
Conference on Disarmament

26 May 2011

English

Final record of the one thousand two hundred and twenty-sixth plenary meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Thursday, 26 May 2011, at 10.15 a.m.

President: Mr. Wang Qun(China)

The President: I declare open the 1226th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

The following delegations have asked to take the floor: the Philippines, on behalf of the informal group of observer States, followed by Colombia, Kazakhstan and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. So, I will now first give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador of the Philippines.

Mr. Garcia (Philippines): On behalf of the informal group of observer States to the Conference on Disarmament, I would like to express our most heartfelt appreciation for your service as President of the Conference. Your energetic leadership and strong sense of inclusiveness is greatly appreciated and will be long remembered. The group acknowledges and deeply values the efforts you have made in facilitating and advancing the dialogue between members and observers of the Conference on Disarmament with regard to the issue of membership expansion. With your guidance and counsel, we were able to achieve greater appreciation of our advocacy within the Conference through the breakfast forum that you organized on 7 April with the P6, regional coordinators and Brazil, and through the open plenary meeting held on 17 May.

We also greatly appreciate the support expressed by individual members, regions and subregional groups on the issue of membership expansion and our call for the appointment of a special rapporteur or coordinator to lead discussion on the issue. We thank Brazil for accepting this potential role. We appreciate the support of the secretariat, and reiterate our welcome to the incoming Secretary-General, Mr. Tokayev. We have held dialogues with each President of the Conference; we have done so with China, Canada and Chile and would like to do so as well with Colombia and other succeeding Presidents of the Conference. We remain hopeful that we will make even further progress on the appointment of the special coordinator.

We would also like to express our thanks to our colleagues who have chaired informal discussions in the Conference on focused topics.

The informal group of observer States extends its gratitude to you and the Chinese presidency team for a job well done, and looks forward to continuing its strong working relationship with the Chinese delegation and the presidencies of the Conference in the coming weeks.

Ms. Arango Olmos (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, let me congratulate you for the work accomplished during your presidency. Your extensive efforts in the Conference's different areas of work serve as an example of commitment and dedication to this Conference.

The plenary and informal meetings on the items on our agenda, your efforts to bring us closer to a consensus on the programme of work on your consultations on membership expansion kept us very busy and led to an interesting exchange of ideas. I would also like to highlight the delegations' willingness to participate actively in the various activities organized under the presidency that ends today.

We trust that this same positive spirit will continue throughout the rest of the year. However, we are halfway through the 2011 session and, as in past years, we have not yet begun any substantive work to successfully meet the hopes placed in this forum. As the new Secretary-General of the Conference said last Tuesday, quoting the Secretary-General of the United Nations: "The tide of disarmament is rising, yet the Conference on Disarmament is in danger of sinking." The same message has been repeated by various countries and dignitaries throughout 2011. The patience of the international community is wearing thin. The world will measure the efficiency and relevance of our Conference in terms of our ability to produce substantive results. For this reason, we believe it is time to

start reflecting deeply on this message. Internally, we must search for a way to strengthen the Conference, but above all, we must think about how we envision our future. Before other institutions start making decisions for us, or making assertions on matters that fall within our purview, we must carry out a critical self-evaluation and identify the courses of action which will result in a revitalized Conference that can fulfil its mandate.

Mr. President, I would like to reiterate my appreciation for your work. You may rest assured, along with all the other Conference members, that the Colombian presidency will carry on in an open and comprehensive manner, in the same spirit and with the same commitment to work, so as to bring the Conference to a successful conclusion.

Mr. Tileuberdi (Kazakhstan): Let me take this opportunity to congratulate the Chinese delegation and Ambassador Wang Qun in person on completing his term as President of this Conference.

Our delegation appreciates the intensive work carried out by the Chinese presidency, as well as the open, transparent and balanced guidance of Ambassador Wang Qun.

We commend the Chinese presidency for its overall efforts to push forward substantive discussions at the Conference on Disarmament and to reach consensus on the programme of work.

In this regard, the delegation of Kazakhstan welcomes the responsible mission of the distinguished Ambassadors of Sri Lanka, Brazil, Italy, Senegal and Belarus to coordinate informal meetings on the relevant items of the Conference's agenda, and looks forward to receiving their reports. Indeed, we had comprehensive substantive discussions during all those informal meetings, especially when experts from our capitals showed vital interest on the issue of a fissile material cut-off treaty.

We also express our gratitude to the President for raising the issue of the expansion of the Conference on Disarmament. We recognize the legitimate aspirations of all countries to be engaged in strengthening global security.

Despite the fact that all efforts and some constructive approaches by the Conference on Disarmament Presidents, as well as the active participation of members of the Conference, have not yet brought tangible progress, we believe that this unique forum will not lose momentum. This Conference should take immediate steps to resume its mandated role as the sole multilateral forum on disarmament.

We are sure that the Chinese delegation, as a member of the P6 in 2011, will continue its genuine efforts to begin substantive negotiations at the Conference on Disarmament.

The President: Thank you, Ambassador, for your important statement and also for your kind words addressed to me. I share your sentiments with regard to how we should work jointly to further advance the work of the Conference on Disarmament.

Today I will first open the floor and invite delegations to speak. I will then give my concluding remarks, sharing with you my feelings, my impressions and my ideas as to how the work needs to be done at the next stage.

I give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador So Se Pyong of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Mr. So Se Pyong (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Mr. President, I take this opportunity to say how highly I appreciate the work that you have done during your presidency, in particular your utmost efforts and endeavours to overcome the existing differences among us.

Let me also highlight your working methodology in order to move the Conference on Disarmament through innumerable consultations with all member States on the basis of full harmonization and coordination, particularly with the P6 and regional coordinators.

Under your presidency for the past four weeks, all members of the Conference have exchanged their views on all agenda items in an open-minded, transparent and tangible manner.

Through this process, we have realized well the true and realistic stance of each delegation on all the agenda items and have made a strong basis for the next stage of the work of the Conference.

In this regard, let me once again express my firm resolve to continue to cooperate with you in the future too.

Let me take this opportunity also to express my hope that, under the presidency of Colombia, the Conference will continue to work in a positive way for substantive progress.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): Mr. President, I have asked for the floor not to make a substantive statement but to take this opportunity, as your presidency comes to a close, to express the views of the delegation of Pakistan on your sterling performance as President of the Conference on Disarmament.

You belong to a country with which Pakistan maintains a stronger and more durable relationship than any other country in the world. We are truly happy to have seen you as President of the Conference on Disarmament and we greatly appreciate the manner in which you have conducted the work of this Conference. We are grateful for your transparent approach, your impartiality, pragmatism and imaginative leadership. It is our hope that, with the trend that you have set in this Conference, we will continue to make progress towards our objectives, which are to make substantive dialogue on all our core agenda items successful and achievable.

Mr. President, I wish you every success in the future. I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome the incoming President, the distinguished Ambassador of Colombia, and to assure her of our fullest cooperation in the fulfilment of her duties as President.

Last but not least, it is my pleasure to formally welcome the new Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva. Kazakhstan is a country with which Pakistan maintains very close relationships, and we are extremely glad to see him as Secretary-General of the Conference.

Mr. El-Atawy (Egypt): Mr. President, Ambassador Hisham Badr intended to participate in this session, but had to chair a meeting. He asked me to convey his sincere appreciation for the efforts that you have exerted during your presidency. Indeed, looking back over the four weeks of your tenure as President of the Conference on Disarmament, this forum has seldom had more intensive schedules in recent memory. Let me reiterate once again our appreciation and gratitude for your presidency.

Mr. Daryaei (Islamic Republic of Iran): Mr. President, I take this opportunity to express the deep appreciation of my delegation with regard to the manner in which you are presiding over this Conference. Indeed, during your presidency we have had ample time to substantively discuss all issues related to the agenda of the Conference. Having said that, I think that this substantive discussion is the prerequisite of any future negotiations, so we attach really great importance to the manner in which you are guiding the Conference. We assure you of the full cooperation of our delegation.

I also take this opportunity to assure the distinguished Ambassador of Colombia, as the new President of the Conference, of the full cooperation of my delegation.

Mr. Oyarce (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): I apologize for being one minute late as I was in another meeting. First of all, just as I did in our last meeting as a member of the P6, I would like to extend a very warm welcome to the Secretary-General of Conference. It is our hope that, with his renowned political and diplomatic experience, qualities that are intrinsic to a statesman, he will help to push forward the negotiating work which is the duty of this forum. We are looking forward to his help.

Mr. President, I would like to thank you especially for the transparent and inclusive manner in which you have led our efforts. Finding a workplan is no easy task given the objective limitations of this Conference. You managed to achieve that goal, and at the very least, with the help of the facilitators, whose work we must also acknowledge, we held an interactive dialogue during the plenary and informal meetings which has revealed the Conference's potential as well as the political challenges we are facing.

Personally, Mr. President, as a member of the P6 I am sincerely grateful for your sensitivity and honesty in dealing with the various common concerns. These qualities epitomize Chinese culture and diplomacy. Many thanks to all of your team. Together, let us continue in our endeavour to exercise our collective responsibility within the Conference on Disarmament, and through this effort, and in the same spirit, we will support the future presidency of the Colombian Ambassador.

Mr. Danon (France) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, today's meeting marks the final stage of your presidency, a position that you have held since March. Many events have shaken the world over these last few weeks, and we are still trying to arrive at a programme that will help make our world a safer place. With the support of your team and the secretariat of the Conference on Disarmament, you have tried to confront this challenge through your efforts to encourage debate and inform the discussion with input from your experts.

I would like to commend you, Mr. President, for your manifold efforts and your readiness to engage with the member States. Regarding the substance, I felt that a promising interaction took place between the work organized alongside the Conference and the debates held within it. We have advanced our understanding of the technical, legal, budgetary or other considerations in negotiating a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons, a negotiation which remains our priority.

Our determination to reach this goal will not falter, and we expect the incoming Colombian President, whom we welcome with full confidence, to strive to bring us closer to our goal.

Mr. Jazairy (Algeria): Mr. President, I really wish to express our enormous appreciation to you personally for the extraordinary commitment that you have shown in advancing the work of the Conference on Disarmament. As we all know, and have known for so many years, it is not an easy task. While success has not yet smiled upon this august forum, the energy that you have put into advancing the cause of the Conference and maintaining its credibility against all the odds is something for which my delegation — and, I am sure, all the delegations present here today — is deeply grateful. The informal groups that you set up that were coordinated by Sri Lanka, Italy, Brazil, Senegal and Belarus, I believe have all demonstrated that the issues at the centre of the mandate of the Conference are still very much alive and open very broad horizons for international cooperation. From the point of view of the non-aligned countries, the negotiation of a treaty on nuclear disarmament is obviously the primary objective. For others, a priority is a fissile material cut-off treaty. But we all have our priorities, and also broader interests beyond these priorities. There should be a way — and this is the purpose of international negotiations, particularly in the context of the Conference — of reconciling different priorities to strike a balance, whereby everybody sees some value added from this exercise.

You have contributed to bringing about this possibility of complementarity of interests and engaging in a win-win exercise. We are not there yet, but you have kept our hope alive. In this way you have honoured the Conference, and you have honoured the wonderful country that you represent, which has been an advocate for international dialogue and for nuclear disarmament.

I also take this opportunity to say, as have the distinguished speakers who have preceded me, that we look forward to the distinguished Ambassador of Colombia keeping this hope alive and probably engaging with the question of where we go from here in the light of the issues and of the meetings that are going to be held in New York with respect to the future of the Conference on Disarmament. We very much look forward to her leadership.

I would like to also take this opportunity to express a warm welcome, on behalf of Algeria, to our new Secretary-General and Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva, and our belief that, with his outstanding experience of leadership in his country, Kazakhstan, he will be able to inspire our deliberations and promote in Geneva the spirit of multilateralism to which we are all most committed.

With these words I would like once again to express our sincere appreciation to you, Ambassador Wang Qun, for your wonderful stewardship.

Mr. Kwon Haeryong (Republic of Korea): First of all, I would like to express my sincere appreciation for your contribution as President to the work of the Conference on Disarmament. I hope that your efforts to organize the series of informal meetings as an initiative to revitalize the process of the Conference will be approved in the near future.

In addition, I would like to call on the future President of the Conference now to keep up the efforts to reach a formula for the programme of work.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the distinguished Ambassador of Colombia on assuming the upcoming presidency. I fully share the view that the Conference on Disarmament will need to make a self-assessment and, of course, I assure you of our full support.

Mr. Hoffmann (Germany): Mr. President, as you and colleagues are certainly aware, France and Germany cooperate exceptionally closely in many fields in the spirit of Franco-German friendship. This is not only politically important; sometimes, it is very practical, because it can shorten proceedings and make them easier to handle. So, can I just say that I am very pleased that I very much share and support the very elegantly drafted statement that Ambassador Danon has just made?

Mr. Laassel (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): On behalf of Ambassador Omar Hilale, I would like to extend the Kingdom of Morocco's congratulations to you for your success as President, owing primarily to the transparent and open manner in which you are conducting your work. Your methods and initiatives have enabled the Conference on Disarmament to exchange views on the full range of issues of the Conference. Over these four last weeks of your presidency, we have witnessed a genuine and highly professional commitment from the members of the Conference on Disarmament and we hope this will enable the Conference to resume its primary function to negotiate legally binding disarmament instruments. My delegation would like to express its gratitude once again for all your efforts. Let me also take this opportunity to assure the Colombian Ambassador and her team of my delegation's full cooperation and willingness to ensure the success of her mission during her presidency.

Mr. Nore-Alam (Bangladesh): Mr. President, I would like to express my sincere thanks and appreciation to you and your team for the transparent and professional manner in which you have conducted your presidency. Your extensive effort to reach consensus on

a programme of work is commendable. Informal discussions on all agenda items during your presidency will provide enough food for thought in the work of this Conference.

I also take this opportunity to welcome the distinguished Ambassador of Colombia as the next President of this Conference. We assure her of our fullest support and cooperation in advancing the work of the Conference.

Mr. Reid (United States of America): Mr. President, today marks the conclusion of your very long presidency. We appreciate your persistence and your energy over this long period and acknowledge that even during the break you were very much working on our behalf, and working to take forward the institution's agenda and to represent us to the world outside the United Nations as well. That extra effort is also acknowledged and appreciated very much.

Your presidency has been marked by a series of both informal and formal efforts, as you tried to find new combinations that might catalyse our work in our dialogue. You have certainly explored the full range of the Conference on Disarmament agenda in such a way that we can say to the First Committee and to the General Assembly that we have left no stone unturned in the breadth and depth of the agenda. That is appreciated.

As we go forward, I must say that the work on which we look back with the greatest hope is the manner in which you brought forward, although in an informal session, expert inputs in what certainly remains our very highest priority, starting negotiation on a fissile material cut-off treaty. I can assure you that we remain fully committed to that goal.

I must say as well we would like to take this opportunity to express our very sincere appreciation to our new Secretary-General for joining us. We very much appreciate his encouragement and his frankness and sincerity in his opening remarks in placing squarely and plainly before us the true crossroads at which the institution stands. We share that analysis and, as we look forward to working with your successor, it is the backdrop — I think it was termed a “stark backdrop” — against which we have to redouble our efforts to make a new beginning for this institution, or face alternatives that would overwhelm us.

So in that light, we pledge ourselves to working with the new Colombian team. We very sincerely wish our current President a return to normal duties and very much look forward to finding new ways to take our dialogue forward in this very challenging environment, in which the international security arena is at a crossroads.

The President: Since this exhausts the list of speakers today, I will say a few words in my capacity as President, as a concluding statement.

I would begin by telling you how grateful we are to all of you here for your vigorous support and cooperation under the Chinese presidency. With your support, since the assumption of our presidency on 22 March, we have managed to accomplish the following tasks in the spirit of fairness, impartiality, openness and pragmatism and on the basis of the rules of procedure of the Conference.

We held eight formal plenary meetings, three of which were devoted to exchanges on the programme of work of the Conference, in a bid to explore and identify, where possible, the common ground between various parties. We held nine informal meetings, with in-depth discussions on the four core issues of the Conference, in particular on a fissile material cut-off treaty. We facilitated inputs on the question of the expansion of membership, channelled into the Conference on Disarmament through formal plenary meetings. In parallel, we, together with regional coordinators and other P6 colleagues, and also with the distinguished Ambassador of Brazil, had a dialogue with 38 observer States on this issue. We also had dialogue and interaction with civil-society representatives on disarmament matters. We had nearly 80 bilateral consultations, inter alia, with other P6 members, regional group coordinators and other members of the Conference on

Disarmament. In addition, we facilitated the transitional arrangements for the Secretary-General of the Conference.

While in the presidency over the past two months, I have benefited immensely from my predecessors, the distinguished Ambassadors of Canada and Chile. Let me once again thank them, as well as my other colleagues in the presidency, namely, the distinguished Ambassadors of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Colombia and Cuba. In the meantime, but before I share with you my impressions, I would also express my sincere thanks and gratitude to the five coordinators of the informal meetings during the Chinese presidency, namely, Ambassador Senewiratne of Sri Lanka, Ambassador Manfredi of Italy, Ambassador Macedo Soares of Brazil, Ambassador Seck of Senegal and Ambassador Khvostov of Belarus. I sincerely thank them for their enormous efforts with regard to the fruitful informal meetings that they coordinated.

In the meantime, while leaving the presidency, I would like to share with you, with your indulgence, some of my impressions and observations flowing from what has transpired during this period.

(spoke in Chinese)

My overriding impression is that, despite each country's different security concerns and positions, since the beginning of this year everyone has shown a stronger political will and has made great efforts to uphold the authority and standing of the Conference in the field of multilateral disarmament. Although the Conference has not had any spectacular achievements, it has without fanfare set to work on concrete issues. All States have actively translated their own political will into real action and have participated in the formal plenary meetings and informal meetings with a conscientious and constructive approach. As we plodded along, each State's tireless efforts and indomitable spirit in the face of difficulties was there to be seen.

During the plenary meetings on the programme of work and the informal meetings on the cut-off treaty, all States enthusiastically participated and expressed very thought-provoking views. A number of countries also sent experts to participate in the relevant discussions, thus bringing depth and pragmatism to those discussions, making them interactive and animated, and promoting mutual understanding of these important issues by all parties. During the discussion on membership expansion, we have seen that the Philippines and many other observer States are eager to participate in the Conference, which reflects even more clearly the international community's confidence and expectations in the Conference. This shows that the Conference, despite facing many difficulties, is still a good multilateral disarmament body. The Conference is still a promising multilateral disarmament negotiating mechanism.

Throughout my tenure as President I have explained fairly thoroughly my country's views on how to break the deadlock in the Conference and begin substantive work in all areas as soon as possible, especially negotiations on an FMCT. Today, as my presidency draws to an end, I would like to build on this foundation to garner some of the experiences of the Chinese presidency and discuss three views held by China. Firstly, in order to break the deadlock in the Conference we must establish solid trust and must not retreat or — even worse — give up out of fear. At present, in descriptions of the Conference, the word "trust" seems to have become a luxury. There are always many people who think that the Conference is already paralysed. Recently, even more people have been saying that we should start again from scratch by holding negotiations on an FMCT outside the Conference.

With regard to an FMCT, we should first be clear about what our objective is. China wishes to see the Conference conclude a good treaty, with universal participation, through good negotiations. A few days ago I asked a colleague what would happen if an FMCT was

negotiated outside the Conference, but without the participation of a number of key countries. The colleague quite bluntly replied, "Given the choice, with the Conference already paralysed, I would prefer starting from scratch on FMCT negotiations outside the Conference. I do not care whether key players participate or not. The current disarmament process must not be held up; we must move ahead."

I would like to say that in any endeavour, there must be a clear goal; you cannot move ahead just for the sake of moving. This is all the more so with regard to disarmament and non-proliferation matters, as they affect every country's national security. We should have a proper sense of historical responsibility with regard to this issue. If the purpose of starting again from scratch is to reach agreement on an FMCT, we must first be clear about the purpose of an FMCT. If none of the key countries with a fissile material production capability participate, then even if agreement is reached on an FMCT outside the Conference, what would be the point? In such circumstances, how can we truly achieve the goal of preventing the proliferation of nuclear material? There is nothing difficult about starting again from scratch. The hard part is ensuring that all key countries are on board. The hard part is ensuring that a new or different mechanism can truly fulfil the same function and have the same effect as the Conference. We should think again and again about that when deciding whether to continue down the path of the Conference or to start again from scratch.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt of the United States of America once said: "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself". Indeed, leaving aside the constructive work now actually being done by the Conference, if it can be said that the Conference is in a state of paralysis, I believe that this is due above all to the utterly unjustifiable and groundless fear that has paralysed our efforts and has made us shrink back, or even retreat, instead of moving forward. As you all know, the Conference faces a host of problems. But we should look at the big picture. What multilateral institution in the world today does not face problems of one kind or another? This reminds me of an old Chinese saying: "Every family has an unpleasant story". The main thing, the most precious thing, however, is that for every family, from the most common to those with royal blood, it is an article of faith to stand together in times of need and help one another out, as we are all in the same boat.

Not long ago when the British royal wedding ceremony was held, billions of people around the world watched as Prince William and Kate Middleton went before the altar and asked each other to stand by one another for better or for worse and never to leave or forsake one another. It was a very touching scene that moved people to tears. It is clear that what binds a family together in the long term is not just love; even more important is mutual trust, sharing both good times and bad. This trust is created not just by vows, but more importantly by real deeds. This is true for families, for nations, and also for multilateral institutions such as the Conference.

The second point I would like to make is that in order to break the deadlock in the Conference we must set aside our political differences. During the Chinese presidency, the work of the Conference has generally proceeded in an orderly manner, in accordance with document CD/WP.565, and for this I would like to thank all my colleagues for their cooperation and support. At the same time, you may wish to reflect on why, after China put forward document CD/WP.565 on 22 March, the Conference briefly began working on the basis of CD/WP.566 and then went back again to CD/WP.565. Documents CD/WP.565 and CD/WP.566 were both agreed upon by the member States of the Conference, so why did this have to happen? What does this situation show?

I believe it shows at least two things; one is that there are still political differences within the Conference that must be overcome. Within the Conference, in respect of FMCT negotiations, the international community shares a common goal, as preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons and promoting nuclear disarmament is in everyone's

interest. All of us should work hard to build consensus and be pragmatic in taking part in the Conference's activities, without holding preconceived ideas. We must conscientiously build trust and work together to achieve a win-win situation. The second thing this situation demonstrates is that the Conference is a mature institution. It shows that although the Conference may have differences of opinion and a lack of trust, it is capable of properly addressing such differences. There is nothing frightening about differences. What is frightening is when people shrink away from differences, out of fear of difference, or use pressure tactics to deal with them. The only effective formula for overcoming differences is through trust, understanding, dialogue and communication. I see a different aspect at work here – one that reflects hope for the Conference.

The third point I would like to make is that in order to break the deadlock the Conference must not only build confidence, strengthen mutual trust and exercise political wisdom; it must also have a proper conceptual approach and sound working methods. We need to be adept at detecting subtleties, carefully looking out for any incipient signs of new developments that can help us to reach consensus, paying special attention to achieving substantial results and pursuing our objectives. In the light of what has transpired during the Chinese presidency, there appears to be a foundation on which the Conference could achieve progress. I would like to cite two examples to illustrate this point.

Firstly, the issue of membership expansion is thought by many to be off-limits as a topic of discussion, but in the recent meetings the discussions held on this issue went quite well. With regard to the substance of the membership expansion issue, all parties attach great importance to the aspirations of those countries which have contributed to arms control and disarmament efforts — including the NPT review process — to play a role in and join the Conference. If we act in accordance with the rules of procedure of the Conference, in a spirit of progressing from easy to more difficult matters through dialogue and consultation, there is reason to hope that progress will be made on this issue.

To take as another example the core issue of the programme of work of the Conference, I believe that there is already a solid basis on which to reach consensus on a programme of work. Firstly, document CD/1864 is a balanced document. It is balanced in every aspect. When discussing the programme of work yesterday, I explained in detail why China believes that this is a good and balanced document. This document does indeed serve as a good foundation. It achieves balance among the mandates and specific tasks of each working group and also among all the different working groups, which are interconnected. For example, some are mandated to negotiate, others are mandated to hold substantive discussions, and still others are mandated for an exchange of views and information. As for the specific content of groups' work, some are concerned with treaties, some are concerned with practical steps to be taken, and some make recommendations on all aspects of the issues in question.

Secondly, with regard to the programme of work of the Conference, it is currently understood that some countries are insisting that work on an FMCT must take the form of negotiations, while others are advocating discussions. We should recognize, however, that no member of the Conference has ever opposed the start of work on an FMCT with a comprehensive, balanced programme of work as its basis. In fact all parties, particularly since the beginning of this year, have approached the work of the Conference — including on the issue of an FMCT — with a conscientious and constructive attitude, which is the basis for consensus.

Some people believe that this basis for consensus is insignificant, but I think it is not to be underestimated. Furthermore, we must not place undue emphasis on the distinction between negotiations and discussions when it comes to an FMCT mandate. After all, the programme of work is not a treatise on linguistics, so we should not be dogmatic about the wording itself. It goes without saying that if we ultimately conclude a treaty, then looking

back, the process that will have led to that outcome can only be described as a negotiation. On the other hand, even if we now agree to start negotiations, the actual conclusion of the treaty is still a long way off, and it is hard to call this process a negotiation. Therefore, we must be clear about what it is that we actually want. Do we want the word “negotiation” itself, or do we want an FMCT? If we truly want to conclude such a treaty, then we should seek to begin substantive work on the basis of document CD/1864, on which there is broad consensus.

(spoke in English)

As we say in China, “difficulties and hardships may open up unexpected new vistas”. I am confident that, as long as all parties work together, in a spirit of “sailing the same boat and helping each other”, to strengthen their confidence and trust in pursuit of a win-win situation based on security for all, we will be able to “see the light at the end of the Conference on Disarmament tunnel” and to restore the Conference to glory.

In conclusion, I would like to congratulate the distinguished Ambassador of Colombia on her assumption of the presidency of the Conference. We, for our part, will do our very best to support and assist her in her work as President.

In conclusion, I would also like to thank the secretariat for its hard work. I must mention Mr. Sareva and his team, and Mr. Mantels. I would also like to sincerely thank the interpreters in the booth for their hard efforts.

This concludes my closing statement. I would like to thank you all.

Before I announce the adjournment of this meeting, I recognize the distinguished Ambassador of the Netherlands.

Mr. van den IJssel (Netherlands): I asked for the floor on a slightly different matter, and therefore thought it would be appropriate to wait for your concluding remarks.

Mr. President, I asked for the floor in my capacity as President-designate of the Seventh Review Conference of the Biological Weapons Convention. But let me seize this opportunity, while of course fully aligning myself with the statement made by France on behalf of the Western Group, to thank you and your team for your presidency and your efforts, to welcome and express our full support to the incoming President, Colombia and, also, to officially welcome our new Secretary-General.

As President-designate of the Seventh Review Conference of the Biological Weapons Convention, it is a pleasure to share with the Conference that yesterday I was informed that Mozambique has ratified the Biological Weapons Convention and has thereby become the 164th State party to this important instrument. I would like to congratulate Mozambique on this important step, whereby it has joined the world community in striving to eradicate this repugnant category of weapons from the face of the earth. I hope that all States inside and outside the Conference that share this goal but are not yet full parties to the Convention will follow the example of Mozambique as soon as possible.

By ratifying the Convention, Mozambique has also once again underlined the vitality of this important disarmament instrument. That, as we all know, is one of the important contributions of the Conference to the cause of multilateral disarmament. Therefore, I thought it useful to share this information with the members and observers of the Conference on Disarmament.

The President: Thank you, Ambassador, for your statement as well as for the information that you have shared with us here and for your kind words addressed to the Chair.

I now recognize the distinguished Ambassador of Japan.

Mr. Suda (Japan): I asked for the floor for another reason, because I would like to announce an event. But before I do so, allow me to express my congratulations and gratitude for the leadership and efforts of the President to bring constructive discussion back to the Conference on Disarmament.

I would like to announce and remind you that next week on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, Australia and Japan are co-hosting the third round of the fissile material cut-off treaty side event meeting, consisting of three afternoon sessions. The purpose of this meeting is to have discussions on various technical aspects of fissile material cut-off treaty issues, particularly in the coming session, where we are going to focus on verification. We anticipate a very useful technical discussion on this issue. The purpose of this meeting is also to support the discussion and the negotiation that we expect to be taking place in the Conference in the near future, without prejudice to the political position of any participating State. I am sure that this discussion will be very useful for all of you, so I hope that you can all participate in this meeting next week.

The President: Would any delegation like to take the floor? This does not seem to be the case. This concludes our business for today, and also concludes the Chinese presidency. The next formal plenary meeting will take place under the presidency of Colombia on Wednesday, 1 June at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 11.20 a.m.