
Conference on Disarmament

28 February 2011

English

Final record of the one thousand two hundred and ninth plenary meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Monday, 28 February 2011, at 11.10 a.m.

President: Mr. Pedro Oyarce (Chile)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Good morning distinguished delegates and ambassadors. I declare open the 1209th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

On behalf of the Conference, I would like to give a warm welcome to our guests: Mr. J. Deiss, President of the United Nations General Assembly, and Mr. Michael Spindelegger, Federal Minister for European and International Affairs of Austria. Your presence here today is a clear political testament to the importance you give to the work of this Conference, to the work that this Conference must carry out in disarmament and non-proliferation.

We shall listen very closely to the observations you will give at this juncture when the Conference requires special efforts to conclude an agreement allowing it to fulfil the mandate for which it was established.

I invite the President of the General Assembly to take the floor as the first speaker.

You have the floor, Mr. Deiss.

Mr. Deiss (President of the United Nations General Assembly) (*spoke in French*): It is an honour for me to speak to you today, and I thank you for your invitation and your presence.

We are living in an important time that holds great promise, but the future is still very uncertain. It is up to the international community to support all these men and women whose hopes must not be dashed. I recently spoke before the Human Rights Council and called on all States Members to take up their responsibilities.

Events in recent months have also shown great promise with regard to disarmament. A favourable political climate has been established, enabling progress in disarmament at both the bilateral and the international level. The Russian Federation and the United States of America — the two countries with the largest stocks of nuclear weapons — have succeeded in negotiating and bringing into force the new START Treaty. This result should be praised and highlighted. However, the disarmament effort is not confined to these two countries, as crucial as they are. All States possessing nuclear weapons must commit themselves in the same spirit to reducing their own stocks. This is essential.

In the autumn of 2010 I visited Hiroshima, where I felt the horror and suffering caused by nuclear weapons. I met survivors and relatives of victims there. I met men and women who have shown the utmost courage in their commitment to ensuring that such a tragedy never happens again. We, as representatives of the international community, must also commit ourselves, and we must do so collectively.

Indeed, the great questions of our time require answers that go beyond the capabilities of countries acting individually, and they necessitate an approach that goes beyond considerations solely of national or regional security. We need multilateral, inclusive and effective action. We need a United Nations Organization, we need a Conference on Disarmament that is strong and takes a leadership role in disarmament and non-proliferation.

The progress achieved in recent months provides us with a solid foundation. The result of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference held in New York in 2010 is a positive sign of the international community's commitment to engage in multilateral efforts.

One of the recommendations made at the Conference was that the Secretary-General should hold a high-level meeting on the Conference on Disarmament. That meeting took place in September 2010 in New York. I also had the opportunity to speak there, so some of you have already heard my message. It remains the same today. The Conference on

Disarmament is the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum of the international community. It is therefore an essential instrument. The Conference must be strengthened accordingly. It must overcome its deadlock. It is a question of the credibility of the forum and of all its States Members.

In the past, during complex geopolitical situations such as the Cold War, for example, the Conference has succeeded in concluding fundamental international disarmament treaties. Why does it not play the same leading role today?

As President of the General Assembly, I am deeply concerned by this continued deadlock. I wish to remind you of the many resolutions the General Assembly has addressed to the Conference. It is your responsibility as States Members to make the Conference a strong and functional instrument. It is always desirable for the decisions of the Conference to have wide support, but the rule of consensus should not become an obstacle to progress; a spirit of flexibility and compromise is necessary to break the current deadlock.

After years of deadlock, the situation of the Conference on Disarmament has become more and more critical. I am very confident, however. Progress is possible. The programme of work adopted in 2009 after many years of stagnation is a prime example. It is a good basis from which to resume work.

I also fully support the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, in his efforts to revitalize the work of the Conference, and I welcome his initiative asking the Advisory Board to follow up on the discussions held during the high-level meeting in September and to formulate recommendations on ways to revitalize the Conference. The General Assembly, as the founding body of the Conference, is ready and willing to contribute to this revitalization process.

Disarmament is one of the most important and noble goals of the United Nations Organization. We must spare no effort to reach that goal. It is a vital contribution to the promotion of peace, security and prosperity for humankind, and I wish to thank you, personally and on behalf of the General Assembly, for all the efforts you have made, individually or within your delegations, to attain this goal.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, President of the General Assembly, for your observations. I now invite Minister Michael Spindelegger to address the Conference.

Mr. Spindelegger (Austria): I am grateful for this opportunity to address the Conference on Disarmament today, and I am delighted to be able to do so together with the President of the General Assembly, Minister Deiss. Let me also use this opportunity to thank the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament for his work over the last years.

Disarmament has been among the key foreign policy priorities of Austria for a long time. Austria became a member of the Conference on Disarmament in 1996 because we wanted to contribute by playing an active role in this important body. Back then, the successful negotiation of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) had given proof of the great capacities of the Conference for arriving at consensual solutions based on constructive engagement by all parties.

The last time that I had the honour to address this forum, in September 2009, I was able to outline in detail Austria's position on a number of important issues, including our support for a treaty on fissile material, multilateral approaches to the fuel cycle and the long-overdue entry into force of the CTBT. At the time, you had just adopted a programme of work after more than a decade of stalemate. Therefore, I was optimistic that this,

together with the increasingly positive atmosphere in the international security arena, would lead to real and tangible progress.

And, indeed, we have seen real progress in various forums:

- The New START Treaty has entered into force. Implementation of this important treaty will, I hope, serve as a trigger for further disarmament efforts. I want to thank the United States and the Russian Federation for their commitment in this regard.
- Last May, the NPT Review Conference adopted, by consensus, a final document that included an ambitious action plan on nuclear disarmament:
 - All NPT States pledged to pursue the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons.
 - All NPT States recognized that the use of nuclear weapons would create a humanitarian disaster on an enormous scale.
 - And the five NPT nuclear-weapon States agreed to discuss central issues of policy and doctrine among themselves in order to enable faster nuclear disarmament and more safety and security for all of us and to share the outcome of their discussions with us.
- Also, in the field of conventional weapons, we have seen positive developments: the entry into force of the Convention on Cluster Munitions and the first meeting of States parties in Laos last November demonstrated convincingly that this convention is one of the most successful developments in the field of disarmament in the past 15 years. Austria actively supports the implementation of this milestone agreement, in particular in the area of victim assistance.

There have been other recent success stories in the area of disarmament. But, just like these three examples, they were achieved outside the framework of the Conference on Disarmament.

The poor track record of the Conference on Disarmament has lasted long enough. In view of the many historic achievements of this forum, it is simply not fair to let it continue failing, year after year.

At the high-level meeting that United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon organized last September, the message was clear. The Conference on Disarmament has become irrelevant. It now faces the real danger of becoming obsolete. More and more States firmly believe that the international community should use the expertise and resources here in Geneva for better purposes than discussing draft programmes of work.

Like many of your Governments, Austria would prefer working in and through the Conference on Disarmament, but if this organization is not able to deliver results, we must explore alternative working structures here in Geneva.

Last fall, the General Assembly of the United Nations put the revitalization of the Conference on Disarmament on its agenda. It is my firm view that, unless the Conference commences its work by the end of its current first session, the General Assembly in New York should have a plenary debate on the follow-up to the high-level meeting and on the future of multilateral disarmament. We must try to identify or establish a forum in which to proceed with substantive work on the most pressing issues. Likewise, we should consider making the future allocation of resources for the Conference on Disarmament dependent on actual progress.

It is also in this regard that we welcome the engaged presence of President Deiss here today. Your interest in the Conference and the revitalization of the disarmament machinery is very encouraging, President Deiss, and I pledge our full support for your

endeavours in this regard. Austria will continue to pursue this issue so that we, together with the many countries that support us in this cause, can ensure that meaningful follow-up to the high-level meeting enables a productive disarmament process.

For Austria, this is not a random political issue. For States that are not members of military alliances, such as Austria, the presence of functioning multilateral security institutions is a vital component of our security. Global disarmament is a pressing issue that requires our fullest attention. The long-term deadlock of core disarmament forums poses a serious security problem – a problem that has to be addressed. Here, paralysis is not an option.

It has been said that the problem is not the forum but the lack of political will. That may be so. But, achievements such as the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction or the Convention on Cluster Munitions demonstrate that political will can also be generated through a negotiation process.

Austria attaches great importance to the multilateral institutions that have brought us stability and security for several decades. Yet, these institutions are not an end in themselves. In this time of optimism about disarmament issues, the people we represent here want progress on substance, not the maintenance of institutions.

There is no lack of expertise or experience or ideas in Geneva. Many interesting proposals have been put forward by States and by independent experts. It is one of the weaknesses of the Conference on Disarmament that there is so little interaction with civil society, so little exchange of views with experts from academia and other organizations, and we thank the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) for its efforts to fill this gap. I encourage you to be more open in this regard. We live in a time when the public in our countries wants to be more informed and more involved. Over the last weeks, we have seen that desire expressed by civil society very clearly. It is in our very interest to lead inclusive discussions in multilateral forums.

In order to encourage a more systematic and cross-cutting dialogue with civil society, I had the honour of opening the Vienna Centre for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation last Friday. This centre, which will be independently managed by the Monterey Institute of International Studies (MIIS)/James Martin Centre for Nonproliferation Studies (CNS), will serve as an open and transparent hub for independent expertise and opinion aimed at contributing to the international discourse on disarmament and non-proliferation. I hope it will stimulate the debate in Vienna and also help to influence the thinking on the subject here in Geneva. The issues at hand are so important; let us make the best use of all positive forces to achieve real and lasting progress in disarmament. Thank you very much for your attention.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Minister Spindelegger for his observations, and I would like to invite the delegations to express their views briefly and to make their discussions as interactive as possible. The high dignitaries are available until 11.50 a.m. With that said, I offer the floor to Ambassador de Macedo Soares, Permanent Representative of Brazil.

You have the floor, Mr. Ambassador.

Mr. Macedo Soares (Brazil): Thank you, Mr. President. First of all, I want to thank His Excellency, Minister Joseph Deiss, President of the United Nations General Assembly, for his initiative to visit the Conference on Disarmament. This is one of the innovative actions that have marked the Swiss Presidency. I also welcome Minister Spindelegger, of Austria, and thank him for his words.

The General Assembly, in its first special session devoted to disarmament, welcomed the agreement reached concerning the constitution of what was then called the Committee on Disarmament. At that special session, the General Assembly did not establish the Conference on Disarmament but instead the Disarmament Commission, and it entrusted the First Committee with the task of dealing only with questions of disarmament and international security. Hence the character *sui generis* of this body, which was not created by the General Assembly and does not figure in the Charter of the United Nations or in its organizational chart, yet nonetheless sends annual reports to the General Assembly, which, in its turn, adopts an enabling resolution for budgetary and administrative purposes as well as for political purposes.

We should examine the best ways for the General Assembly and its First Committee to bolster the Conference on Disarmament in the performance of its exclusive task of negotiating legal instruments on disarmament.

Every year, at least half of the permanent representatives to the Conference on Disarmament attend the session of the First Committee, thereby contributing a Geneva contingent to blend with the New York culture. The sessions of the First Committee are an important opportunity for Member States, the majority of which are not represented in the Conference on Disarmament, to exert influence on the Conference. One has to admit, however, that, as happened last October, the resolution on the Conference's report was produced basically by the six Presidents of the corresponding session of the Conference, along with a few of its member States. Perhaps it would have been more interesting if the resolution had emanated, in particular, from delegations of States that are not members of the Conference on Disarmament.

Another useful initiative has been the visits paid to the Conference by chairpersons of the First Committee prior to the opening of the session of the General Assembly.

Brazil, a State that favours negotiations on a convention banning nuclear weapons and on all the other core items on the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament, welcomes any expression of support from the General Assembly for those objectives.

Thank you, Mr. President.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Ambassador Akram, Permanent Representative of Pakistan, has the floor.

You have the floor.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): Thank you, Mr. President. Allow me to begin by welcoming Mr. Joseph Deiss, President of the United Nations General Assembly, and Mr. Michael Spindelegger, Foreign Minister of Austria, to the Conference on Disarmament this morning. We have listened very attentively to the statements made by our distinguished guests and welcome this opportunity for an interactive dialogue with them. It is mainly in the context of the comments made regarding the high-level meeting and its follow-up that I would like to speak this morning.

In regard to the Conference on Disarmament, its priorities and its overall disarmament and arms control activities, we feel that, in order to take our work forward, especially in the framework of the high-level meeting and its follow-up, we need to take into account existing international realities. If we do not do so, our work here, or that of the high-level meeting or that of the United Nations General Assembly itself, will not be successful.

The Conference on Disarmament does not operate in a vacuum, as we have been saying all along. It is obviously affected by developments in the international political system. Each State shapes its position on the Conference's agenda in the light of its

perceptions of the security environment; it certainly does not do so on the basis of any artificial timeline, nor does it attempt to catapult one issue to the forefront while neglecting other equally pressing, if not more pressing, issues. The work of the Conference and, indeed, of the international disarmament machinery as a whole can proceed only on the basis of the security of all States. Any initiative that undermines the security of even one State will not succeed. The impasse in the Conference is not due to its rules of procedure or working methods, but rather to the security concerns of States. Accordingly, these security concerns need to be addressed in order to facilitate the work of the Conference. The agenda of the Conference on Disarmament covers a number of critical issues, and a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT) is not the only item on its agenda. There can be no preferential treatment of any one issue to the exclusion of other agenda items. Unfortunately, what we are witnessing today are attempts to paint a picture that presents the FMCT negotiations as the only measure of the Conference on Disarmament's success. We hear arguments that the only issue ripe for negotiations is an FMCT. We cannot accept this interpretation, and I am sure that there are a number of countries, especially from the Group of 21, that would agree with us.

We have closely followed the debate and outcome of the high-level meeting convened by the Secretary-General of the United Nations last September in New York. The statements made during the high-level meeting, especially those made on behalf of the 118 countries of the Non-Aligned Movement, made it abundantly clear that the overwhelming desire of a majority of United Nations members was to see progress on the issue of nuclear disarmament. The high-level meeting confirmed what was already well known: in objective terms, if a broad consensus exists on any single disarmament issue amongst the international community, it is on the importance of making tangible progress towards nuclear disarmament. The Conference should respond to this call and should not, either directly or indirectly, endorse an approach or a preference that does not enjoy the majority support of the international community.

It would also be useful to reflect upon the impasse at which the Conference on Disarmament has been for more than the last 12 years and to see how the major Powers did not allow any consideration of an FMCT during this period while they were themselves working on achieving strategic sufficiency in their stocks. They declared that the subject of an FMCT was ripe for negotiations once this sufficiency was achieved. How is the proposed FMCT to contribute towards nuclear disarmament when it has become cost-free for the major nuclear Powers? And, in this context, I was very happy to hear the President of the General Assembly comment that all States that possess nuclear weapons must take action to reduce the stocks of their nuclear weapons. We agree completely with this approach.

With regard to nuclear disarmament, the question of negative security assurances is also a pressing issue meriting urgent attention by the Conference on Disarmament. The recent debate in the Conference on this important issue has demonstrated that, barring a miniscule minority, the Conference's membership wants to undertake negotiations on legally binding negative security assurances. These negotiations, if conducted with sincerity, could be simple but highly consequential.

Thus, in our view, blaming the Conference's lack of activity on its rules of procedure misses the point and is an attempt to present a simplistic and, may I say, self-serving diagnosis of a complex political and strategic international situation. Any attempt to amend the Conference's rules of procedure, especially the rule on consensus, would unravel the Conference and gravely harm the global disarmament machinery. What is even more important is that, if negotiations on an FMCT were to be taken out of the framework of the Conference on Disarmament, the results of such negotiations would not be all-encompassing because one, if not more, of the nuclear-weapon States would not take part in

those negotiations. As for the discussions about revitalizing the work of the Conference in the context of the high-level meeting, our view is that any such attempt at revitalization of the Conference, in order to be credible, should cover all other parts of the international disarmament machinery as well, including the United Nations Disarmament Commission. Such an exercise could be undertaken by convening a fourth special session on disarmament, which is being called for by the vast majority of the Member States of the United Nations. Our distinguished colleague, the Ambassador of Brazil, has already commented on the important contribution that was made to our work and to our existence as a body by the first special session on disarmament and by the focus of that seminal meeting on the issue of nuclear disarmament. We seem to have lost our way and, perhaps, in order to find our way back to our original goals, we will need to convene another special session of the United Nations General Assembly relating to disarmament.

Thank you very much, Mr. President.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much Mr. Ambassador.

I offer the floor to the Permanent Representative of China, Ambassador Wang Qun.

You have the floor, Ambassador.

Mr. Wang Qun (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The delegation of China welcomes Mr. Joseph Deiss to the Conference on Disarmament in his capacity as the President of the sixty-fifth session of the United Nations General Assembly, and expresses its appreciation for his efforts to further the multilateral disarmament process. We also welcome Mr. Spindelegger, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Austria, to the Conference on Disarmament. My delegation has listened carefully to Mr. Deiss' views on follow-up to the High-level Meeting on Revitalizing the Work of the Conference on Disarmament and Taking Forward Multilateral Disarmament Negotiations. Our views on follow-up to that meeting are as follows:

Firstly, when considering follow-up to the high-level meeting, we should first assess what effect the high-level meeting held in 2010 has really had on the Conference on Disarmament. The objective of the high-level meeting was to reinvigorate the Conference on Disarmament. Each State Member should objectively evaluate and seriously consider whether or not the meeting has helped to reach this goal.

Secondly, when considering follow-up to the high-level meeting, the views of all States Members of the Conference on Disarmament should be given full consideration. We hope that efforts in that regard can continue to contribute to and strengthen the status of the Conference on Disarmament, while respecting and upholding the rules of procedure agreed by consensus of the Conference, as well as giving equal treatment and weight to each State's legitimate security concerns.

Mr. Deiss has just expressed his hope that the Conference on Disarmament will play a leadership role and be a driving force for progress in the sphere of disarmament. We are in full agreement with this viewpoint. We believe that currently there is positive momentum in the work of the Conference on Disarmament: not only has the Conference adopted a programme of work, it has also begun regular discussions on a variety of substantive issues. We support the initiation of negotiations as soon as possible on a fissile material cut-off treaty and on other substantive work. We hope that all parties involved will value and preserve the current positive momentum, focus on consensus, continue to work together, attempt to breathe new life into the Conference on Disarmament, and strive to achieve progress as soon as possible. For our part, we will continue our own tireless efforts in this respect.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much Ambassador.

I offer the floor to the Permanent Representative of Ireland, Ambassador Corr.

Mr. Corr (Ireland): Thank you, Mr. President. I wish to welcome Mr. Joseph Deiss, the President of the General Assembly, and to thank him for the statement that he made this morning. I also wish to welcome the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Austria, Mr. Spindelegger, to this session of the Conference on Disarmament and to thank him for his statement.

Mr. President, I am taking the floor on behalf of Canada, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, the Philippines and Switzerland. Our countries have decided to make a joint statement in order to use the limited time available most efficiently. We would like to thank you, Mr. President of the General Assembly, for sharing your hopes, expectations and concerns with us, and we look forward to sharing some of our views and ideas with you. This is the first time that a President of the General Assembly has addressed the Conference on Disarmament, and this is, therefore, an historic moment that symbolizes the critical juncture at which the Conference stands right now. Yet a visit from the President of the General Assembly is also only natural, given the fact:

- That the first resolution adopted by the General Assembly in 1946 was on disarmament and the topic has consistently been a high priority ever since
- That the General Assembly convened the first special session devoted to disarmament, which set out the goals, principles and priorities under which we have been operating
- And, last but not least, that the General Assembly, consisting of all Member States of the United Nations, regularly requests the Conference to undertake certain tasks and receives an annual report from the Conference

Your visit today is therefore very important and timely because the outside world has high expectations regarding the prospects for tackling outstanding issues of disarmament, because it is necessary for the Conference to be reminded of its responsibility to live up to its mandate and to negotiate, and because the General Assembly is watching the deadlock in the Conference on Disarmament with growing impatience and great concern. In this regard, the successful adoption without a vote of a resolution on the follow-up to the high-level meeting (A/RES/65/93) underlines the General Assembly's interest in continuing to monitor the situation and in contributing to a solution.

As a concrete idea, we would like to suggest today that the General Assembly engage in a debate at its sixty-fifth session, under its agenda item on follow-up to the high-level meeting, on the revitalization of the disarmament machinery, including the Conference on Disarmament. A focused debate on this subject is urgently needed. This debate should take place in the near future and build a bridge to the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly, which, in our view, should find solutions regarding this important matter. This debate should be based on substantive inputs that include contributions from Geneva.

Our delegations stand ready to participate actively both in the preparations and in the debate.

Thank you, Mr. President.

The President: Thank you very much Ambassador.

I offer the floor to the Permanent Representative of Algeria, Ambassador Jazaïry.

You have the floor, Ambassador.

Mr. Jazaïry (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, I would like to express our gratitude to the President of the United Nations General Assembly and to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Austria for their visit today, which demonstrates their interest in the Conference on Disarmament.

This is a solemn occasion that provides us with an opportunity for an exchange of views on ways to enable the Conference to fulfil its mandate and thereby reaffirm its role as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, as the President of the General Assembly has just pointed out.

His visit, which is the first by a President of the General Assembly and follows the visit of the Secretary-General of the United Nations on 26 January 2011, highlights, in case there was any doubt, the importance of disarmament issues in the United Nations programme and the importance of the concerns of the international community.

At its sixty-fifth session, as at previous sessions, the United Nations General Assembly addressed to us a number of resolutions asking the Conference to, *inter alia*, adopt a programme of work as soon as possible and to address some important issues.

Despite the urgency of the matter, we were unfortunately not able to respond favourably to these appeals, thus prolonging the state of deadlock or lethargy within the Conference on Disarmament.

This situation is specific to the Conference on Disarmament, which was thought to have been cured of its paralysis after the unanimous adoption, under the presidency of Algeria, of decision CD/1864 in 2009. The members of the group of six Presidents at that time included Ambassador Christian Strohal, who provided me with invaluable support on that occasion.

That document, which was the result of compromise, was a good foundation from which to launch substantive work, provided that work eventually progressed in the direction of negotiating mandates on all priority issues, particularly on nuclear disarmament as our colleague, the Permanent Representative of Pakistan, has just reminded us.

That is to say, one of the merits of a comprehensive approach involving the adoption by the Conference on Disarmament of a complete and balanced programme of work is that it would address the security concerns of all States Members.

Algeria continues to believe that the Conference on Disarmament is the appropriate forum for providing collective and negotiated solutions, thereby acceptable to all, to avert the various threats to international peace and security.

We share Mr. Spindelegger's concerns about the deadlock in the Conference on Disarmament. Its continued existence cannot be an end in and of itself in the absence of results.

However, we do not think that the use of parallel frameworks would provide adequate answers to the issues of peace and security involved.

Furthermore, as Mr. Mourad Medelci, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Algeria, has already pointed out at the high-level meeting in September 2010 on revitalizing the Conference on Disarmament, "an ordinary session of the General Assembly cannot divest the Conference on Disarmament of its powers, or even legitimize the removal of one of the fundamental themes under its mandate".

Thus, if the deadlock continues, it seems to us that it would be necessary to convene a fourth special session in accordance with the request formulated in resolution 65/66, in order to examine disarmament issues in their global context.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much Ambassador.

I offer the floor to Ambassador So, Permanent Representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea

You have the floor, Ambassador. You are the final speaker.

Mr. So (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Thank you, Mr. President. The delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea also welcomes the presence of the President of the General Assembly and the Foreign Minister of Austria and expresses thanks for their statements concerning the revitalization of the Conference on Disarmament.

The member States of the Conference have made continuous efforts and contributions to the draft programme of work and to efforts to start substantive discussions as well. However, all these efforts have not yielded good results over the last years.

The Conference on Disarmament remains the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum. In this context, my delegation considers that all questions regarding agenda items should be discussed within the Conference rather than outside of it, since, otherwise, this would interrupt the progress of the work of the Conference. As the non-aligned countries emphasized at the high-level meeting in New York last year, any follow-up should be inclusive and driven by all Member States.

It is, therefore, the view of my delegation that, as the Ambassador of China has just said as well, all activities of the Conference should be treated in a comprehensive and balanced manner and that the consensus principle as expressed in its rules of procedure should be thoroughly observed. At the same time, the legitimate concerns of all countries should be taken into full account as well. This is the view of my delegation. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much.

I offer the floor and offer my apologies because I did not take due note of her wish to speak.

I give the floor to the Alternate Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Ms. Adamson.

I offer you the floor.

Ms. Adamson (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland): Thank you very much, Mr. President, and we also wish to thank both of our high-level visitors for taking time out from their very busy programmes. I think that, from what you have heard today, you will see that there is a great deal of interest in more interaction between New York and Geneva on the future of the Conference on Disarmament and the machinery of disarmament.

I would like to go back to something that I mentioned when the Secretary-General was here in January, which has to do with the role that the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters can play this year. I think we all recognize that this is not an ordinary year for the Conference on Disarmament and, therefore, as we head into the next session of the General Assembly in October, I think we should take every opportunity to have some interaction with the Advisory Board. Therefore, I wonder if it is possible for the Advisory Board to reach out — perhaps through the General Assembly itself — to some of the mechanisms we have, including the Conference on Disarmament and the United Nations Disarmament Commission, to solicit thoughts from the membership.

Quite a few of my colleagues talked about the need for an inclusive debate, and I very much agree with that. I think that you heard some very clear statements from colleagues here about their own concerns, so I hope you will take back a message to the

Secretary-General and to the Advisory Board that they should think about ways of talking with us, both here and in New York, before we find ourselves at the next session of the General Assembly in October and have to rush to adopt a resolution. I think that we have some months during which we should be making good use of the expertise of the Board. Thank you, once again, for coming and spending time with us.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President of the General Assembly, I ask you to give a brief response.

The President has the floor.

Mr. Deiss (President of the United Nations General Assembly) (*spoke in French*): I thank all the speakers for their contributions to this discussion and I am happy to hear that, as the representative of the United Kingdom has just said, there is also interest in Geneva in greater interaction between Geneva and New York. I will keep this in mind, as it is indeed one of the goals of my visit with you today. I am not here to reprimand you, or criticize you, or to give any opinion on specific issues. But I would like in any case to offer two points in answer to all the questions that have been raised, and to explain my position.

The first point is that my goal, my aim, my role as I see it, is to strengthen the United Nations Organization as much as possible, to strengthen its credibility. I cannot but applaud the call also made by the Permanent Representative of China for us to play more of a leading role. In the eyes of men and women around the world, it is the United Nations bodies, whether it be the General Assembly, the Security Council, or the Conference on Disarmament, that must show the way forward. We must therefore live up to those expectations, and my efforts are aimed in that direction. As I stand here with you today speaking about disarmament, I simply wish to remind you that the three primary objectives set out in the United Nations Charter are the maintenance of peace and security (what issue could be more relevant than disarmament in that regard?), cooperation (we must all try to cooperate) and, most importantly, friendship among peoples. When you find your discussions at a standstill, you might wish to reflect on these behests to not only defend the interests of each country, which is completely legitimate, but also to seek common good and friendship among peoples.

I am also here, given that I hold no official function in my country, to represent the citizen, the average man or woman in the street. We must all, whether here or in New York, ask ourselves what is expected of us by all these people who know, coming back to the issue of weapons, that at any time any weapon can be turned against simple civilians, as demonstrated in the recent past. Furthermore, any use of a nuclear weapon involves taking responsibility for or accepting terrible damage among the civilian population. So these simple civilians ask themselves, "What are they doing in New York? What are they doing in Geneva?" I urge you to act so that we can provide them with answers. When we have repairmen come to work on our houses, we check every evening to see how much progress they have made, whether they have done their job or not. Be aware that the civilian population is asking themselves these questions. That is why I ask you to accept the appeal made to the Conference to play a leading role.

Finally, I would also like to respond to the speaker from Ireland, who asks a specific question. I can tell you first of all that one of the agenda items still left to be scheduled (items not yet confirmed for the plenary sessions) is the follow-up on the high-level meeting held on 24 September, revitalization, etc. During my next meeting with the Secretary-General, as we must work very closely together, we will discuss this issue, I promise you.

Ladies and gentlemen, that concludes what I wished to say. There was one other question raised by the speaker from Pakistan. Regarding my statement that all States should reduce their arsenal — and on that point, I speak in my personal capacity, based on my

personal beliefs — I believe we must all seek the ultimate solution, which is a world without nuclear weapons. This is because of the reason I gave you earlier, that it is not possible to imagine the use of a weapon of this type without grave effects on the civilian population, which gravely contradicts the principles of our Organization.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Before we leave, let us briefly thank the President of the General Assembly, Mr. Deiss, and Minister Spindelegger for the very clear political messages and observations they have given us. We also thank you for the ideas you have proposed, and we are confident, Mr. President, that the General Assembly will also continue in its efforts to revitalize this forum. Ideas have been put forward today, and reference has been made to the Advisory Board. I wish to say that you can be certain that this forum will continue its efforts to fulfil its mandate.

I suggest that we suspend the meeting for a few minutes in order to escort the President and the Minister and reconvene in three minutes.

The meeting is suspended.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank you for your participation, and I believe this interactive dialogue was useful. It was successfully achieved using the format that we followed with the Secretary-General. I would just like to inform you that this afternoon our first speaker, at 3.30 p.m., will be the Secretary of State of the United States, then at 3.45 p.m. — this is all approximate obviously, with some flexibility allowed — the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Canada, followed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Finland, then the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, concluding with the Under-Secretary for Multilateral Affairs and Human Rights of Mexico. This is the programme for the afternoon; we will convene at 3.30 p.m.

Are there any other questions or concerns?

If not, let us close the meeting by thanking you again for your participation, and we will see each other at 3.30 p.m.

Thank you.

The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.