thousand two hundredth plenary meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Thursday, 27 January 2011, at 10.15 a.m.

President: Mr. Marius Grenius..... (Canada)

The President: Dear colleagues, I declare open the 1200th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament, and also our third meeting this week. I believe that there was a good exchange of views with the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Ban Ki-moon. As you were aware, he was very, very pressed for time, but felt that he wanted to hear everybody who had put their flag up, so to speak, and he stayed with us right to the end of the speakers' list. I look forward to seeing what else comes out of that informal discussion.

Today, I would like to extend a warm welcome to our guest Ms. Rose Gottemoeller, who is the Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of Arms Control, Verification and Compliance. I expect that given the good news about the ratification of the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) by the upper house of the Russian parliament, she may wish to say a few words about that. Also, we have quite a long speakers' list. We have the Russian Federation followed by Hungary, on behalf of the European Union, Belarus, Algeria, Japan and the Netherlands, and possibly other speakers. Ms. Gottemoeller, you have the floor.

Ms. Gottemoeller (United States of America): I am pleased to join you today at the start of the 2011 session of the Conference on Disarmament. The Conference is the international community's only standing multilateral negotiating forum for arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation agreements. It remains a vital institution for all of us.

Mr. President, we are heartened by your activism, enthusiasm and determination to move the Conference forward, including the invitation from you and the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, Mr. Ordzhonikidze, for ministerial-level attendance at this year's opening sessions. We believe that the more we focus attention on the current plight of the Conference, the more the international community will insist on setting this important body on the path of progress. You may count on my Government's full support as you and your colleagues strive to move the Conference to action. Ambassador Kennedy and the United States delegation stand ready to assist you in your important work.

The Conference on Disarmament and its predecessors have forged historic agreements to eliminate and control the spread of weapons of mass destruction. From the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC) to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), this Conference's record of concrete achievements that contribute to international peace and security is second to none.

When President Obama spoke in Prague in April 2009 about his vision of a world without nuclear weapons, he recognized the need to create the conditions to bring about such a world. The United States Administration has been working diligently on this agenda, which includes stopping the spread of nuclear weapons, reducing nuclear arsenals and securing nuclear materials.

Last year the international community undertook to breathe new life into the global arms control and non-proliferation agenda. The United States was pleased to play an active role in this effort. Of particular note, the 2010 NPT Review Conference provided a major boost to multilateral efforts to strengthen international security. It renewed the commitment of the parties to a set of common objectives; provided a plan for pursuing those objectives in the treaty's main pillars of non-proliferation, disarmament and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy; and it restored confidence in the global regime on which the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons is based. Additionally, the Nuclear Security Summit in Washington and the completion of the new START Treaty between the United States and the Russian Federation have contributed to the tremendous momentum for even further progress.

We applaud the efforts by Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations, to advance the goals of multilateral arms control, non-proliferation and

disarmament, and fully endorse his appeal to the Conference on Disarmament made yesterday. We share his assessment of September 2010 that, in light of the past accomplishments of the Conference on Disarmament and its record of making progress even in a complex political and security context, there is no good reason for stagnation. Yet, for nearly 15 years, this multilateral negotiating body has registered no concrete progress.

To be sure, there have been glimmers of hope and false starts, most recently in June 2009, the last time I had the pleasure to speak to this plenary about the goals of this organization. Then, the Conference had agreed to a comprehensive and balanced programme of work to begin negotiations on a verifiable fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT), and to conduct substantive discussions on nuclear disarmament, negative security assurances (NSAs) and the prevention of an arms race in outer space (PAROS).

There was great hope that the 2009 agreement outlined in document CD/1864 would finally revive the Conference on Disarmament from its long slumber. As we know, for one very specific reason, this was not to be. As my Government noted last September at the Secretary-General's high-level meeting in New York, "a single country — a good friend of the United States — changed its mind and has blocked the Conference from implementing its workplan".

As a result, we find ourselves starting the fifteenth annual session of the Conference on Disarmament since the conclusion of the CTBT negotiations in 1996 with this institution dead in the water. We can and must do better. Waiting *ad infinitum* for the Conference to commence negotiations on an FMCT and to engage in serious discussions on other issues of concern to member States is not a viable option. After all the progress that has been achieved on arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation in the last two years, we must look forward and move with purpose, especially in this, the most important international arms control forum.

An FMCT has long been one of the key goals of multilateral arms control. A cut-off will provide a firm foundation for future disarmament efforts and help to consolidate the arms control gains made since the end of the cold war. It is one of the key steps called for in the Final Document of the 2010 NPT Review Conference. The verifiable controls over fissile material under an FMCT will play an important role by strengthening confidence among the relevant States and help to create the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons.

No other world body of sovereign States is better suited to negotiating an FMCT. We readily acknowledge that an FMCT would have profound security implications for countries that have unsafeguarded nuclear facilities, including the United States of America. Under the rules of procedure and consensus principle of the Conference on Disarmament, every State assembled in this room will have an equal opportunity to defend its interests and ensure that an FMCT does not harm its vital interests.

The entire point of seeking to pursue an FMCT in this forum is precisely because of the consensus principle underpinning this body's substantive work. No country need fear the outcome of FMCT negotiations, and no country should feel it necessary to abuse the consensus principle and frustrate everyone's desire to resume serious disarmament efforts and negotiations.

Time is running out. In short, it's time for the members of this body to approve a programme of work and get started on FMCT negotiations. If we cannot find a way to begin these negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament, then we will need to consider other options. The calls for exploring such alternatives were in evidence at last year's high-level meeting and during the subsequent session of the First Committee of the United

Nations General Assembly. The longer the Conference on Disarmament languishes, the louder and more persistent such calls will become.

Should we not be able to agree to begin negotiations now, in preparation for negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty in the Conference, we strongly support the idea of good discussion in plenary sessions of broad FMCT issues, reinforced by expert-level technical discussions on specific FMCT topics which could provide further input for plenary exchanges. This work will not be a substitute for FMCT negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament, but healthy intellectual homework that will prepare the way for what will almost certainly be a difficult negotiation.

We urge every member State to dispatch to Geneva scientific and technical experts on fissile material to support such discussions here in the coming weeks. The United States experts will follow me here in several weeks and be available to contribute to discussions in the Conference and to hold meetings on the margins with interested delegations. We look forward to contributing to these FMCT discussions, in plenary meetings and informally, elsewhere in the Palais des Nations, and hope that they will shed light on our own views and on the views of others. The United States will also be prepared to discuss other issues of importance to Conference on Disarmament member States.

Now I would like to say a few words on some of the central matters before this institution. The United States Administration is pleased that the United States Senate gave its advice and consent to ratification of the new START Treaty on 22 December of last year. When he called to offer his condolences for the tragedy at Domodedovo airport, President Obama congratulated President Medvedev on the successful vote in the Russian State Duma. Yesterday, there was a positive vote in the Federation Council, which is excellent news. The legislative process will be followed by an exchange of instruments of ratification, which will bring the Treaty into force.

When the Treaty is fully implemented, it will result in the lowest number of strategic nuclear warheads deployed by the United States and the Russian Federation since the 1950s. The new START Treaty sets the stage for further limits on and reductions in nuclear arms. As President Obama stated when he signed the new START Treaty in Prague on 8 April 2010, once the Treaty enters into force, the United States intends to pursue with Russia further reductions in strategic and non-strategic nuclear weapons, including in non-deployed nuclear weapons.

The United States Senate has made clear its strong interest in addressing the numerical disparity in non-strategic or tactical nuclear weapons between the United States and Russia. The resolution of advice and consent to ratification of the Senate calls for the United States to seek to initiate negotiations with Russia to limit and reduce tactical nuclear weapons within a year of entry into force of the new START Treaty. Work is already under way in Washington to prepare for such dialogue with Russia on future talks.

The United States will continue its long tradition of transparency about nuclear weapons, as exemplified by the stockpile numbers that we released during the 2010 NPT Review Conference, as well as the many briefings and documents which we made available in the run-up to and during the Conference and subsequently. As a follow-up to the September 2009 five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (P-5) conference on verification, transparency and confidence-building, the P-5 will meet later this year to take up these issues again as part of our effort to implement the Final Document of the 2010 NPT Review Conference.

The United States supports properly crafted nuclear-weapon-free zones (NWFZs) because, if the relevant countries fully comply with them, they can contribute to regional security and stability and reinforce the worldwide nuclear non-proliferation regime. We

believe that the protocols of the treaties establishing such zones are the most appropriate way of implementing legally binding negative security assurances.

At the 2010 NPT Review Conference, the Secretary of State, Ms. Hillary Rodham Clinton, announced that the United States would submit to the Senate for advice and consent to ratification protocols to the nuclear-weapon-free zones established for Africa and the South Pacific. She also made clear that the United States was prepared to consult with parties to nuclear-weapon-free zones in Central and South-East Asia in an effort to reach agreement that would allow us to sign the treaties' protocols. Work has been ongoing since the Review Conference to fulfil these pledges, and we remain ready for constructive dialogue with the parties to the Central and South-East Asia nuclear-weapon-free zones.

The United States National Space Policy was released on 20 June 2010 and reflects the principles and goals to be used in shaping the conduct of United States space programmes and activities. One provision of the policy states that the United States will pursue pragmatic and voluntary transparency and confidence-building measures (TCBMs) to strengthen stability in space by mitigating the risk of mishaps, misperceptions and mistrust.

To implement this part of the policy, the United States is continuing to consult with the European Union on its initiative to conduct a comprehensive set of multilateral TCBMs, also known as the Code of Conduct for Outer Space Activities. We plan to make a decision in the coming weeks as to whether the United States can sign the Code, and whether any modifications would be necessary.

Additionally, we look forward to working with our colleagues in the international community in the Group of Government Experts (GGE), which was established by General Assembly resolution 65/68 during the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly. It is our hope that this GGE will serve as a constructive mechanism to examine voluntary and pragmatic TCBMs in space that address real problems.

Within a short time, the United States will be announcing its national security space strategy. Like the National Space Policy, the national space strategy will be based on the notion of shared interest: it is in the shared interest of all space-faring nations to ensure the responsible, peaceful and safe use of space.

With regard to arms control, the National Space Policy states that the United States will consider space-related arms control concepts and proposals that meet the criteria of equitability, effective verification and which enhance the national security of the United States and its allies. The United States continues to support the inclusion of a non-negotiating or discussion mandate in any programme of work of the Conference on Disarmament under the agenda item on the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

Turning now to other important matters, at the 2010 NPT Review Conference, Secretary of State Ms. Hillary Rodham Clinton reaffirmed the United States commitment to ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. The Obama Administration will continue to lay the groundwork for positive consideration of the CTBT by the United States Senate, working closely with that body, and to bolster international support for the Treaty.

While the Administration prepares for consideration of the Treaty by the Senate, the United States has increased its level of participation in all of the activities of the Preparatory Commission of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) in preparation for the entry into force of the Treaty, especially with respect to its verification regime. United States technical experts are working closely with their counterparts from the Provisional Technical Secretariat to explore joint efforts to improve the capabilities of the various networks of the global International Monitoring System and the functions of the International Data Centre in Vienna.

After an absence of eight years, United States experts are fully engaged in advancing the effectiveness of the on-site inspection element of the verification regime, both from policy and technical perspectives. The United States has also assumed full responsibility for the costs of operating, maintaining and sustaining the 31 stations of the International Monitoring System assigned by the Treaty to the United States.

The Conference on Disarmament can claim important success in its work over the years. The Biological Weapons Convention stands out as one of those success stories. Our own Ambassador to the Conference on Disarmament, Ms. Laura Kennedy, was recently appointed to serve concurrently as the United States special representative on Biological Weapons Convention issues. Her critical task leading up to the Seventh Review Conference of the Biological Weapons Convention is to lead United States efforts in working with others, including many of you here today, so that the groundwork is done to help ensure a successful Review Conference and work thereafter.

We believe that the Review Conference should take decisive action and adopt a programme of future work that will allow the BWC to make major contributions to building the global capacity to combat infectious disease and prevent bioterrorism, as well as promoting confidence in effective BWC implementation and compliance. The Review Conference should also take steps that enhance the effectiveness of the Convention as a norm against biological weapons, advance the goal of universal adherence and build on past exchanges in order to provide the premier forum for multisectoral information exchange, coordination and cooperation to identify, mitigate and manage biological threats.

We look forward to working in close cooperation with the parties to the Convention to achieve our mutual goals for the Review Conference under the excellent guidance of the President and your Conference on Disarmament colleague, Ambassador van den IJssel.

In conclusion, last year we all witnessed substantial progress in the arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament arenas. That progress did not happen by accident. It required the sustained commitment and hard work of many, many individuals and governments from around the world. It required trust and compromise and a willingness to listen to all sides and to engage.

We are making steady progress towards the long-term goal of a world without nuclear weapons. This step-by-step approach will require time, effort and the commitment and imagination of us all. Whether we are speaking of securing nuclear materials and keeping them out of the hands of terrorists, or steadily reducing the number of nuclear weapons globally, or having the collective vision to embrace the idea of a world without nuclear weapons, and committing to work in a serious and precise way towards that goal – we have much to be thankful for, but much left to do.

Consensus-based FMCT negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament are the next logical step in the nuclear disarmament process. We need to act and to act soon. Much is at stake, for if the Conference on Disarmament is left to wither on the vine, it will serve no one's long-term national security interests. It is time for the Conference on Disarmament to get back to work and to make its rightful contribution to international peace and security. Mr. President, we wish you well as you guide the work of this Conference forward.

The President: I thank Ms. Gottemoeller for her statement to the Conference and also for that update on United States policy. I was mistaken with respect to the speakers' list. It is the delegation of New Zealand rather than the Netherlands which has asked to have its name on the speakers' list. I think I am in deep trouble with the New Zealand Ambassador. I now give the floor to Ambassador Valery Loshchinin of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Loshchinin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. President, allow me at the outset to extend a sincere and cordial welcome to Ms. Gottemoeller and express our gratitude for her impressive statement. We share your views as a whole on the significance and role of the new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty. Concerning the improvement and “resetting” of Russian-United States relations, an important step towards nuclear disarmament and strengthening international peace and security, it is worth noting that negotiations were difficult and at times strained and intense. However, the desire of both parties for a positive outcome eventually led to success. The credit for this goes largely, and ultimately, to the Presidents of the two countries, and also the negotiators. Ms. Gottemoeller’s personal contribution to this work was invaluable, and I think that the success was facilitated in no small measure by the fact that she has an excellent command of Russian and our chief negotiator, Anatoly Antonov, of English. They eventually found a common language, and a favourable outcome was obtained as a result.

Two days ago, on 25 January, the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation adopted in its final reading an Act on the ratification of the Treaty. It must be said that this was no easy matter. It involved very difficult and intense debates in the State Duma and a vote with 350 deputies in favour of the Treaty and 96 against. It is true that yesterday the Federation Council, the upper house of the Federal Assembly, ratified the Treaty unanimously. Now that the parliamentary stage of the ratification process is completed in both countries, we trust that the relevant laws will be signed by the Presidents of the Russian Federation and the United States of America and the instruments of ratification will be exchanged. The Treaty will then enter into force.

Meanwhile, in response to the reservations made by the United States Congress in its resolution of ratification, the Russian parliament has also set conditions for approving the Treaty.

The Act stipulates that the new START Treaty is a result of compromise and that all its provisions — I would like to emphasize, all its provisions — are closely interrelated. Implementation of the Treaty is possible only if all the principles and provisions set out therein, including those in the preamble, are taken into account. This pertains in particular to the part of the preamble setting forth the interrelationship between strategic offensive arms and strategic defensive arms and the growing importance of that interrelationship as levels of strategic nuclear arms are reduced.

The Act also emphasizes that the Russian Federation may withdraw from the Treaty in the event of unilateral deployment by the United States of ballistic missile defence systems that “qualitatively undermine the national security and defence capabilities of the Russian Federation”, or the development of strategic non-nuclear weapon systems in the absence of the relevant decisions of the Bilateral Consultative Commission established under the Treaty.

As President Medvedev stressed in his statement at the Davos Forum yesterday, “We must continue our efforts in the area of strategic offensive arms reduction and in the related area of missile defence.”

We are convinced that the entry into force of the new Treaty will set the stage for continued progress in nuclear disarmament in a wider context. We hope that this will provide further impetus for positive developments in the Conference on Disarmament and enable us to begin substantive work.

I should like to inform you, Mr. President, and colleagues that the views of the Russian Federation on the entire range of disarmament processes and the situation in the Conference on Disarmament will be presented in detail to the Conference on 1 March by Sergey Lavrov, Minister for Foreign Affairs.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Russia for his statement and now give the floor to the delegation of Hungary on behalf of the European Union.

Mr. Iliopoulos (Hungary): Mr. President, I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The candidate countries Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Iceland, the stabilization and association process countries and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia align themselves with this declaration. At the outset I would like to express our heartfelt condolences to the delegation of the Russian Federation for the tragic loss of life during the recent terrorist attack in Moscow.

Since this is the first time that I am taking the floor under your presidency, allow me first to congratulate you on the assumption of the post as the first President of the Conference on Disarmament during its 2011 session. I would like to assure you, and the other six Presidents chairing the Conference on Disarmament during the 2011 session (P-6), of the full support of the European Union in your efforts to guide the work of this Conference and to overcome its long-standing impasse. Furthermore, I would like to commend you for the successful adoption of the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament for the current session.

The European Union highly values the system of work of the P-6 presidencies, which has made a considerable contribution to the work of the Conference on Disarmament, and is keen to see this model of close and continuous coordination among the Presidents of the annual sessions continue. We therefore wish success to the P-6 of 2011, namely Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Cuba and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. As last year, we will continuously support your efforts.

Yesterday, we heard once again the urgent appeal made to this Conference by the Secretary-General of the United Nations to commence substantive work without further delay and to adopt a programme of work at the earliest possible date. The European Union fully supports and endorses this appeal. All Conference on Disarmament members bear responsibility for making the Conference on Disarmament deliver according to its mandate.

Indeed, last autumn, the high-level meeting on revitalizing the work of the Conference on Disarmament in New York and the First Committee heard the overwhelming call for the commencement of substantive work in the Conference on Disarmament. The Conference should heed this call and the European Union would like to see effective follow-up to it. Your strong personal commitment, Mr. President, as well as the efforts of your Government, will be an essential and extremely welcome contribution to this process. We hope that the consultations you conducted during the intersessional period will enable the adoption at the earliest possible date of a balanced and comprehensive programme of work, followed by its swift implementation.

Let me recall that the European Union attaches clear priority to the immediate commencement and early conclusion of the negotiation in the Conference on Disarmament of a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, known as FMCT, on the basis of document CD/1299 of 24 March 1995 and the mandate contained therein and subsequently reiterated in document CD/1864. For the European Union, launching these negotiations is urgent and important. All Conference on Disarmament member States should appreciate that national security concerns, while legitimate, should be addressed as part of the negotiation process rather than as a prerequisite. We also consider that there are confidence-building measures that can be taken immediately, without the need to wait for the commencement of formal negotiations. This is why we call upon all States possessing nuclear weapons to declare and uphold the moratorium on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

The European Union also remains ready to engage in substantive discussion on the other items that were included in document CD/1864: practical steps for progressive and systematic efforts to reduce nuclear weapons with the ultimate goal of their elimination, including approaches towards potential future work of a multilateral character; all issues related to the prevention of an arms race in outer space; effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons; and other issues on the Conference on Disarmament agenda.

Our goals and priorities for work in the Conference on Disarmament have not changed, nor has the European Union's commitment to the Conference as the sole permanent multilateral forum for disarmament negotiations diminished. At the same time, we are aware that the adoption of a programme of work will require sustained political effort. If the Conference remains at a standstill, there is no doubt that the international community will increasingly reflect on options and, if necessary, identify other ways to ensure progress in multilateral non-proliferation and disarmament.

The year 2011 must be used effectively to put the Conference on Disarmament back on track. We cannot afford another year of endless and ultimately fruitless consultations and procedural manoeuvres. The credibility and legitimacy of the Conference on Disarmament is at stake. The First Committee has insisted on the urgent need to revitalize the work of multilateral disarmament bodies and urged the Conference on Disarmament to agree early in 2011 on a programme of work, including the immediate commencement of negotiations on an FMCT. We believe that the Conference has an obligation to ensure serious follow-up before we report back in the autumn.

In 2011, the Conference on Disarmament must build on the momentum generated by renewed efforts to seek a safer world for all and to achieve the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons in accordance with the objectives of the NPT. It must make a substantive contribution to global disarmament and non-proliferation efforts. The European Union remains committed to this task, and we expect similar commitment from all Conference on Disarmament members. We, therefore, appeal to all delegations to the Conference on Disarmament to show the flexibility which is needed by all of us if we want to overcome the long-standing stalemate.

The European Union appreciated the enhanced engagement last year between civil society and the Conference on Disarmament. We would welcome a similar approach by the Conference in 2011, thus strengthening the contribution of NGOs and research institutions to the work of the Conference.

Lastly, the European Union would like to recall its long-standing attachment to the enlargement of the Conference on Disarmament. We support the call made by the informal group of observer States to the Conference on Disarmament, including some European Union member States, to appoint a special coordinator on expansion of the membership of the Conference on Disarmament in 2011.

The President: I thank Ambassador Iliopoulos for his statement on behalf of the European Union, and I now give the floor to the representative of Belarus.

Mr. Popov (Belarus): I have the honour to take the floor on behalf of the Eastern European Group, representing Bulgaria, Kazakhstan, Romania, Russian Federation, Ukraine and Belarus. At the outset, I would like to join others in expressing sympathy to our group member, the Russian Federation, on the occasion of the loss of lives of innocent people in the recent terrorist attack at a Moscow airport.

The Eastern European Group congratulates you, Mr. President, on the assumption of your duties as the first President of the Conference on Disarmament for the 2011 session. The Group praises your efforts leading to the adoption of the agenda at the first plenary

meeting. The Group stresses that the Conference on Disarmament continues to be the sole multilateral body for conducting negotiations on the critical issues of disarmament and international security and which possesses the necessary expertise.

The Group takes serious note of the attention given to the Conference by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, who addressed the Conference in person yesterday. The Group considers his address as an important element of follow-up to the high-level meeting held last September in New York devoted to revitalizing the Conference. The Group emphasizes that further substantive follow-up actions need to be taken in an inclusive manner, be driven by member States and should strengthen the role and work of the Conference on Disarmament.

The Group also welcomes the Secretary-General's summary of the high-level meeting issued on 24 September 2010, in particular his appeal to commence the substantive work of the Conference without delay and to adopt a programme of work based on the 2009 programme of work or any other subsequent proposal submitted during the 2010 session. This appeal was further strengthened by General Assembly resolution 65/85 on the report of the Conference on Disarmament. The Group believes that these proposals still represent a viable and well-balanced compromise and reiterates the need for the speedy adoption of a programme of work for the Conference.

The Group endorses calls for the appointment of a special coordinator on expansion of the membership of the Conference on Disarmament and would welcome further consideration of the issue of broader involvement of civil society in the work of the Conference on Disarmament. The Group believes that under the effective leadership of the Presidents, coupled with a responsible and flexible approach by all member States, we will find a way out of the deadlock the Conference on Disarmament has faced for a decade.

The President: I thank the representative of Belarus for his statement and now give the floor to Ambassador Jazairy of Algeria.

Mr. Jazairy (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, I reiterate the congratulations of the Algerian delegation to you on taking up the presidency of the Conference. We also welcome the statement that the Secretary-General of the United Nations delivered before us yesterday, and the informal discussion with him that followed.

I would also like to pay tribute again to Ambassador Sergei Ordzhonikidze, Personal Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General and Secretary-General of the Conference, for the distinguished role he has played in our work. Lastly, I would like to extend a warm welcome to our newly arrived colleagues, the ambassadors of Kenya, Zimbabwe, Hungary and Sweden.

It is unfortunate, indeed highly unfortunate, that for yet another year the situation within the Conference precludes the possibility that we might agree on a programme of work that would allow us at last to resume negotiations to address the various challenges threatening the non-proliferation and disarmament regime and, consequently, international peace and security. As Mr. Mourad Medelci, Algeria's Minister of Foreign Affairs, underlined at the high-level meeting in New York in September last year, Algeria believes that this stagnation should not be ascribed to failings on the part of the Conference. Rather it may be ascribed to an absence of political will to address the issues on the Conference's agenda comprehensively, as well as attempts to establish a ranking among the points in the Decalogue. It is also linked with the inability of the parties concerned to come up with regional solutions that might restore the multilateral momentum.

As the United Nations General Assembly reaffirmed in its recent resolution 65/54, multilateralism remains the core principle in resolving disarmament and non-proliferation concerns. On this point, I would like to add my voice to those of the many speakers who

have reaffirmed their support for the Conference on Disarmament as the sole multilateral forum for negotiation in the area of disarmament.

Clearly, the first priority we need to address is the elimination of nuclear weapons, which represent a continuing threat to the very survival of mankind.

We are encouraged by the expressions of good faith in support of the elimination of nuclear weapons, and the many initiatives and efforts undertaken to this end. The agreements concluded at the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in May 2010, the ratification of the START Treaty by the United States and the Russian Federation, unilateral reductions in nuclear weapon stocks and the Nuclear Security Summit in Washington are steps forward that should be applauded.

These efforts must be sustained if we wish to truly free mankind from the nuclear threat. Because it must be recognized that the progress achieved to date has failed to discredit the concept of nuclear deterrence – a concept which the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches stated, in 1982, “is to be rejected as morally unacceptable and incapable of safeguarding peace and security”, adding that “the production and deployment as well as the use of nuclear weapons are a crime against humanity”.

Nonetheless, the number of nuclear weapons in existence remains alarming. Doctrines of nuclear deterrence dating from an era rightly described by our Swedish colleague, in a statement delivered on 25 January 2010, as “dangerous” have been reaffirmed. One alliance has even declared itself to be fundamentally nuclear in nature, which, according to the report of the United Nations Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters published under the symbol A/56/400 in September 2001, is “contrary to the spirit and letter of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons”. The concept of deterrence does not feature in the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Resuscitating this outdated concept from the East-West confrontation further delegitimizes the obligation to reject nuclear weapons which is the cornerstone of the NPT. If this was to happen, it would run the risk of opening the door to nuclear proliferation, since no one has a monopoly on deterrence. Yet the well-being of mankind rests on quite the opposite process, entailing a shift from a non-proliferation approach to one of nuclear disarmament.

Algeria is firmly committed to nuclear disarmament. It abides by its non-proliferation undertakings in accordance with the NPT, which remains, in its opinion, the cornerstone of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. The Treaty rests on responsibilities and rights that are shared between the signatories. Respect for all Treaty provisions and their universality are preconditions for the credibility and legitimacy of the non-proliferation regime. We therefore reiterate the call made to States which have not yet done so to ratify the Treaty.

We understand the fears that some have expressed regarding the risks of proliferation. However, we believe that solutions which would clarify any ambiguities and imbue nuclear programmes with the necessary transparency could be developed within the framework of IAEA. The prevention of nuclear weapon proliferation should not in any way undermine the sovereign right to have access to nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, nor should it jeopardize our energy independence to the benefit of an oligopoly which imposes its own *à la carte* rules.

At a time when those States which have abandoned the nuclear option are being asked to commit to new non-proliferation measures, some nuclear Powers are pressing ahead with programmes to upgrade their nuclear arsenals in order to maintain a “credible” nuclear deterrent capability. In making the achievement of nuclear disarmament subject to conditions established unilaterally, these Powers are relegating one of the Treaty’s original goals, that of nuclear disarmament, to a distant horizon. We cannot allow the status of

nuclear-weapon State recognized under the NPT, subject to the limitations established in its article VI, to be treated as a permanent right.

We must move away from this inequality between nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States, for which there was at least a degree of justification during the cold war. The arguments used to justify it today are both dangerous and unfair. As Jean Klein noted in an article entitled *Ambiguities of non-proliferation* published in *Le Monde diplomatique* in 1978, it is hard to identify any rule of international morality that might entitle the rich nations to forbid others to exercise the nuclear option while they themselves have yet to relinquish the privileges that nuclear weapons confer and have yet to demonstrate, through practical disarmament measures, their commitment to building a new foundation for global security.

The nuclear-weapon States are urged to fulfil their commitments, in particular the unequivocal commitment to eliminate their nuclear arsenals in a transparent manner and so give full effect to article VI of the NPT. This is an obligation — yes, an obligation — reaffirmed by the International Court of Justice in its advisory opinion of July 1996. The nuclear Powers must accept their responsibilities in nuclear disarmament. However, this process should not be solely a matter for national or bilateral policy or, dare I say it, unilateral policy. To be effective, it must be negotiated in a multilateral forum. And it is in this context that a treaty banning the production of fissile material finds its relevance. A ban should form part of a non-proliferation approach but also, and above all, a disarmament approach. The entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) would be a significant advance in this same direction.

In this context, we think it would be useful for the Conference to devote particular attention to the issue of doctrines of nuclear deterrence and, by extension, the actual legitimacy of using nuclear weapons.

In brandishing nuclear weapons as a means to protect vital interests or confront alleged threats, the nuclear Powers are quite simply displaying total disregard for the security of others, that is to say, collective security. They are overlooking the fact that the Conference has 65 member States with a variety of security programmes, disregarding the fact that the international community has conferred upon us a responsibility to look beyond our own security programmes and interests and lay the ground for collective security in which the fundamental principle is undiminished security for all.

What, otherwise, are we to say of the situation of the States in the Middle East region, which will face a real nuclear threat from a single country which has built up a significant nuclear arsenal, with impunity, undisturbed and without being a party to the NPT? Despite repeated calls from the international community, Security Council resolutions and the resolution adopted at the 1995 NPT Review Conference, it still refuses to accede to the NPT and place its nuclear facilities under IAEA safeguards. Strangely, the decision makers of this world fail to see anything wrong in this.

The establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in this region is essential to the stability of its States and could help advance the peace process. We call on the nuclear-weapon States and the international community as a whole to take action to give this beleaguered region nuclear-free status. We trust that the Conference scheduled for this purpose in 2012 will provide the launch pad for negotiations towards establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East and will not be derailed by diversionary tactics. However, the process of establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones should not be viewed as an alternative to our countries' legitimate demand for multilateral negative security assurances.

Algeria joins fellow member States of the Non-Aligned Movement in calling for these negative security assurances. It believes that the right to self-defence cannot be invoked to justify the use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States. Our

demand stems from the legitimate right to security enjoyed by non-nuclear-weapon States. Moreover, this right is a key element of the non-proliferation regime itself. We have noted positive developments in this area in United States policy, and we welcome them.

However, the current system of unilateral declarations is not in our view a full response to our concerns.

It is vital that, within the Conference on Disarmament, we can agree on a legally binding international instrument which clearly and credibly prohibits the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States.

Outer space is a common heritage of mankind which must be preserved and must be used exclusively for peaceful purposes. We support the declarations made in our forum over the past few days reaffirming that the Conference on Disarmament is the best forum for drawing up international instruments that can reinforce the regulatory framework preventing and restricting the militarization of this common heritage.

The international community has entrusted us with responsibility for negotiating instruments of disarmament — first and foremost nuclear disarmament — that will help build real international peace and security. To this end, we owe it to ourselves to act with a sense of collective responsibility, as the Secretary-General of the United Nations reminded us yesterday evening. In so doing, we must be guided by the principles of the Charter of the United Nations: the peaceful settlement of international disputes, non-recourse to the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State.

In this context, the Algerian delegation, along with all the members of the Conference, is ready to engage in any initiative that might enable us to effectively move forward in our work.

In this regard, we remain convinced that the logic underlying the decision published in document CD/1864, adopted in May 2009, is vital in order to embark on a process of discussion and negotiation. We heartily thank the Secretary-General of the United Nations, you, Mr. President, and the honourable Assistant Secretary of State of the United States for their very positive assessment of the initiative taken by the Algerian presidency of the Conference on Disarmament, which led to the adoption by consensus of decision CD/1864 in May 2009. As the Secretary-General of the United Nations said yesterday, only an approach based on the logic underpinning this initiative will enable us at last to negotiate instruments that satisfy the security concerns of all member States.

Decision CD/1864 is not a finished product. It does not set priorities. It is a point of departure for a lengthy process that we must, in accordance with our rules of procedure, bring to a successful conclusion. The success of the process is, of course, dependent on contingencies that, from the Conference on Disarmament's point of view, are both endogenous and exogenous.

Lastly, allow me to quote one of our most eminent colleagues, a colleague of whom I retain only the best of memories and whom some of you will no doubt remember, Ambassador Masood Khan, the predecessor of our colleague H.E. Zamir Akram of Pakistan. In closing the sixth Review Conference of the Biological Weapons Convention, he said: "We will put success on the table and try to define what it could be."

There are risks in delay. If the Conference is discredited as a result of its stagnation, its survival will be under threat. We heard this yesterday and we heard it again earlier today. The logic underpinning decision CD/1864 is synonymous with the Conference's survival. Should its survival be threatened, we must consider the possibility of calling a fourth special session of the United Nations General Assembly on disarmament.

Lastly, I would like to echo those who spoke before me and supported the principle of NGO participation in the work of the Conference on Disarmament. Such participation is sought in other United Nations bodies and is already a reality in particular in the Human Rights Council.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the Ambassador of Algeria for his statement.

(*spoke in English*)

I now give the floor to Ambassador Suda of Japan.

Mr. Suda (Japan): Mr. President, I would like to begin my statement by joining others in expressing our heartfelt condolences to the Russian Federation for the tragic loss of life caused by the terrorist bombing on Monday.

Let me congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament at this very important juncture. It must be acknowledged that the Conference on Disarmament faces some especially difficult and big challenges in 2011. I am fully confident, however, that under your wise guidance based on your long and rich experience in Geneva, the Conference will meet the tasks entrusted to it by the international community. I assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation as you lead the work of the Conference. I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome our new colleagues from Hungary, Kenya, Sweden and Zimbabwe. We look forward to working with them over the course of this critical year.

Yesterday, at the beginning of this year's session, we once again listened intently to a strong plea by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for the Conference on Disarmament to fulfil its role, which is to immediately commence negotiations on the multilateral disarmament treaty. We have also learned that the new START Treaty between the Russian Federation and the United States is being ratified very soon. It is regrettable, however, that despite the historic agreement reached on a programme of work in 2009, no progress was made in this body last year. Given the heightened expectations of the international community, including those of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, repeating the same dysfunctional pattern of the last session is unacceptable.

My delegation strongly calls upon all member States to demonstrate their flexibility by swiftly agreeing to a programme of work and commencing substantive work. For Japan, the programme of work can be based either on document CD/1864, as agreed in 2009, or document CD/1889, tabled by the Brazilian presidency last year. If, unfortunately notwithstanding our best efforts, our differing positions do not allow a breakthrough, it is incumbent upon us to take a fresh and innovative look at the ways in which the Conference on Disarmament can effectively function in accordance with the rules of procedure while keeping them intact.

Firstly, the rules of procedure stipulate that the work of the Conference should be conducted in plenary meetings and that any subject relevant to the work of the Conference may be raised therein. Taking this into account, even if we are not in a position to agree on the establishment of working groups, we can still conduct substantive work on the agenda items within plenary meetings. This year, we must do substantive and in-depth work on all the core agenda items, fully utilizing the plenary meetings under the leadership of the Presidents. In this respect, I welcome the constructive initiatives and leadership demonstrated by the first President of this year's session on Tuesday. Japan fully supports the President's plan for discussions in the plenary meetings.

Secondly, we should recall that the rules of procedure do not call for a programme of work to include the establishment of any working group or its mandate; the rules only indicate that a programme of work should include a schedule of the Conference's activities.

In fact, for a long time (until the early 1990s) a programme of work mainly consisted of a schedule of activities, with the establishment of ad hoc committees agreed to separately. More interestingly, in 1996, the Conference on Disarmament continued its negotiations on the CTBT without agreeing to a programme of work at all. It did this by re-establishing the ad hoc committee on the CTBT negotiations independently. Another interesting fact is that during those peak years of the Conference on Disarmament, subsidiary bodies were not always established concurrently with the adoption of the agenda and the programme of work, but some of them were established afterwards.

All these historical examples clearly show that there is no strict sequence for the Conference's procedures and that the rules of procedure are flexible enough to allow room for our productive work.

Japan takes a practical and concrete approach towards nuclear disarmament. We believe that an FMCT is the next logical and critical step to achieving this goal after the CTBT. Indeed, I cannot imagine any road towards a world free of nuclear weapons without firstly banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons, which is the core element of their warheads. An FMCT, therefore, is indispensable for progressive nuclear disarmament as well as non-proliferation.

Starting negotiations will not prejudice their outcome, and even if we do succeed in producing a single text for a treaty, it is sovereign States that will decide whether they will sign and ratify it. An FMCT once completed can serve as an impregnable legal basis for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, like the NPT and the CTBT. Therefore, as called for in the Final Document of the 2010 NPT Review Conference, the Conference on Disarmament should immediately begin negotiations on an FMCT.

Besides this issue of a specific FMCT treaty, Japan is willing to participate in discussions with a longer perspective on how a multilateral nuclear disarmament framework or a nuclear weapons convention, as it is often referred to, should look in the final phase of nuclear disarmament. Of course, national security assurances and the prevention of an arms race in outer space are also important issues that this Conference needs to address. Japan will actively take part in substantive discussions on these issues as well.

This year, we should at least conduct substantive work on the agenda items in plenary meetings, possibly backed by various side events of experts. Irrespective of this, as we embark on this year's session of the Conference on Disarmament, we need to start reflecting on the potential implications of yet another negative outcome, particularly in the light of the high-level meeting convened by the Secretary-General of the United Nations last September. The sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly gave us the chance of another year; whether we will seize this opportunity or not is solely in our hands.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Japan for his statement and now give the floor to Ambassador Higgie of New Zealand.

Ms. Higgie (New Zealand): Mr. President, let me begin by congratulating you, as you take your turn as our President, on the assiduous manner in which you have been fulfilling your responsibilities. The effort and energies that you and your team have invested in consulting us all is very much appreciated. The first presidency of the Conference's annual session is always demanding, but I think it is especially so this year. I say this because more than ever, the future of this Conference seems squarely on the line.

There is widespread dissatisfaction amongst our membership here with the chronic stagnation of the Conference on Disarmament proceedings. It is also the subject of broader concern, as the timely high-level meeting convened last September by the Secretary-General of the United Nations makes clear, and as the Secretary-General himself made

apparent in his statement to us here yesterday. The current state of affairs is untenable. You have my delegation's full support in your efforts to focus the Conference on the substantive items of our agenda and continue your consultations on the establishment of subsidiary bodies and their mandates.

For the New Zealand delegation, the question of the content of the programme of work needs to be demystified along the lines set out in paragraph 6 of decision CD/1036, which was adopted by the Conference on 21 August 1990. That decision on the so-called "improved and effective functioning" of the Conference envisaged a streamlined and sensible process whereby the programme of work would be no more than that which its literal interpretation suggests – a mere programme or timetable, but certainly not an overarching mandate. Decision CD/1036 led to the current rule on the work programme (rule 28 of the rules of procedure), with its emphasis on organization of business rather than on mandates. Mandates are matters for subsidiary bodies should the Conference decide to establish such mechanisms.

My delegation sees no future in tying our work in procedural knots by treating the programme of work as if it were the instrument setting an overriding mandate for the Conference on Disarmament. New Zealand prefers to see our energies applied towards engagement on substance, including to demonstrate that the Conference on Disarmament is meeting the expectations of the United Nations General Assembly and, indeed, the world community, as a body that negotiates on substance rather than procedure.

The responsibility for getting this body back on track and negotiating on substance is, of course, not the President's alone. All members share that responsibility, whether it is expressed through showing the necessary flexibility to agree on a mandate for a negotiating group or several mandates for several groups, or through pursuing constructive debate in plenary meetings, as provided for in the rules of procedure. Again, my delegation is ready to contribute fully and flexibly on either or both fronts.

We welcome the constructive suggestions put forward yesterday in the speech by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Ban Ki-moon. We look forward to the engagement of the Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters on the issues raised at the high-level meeting, including on the idea of a panel of eminent persons. We would also hope that the Secretary-General's suggestion yesterday regarding the launch of an informal process on fissile material can be carried forward.

It is of serious concern to us that the contribution which a fissile material treaty can make to the cause of nuclear disarmament is being underestimated. We would hope that the Secretary-General's suggestion yesterday and other developments, such as the Advisory Board's subsequent involvement, may help bring about the change in the Conference that we regard as imperative. The continuing failure of this Conference to deal in a substantive way with fissile material and other major international issues on its agenda is not simply a wasteful use of resources in times of financial stringency and competing economic needs; far more significantly, it also compromises the interests of small countries like my own, for whom multilateral solutions, especially on issues of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control, are matters of high national security.

In any situation where the national security interests of many are jeopardized by the views of a few, it is inevitable that questions will be asked about the future of this body and about alternative avenues for pursuing such key matters affecting international security. While we have great respect for the Conference on Disarmament, which after all has succeeded in overcoming great political differences in the past, delegations are bound to want to weigh not only the utility of resources committed by the United Nations to this body, but also the pursuit of new approaches to multilateralism.

The high-level meeting convened by the Secretary-General of the United Nations on 24 September 2010 has directed a searchlight on to the future of the Conference on Disarmament. For my delegation a fundamental aspect of the follow-up to that event will be the manner in which the Conference's annual report to the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly clearly and openly sets out the state of affairs in this Conference. Reporting to the General Assembly in the opaque and empty manner of the past can no longer be an option in view of the concerns voiced at the high-level meeting and during the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly. As the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, told us yesterday: we must not let our deafening silence define us.

My delegation's fervent hope now is that through the groundwork you have laid, Mr. President, and with your customary leadership and courage, this body will break out of its stagnation, and that a new era — an era of negotiations able to weigh the security needs of all members — will be able to be reflected in the report of the Conference on Disarmament at the end of this year's session.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of New Zealand for her statement and I now give the floor to Ambassador Hannan of Bangladesh.

Mr. Hannan (Bangladesh): Mr. President, at the outset, on behalf of the Government of Bangladesh, let me express my deep sorrow and condolences to my Russian colleagues for the tragic loss of lives in the recent terrorist attack in Moscow.

May I also join my other colleagues in warmly congratulating you on your assumption of the presidency of this Conference? We are confident that your wisdom, diplomatic skills and experience will help us clear the work of the Conference in a smooth and productive manner. I can assure you of my delegation's fullest support and cooperation in discharging your responsibilities. I would also like to welcome my new colleagues to the Conference on Disarmament.

I would like to thank the Secretary-General of the United Nations for his statement in this forum yesterday. His interest and seriousness in the Conference on Disarmament has created much enthusiasm amongst us. I also thank the Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of Arms Control, Verification and Compliance, Ms. Gottemoeller, for her very comprehensive statement today. We are deeply encouraged by the enhanced engagement of the United States.

The delegation of Bangladesh commends your efforts during the intersessional period to reach out to all parties concerned and to conduct informal consultations aiming at acceptable solutions to the existing stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament. We are keen to see the Conference immediately return to substantive work. We hope that with political commitment and enough flexibility and accommodation we will be able to reach this goal.

Bangladesh attaches great importance to general and complete disarmament. It is our constitutional commitment; we are convinced that armaments are not part of the solution we seek towards attaining a secure and peaceful world. We also believe that nuclear differences are irrelevant to the perceived trends facing the world today: climate change, terrorism, food, water and energy shortages and increasing global economic disparity. We therefore strongly support, in principle, all kinds of arms control and disarmament initiatives aimed at reaching our ultimate goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

Like other members, Bangladesh attaches the highest priority to nuclear disarmament. We believe that until achievement of a nuclear-weapon-free world, non-nuclear-weapon States have a legitimate right to receive security assurances from nuclear-weapon States. We therefore ask the Conference for an early negotiation of a universal,

unconditional and legally binding instrument for negative security assurances. Bangladesh supports the beginning of negotiations for a comprehensive, non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons and other explosive devices. Bangladesh also holds that outer space is a common heritage of mankind and supports all international efforts to prevent an arms race in outer space.

Bangladesh is of the opinion that the Conference on Disarmament should be more receptive to global voices for disarmament, which would create space for civil society and induce working for peace and development. Civil society can bring in additional perspectives and ideas that might enrich the Conference's work.

The high-level meeting in New York came up with important guidelines and recommendations by the member and observer States for overcoming the Conference's current impasse. The Secretary-General of the United Nations also suggested some follow-up actions on last year's Summit. We strongly believe that the implementation of these guidelines, suggestions and recommendations will essentially revitalize the Conference and bring it back to work. However, ultimately, the onus remains on us, the Conference on Disarmament members, to reach an agreement on starting substantive work. Only one year ago, Bangladesh assumed the first presidency of the 2010 session of the Conference on Disarmament when hopes were running very high that, after the years of deadlock, the Conference would begin substantive work. However, this hope waned during the year, despite serious efforts by successive Conference on Disarmament presidencies. Still, recent developments in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation, such as the conclusion of a new START Treaty between the United States and Russia and its ratification, outcomes of the Washington Security Summit, the 2010 NPT Review Conference and the high-level meeting on revitalizing the Conference on Disarmament, although held outside the purview of the Conference, encouraged us to be optimistic.

We hope that this year the Conference will be able to make a breakthrough by engaging in its substantive work. To this end, Bangladesh looks forward to working with all the delegations in good faith. We expect, as the first President of this year's session, that you will provide a smooth and steady start – a good start to the work of the Conference, which will facilitate early consensus to reach our goal. In conclusion, Mr. President, my delegation wishes you the best of success in your endeavours.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Bangladesh for his statement. On a personal note, when Ambassador Hannan was President here, a year ago, I needed to see him a number of times to get his advice and counsel based on his own experience, and I thank him for that.

That concludes the speakers' list. Is there any other delegation who would like to take the floor? The representative of Australia please.

Mr. Wilson (Australia): Mr. President, may I start by joining others in expressing our condolences to the Russian delegation, Government and people for the terrible incident which occurred on Monday? I think we are all people who spend a fair bit of time in airports, and it causes us to reflect particularly on the nature of that incident. May I also pass on the apologies of Australia's Ambassador, Mr. Peter Woolcott, who is unable to be here to deliver this statement because of Australia's universal periodic review in the Human Rights Council?

As this is the first time Australia is taking the floor during your presidency, I wish to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and to thank you for your outreach and consultative and transparent approach to the Conference on Disarmament member States during your very active preparations. I also

wish to commend you on your ongoing efforts to secure a programme of work with a view to its early implementation.

You have assumed this important leadership role at a critical juncture for the Conference on Disarmament. Last September, you and the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, convened a high-level meeting on revitalizing the work of the Conference on Disarmament. At that meeting, Australia and others expressed their strong desire for the Conference on Disarmament to get back to work. Australia's fervent wish remains for the Conference to implement a programme of work and for that work to include negotiation of a fissile material cut-off treaty on the basis of document CD/1299 and the flexible mandate contained therein. Like many others in the Conference on Disarmament, Australia considers CD/1864, agreed by consensus under the Algerian presidency, to be the gold standard for work in the Conference on Disarmament. We also acknowledge the value of document CD/1889, as proposed under the Brazilian presidency. Australia understands that there is currently not a consensus in the Conference on Disarmament on an FMCT, but that absence of consensus does not invalidate our view on an FMCT, or diminish the company of those who share our view.

For Australia, it is inconceivable that sustained progress can be made on the elimination of nuclear weapons without a ban on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other explosive devices, and, for that matter, without the entry into force of the CTBT. At the Secretary-General's high-level meeting, Australia's Foreign Minister, Mr. Rudd, noted that the time has come for negotiations on the fissile material cut-off treaty. Any State unable to countenance the FMCT has the option of not participating in the negotiations or not joining in the final outcome, but they should not block the way for others to negotiate in the Conference on Disarmament.

Australia remains ready to engage in substantive and constructive work on all the Conference's core issues. This includes concrete and practical steps towards more effective negative security assurances and towards reducing, and eventually eliminating, nuclear weapons. We are conscious that effective progress on these issues requires a combination of multilateral, regional, bilateral and unilateral efforts working to reinforce each other. With this in mind, Australia places particular importance on building on the momentum generated by the successful conclusion of the 2010 NPT Review Conference. The focus of the non-proliferation and disarmament initiative that Australia, Japan and a range of countries across regions support is the need to promote the steady implementation of the actions adopted by consensus at the 2010 NPT Review Conference so as to advance nuclear disarmament and strengthen non-proliferation. Australia hopes that this initiative will be creative and lead to relevant practical proposals, and firmly believes that all countries have a responsibility to cooperate in this endeavour. Lastly on the core issues, Australia's first national space policy will soon be released. In this context, Australia looks forward to engaging more closely on space security issues.

Australia welcomes the frank assessment by the Secretary-General of the United Nations of the Conference on Disarmament yesterday and his encouragement for us to consider how best we can move forward on work that will advance the Conference's goals. As I have already noted, Australia places particular importance on building on the momentum generated by the successful conclusion of the 2010 NPT Review Conference. We have an opportunity in 2011 to advance multilateral disarmament efforts. We should seize that opportunity, with good faith and with transparency, with open minds and a dash of creativity.

Be assured, Mr. President, that you will have the highest level of support and cooperation from the Australian delegation, and I extend that assurance to all of the P-6 delegations this year – an assurance that we will work with all member States to get the Conference on Disarmament back to its important work.

The President: I thank the representative of Australia for his statement and also wish Australia success in the universal periodic review. Is there anybody else who would like to take the floor at this point? If not, I would like to give the floor to the Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference.

Mr. Sareva (Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference): Mr. President, I would just like to draw the attention of the distinguished delegates to a document which has been distributed in the meeting room – document CD/INF.60. It is an information note for both members and non-members of the Conference containing information for delegates on practical and logistical issues, such as lists of speakers, representation, accreditation and registration procedures. I have been advised that it is not before you, but has been distributed in the pigeonholes. It is an information note that you will find useful and we request you to peruse its contents and, with a view to the future, inform the secretariat if there is anything else that you would like this annual information note to contain. If need be, we can issue a revised version in order to service the Conference better.

The President: That reminds me of a “personal war” that I have been engaged in, namely the paper war of the United Nations. Hopefully, these kinds of documents will be distributed via e-mail, etc. I know that people still like them in their pigeonholes, but I think we should be ecologically responsible.

Mr. Sareva (Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference): The secretariat will be in contact with all delegations in the near future on whether we could move over to an e-mail-based mode of communicating with both members and non-members. As you know, currently we are working on the basis of faxing communications to you. The secretariat has been advised by some delegations that they wish to move over to an e-mail-based system of communications, and we will shortly be in touch with all of you to find out about your preferences. Fax is, after all, a fast disappearing medium, and therefore we have to think about moving over to an e-mail-based mode of communicating.

The President: This concludes our business for today. The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Tuesday, 1 February at 10 a.m.

You will recall that when we were talking about the four core issues, I suggested that perhaps we could concentrate on the issue of nuclear disarmament as one of the topics for next Tuesday. However, it is up to individual States and what they would like to say and how they would like to use our plenary time next Tuesday.

I would also remind colleagues that we distributed a flyer, a reminder, I believe last Tuesday, about a presentation that will take place after Tuesday’s plenary meeting by the interpreters, who are sitting very patiently behind us and who probably know us better than we know ourselves as they interpret what we are actually saying to you in plenary session. There will be a short presentation by them, followed by a question-and-answer session and some refreshments. That way you can meet the interpreters personally and have a talk with them. I do hope that all of you will join us for that informal event.

This meeting is now adjourned.

The meeting rose at 11.50 a.m.