
Conference on Disarmament

28 June 2011

English

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

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 28 June 2011 at 10.15 a.m.

President: Mr. So Se Pyong(Democratic People's Republic of Korea)

The President: I call to order the 1230th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

On the assumption of the presidency by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, let me start with some brief opening remarks.

It is a great honour for me to preside over this august forum, the Conference on Disarmament. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea, on assuming the responsibility for presiding over this Conference, expresses its full readiness to consult with Member States in an open, inclusive and transparent manner.

There have been useful and constructive discussions in the 2011 session of the Conference under the leadership of the distinguished Ambassadors of Canada, Chile, China and Colombia. Their considerable efforts have generated momentum in the work of the Conference. I therefore wish to thank all my predecessors in the P-6 of 2011.

As the President, I intend to convene four focused plenary meetings, which will be devoted to discussion of the revitalization and strengthening of the Conference, the programme of work, and general statements by delegations during the presidency of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. In the meantime, I will try to consult with the interested delegations that might have constructive proposals on all items, including the programme of work, even in the intersessional period.

The Conference on Disarmament is a unique institution as the sole multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament. It cannot be re-established at this stage, nor can it be replaced by another.

Under the Charter of the United Nations, we have an obligation to work collectively to achieve peace and security for all nations and not to use or threaten to use force in international relations. I do believe that the Conference has the capacity to deliver concrete results when there exists the political will and when members make concerted efforts to negotiate multilateral disarmament treaties.

I am very much committed to the Conference on Disarmament and, during my presidency, I welcome any sort of constructive proposals that would strengthen its work and credibility. I am ready to work closely with all members of the Conference to provide the ground for strengthening the work of the Conference.

As the President, I will be guided by the rules of procedure, in particular the consensus rule, which is the cardinal rule of the Conference. I will therefore respect the position of every delegation and take into account the position of each one, in an effort to find common ground on substantive issues and on procedural matters.

With your support and cooperation, I will do everything in my capacity to move the Conference forward.

Before turning to the list of the speakers, I would like to take this opportunity to bid farewell to two distinguished colleagues, Ambassador Marius Grinius of Canada and Ambassador John Duncan of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, who will leave Geneva in a couple of weeks. Ambassador Grinius arrived in Geneva in 2007 with a wealth of experience, having served in Bangkok, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) headquarters and Hanoi, in addition to various other assignments. Ambassador Duncan joined us a year previously after postings in Paris, the Sudan, Brussels, Albania and Kosovo. In Geneva, both have distinguished themselves as diplomats of the highest calibre. Their presence here in Geneva will be missed but I would like, on behalf of the Conference, to wish them the best for the future.

The following delegations have asked to make a statement: first, Canada, Ambassador Grinius, second, the United Kingdom, Ambassador Duncan, and third, India, Ambassador Rao.

Mr. Grinius (Canada): First, let me congratulate you on assuming the tasks of the presidency at this critical juncture in the history of the Conference and thank you very much for your kind words.

It is appropriate that my last statement in the open plenary should take place under your Presidency. Prior to Geneva, I had the privilege of being Ambassador to the Republic of Korea with concurrent cross-accreditation to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. In Pyongyang, I was fortunate to have various opportunities to exchange views with high-level Government officials, senior military representatives, party cadres and academics.

Last January, as the first President of the Conference in 2011, I quoted from *The Whispering Gallery of Europe*, the memoirs of Major-General Temperley who was the senior adviser to the British delegation to the Disarmament Conference of 1932 in Geneva. He published his memoirs in 1938.

He wrote: "If speeches could have made the world safe for democracy, then the League [of Nations] would indeed have been impregnable." The same could be said of the recent past of the Conference, where I have heard many a fine speech over the past four years and more. I will try to keep mine quite short, by the way.

It is easy to dwell on the fact that, during the past 13 years — or even longer, if you count from the adoption of the famous Shannon mandate in 1995 — the Conference has failed to move forward on its core disarmament responsibilities, including the negotiation of a fissile material cut-off treaty.

We all know what the reasons are. It is, however, easy to dismiss the current paralysis as "lacking political will", despite the fact that States demonstrated considerable political will at the Security Council Summit, the Nuclear Security Summit and at the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in May 2010.

It is also easy to remind ourselves of the past disarmament glories of the Conference, be it the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Biological Weapons Convention or the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which, unfortunately, still appears a long way from coming into force.

Perhaps the Conference can do it again, but the way forward is not obvious.

I would argue that the Conference on Disarmament — "the sole multilateral negotiating forum for disarmament" is the mantra which many here like to repeat — is on life support, because it no longer is that exclusive negotiating forum. Indeed, it is not negotiating anything and has not been doing so for a very long time.

I would suggest that we must do even more than simply look at the Conference on Disarmament. We must look at the entire United Nations disarmament machinery, a child of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament in the middle of the Cold War, and decide whether the machinery is part of the problem or whether it is simply an innocent victim of political paralysis.

We need to look not only at what the Conference has not achieved, but also what the United Nations Disarmament Commission has not done for the world lately. We must also ask ourselves whether the repetition of all those resolutions in the First Committee year in and year out really suits the world's security and disarmament needs.

When I arrived in Geneva in August 2007, it was the Ambassador of Syria, who was then President, who warmly welcomed me to the Conference on Disarmament. When he described the agenda, however, I did have flashbacks to my visits to the Conference in the mid-1980s as the desk officer for nuclear arms control. I had hoped things would have progressed somewhat in 20 years, but apparently they had not.

Unfortunately, it is a challenge, particularly for bureaucrats, to “think outside the Cold War box” and even harder, particularly for senior military representatives, to rethink national security perceptions which are firmly rooted in the eighteenth century.

Indeed, putting on my United Nations hat, I would argue that the twenty-first century will become more and more preoccupied with the now classic global challenges of climate change, the need for more and more energy, the competition for less and less natural resources, environmental degradation, natural disasters, massive transboundary, or internal displacement of people caused by economic necessity or as a result of natural and man-made disasters. Small arms and light weapons will remain the real weapons of mass destruction.

I believe that the Conference on Disarmament is fast approaching an historic tipping point, but it may yet shake off its lethargy. We have already had a good discussion about the future of the Conference under Colombia’s Presidency. Under your Presidency, we will have the opportunity to have a substantive exchange with the Secretary-General’s Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters. The outcome of the P-5 deliberations, which start this week in Paris, will set the tone and direction on nuclear disarmament matters for some time to come. Finally, the United Nations General Assembly will debate the issue on 27 July.

The outcomes of all these deliberations have the potential to give a positive impetus to our own deliberations in August. I would certainly hope that they do so. We will need all of our collective wisdom in the fall, and perhaps some luck, when the General Assembly decides what to do with the Conference on Disarmament and perhaps looks at the entire United Nations disarmament machinery.

In closing, I would like to say that no matter how frustrated I have been with respect to the non-progress of the Conference on Disarmament, I could always count on all of you for your patience, for your collegiality and professionalism and for your friendship.

May you and the Conference find that elusive breakthrough. *Bon courage*, and thank you.

The President: Thank you Ambassador Grinius for your statement and for the kind remarks addressed to the Chair. Now I give the floor to Ambassador John Duncan of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Duncan (United Kingdom): Let me begin by congratulating you on your appointment, and thank you for your kind words.

Although I will not be leaving Geneva for another few weeks due to other commitments, this is the last plenary at which I will be able to address you all before my departure.

It seems only yesterday that, sitting only a few yards from where I am now, I took the floor for my maiden speech, but it has been five years – one of the longest postings of my professional career.

In the spring of 2006, the world of arms control and disarmament looked very different. I was very conscious of the weight of history, of the number of British ambassadors who had spoken and debated within these walls stretching right back to the early part of the last century, when this was the seat of the ill-fated League of Nations. And I too have drawn on the speeches of that time, and the many almost eerie parallels.

I was perhaps fortunate that my arrival coincided with what has proved to be a sea change – a desire by many to break out from a decade of deadlock, to shrug off the despondency that so infused the multilateral disarmament community. This sea change culminated in the successful NPT Review Conference last year, with its unprecedented agreement on focused and measurable action across all three pillars – disarmament, non-proliferation and peaceful uses.

The Conference was very much an early part of that movement, with the decision of the United States to table a framework fissile material cut-off treaty and the subsequent proposal by the then P-6 presidency of draft decision L.1 which, in turn, for the first time in many years, led to a period of intense activity in Geneva as the Conference engaged across all of the items on its agenda.

Indeed, such was the rapid upsurge in work that many delegations in Geneva found it difficult to cover the spread of such work, having suffered from the corrosive effects of gradual yet understandable downsizing during the previous decade.

The energy behind this renaissance found its expression in a number of fields as a wide number of countries decided that the deadlock and stagnation should not be allowed to continue in this important area of policy. It was particularly evident in the area of conventional weapons. Over the succeeding months we witnessed the launch of the Oslo Treaty negotiations, outside the traditional multilateral framework, and the launch of the arms trade treaty process under a United Nations General Assembly mandate.

In both cases, we witnessed a willingness to embrace a new type of diplomacy; not, I hasten to add, the digital diplomacy of blogging, Facebook and Twitter, important though those new tools are to modern diplomacy. No, I am talking about the diplomacy of cross-regional coalitions, a deliberate break from the diplomacy of power politics towards a diplomacy based on shared interests and shared values.

The election of President Obama in the United States of America heralded significant movement on the strategic nuclear agenda too, with the commencement here in Geneva of negotiations between Russia and America on the New START Treaty.

But as the wider multilateral diplomatic community geared itself up and got back to work, the Conference appeared to hesitate and then to falter. The brokering of decision CD/1864 under the Algerian presidency seemed to herald a new era for the Conference, but it was not to be.

Like many others in this room, I have wider responsibilities but it is nevertheless a disappointment that in the area that should have been the core of my work over the past five years we have not seen the kind of progress that so many expected and hoped for.

In some ways, this is surprising since the Conference community does not lack the talent, energy or willingness to embrace the new ways of working that have been the precursors to success in other areas of the multilateral diplomatic community.

Indeed, it has been a great privilege to serve alongside such a talented group of diplomats. I will spare the blushes of those present who know the esteem in which I hold them, but an indicator of the quality of this community can be seen in the postings to which a number of our colleagues have, over the past five years, been sent on completion of their time in Geneva — Washington, Moscow or Kabul, to name but a few — are places to which our diplomatic services send their most capable officers, our brightest and best.

I have also been constantly impressed by the energy and ingenuity of my colleagues as they sought to find new ways out of the impasse. The willingness to work together in that cross-regional coalition that the Conference's P-6 joint Presidency represents was an inspiration to me during our own Presidency in 2008.

And yet, despite the urging — indeed, the blandishments — of many senior political figures on the international scene, from both the past and the present United Nations Secretaries-General and the high-level meeting in New York, we have been unable to move forward.

Many have speculated about why the Conference seems unable to play its part in this new dynamic in multilateral diplomacy; an increasing number have drawn the conclusion that the Conference is no longer “fit for purpose”.

My own view is that although there may be some truth in the argument that the institution itself needs some modernization, the problem is more profound.

Certainly, no matter how effective the P6 mechanism has shown itself in improving cross-regional agreement, there can be little doubt that the concept of a presidency that lasts for a matter of weeks is absurdly labour-intensive for any nation compared to the results that could possibly be achieved in such a timescale. If we were starting from a blank page, I doubt that anyone would suggest such an idea unless their objective was to ensure that the Conference did not make any progress.

There is also something rather worrying about an institution which, as my Canadian colleague just mentioned, proudly proclaimed for much of my time here that it was “the sole multilateral negotiating body” when that was self-evidently not the case, or an institution that talks about the membership as being ideally suited to disarmament when so many members of the United Nations General Assembly are kept outside. I have also tended to flinch when I have heard reference to the “Geneva spirit” or, even worse, to “the best club in town”.

But these are simply the symptoms of a much deeper malaise, namely, an unwillingness to show the necessary leadership, without which all the energy and skill of diplomats like ourselves on the front line counts for little.

A senior military officer once described the requirements of leadership to me in the following terms, and I will share it with you: “Firstly, the vision to see the world as it might be; secondly, the courage to take up that vision; thirdly, the determination to hold fast to that vision despite the obstacles placed in one’s path along the way until it becomes a reality.”

To that triptych of vision, courage and determination I would perhaps add the willingness to pay the price, or to put it another way, to accept the costs that achieving that vision will entail.

In my personal view, the lesson from the past five years is that once the P-6 Presidency put decision L.1 on the table it has always been possible to get the Conference back to work. We have simply not been willing to pay the price for doing so.

The coming months will show whether the exasperation with the current state of affairs is sufficient to bring about the change that so many have been advocating.

For my part, the journey is over. I shall look back with gratitude for all that I have learned from serving with some of the finest diplomats in the business. I leave inspired that despite the huge variety of cultures, political systems and histories that is represented in this room today, there is a common humanity that unites us all, a willingness to make common cause, to put aside our differences and strive to make the world a better place.

A word of thanks to the translators who have coped so well with my impromptu interventions and arguments made on the hoof. And finally my thanks to my own team, who will remain to carry on the task. I doubt that any ambassador could have wished for greater commitment, imagination and support than that which I have enjoyed during my tenure.

I bid you farewell and wish you good luck in your endeavours.

The President: Thank you Ambassador for your statement and for your kind words also addressed to me. Now I give the floor to his Excellency, Ambassador Rao from India.

Mr. Rao (India): Mr. President, since this is the first time that my delegation has taken the floor under your presidency, allow me to congratulate you on your assumption of this important responsibility. We assure you of the full cooperation of the Indian delegation in the discharge of your duties.

Permit me also to say a few words of farewell to Ambassador Duncan of the United Kingdom and Ambassador Grinius, who will be leaving us soon. Ambassador Duncan has made an irreplaceable contribution to the Conference as head of his delegation, as President of the Conference in 2008, and as a pioneer in public diplomacy in the Conference. We will remember fondly the Burns' Night suppers that he and his charming wife organized with typical Scottish verve. I feel a personal sense of loss at his departure; John has been an outstanding colleague and a valuable friend. What has impressed me most is his constant striving for consensus and to find a way forward, even in the most difficult circumstances. We will miss his professional qualities and his personal warmth. And we will miss his clear and pragmatic voice in the Conference as he moves on to keep other promises and notch up more miles. On behalf of my delegation and on my own behalf, I wish him all the very best.

We also bid farewell today to Ambassador Grinius of Canada. He was the first President of the Conference this year. As first President, one has an additional responsibility to get the Conference back to the work that it is supposed to do. Ambassador Grinius has been an excellent colleague. He has never hesitated to speak his mind and has hardly lost his sense of humour, as was evident in today's remarks as well. We wish him and his family good luck as they return to Canada.

I had asked for the floor today to read, for the Conference's record, the following message from my Prime Minister, Mr. Manmohan Singh, to the Global Zero summit held recently in London from 21 to 23 June. I quote:

I have great pleasure in conveying my greetings to the participants in the Global Zero summit and extending my support for its noble goal of a world free of nuclear weapons.

India has been steadfast in its support for global, non-discriminatory, verifiable nuclear disarmament. Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi presented a visionary action plan for a nuclear-weapon-free and non-violent world order. This action plan sets out a roadmap for achieving nuclear disarmament in a time-bound, universal, non-discriminatory, phased and verifiable manner. We are glad to note that the Global Zero action plan is based on similar principles and that, like India, it supports the global elimination of nuclear weapons in a time-bound framework.

The goal of nuclear disarmament can be achieved by a step-by-step process, underwritten by a universal commitment and an agreed multilateral framework that is global and non-discriminatory. Progressive steps are needed for the delegitimization of nuclear weapons. Measures to reduce nuclear dangers arising from the accidental or unauthorized use of nuclear weapons, to increase restraints on the use of nuclear weapons and de-alert nuclear weapons are essential steps. There is a need for a meaningful dialogue among all States possessing nuclear weapons to build trust and confidence and to reduce the salience of nuclear weapons in international affairs and security doctrines.

This campaign can be taken forward by forging a renewed consensus on non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament. Public awareness and support is vital to generate and sustain an irreversible momentum until we reach our cherished goal of

a world without nuclear weapons. Transforming this vision into reality is a task worthy of the distinguished participants of the Global Zero campaign.

I extend my best wishes for a successful conference.

The President: Thank you Ambassador for your kind statement and kind words also. Now I just give the floor to his Excellency Ambassador Wang from China.

Mr. Wang Qun (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Mr. President, first of all, the Chinese delegation would like to congratulate you on assuming the presidency of the Conference. We are pleased that our friendly neighbour, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, is undertaking such an important task. We note that Ambassador So Se Pyong is doing all he can to advance the work of the Conference in an open and transparent manner. We are confident that, with his outstanding leadership skills and extensive diplomatic experience, the Ambassador will undoubtedly be able to carry forward the work of the Conference so that it makes positive progress. My delegation would also like to take this opportunity to express our admiration of the efforts made to promote the work of the Conference by the Colombian Presidency.

Since the start of this year, thanks to the joint efforts of all members, and especially those who have recently assumed the rotating presidency, the Conference has built up some positive momentum and everyone has shown the political will to break the deadlock and begin substantive work as soon as possible. The relevant discussions have also been more in-depth and pragmatic, thus laying a foundation for the revitalization of the Conference. China hopes that all parties will maintain this positive momentum and continue their efforts to break the deadlock in the Conference as soon as possible. The Chinese delegation will also actively support the work of the President from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and will itself work hard towards that end. Lastly, I would like to thank the distinguished Ambassadors of Canada and the United Kingdom for their tireless efforts to promote the work of the Conference. I am sorry to see them go and wish them and their families all the best for the future.

The President: Thank you Ambassador Wang for your statement and for your warmest and very kind remarks addressed to the President. Now I give the floor to the distinguished representative from Nigeria.

Mr. Laro (Nigeria): Mr. President, Nigeria would like to join other delegations in congratulating you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. We have full confidence in your ability to manage the affairs of the Conference, and in this task you will have the full support and cooperation of the Nigerian delegation.

The United Nations Secretary-General has described the Conference on Disarmament as the undisputed home of international arms control efforts. He has noted that, even in the complex political and security context of the Cold War, the Conference had still managed to conclude important treaties. The question then is if the Conference was able to achieve so much during a period of entrenched polarization, division and mutual suspicion, how come, with the Cold War over, we find the Conference on Disarmament going round in circles, paralysed and unable to move forward on even the most basic of requirements, which is a programme of work? The consensus achieved on document CD/1864 back in May 2009, thanks to the astute leadership of Algerian Ambassador Idriss Jazaïry, raised hopes for making progress. However, these hopes are all but dashed now, because two years later we have yet to commence substantive work. The Nigerian delegation finds this quite frustrating and disappointing. We are indeed worried about the negative impression that this situation creates about the Conference. If business continues as usual, we fear that the very relevance of the Conference may be called into question.

This situation brings to mind the time when the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, the GATT, was labelled “the general agreement to talk and talk”, out of the frustration that the public felt at its slow pace of progress. It would seem to my delegation that the Conference on Disarmament may well be heading in the same direction, where it would be perceived by the public as a talking shop where nothing of substance is achieved. This would be a pity, really, because we all know that significant multilateral agreements on disarmament have been achieved in the Conference.

Therefore, Nigeria urges all members of the Conference to do all that is necessary to save it from losing credibility and falling into irrelevance. It is our belief that we must appreciate and respond appropriately to the increasingly negative image of the Conference among the general public. Clearly, the time to act is now.

The President: Thank you very much for your statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair also. Now I give the floor to his Excellency, Ambassador of Portugal on behalf of the informal group of observer States.

Ms. Andresen-Guimarães (Portugal): On behalf of the informal group of observer States to the Conference on Disarmament, allow me to convey our warmest congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference and to assure you of our support. May I also express our appreciation to your predecessors, the Permanent Representatives of Canada, China, Chile, and Colombia, for their service as Presidents of the Conference and for their open and meaningful engagement with the observer States?

Events particularly relevant to this body will take place in the upcoming weeks. In this context, we are looking forward to a fruitful exchange with the Secretary-General's Advisory Board here in Geneva and will also offer our contribution to the General Assembly debate in New York on the revitalization of the Conference on Disarmament. We are looking forward to working with you.

The President: Thank you Ambassador for your statement and for your kind words also. Is there any delegation who would like to take the floor? I see none. So this concludes our business for today, but as we all understand on Thursday 30 June at 10 a.m., the Conference will hold an informal plenary meeting at which time the Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters will participate in the proceedings. In this regard, is there any delegation asking for the floor? Yes, distinguished delegate from Iran you have the floor.

Mr. Daryaei (Islamic Republic of Iran): Mr. President, let me congratulate you on your assumption of the Presidency. I am confident that, under your able guidance, the Conference on Disarmament can have fruitful meetings and I assure you of the full cooperation of my delegation.

Allow me also to join other colleagues in bidding farewell to the Ambassadors of Canada and of the United Kingdom. I wish them all the best in their future endeavours.

Last year the United Nations Secretary-General started the process for convening the high-level meeting on revitalizing the work of the Conference on Disarmament and taking forward multilateral disarmament negotiations. The Secretary-General's initiative resulted in a summary, on 24 September 2010, which reflected the understanding of the Secretary-General as convener and Chair of the high-level meeting, of the views expressed there. In paragraph 19 of that summary, the Secretary-General indicated that he would ask his Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters to undertake a thorough review of the issues raised in the meeting, including the possible establishment of a high-level panel of eminent persons with a special focus on the functioning of the Conference on Disarmament. Based on its recommendations, the Secretary-General would consider further action in this regard.

As the discussion of last year in the Conference made crystal clear, the summary is not binding on member States and only reflects a Secretariat approach. Having said that, I would like to ask the following questions. The response to these questions would help us to better understand what would be the grounds, if any, for having a specific Conference on Disarmament meeting with the Advisory Board.

First, what is our definition of the member State-driven approach to revitalizing the work of the Conference?

Second, what are the advertent or inadvertent consequences of mixing the borders of Secretariat-driven approaches with member-driven approaches?

Third, does convening a special meeting of the Conference on Disarmament with the Advisory Board contribute to blurring this border, or not?

Fourth, do we have a precedent in the work of the Conference on Disarmament or other international organizations that a policymaking organ of one independent international body convenes a special meeting with the advisers of the Secretariat of other international organizations?

In conclusion, I would like to put on record that my delegation wholeheartedly appreciates the initiative of the United Nations Secretary-General for revitalizing the work of the Conference. We see this initiative as a useful Secretariat-driven approach that is not, and should not, be mixed with a member-driven approach, which is the legitimate desire of the Non-Aligned Movement countries, including mine, for this body to evaluate itself. We are ready for the fullest cooperation with the Advisory Board with due respect to the principles of work in international organizations. We appreciate your efforts in paving the way for a direct bilateral meeting between the Advisory Board and interested delegations. We also appreciate your efforts in helping them to have meetings with the representatives of the regional groups. We are also aware that Mr. Tokayev is the Personal Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General and we are confident that he regularly briefs the Secretary-General about the position of the different delegations in the Conference.

However, we have questions about the consequences and benefits of convening a special meeting with the Advisory Board.

We do not want to create an obstacle in the way of any consensus that might emerge in this meeting, provided that the Secretary-General's initiative is seen by all delegations as a mere Secretariat-driven approach and is separated from any member-driven approach for self-evaluation by the Conference that might later on be developed by the members of the Conference.

The President: Thank you for statement. Is there any other delegation? Yes, Myanmar, you have the floor.

Mr. Lynn (Myanmar): Mr. President, at the outset I would like to congratulate you on behalf of my Ambassador and my delegation on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament at this important juncture. My sincere appreciation also goes to all your predecessors for the important work they have done for the Conference. I am confident that, with your experience and diplomatic skills, you will lead our deliberations to a desired outcome. We are also encouraged by your opening remarks outlining your views and commitment to the work of the Conference. I would also like to assure you of my delegation's full cooperation in this important task.

Allow me to respond to your proposal, or information, on informal interactions with the United Nations Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Disarmament. My delegation shares the disappointment at the current stagnation of the Conference. It is incumbent on all of us to explore and employ all possible ways and means to revitalize the Conference. We

believe that interaction with the Advisory Board constitutes a useful step in this direction. We had some concerns as to the process of this interaction, such as identifying the mandate that started this event, and the status of the outcome — if there is going to be any — and how it should be reflected in our report to the General Assembly, and so on. They are all real concerns. But, notwithstanding these concerns, we see this exercise as an opportunity to further enhance the understanding of positions, not only among us, but also the understanding of relevant entities outside the Conference on Disarmament and the international community as a whole. It may also contribute to the way forward, to what we should do next year if the Conference is still unable to move forward.

In short, my delegation is looking forward to interacting informally with the United Nations Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Disarmament.

In closing, Mr. President, on behalf of my Ambassador and on behalf of my delegation, I would like to bid farewell to the Ambassadors of Canada and the United Kingdom and wish them all the best in the future.

The President: Now I give the floor to the Secretariat to answer the questions raised by the distinguished delegates of Iran and Myanmar.

Mr. Sareva (Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament): I thank the Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran for his questions. I will also make sure that the expression of support that you gave to the Secretary-General's initiative is conveyed to him.

The Secretary-General has expressed concern on a number of occasions about the continued lack of progress in the Conference on Disarmament. He has also stated on a number of occasions that disarmament, including nuclear disarmament, is one of his key priorities. I am sure that it will be during his second term, as that was reflected, for example, in his five-point plan of a few years ago.

The Secretary-General and the Secretariat fully know that the Conference on Disarmament works on the basis of its own rules of procedure, and is, ultimately, the master of its own procedure and the master of its own fate.

Having said that, the Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters performs an important role in line with the decisions of the first special session of the General Assembly on disarmament; it is part of the disarmament architecture as created back in that special session. The Secretary-General has asked his Advisory Board to provide advice on the way forward. He was the one who convened last September's high-level meeting, which was received well; he felt obliged to see that meeting not become a flash in the pan, but to have a proper follow-up.

But as far as the possible blurring of a Secretariat-driven and a member State-driven process is concerned, I think that everybody knows where everybody is coming from on this. The Conference on Disarmament is ultimately the master of its own procedure, and of course the General Assembly has its own important role through the First Committee. So, I believe that there is no misunderstanding on anybody's part. The Advisory Board's meeting and its presence here this week is very important. From what I have heard, it seems that their presence here is indeed broadly welcomed and much appreciated. The report which will ultimately feed into the discussions in the General Assembly will have its own important role, but it is just one — albeit an important — part of the architecture.

I would be happy to answer any further questions.

The President: So, now the honourable delegate of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Daryaei (Islamic Republic of Iran): I thank the Deputy Secretary-General for providing a very useful answer to some of my questions. As I mentioned, we welcome the

presence of the Advisory Board here. We appreciate your effort in paving the way for conducting bilateral consultations with interested member States. We are also having meetings with the regional groups and we will be glad to participate in all of those meetings. But again, my question relates directly to conducting a very special meeting of the Conference on Disarmament with them and the possible benefit of doing so. Of course I understand that the consequence would not be to blur the border. I think from the answer that you gave us, we can be confident that it would not blur or mix these two approaches, namely member-driven and Secretariat-driven approaches. So, if we move in that direction, we would not create any obstacle to reaching any kind of consensus in this meeting about convening formal or informal meetings with the Advisory Board.

The President: I would just read out paragraph 8 of the rules of procedure: "The President of the Conference, in full consultation with and with the agreement of all its members, may convene the Conference in special session." So this is why I also open the floor. So, I understand that the distinguished representative from the Islamic Republic of Iran has no objection to holding the meeting, but ask the Secretariat to have more consultations with members and the regional groups, even the Secretary-General. So, I hope that the Secretariat will organize for this facilitation.

Mr. Khelif (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): The delegation of Algeria would first like to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and to express its full support for your efforts to accomplish your tasks. The delegation of Algeria has requested the floor simply to seek clarification on one point. It would like to know whether this is a special session, in which case the statements will be reflected in the record, or an informal meeting whose purpose is to accede to the request of the Secretary-General's Advisory Board and to welcome the members of the Board and present our views to them so that they can perform the task entrusted to them by the Secretary-General, namely, to garner the views of the member States of the Conference on Disarmament, as well as other States, and to make recommendations to the Secretary-General.

Our understanding is that this meeting will be an informal one, organized at the request of the members of the Advisory Board for the purpose of conducting frank discussions, assessing the situation, giving our views on the situation at the Conference on Disarmament and on the work of Advisory Board members, and making recommendations to the Secretary-General of the United Nations. If this is the case, then our delegation will be happy to participate in the exercise.

The President: It should be clarified that the meeting should be informal. As I said before, on Thursday, 30 June at 10 a.m. the Conference will hold an informal plenary meeting, at which time the Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters will participate in the proceedings.

Mr. Daryaei (Islamic Republic of Iran): Just for the record, because the question from our distinguished colleague from Algeria was very interesting, it would be an informal meeting, requested by the Advisory Board, and we would just accede to the request. It is not our request to convene the meeting with them.

Mr. Sareva (Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament): The history of convening this meeting goes back to the previous presidency, that of Colombia. The Advisory Board, indeed, with the meeting scheduled in Geneva, thought that in order to get a full picture of the views in the Conference on Disarmament about the continued lack of progress, the members of the Board would benefit from attending a meeting of the Conference where all members of the Conference would be given the opportunity to express themselves. This interest was expressed to the then Colombian presidency, which agreed that by doing so the Conference would add value to the deliberations of the

Advisory Board. The matter was also discussed briefly in the presidential consultations at that time, and, subject to action by the current presidency, it was decided to proceed accordingly. So this is, in short, the history of how we have reached the point where we are today.

The President: For the record, I think that the Advisory Board requested this informal meeting. That is why I just opened the floor to ask for the views of all members. So now it is decided that on Thursday, 30 June at 10 a.m. the Conference will hold an informal plenary meeting, as requested by the Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters. So, I see no objection. It is so decided. Finally, I will just give you one piece of information. After next week we will go on a break for one month. Information about the next meeting will be provided by the Secretariat in August in a timely fashion.

So now, this meeting stands adjourned.

The meeting rose at 11.20 a.m.