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English

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

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 24 January 2012, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Luis Gallegos Chiriboga (Ecuador)

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The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I declare open the 1243rd plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. Before starting today's activities, I would like to take the opportunity, albeit late, to say farewell to colleagues who left after the conclusion of work in September last year, namely Ambassador Alberto Dumont of Argentina, Ambassador Wang Qun of China, Ambassador Fernando Rojas Samanez of Peru and Ambassador Valery Loshchinin of the Russian Federation. On behalf of the Conference, I would like to express to the respective delegations our deepest gratitude for the many valuable contributions made by their representatives to the work of the Conference during their mandates, and our sincere wishes for their every success and satisfaction in their new positions.

I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to an eminent person who is still with us at the Conference but will soon leave Geneva to take on other important functions. Ambassador Eric Danon of France has established a reputation that transcends the Conference on Disarmament. As his country's ambassador for disarmament affairs, he has shown great skill and tenacity, and it has been an honour to work with him during the past few weeks. In the name of this Conference and on my own behalf, I wish Ambassador Danon all the best in his new endeavours.

Please also allow me to welcome colleagues who have recently taken up positions as representatives of their Governments before the Conference: Ambassador Antonio Guerreiro of Brazil, Ambassador Elissa Golberg of Canada, Ambassador Wu Haitao of China, Ambassador Sujata Mehta of India, Ambassador Mari Amano of Japan, Ambassador Steffen Kongstad of Norway and Ambassador Alexey Borodavkin of the Russian Federation. I would like to take this opportunity to assure them that they will have our full cooperation and support as we tackle our new tasks.

I would now like to make some introductory remarks. As we launch this session of the Conference, I would like first to thank previous presidents for their efforts in this important forum, in particular the Cuban presidency, which preceded us. I would also like to pay tribute to the work of the at least 90 presidencies that have, in the past 15 years, attempted with great diligence but little success to arrive at a programme of work that would allow us to overcome the stalemate that has plagued the Conference for more than 15 years.

Second, let me say that the Government of Ecuador harbours great hopes that the Conference might overcome its stalemate in 2012, and thereby resume its rightful place on the international stage as the sole multilateral forum on disarmament.

Disarmament and non-proliferation are matters of the highest priority for Ecuador, as borne out by its foreign policy, and this is why we have acceded to most of the multilateral disarmament treaties and conventions.

Ecuador, as a pacifist country, considers multilateral diplomacy to be the appropriate avenue for addressing disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation, and reaffirms the importance of multilateralism as a guiding principle for negotiations in this area.

In line with these principles, we embarked on a process of consultations based on the mandate contained in General Assembly resolution 66/59, which was broad and transparent, and also inclusive and democratic. In that process we strove to take into account all delegations' views and opinions.

In the wake of the coordination meetings that have taken place, I have become convinced, as have many others in this room, that the stalemate in the Conference is not the result of mere procedural matters or the question of whether to adopt a programme of work, but rather that its causes lie in much more serious and deep-rooted geopolitical and security considerations and matters of regional balance that we cannot disregard or avoid.

Nor, however, can we ignore the fact that the depth of frustration among members of this forum is such that we have reached a critical point. This is reflected in resolutions adopted at the most recent session of the General Assembly, in particular resolutions L.13, L.39 and L.40, which call for the adoption of a programme of work during the first session of 2012.

Permit me to recall my own experience 12 years ago in this very same grand room as the Permanent Representative of Ecuador, when, after intense negotiations, Ecuador and other countries succeeded in being admitted as members of this important forum.

In my final statement then I expressed the hope that the dawn of a new century would move the Conference to adopt an action plan in response to the worldwide demand for peace and disarmament. I also suggested to member States that they should overcome their disagreement on the negotiation of a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT) and stressed that new times required new ways of thinking and new paradigms in order to achieve disarmament. Today I return to this majestic place to preside over an institution that is in grave danger of losing its relevance and importance in the international arena, because of its inability to adopt a programme of work.

It has become clear in the course of informal consultations by the presidency, which involved first informal bilateral talks with some members and then the circulation to all members of a non-paper designed to stimulate debate, that there is no agreement to move forward on the Conference's agenda items. The presidency views the problem as more than a drafting issue. There is no agreement in sight.

It also became clear from this consultation process that opinions are divided regarding the future of the Conference. On the one hand, some members insist that it has value as the sole multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament, while others question its *raison d'être* after nearly 15 years of stalemate. The reality is that the Conference and its foundations are being seriously eroded by a continued lack of results, reflected in the absence of a programme of work that would enable us to restart substantive work. Many believe that there is no need for a programme of work. The lack of agreement on such a programme means that a start to negotiations has not been discussed.

On the other hand, the consultations revealed a tendency on the part of some to equate the Conference with the issue of the FMCT, when in fact they are two different things. In my view, the existence of the former is not dependent on the achievement of the latter. Obviously, the negotiation of an FMCT in the framework of the Conference would be the best result for many members. However, under the present circumstances it is unlikely to happen, particularly given the views of one or more States on security matters.

Therefore, the Conference must be able to work without an FMCT. Otherwise we will all become hostages, since the lack of consensus on one issue will hinder progress on others.

Clearly, the issue of the FMCT has become a permanent feature of the Conference and refuses to be dislodged. New ideas are needed to overcome our paralysis and immobility, but for that to happen, we need to move away somewhat from the Conference's core issues and look at everything from a new angle.

Our concern for international security and global disarmament is certainly more important than the four core issues on the Conference agenda, and that is the key to finding a way out of the stalemate.

Given all the above, the presidency invites you to think about the following:

If we are optimistic and believe that the Conference has a viable future, should we not recognize that the failure to produce results is endangering its credibility and existence?

If the failure to produce results is due to external considerations — for example, the current security environment — would it not be better to decide to put the Conference on standby until a political solution is found?

If the majority of Conference members agree that it will be difficult to agree on the adoption of a programme of work this year, would it not be better to convene the Conference only for a limited period until the political environment improves?

If it is true that our obsession with the four core issues on the agenda is preventing us from achieving international security and disarmament, why not urge the General Assembly to convene, once and for all, the fourth special session devoted to disarmament in order to review all the machinery, as many States have suggested?

During the past 15 years, we have reiterated time and time again that the Conference was established to negotiate, not to discuss disarmament matters; and yet we have spent our time, year after year, discussing the programme of work as if it were the main issue.

Let us therefore ask ourselves whether discussing the issues at stake would have been more productive and brought us closer to achieving our goals and the negotiation of certain issues.

We could then broaden the discussion of issues of concern to the Conference with the hope of finding common ground that would allow us to move forward.

To address these and other critical questions, the presidency suggests holding a series of plenary sessions so that all members may debate frankly, honestly and openly the future of this body.

I would like to ask the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Tokayev, to read out a message to the Conference from the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Ban Ki-moon.

Mr. Tokayev (Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament): Thank you, Mr. President. The message of the Secretary-General goes as follows:

I welcome the opportunity to convey greetings to the Conference on Disarmament today. This body has long served as the world's single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum. The Conference and its predecessors have had some impressive accomplishments. It was in Geneva that the Biological Weapons Convention, the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the Treaty on the Prohibition of the Emplacement of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction on the Seabed and the Ocean Floor and in the Subsoil Thereof, and the Convention on the Prohibition of Military or Any Other Hostile Use of Environmental Modification Techniques were first considered or negotiated. Many of these were achieved during the cold war, proving that it is possible to create global legal norms even in times of great political disagreements.

Yet today this distinguished body is no longer living up to expectations. The last occasion on which the Conference fulfilled the negotiating role given to it by the United Nations General Assembly was in 1996, when the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty emerged from an intensive three-year process. Not only do the members of the Conference disagree over its priorities, but the consensus rule, which has served this body so well in the past, is currently used as a de facto veto power to stall every attempt to break the impasse.

Some States want negotiations on nuclear disarmament. Some want to ban the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons. Some want a treaty protecting non-nuclear-weapon States against the threat or use of nuclear weapons.

Others want a treaty to prevent an arms race in outer space. Even if a large majority of the members are ready to begin negotiations on a fissile material treaty, some are eager to “precondition” the outcome of such negotiations, even though it is clear that national security interests can be defended most effectively during the negotiations and, later, in the national signature and ratification process.

The future of the Conference is in the hands of its member States. But I cannot stand by and watch it decline into irrelevance as States consider other negotiating arenas. Both the high-level meeting that I convened in September 2010 and the General Assembly’s plenary follow-up meeting last July were not just exercises in criticizing the status quo, though certainly such critiques featured prominently. Above all, these gatherings were opportunities for the world community to voice its support for new progress in this field.

In 2012, the future of the Conference will be under the spotlight as never before. Lamenting the constraints of the rules of procedure or the “absence of political will” can no longer suffice as explanations for any further lack of progress. The General Assembly is seized of the matter and, if the Conference remains deadlocked, is ready to consider other options to move the disarmament agenda forward.

I urge you to seize this moment, when the world is focused intently on advancing disarmament goals. I appeal to you to support the immediate commencement of negotiations in the Conference on agreed disarmament issues. Prior agreement on their scope or final outcomes should not be a precondition for the start of negotiations, or an excuse to avoid them. The tide of disarmament is rising, yet the Conference on Disarmament is in danger of sinking. Let us restore the Conference to the central role it can and must play in strengthening the rule of law in the field of disarmament. It is our shared responsibility to make the Conference work, not only for us but for future generations.

This is the end of the message of the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank Mr. Tokayev for passing on this important message from the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Ban Ki-moon. I would now like to ask Mr. Tokayev to convey to the Secretary-General our thanks for his message and to let him know that all the members of this forum are aware of its significance.

I invite the Conference to adopt a decision on requests to participate in the work of the Conference presented by non-member States. The requests, contained in document CD/WP.570, have been sent by the following States: Albania, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, the Dominican Republic, Georgia, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, the Holy See, Jordan, Latvia, Libya, Lithuania, Nepal, Oman, the Philippines, Portugal, the Republic of Moldova, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, Singapore, Slovenia, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the United Arab Emirates and Uruguay.

I would like to add the requests of two other countries to the list in CD/WP.570: Estonia and Qatar. May I take it that the Conference decides to invite these States to participate in our work in accordance with the rules of procedure? Thank you. It is so decided.

We are going to pause briefly without adjourning the meeting to enable observers to take the places assigned to them. They are welcome.

Now we will proceed with the adoption of the agenda for the 2012 session. I believe from my consultations that there is consensus on the draft agenda for this session. May I

take it that the Conference decides to adopt the agenda contained in document CD/WP.569, which you have before you? There being no objection, it is so decided. The Secretariat will publish the agenda as an official document of the Conference.

Now I would like to make the following statement: "With regard to the adoption of the agenda, I would like to state in my capacity as President of the Conference that it is my understanding that, if there is a consensus in the Conference to deal with any given issue, this may be done in the context of this agenda. The Conference will also take into account rules 27 and 30 of its rules of procedure."

I will now proceed with the list of speakers.

Ms. Gottemoeller (United States of America): At the outset of my remarks, please allow me to congratulate Ecuador, and you personally, on your assumption of the first presidency of the 2012 session of the Conference on Disarmament. Ambassador Kennedy and I wish you well as you guide the work of this Conference forward; you may count on our delegation's full support. I would also like to extend our best wishes to the other Conference presidents for the 2012 session: Egypt, Ethiopia, Finland, France and Germany. We look forward to working with all of you during this year.

I spoke at the Conference's opening session last January, and I am pleased to be here again to highlight the progress on arms control and disarmament that has been made over the course of the past year. The New START Treaty entered into force on 5 February 2011. Implementation is going well and continues to contribute positively to the United States-Russian relationship. The treaty represents a strong foundation for further bilateral reductions and an important step on the path towards a world without nuclear weapons. Discussions between our two Governments on the next steps are under way.

I am also pleased to report that the United States-Russian Plutonium Management and Disposition Agreement (PMDA) and its protocols came into force in 2011. The PMDA commits the United States and the Russian Federation each to disposing of no less than 34 metric tons of excess weapon-grade plutonium – enough material in total for approximately 17,000 nuclear weapons.

Expanding beyond bilateral issues, the five nuclear-weapon States have started a regular dialogue on verification issues and confidence-building measures related to nuclear disarmament as part of our commitment to carry out our obligations under article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

The United States is proud to be at the leading edge of transparency efforts, publicly declaring our nuclear stockpile numbers; participating in voluntary and treaty-based inspections measures; working with other nations on military-to-military, scientific and lab exchanges; sponsoring site visits; and frequently briefing others on our nuclear programmes and disarmament efforts.

The United States is committed to securing ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, and we have been engaging the United States Senate and the American public on the merits of the treaty. As we move forward with our process, we call on all Governments to declare or reaffirm their commitments not to conduct explosive nuclear tests, and we thank and congratulate Ghana, Guinea, Guatemala and Indonesia for ratifying the treaty in the past year. We ask that all the remaining Annex II States join us in moving forward towards ratification.

I am also gratified to report progress on the extension of treaty-based negative security assurances throughout the regional nuclear-weapon-free zones. The Obama administration transmitted the relevant protocols of the African and South Pacific nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties to the Senate for its advice and consent to ratification. We were also glad that the nuclear-weapon States and the States of the Association of Southeast

Asian Nations resolved long-standing differences related to the language of the protocol to the Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone. Along with the other NPT depositary States, we have lent our strong support to the efforts of the facilitator of the 2012 conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction, Jaakko Laajava, the Finnish Under-Secretary of State for foreign and security policy.

Regarding the Chemical Weapons Convention, the United States is proud of the progress made towards a world free of chemical weapons. We continue to make steady progress in destroying our chemical weapons. By April of this year, we anticipate we will have destroyed 90 per cent of our stockpile. The remaining 10 per cent will be destroyed while assigning highest priority to ensuring the safety of people, protecting the environment, and complying with national standards for safety and emissions, as called for in the Convention.

Last month, the States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention met here in Geneva for their Seventh Review Conference. They agreed to a standing set of agenda items that cover national implementation, developments in science and technology, and assistance and cooperation, all of which will serve to strengthen the effect of the treaty and help bridge the interrelated work being undertaken in the security, public health, law enforcement and scientific communities. This was done under the able direction of our Conference colleague, Ambassador Paul van den IJssel.

Mr. President, before I proceed further on Conference matters, please allow me to discuss recent developments regarding the European Union's proposal for a code of conduct for outer space activities. Over the past four years, the United States and European experts have regularly consulted on drafts of the European Union code of conduct for outer space activities. After an extensive inter-agency review of the European Union's initiative, the United States has decided to enter into formal consultations with the European Union and spacefaring nations to develop an international code of conduct, because the long-term sustainability of the space environment is at risk from space debris and irresponsible activities.

As Secretary of State Hillary Clinton announced on 17 January, the United States is prepared to work in active partnership with all Governments to develop a code that can be adopted by the greatest number of spacefaring nations around the globe. We believe that an international code can help strengthen the long-term sustainability of space and promote safe and responsible use of space, while at the same time ensuring that the inherent right of self-defence is not impaired. As more countries and companies field space capabilities, it is in our mutual interest that they act responsibly. A widely subscribed international code can encourage responsible space behaviour and single out those who act otherwise, while reducing the risk of mishaps, misperceptions, mistrust and misconduct.

We expect to actively participate in the international discussions on an international code throughout this year and beyond. As part of this process, the United States looks forward to the multilateral experts' meetings that the European Union plans to convene in the near future. We also look forward to the meeting of the Group of Governmental Experts on transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities that is scheduled to convene this summer. We see this as a key opportunity to develop practical measures to enhance transparency and confidence-building and sustain the peaceful exploitation of outer space.

Now, if I may, I would like to turn to the impasse in the Conference. While the international community has been active and achieved results in many areas during the past year, the Conference on Disarmament appears to be no closer to an "honest day's work" than it was last January. Despite herculean efforts by a number of Conference member

States, the Conference continues to languish, and a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT), the next logical and necessary step in the multilateral nuclear disarmament process, remains no closer to negotiation.

We did see some rays of hope last year. Australia and Japan hosted a series of extensive discussions among FMCT technical experts on the Conference's margins that allowed the international community an opportunity to exchange views and gain perspectives in a sustained and organized way. The chairs' summaries of these discussions will make a useful contribution to our collective body of knowledge when eventual FMCT negotiations begin. The United States initiated consultations among the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council and others on unblocking FMCT negotiations in the Conference and to prepare our own countries for what certainly will be a prolonged and technically challenging negotiation. Last summer, the Secretary-General of the United Nations asked Member States to continue their dialogue on ways to improve the operation and effectiveness of the United Nations multilateral disarmament machinery, in particular the Conference on Disarmament.

In the view of the United States, all of these efforts have been worthwhile, but regrettably none has achieved the desired result of moving this body forward on FMCT negotiations and work on other important issues. When Secretary of State Clinton addressed the Conference last February, she stressed that "Global nuclear security is too important to allow this matter" — that is, the FMCT — "to drift forever". At the most recent session of the General Assembly's First Committee, we all witnessed and experienced the growing international frustration with the status quo here in Geneva. Not surprisingly, and with no small amount of justification, many in the international community are losing patience with the current situation in the Conference.

Every Government represented in this room, including my own, has national security concerns and obligations associated with an FMCT. But as responsible Governments, we also have a collective obligation to and responsibility for international peace and security, to which an FMCT would significantly contribute. The FMCT is not some sort of deliberate diversion from "real" nuclear disarmament. Along with the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), an FMCT is an absolutely essential step for global nuclear disarmament.

Simply stated, we can't get to the end if we don't start at the beginning. A verifiable end to the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons is necessary if we are to create the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons. How can we make progress towards a world without nuclear weapons while some States continue to produce the key component for building up their nuclear arsenals?

A universal halt to the production of fissile materials for use in weapons is essential. Some States have already declared a moratorium on such production, but others have not. Some, such as the United States, have reduced their military stocks of fissile material, whereas others are actively engaged in further production. The path to a world without nuclear weapons will require many steps. The next logical step in halting the increase of nuclear arsenals is an FMCT.

In action 15 of the 2010 NPT Review Conference final document's action plan, all States parties agreed that the Conference should begin immediate negotiation of an FMCT. The United States remains fully committed to an FMCT as a tangible contribution to our full, effective and urgent implementation of article VI, as stated in that action plan. As the 2015 NPT review process gets under way this year, every State party to the NPT has the responsibility to make an FMCT a reality. In fact, every nation should share in the work that will create the conditions necessary to achieve a nuclear-free world.

Here in Geneva, and in New York, and in capitals around the world, there has been a vigorous debate over the state of the United Nations multilateral disarmament machinery in general and the impasse in the Conference in particular. I have been speaking about this at various venues and I will reiterate my thoughts here. Some people have spoken about amending the consensus rule at the Conference in order to break the current logjam. The United States does not share the view that the impasse in the Conference is the result of procedural rules. On the contrary, we believe that the consensus rule has served Conference members well by providing assurance that individual member States' national security concerns can be met.

There may be a case for some modifications to how decisions are taken on small procedural items at the Conference, but those issues are not at the heart of the impasse. The road will remain blocked until all members of the Conference are convinced that commencing negotiations is in their national interest, or at least not harmful to those interests. The United States is working hard to make the case to those countries with reservations about the FMCT that starting negotiations is not something to fear.

Of course, for any negotiation to be substantive and worthwhile, the key States most directly affected by an FMCT should be involved. When it comes down to what is in the best interest of international security, the negotiating venue for the FMCT is of less importance than the participants. As a matter of pragmatism, however, the Conference — which includes every major nuclear-capable State — remains the best option for achieving a viable, effective FMCT.

Once FMCT negotiations have begun, Conference members will face many complex and contentious issues, including the difficult issue of scope. We are well aware that Conference members are divided on this issue. Ambassador Shannon's report to the Conference, from which the Shannon mandate is derived, highlighted these disagreements. His report of his consultations made it abundantly clear that members could not agree on this key issue, or on many others. What members did agree on is embodied in a key sentence in that report following a listing of those contentious issues. That crucial sentence reads: "It has been agreed by delegations that the mandate for the establishment of the Ad Hoc Committee does not preclude any delegation from raising for consideration in the Ad Hoc Committee any of the above noted issues."

The United States' position is clear: FMCT obligations, including verification obligations, should cover only new production of fissile material. Step-by-step approaches to arms control and non-proliferation have been very successful over the years. A step-by-step approach would serve us well with an FMCT. One essential step in the process should be a legal ban on the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons.

We are fully aware that many Conference States have a different view and that this issue will be the subject of vigorous debate. That is what negotiations are for, and the United States is ready to have that debate. What is not helpful is an effort to "pre-negotiate" the outcome of any negotiations by an explicit reference to existing stocks in a negotiating mandate. We would not be alone in seeing this as a thinly veiled effort to prevent negotiations from getting under way.

Regarding the possibility of the Conference's simultaneously negotiating on the four core issues — that is, an FMCT, nuclear disarmament, negative security assurances, and prevention of an arms race in outer space — it is not a practical option. It is difficult to see how a body that has not negotiated any of these topics over the last 16 years could take on the responsibility for negotiating all four at one time. The Conference should focus on one major negotiation at a time, as it did during the CTBT negotiations. Given the reality that an FMCT would set the stage for further progress in reducing nuclear arsenals, it has been

repeatedly endorsed by Conference member States as the priority nuclear disarmament negotiation.

In conclusion, Mr. President, we hope that 2012 will be the year when the Conference on Disarmament emerges from its prolonged impasse and once again contributes to international peace and security by beginning negotiations on an FMCT.

The Conference and its predecessor bodies have a long history of delivering landmark agreements, all of which were contentious in their own right and took years to complete. But in each case, the nations and people who assembled in this historic chamber persevered and helped to create a multilateral arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament structure that supports the security of the international system to this very day. An FMCT will make a critical contribution to this international security architecture. As Secretary of State Clinton said last February, this agreement is “too important a matter to be left in a deadlock forever”.

If the Conference fails to deliver an FMCT negotiation this year, we will again have shirked our responsibility to move forward towards a world without nuclear weapons. We recognize that this is a crucial year for the Conference as an institution and that the General Assembly is monitoring our progress closely. Let us seize the opportunity to make real progress here and restore the vibrancy of this once-vital institution. Business as usual is a recipe for disaster.

We look forward to consulting and working with the Conference’s member and observer States as the 2012 session proceeds. Time is short and the stakes are high.

Ms. Golberg (Canada): Mr. President, let me first congratulate you on assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. There is no doubt that you have a formidable task ahead of you in this first, critical session of our work. Canada will continue to be engaged in and support the Conference in the hope that we will be in a position to begin substantive work.

The gravity of the threats posed to all of our countries by the potential use and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, including by non-State actors, and the need for effective controls over these weapons systems speak to the ongoing need for action. The Conference on Disarmament has in the past been an important mechanism for moving forward the multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation agenda. For too long, however, it has stood moribund, failing to provide direction and leadership. As we meet here today and in the coming weeks, we must approach our work with urgency and priority, and in a reform-minded manner. We must seek to overcome our differences and bring innovative solutions to the challenges we face within the Conference, making efficient use of our time and resources. Canada fears that if we continue to be unable to agree to even a programme of work this year, we will irrevocably contribute further to this institution’s loss of credibility.

Mr. President, I would like to thank you for the work you have done in developing your non-paper and on the proposed draft programme of work. Canada has made no secret of the fact that our priority is to begin negotiation of a treaty to ban the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices this year, ideally at the Conference. Canada’s prioritization of this issue is not based on the belief that this is the only issue that matters, but on the pragmatic recognition that we cannot do everything at once. Preventing an arms race in outer space, negative security assurances and nuclear disarmament are all important non-proliferation and disarmament priorities. Nevertheless, among the Conference’s core issues there exist a negotiating mandate and an extensive body of preparatory work only for a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT). The next logical step is negotiation.

However, such negotiations should not be pursued in isolation. Canada also believes that we must begin preparing the groundwork for future negotiations on the other core issues so that we can also agree to a mandate to begin on these. Canada believes a programme of work that allows for negotiation of an FMCT and substantive discussions of the other core issues is the best option for returning the Conference to work. Such a programme of work would require difficult compromises, but it would also represent a pragmatic recognition that treating all issues in an equitable and balanced manner does not mean that all issues must be treated in the exact same manner, all at the same time. To insist on this is a recipe for deadlock.

(spoke in French)

This year the General Assembly has also shown its determination to consider other options, including with regard to a treaty on fissile material, in a sign that its patience with the status quo has its limits, as the Secretary-General has stated. We have all said that this stalemate could not last, and now the General Assembly has set us a deadline. Certainly, we have national interests, and the consensus rule of this body ensures that those interests are in fact respected. However, that rule was never intended to prevent the opening of negotiations. There is always some uncertainty at the beginning of discussions, because our interests do not necessarily converge immediately. That is the nature of negotiations, and that should not prevent us from fulfilling our task.

Canada hopes very much that we can agree on a programme of work this year and implement it from the beginning of next year, thereby enabling this body to fulfil the mandate for which it was created. We are convinced that it is possible both to address our respective national interests and to achieve our common goals, namely non-proliferation and disarmament. We have a chance to restart the work of the Conference.

Ms. Caballero (Peru) *(spoke in Spanish)*: Mr. President, first of all let me congratulate you on taking up the post of President of our Conference and wish you every success in your work. We are pleased that a neighbour such as Ecuador, with which we share not only history and geography but also a commitment to peace and a series of joint efforts in this regard, is presiding over this Conference. It is with great pleasure that I would like to assure you of the full support and cooperation of my delegation with a view to achieving the goals set forth for this first and, I would say, key part of the session.

Mr. President, we have been warned on numerous occasions of the danger facing this collegial body, the sole multilateral forum for disarmament negotiations, if we do not swing into action and address in a substantive fashion the issues that have been before it for quite some time.

We are keenly aware of what is at stake in strategic and military terms at the global level and in certain regions, as well as of the unceasing efforts undertaken by the Conference, and in particular by all its presidents, to meet the considerable and complex challenges arising in the field of international security.

However, we must not lose sight of our great responsibility to promote conditions conducive to allowing the multilateral institutions to foster and ensure peace, security and disarmament. Nuclear-weapon States bear particular responsibility in this endeavour, which is why my country addresses to them a special and fraternal appeal to focus more on security considerations and global, collective deterrence, rather than individual concerns, so that the threat to our planet of nuclear annihilation might recede.

Mr. President, my delegation is ready to begin immediately and without further delay the substantive work of the Conference, in particular on the four core issues: fissile material, nuclear disarmament, negative security assurances, and the prevention of an arms race in outer space. Thus, we support any initiative that will facilitate a start to negotiations

on fissile material for nuclear weapons, taking in the broadest possible range of aspects, including production, verification and stock reduction, but without neglecting consideration of the other agenda items.

We welcome your suggestions regarding a possible middle way to agreement on a programme of work for this Conference. This is an example of the constructive spirit that we are sure will characterize your work at the head of this body, and is consonant with the dedication to peace of this important country in Latin America, a region that long ago demonstrated its commitment to international peace and security by becoming the first populated zone free of nuclear weapons.

That is why I would like to thank you and your delegation for preparing an informal paper as the basis for a draft decision on the establishment of a programme of work and for the consultations that have been undertaken in this regard. We believe that the proposed balanced approach to the agenda items, in line with the programme of work adopted in 2009, is a sound basis for promoting consensus during the first part of this year's session.

We believe that the setting up of working groups and the appointment of special coordinators on the various issues raised in the document could facilitate the resumption of work in the Conference.

We have a chance to demonstrate genuine political will to free this forum from its stalemate and to send the international community a positive signal. My delegation will continue to support and contribute constructively as needed in order to help this body attain the significance and success it deserves.

Mr. Rodriguez (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to congratulate you on your appointment as President of this important negotiating forum. We believe that your extensive experience and proven leadership will enable us to make progress in the work of the Conference.

Cuba would like to reaffirm the importance of promoting multilateralism as an underlying principle of disarmament negotiations. Solutions agreed on multilaterally, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, are the only viable way to address disarmament and international security issues. Cuba emphasizes that it is confident and willing to negotiate on any issue agreed on by all the States that make up this forum.

As we all know, the Conference plays a key role in the disarmament machinery with regard to the negotiation of universally acceptable treaties. We are concerned about attempts to discredit this Conference, which is itself the fruit of multilateralism and which has produced major international disarmament treaties. If the Conference did not exist, we would have to create it.

Like other colleagues, we are disappointed that the Conference has, for more than a decade, been unable to carry out substantive work. Some blame this on the body's working methods and rules of procedure. Cuba disagrees with that assessment. The underlying cause of the stalemate in our work is essentially political.

The First Committee of the General Assembly continues to adopt dozens of resolutions that are simply disregarded, particularly those on nuclear disarmament.

The fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament has still not been convened, even though the Non-Aligned Movement has long insisted on the need to do so.

Cuba is in favour of optimizing the disarmament machinery of the United Nations, including this Conference. But we believe that the stalemate currently plaguing much of this system is due above all to the lack of political will on the part of certain States to achieve meaningful progress, especially on nuclear disarmament.

We are concerned that several delegations have expressed the view that the time has come to drop the Conference and make use of alternative negotiating processes.

Cuba opposes replacing the Conference with selective ad hoc mechanisms that lie outside the framework of the United Nations and are directed by certain countries. Such an approach would constitute a dangerous backwards step.

The solution does not lie in ignoring the Conference or diminishing its importance. On the contrary, today more than ever it is the responsibility of all to maintain and strengthen it.

The Conference should, as soon as possible, adopt a comprehensive and balanced programme of work that takes account of the real disarmament priorities.

As I have already stated, Cuba is ready to negotiate on various instruments at once and, if feasible, in parallel at this Conference, namely: a treaty to eliminate and prohibit nuclear weapons; a treaty to ban the arms race in outer space; a treaty to provide effective security assurances for non-nuclear-weapon States such as Cuba; and a treaty to prohibit the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

We believe that the Conference can cope with all of these negotiations.

Nuclear disarmament is and must remain the highest disarmament priority. On that basis, consensus must be created in the framework of our Conference.

It is simply unacceptable that in today's world there are nearly 23,000 nuclear weapons, 7,560 of which are ready for immediate use.

Cuba is determined to do everything possible to cooperate with you in the attempt to launch substantive negotiations at this Conference, in accordance with its fundamental mandate to negotiate international treaties on disarmament and arms control. This requires the contribution of each and every member, and it is therefore up to us to demonstrate through tangible actions our commitment to disarmament and peace.

Mr. Amano (Japan): Mr. President, since this is the first time that I am taking the floor under your presidency, let me congratulate you on your assumption of the first presidency of the 2012 session of the Conference on Disarmament. I assure you of my delegation's utmost support and cooperation during your tenure.

Given that this is also the first time that I am taking the floor to address a formal plenary meeting as the Ambassador of Japan to the Conference on Disarmament, please allow me to elaborate my thoughts on the business of the Conference. This body has a distinguished record of producing important international disarmament treaties and instruments. However, the Conference is now at a critical juncture in its long history. At the First Committee's session last year, which I attended, resolutions were adopted urging the Conference to make tangible progress. It was also emphasized that if the Conference were unable to do so, other options would be explored for taking forward international disarmament. We have to keep this clearly in mind when we engage in the work of this year's session.

On the substance of activities related to the four core issues of the Conference, the Government of Japan believes that document CD/1864, adopted by consensus in 2009, presents the best way forward. We firmly believe the negotiation of a fissile material cut-off treaty should begin as early as possible, as it constitutes the next logical step towards the realization of a peaceful and secure world without nuclear weapons.

The commencement of these negotiations has been blocked by one country on the grounds of its national security considerations. We don't disregard the security concerns of any member State, but I would like to underscore that the Conference's rule of consensus

must not be abused to justify blocking the start of negotiations on the issue that the international community regards as the most necessary next step for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Indeed, each member State can address its concerns within the negotiations themselves.

Furthermore, Japan would like to highlight that the member States of the Conference on Disarmament, which represent only 65 out of the 193 United Nations Member States, enjoy a special privilege. With that privilege, however, comes the responsibility to the international community of hammering out, through negotiations, practical measures towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

Mr. President, we understand that you have made the observation that unless the Conference achieves something concrete within the first three months of this year's session, the focus of the international community will shift to workable alternatives to the Conference as a negotiating forum. This is not much time, but Japan is prepared to exert the necessary efforts in cooperation with other member States to achieve results within that period.

Mr. Guerreiro (Brazil) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, the delegation of Brazil is very pleased to see the Conference on Disarmament resume its work under the presidency of an illustrious representative of our neighbour Ecuador. We wish you and your team every success in carrying out this important task. We are confident that your extensive experience in multilateral diplomacy and your leadership will prove invaluable to achieving the desired results. The presidency of Ecuador can count on our support and friendship.

(*spoke in English*)

Mr. President, ambassadors, dear colleagues, it was a great honour for me to be appointed by my Government as the Permanent Representative of Brazil to the Conference on Disarmament. I want to express my sincere expectation to be working with you in the days and months to come, wishing that our collective effort may help overcome the difficulties that the Conference faces nowadays and enable this body to resume its substantive work in accordance with its mandate.

The discussions during the recent session of the General Assembly's First Committee have shown that there is a widespread desire to resume substantive work at the Conference, which is very fortunate. Yet there seem to be differences among member States regarding the most appropriate way to make the Conference move in that direction. Brazil believes that any solution to the present impasse cannot disregard the need for the involvement of all parties concerned or neglect the importance of the universalization of any negotiated instrument.

For Brazil, getting the Conference back to work means addressing the root causes of inaction in multilateral disarmament negotiations. Ultimately, what needs to be addressed is the continuous lack of political will in many quarters to advance meaningful commitments in the area of nuclear disarmament. The problems faced by the Conference do not stem from its rules of procedure or from its consensus rule. The Conference has proven in the past that it can render relevant results as the single multilateral forum for disarmament negotiations. The present drive for establishing an alternative to the Conference would be an easy solution yet one that, in weakening the very structure of multilateral disarmament, might have unexpected consequences for many of our medium- and long-term aspirations.

Nuclear disarmament remains the highest priority for my country. As President Dilma Rousseff said last September in New York, "A world in which nuclear weapons are accepted will always be an insecure one. Possession of these arsenals by a small number of countries gives them, in their view, exclusive rights. It is a reminder of an asymmetrical

conception of the world created during the post-war world that should have already been left behind.”

While a small number of countries try to hold onto their arsenals, a vast majority believe that it is high time to adopt a timeline or political horizon for the elimination of nuclear weapons. The results of the most recent NPT Review Conference were welcomed by those who finally saw some room for progress in the realm of nuclear disarmament. Yet later developments, such as announcements of modernization of nuclear-weapon systems and the reiteration of concepts and doctrines of nuclear deterrence, have shown how thin our hopes may have been. As we approach the new review cycle of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, we expect to see concrete and meaningful actions by nuclear-weapon States.

Mr. President, as a matter of priority, Brazil favours the establishment of a subsidiary body with a view to discussing the question of nuclear disarmament, in particular the treaty banning nuclear weapons. However, we are prepared to consider proposals for the commencement of negotiations on any of the core issues of the agenda of this body. We consider that a legally binding instrument containing assurances by nuclear-weapon States that they will not use or threaten to use those weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States is required. Non-binding political declarations are simply not enough. Of all the core issues, negotiations on nuclear security assurances would certainly be the most simple and uncontroversial ones.

We also support the establishment of a working group to negotiate the treaty banning the placement of weapons and the use of satellites as weapons, as well as prohibiting any sort of attack on devices in orbit. Establishing a working group on the prevention of an arms race in outer space would not imply any nuclear disarmament or economic cost for nuclear-weapon States, but would provide a most relevant legally binding regulation preventing any future arms race in outer space.

Brazil is pleased to see that, at the request of the General Assembly, a group of governmental experts will soon conduct a study on outer space transparency and confidence-building measures. These measures do not, however, replace a legal instrument.

With regard to a fissile material treaty, it is our view that such a legal instrument should be a meaningful and significant one. A fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT) is already in place for all non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the NPT. It is our duty to ensure that as many as possible of the verification measures to which non-nuclear-weapon States are subjected will also be applied to nuclear-weapon States. An FMCT should deal both with the future production of fissile material upon entry into force of the instrument and with pre-existing material. In 2010, Brazil offered a contribution to this debate with a proposal on a possible structure for a treaty, as contained in document CD/1888.

Finally, Mr. President, Brazil believes that the question of the enlargement of the Conference should be duly considered, as we believe that a greater number of member States would certainly stimulate richer and more comprehensive discussions within this forum. We also consider that increased participation by civil society in the work of the Conference would be a positive development contributing to greater awareness outside the Conference of the many challenges faced in the field of nuclear disarmament.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Mr. President, as yesterday was the first day of the year of the dragon according to the Chinese calendar, on behalf of the Chinese delegation I would first like to take this opportunity to extend our best wishes to everyone on the occasion of the Chinese new year. I offer you my congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference and would like to express my appreciation for the positive efforts you have made since the beginning of this year to move the work of the Conference forward as soon as possible. I am confident that with your abundant

diplomatic experience and excellent diplomatic skills you will be able to lead the Conference to a good start this year. The Chinese delegation will make every effort to support you in your work.

As the new ambassador for disarmament affairs of China, I look forward to continuing in the same vein as my predecessor and building good personal and working relations with everyone.

The Conference's current situation is a matter of particular concern for all of us. Everyone ardently hopes that the Conference can break out of its deadlock as soon as possible. Last year, during the Conference and in the First Committee of the General Assembly, all parties engaged in an impassioned debate about the work of the Conference. Admittedly, there is disagreement among the parties on a number of questions. Some colleagues have expressed pessimism and despair about the Conference. At the same time, I think we all believe that the Conference is still the most appropriate forum for negotiating multilateral arms control and disarmament treaties. Its authoritative stature must be upheld and strengthened.

The most important task we now face is to promote the Conference's initiation of substantive work as soon as possible. To do so we must work diligently on two fronts.

On the one hand, we must actively seek a way ahead within the Conference. In the past few years the successive presidents and various parties have put forward a number of good suggestions and ideas, including the decision contained in document CD/1864, adopted by consensus in 2009, and these ideas and suggestions have established a good foundation for our work. We must now assimilate the new circumstances, hold broad consultations and strive to find proposals acceptable to all.

On the other hand, we must work hard to create favourable conditions outside the Conference. Arms control and disarmament are intimately linked with international and regional security situations. All of us must actively take steps to address each other's legitimate concerns, promote mutual trust and create an atmosphere conducive to negotiations and dialogue.

The position of China is clear. We have consistently held that the Conference, as the only multilateral disarmament and arms control negotiating body, is the sole and most appropriate forum for the negotiation of arms control and disarmament treaties. We support the early adoption by the Conference of a comprehensive and balanced programme of work and the launching of substantive work on all subjects as soon as possible. We hope that all parties will continue to have a constructive attitude, work hard to seek consensus and quickly find an appropriate way to break out of the Conference's deadlock. The Chinese delegation is ready to strengthen cooperation with all parties to that end.

Mr. Gómez Camacho (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, I also join in congratulating you on your appointment. As always, you may rely on the delegation of Mexico to support your work.

We are gathered here today at a crucial time for the Conference on Disarmament. It has been said that 2012 will be a watershed year for the Conference, as the international community has made it clear that it will no longer tolerate the paralysis that afflicts this forum.

The Conference should be in the vanguard of designing new approaches to international security. But after 15 years it has still not fulfilled its mandate or role in the disarmament machinery.

Several reasons have been put forward to justify this situation, among them the need for an international climate that is propitious for disarmament negotiations. This is simply

talking around the substance of the agreements that the Conference should be forging. It is often said that there is no agreement on what should be the priorities of the Conference agenda, and that there can be no such agreement because countries are defending their own national interests.

Mexico does not subscribe to such points of view. While it is a legitimate and inalienable right of all countries to pursue their own interests in international forums, we would like to believe that the only rational option should be to achieve a safer world for all.

Therefore, I repeat that, for Mexico, international peace and security do not depend on weapons of mass destruction. Rather, we believe that only a world free of nuclear weapons can guarantee security and peace for all.

Mr. President, last October, in the framework of the First Committee of the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly, we participated in various consultations to consider the four resolutions up for discussion on the Conference and the lack of progress in disarmament negotiations. Those discussions reflected the great interest that delegations from around the globe have in achieving nuclear disarmament. It also emerged that a vast majority of States Members of the United Nations would like to see binding multilateral agreements on disarmament. Many also believe that the current situation is unsustainable and that a comprehensive review should be conducted of the disarmament machinery, and in particular of the Conference, its agenda, working methods and operation.

What is critical now is that the General Assembly has urged us to explore all available options should the situation in the Conference continue.

Mexico has once again come to this Conference in a constructive spirit and ready to work, but this time with the strong conviction that maintaining the status quo is not a viable option.

So we hope that we, the members of the Conference, will rise to the occasion and heed the appeals by the General Assembly to move on from procedural to substantive matters, from the interests of a minority to those of the community.

Otherwise, the General Assembly will have to act on the matter in accordance with the powers and responsibilities conferred on it by the Charter.

Ms. Zappia (Denmark): Mr. President, allow me first to congratulate you, on behalf of the European Union, on the assumption of the post of the first President of the Conference on Disarmament during its 2012 session.

The acceding country Croatia; the candidate countries Iceland, Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; the stabilization and association process countries and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia; and Armenia, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine align themselves with this statement.

Mr. President, we have heard again the urgent appeal made on behalf of the Secretary-General of the United Nations to this Conference to commence substantive work without further delay and to adopt a programme of work at the earliest possible date. Last year the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters in its report suggested that the Secretary-General encourage progress on a programme of work based on the consensus document CD/1864. The European Union fully supports and endorses these appeals. All Conference members bear the responsibility of making the Conference deliver according to its mandate. We strongly value close and continuous coordination among the six presidencies, which could considerably contribute to our work.

Indeed, last autumn the General Assembly's First Committee heard an overwhelming call for the commencement of substantive work in the Conference on

Disarmament. The Conference should heed this call, and the European Union would like to see effective follow-up to it. All European Union member States, together with other States Members of the United Nations, cosponsored the resolution on revitalizing the work of the Conference on Disarmament and taking forward multilateral disarmament negotiations. Your strong personal commitment, Mr. President, as well as the efforts of your Government, will be an essential and extremely welcome contribution to this process. We hope that the consultations you conducted during the intersessional period will enable the adoption at the earliest possible date of a balanced and comprehensive programme of work, followed by its swift implementation.

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

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

The European Union would like to restate its long-standing attachment to the enlargement of the Conference on Disarmament. We underline the importance of continuation of consultation on the expansion of the membership as expressed in the operative paragraphs of United Nations General Assembly resolution A/66/59 on the report of last year's session of the Conference, and we strongly support the call to appoint in 2012 a special coordinator for the expansion of the Conference's membership.

The European Union's commitment to the Conference on Disarmament has not diminished. At the same time, we are aware that the adoption of a programme of work will require sustained political effort. If the Conference's standstill continues, the international community will increasingly reflect on other options and ways to ensure progress in multilateral non-proliferation and disarmament.

The year 2012 must be used effectively to put the Conference back on track. We cannot afford another year of fruitless consultations, procedural manoeuvres and the persistent abuse by some member States of the consensus rule that prevents us from undertaking priority disarmament tasks. The General Assembly's First Committee has insisted on the urgent need to revitalize the work of multilateral disarmament bodies and urged the Conference on Disarmament to agree early in 2012 on a programme of work including the immediate commencement of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty.

We believe that the Conference has an obligation to act before we report back in autumn. The credibility and legitimacy of the Conference are at stake.

In 2012 the Conference on Disarmament must make a substantive contribution to global disarmament and non-proliferation efforts. The European Union remains committed to this task, and we expect similar commitment from all Conference members. We therefore appeal to all delegations to the Conference to show the flexibility which is needed from all of us if we want to overcome the long-standing stalemate.

The European Union appreciated the enhanced engagement last year between civil society and the Conference on Disarmament. We would welcome a similar approach by the Conference in 2012, thus strengthening the contribution of NGOs and research institutions to the work of the Conference.

Mr. Ganev (Bulgaria): Mr. President, I have the honour, on behalf of the Eastern European Group — Belarus, Bulgaria, Kazakhstan, Romania, the Russian Federation and Ukraine — to congratulate you on the assumption of your duties as the first President of the Conference on Disarmament during its 2012 session. The Group would also like to express its satisfaction at the adoption of the agenda at this first plenary meeting.

The Eastern European Group countries firmly believe that 15 years of deadlock in the Conference on Disarmament is enough. This annual session not only gives us a new opportunity to overcome the difficulties, it will also require from all of us greater political will, mutual understanding and shared responsibility. In the light of this, we take serious note of the appeal by the Secretary-General of the United Nations to the Conference's member States to adopt a balanced programme of work based on document CD/1864 and to resume substantive work as soon as possible. We rely on the skills of the six presidents of 2012 and their ability to move the Conference forward.

The Group reiterates its support for the enlargement of the Conference and the calls for the appointment of a special coordinator for the expansion of the Conference's membership. The Eastern European Group countries would like to see the Conference membership be relevant to twenty-first-century realities. We would welcome further consideration of the issue of broader involvement of civil society in the work of the Conference.

I would like to reiterate the commitment of the Group to the relevance of the Conference as an important and unique multilateral body for conducting negotiations on critical legally binding multilateral instruments related to disarmament and international security. I can assure you, Mr. President, on behalf of the Eastern European Group countries, that we will spare no efforts to facilitate consensus in 2012.

Mr. Peláez (Argentina) (spoke in Spanish): I address the Conference on Disarmament on behalf of the following Latin American States: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela.

It is a great honour for our region to start the 2012 session of the Conference with a Latin American presidency. We are confident that the principles of disarmament traditionally advocated by Latin American and Caribbean States will be adhered to faithfully by this Ecuadorian presidency.

We also take this opportunity to extend our best wishes to the Conference presidents who will follow in the course of 2012 and who will have the important task of beginning to revitalize this body.

Mr. President, 2012 will be a key year for the future of the Conference, which we consider to be the appropriate setting for continuing work on concluding treaties on nuclear

disarmament, in accordance with what was agreed at the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.

On several occasions during the past few years, member and observer States from our region have addressed this forum in a constructive and flexible spirit in order to share our views on the issues before the Conference in the hope of achieving consensus.

In order to overcome the situation in which the Conference finds itself at the beginning of 2012, the early adoption and implementation of an agenda and programme of work are, without doubt, indispensable. We therefore commend your willingness and determination to resume the work of this Conference without delay.

We thank you for the consultation process held recently to exchange ideas on the future programme of work, which will ensure that the concerns and priorities of all member States can be taken into account. We hope to achieve consensus on wording that will assist with the adoption and implementation of a programme of work soon, thereby making it possible for the Conference to start substantive work without delay.

Mr. President, in this year marking the forty-fifth anniversary of the opening for signature of the Treaty of Tlatelolco, the Latin American and Caribbean countries remain committed to pursuing nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, following the example set when we created the first nuclear-weapon-free zone in a densely populated area of the planet.

We take this opportunity to welcome the recent ratification by Guatemala of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

Let me conclude by emphasizing that the Latin American countries present in this forum will never abandon the effort to have this Conference play its intended role. We must remain actively committed, basing ourselves on the principle of multilateralism, to working in a constructive and flexible spirit, and to showing the necessary political will. We hope that all States gathered here share the same aspiration.

Ms. Vuković (Croatia): Mr. President, on behalf of the informal group of observer States, let me congratulate you on the assumption of this important post and wish you all the best in the coming four weeks and beyond. At the same time, needless to say, I would like to assure you of our group's full support in achieving the goals set for your presidency. We stand ready to assist you in what will hopefully be the start of a good year for the Conference, the year when substantial work starts and consideration of expansion advances.

We start this year with ever-stronger appeals for the Conference to commence substantive work without further delay. We have a great number of United Nations General Assembly resolutions urging the Conference to adopt and implement a programme of work early in 2012. Of special importance for all States applying for membership in the Conference is General Assembly resolution 66/59 on the report of the Conference on Disarmament, which in paragraph 6 "recognizes the importance of continuing consultations on the question of the expansion of the membership of the Conference". Moreover, paragraph 18 of last year's report of the Conference to the General Assembly contains a reference to the appointment of a special rapporteur on enlargement. No need to remind ourselves of article 1 of the rules of procedure stating that the membership of the Conference will be reviewed at regular intervals.

This gives us ample basis for realistically expecting early further advances in this area. To cite some numbers, there are currently 33 observer States to the Conference, out of which 25 are applicants for membership. In the previous two cases of the expansion of the Conference, special coordinators on the expansion of membership were appointed respectively two and three years ahead of the actual expansions. This practice need not repeat itself, but it does call for an early appointment of the special rapporteur this year in

order to continue, in an organized manner, consultations which may lead to eventual expansion. The interest of a number of States in joining this body should be seen as major proof of its vitality and credibility.

We look forward to working with you, Mr. President, in moving the Conference in the right direction.

Mr. Mundaraín Hernández (Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): We wish to congratulate you, Ambassador Chiriboga, on your appointment as President of the Conference and to express our satisfaction at seeing you guide our work. We take this opportunity to offer you the total support and full cooperation of our delegation in all your endeavours in the coming weeks.

I am pleased to see an ambassador from a Latin American country as President, as it underscores the oft-repeated commitment of our region to disarmament, and especially nuclear disarmament.

I also avail myself of this opportunity to wish the other presidents of this year's session, hailing from Egypt, Ethiopia, Finland, France and Germany, every success in the face of the challenges they will need to overcome in order to see this forum start substantive work.

Our country has long been a supporter of general and complete nuclear disarmament under strict and effective international oversight, and therefore considers it critical that new instruments on disarmament and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction be negotiated and that the existing ones be strengthened.

One step in this direction would be to start negotiations on a legally binding treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons, which must contain specific verification provisions and cover current stocks.

We continue to see the need for consensus on how best to provide non-nuclear-weapon States with negative security assurances against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, as long as the goal of nuclear disarmament still remains to be achieved.

We must reiterate our wish that outer space remain a place where peaceful activities may be developed for the benefit of humankind, and in no way become the stage for an arms race.

Mr. President, the session of the Conference on Disarmament that you are opening is crucial. We can no longer postpone the start of substantive work. The degree of urgency with which we approach this task will be decisive in maintaining the validity and even the relevance of this forum, and we must start with an agreement on the programme of work.

We hope that this will be the year in which the Conference on Disarmament, the sole multilateral forum for negotiations in this area, once again becomes the scene of substantive discussions generating significant legally binding documents on disarmament.

Mr. Oyarce (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, we would like to congratulate you on taking up the presidency of the Conference. We believe that Ecuador will endeavour to ensure that our region continues to contribute to the multilateral system of disarmament and non-proliferation. We will offer the same support to all the presidencies of 2012. We welcome the new permanent representatives and the statement made today by the Ambassador of Brazil.

You, as President and as a friend, can count on the modest support of the Mission of Chile. My delegation shares the views expressed by Argentina on behalf of the Latin American and Caribbean States participating in the Conference.

We believe that there is a general perception that 2012 could be a decisive, and some here have said crucial, year for the future of the Conference. Countless efforts have been made, with specific proposals and messages at the highest level. Today, the Secretary-General of the United Nations has submitted to us yet another, with a view to reactivating this forum. Unfortunately, those efforts have been insufficient to build a political commitment.

At the most recent General Assembly, the need to produce binding disarmament agreements was emphasized. The Assembly sent, formally and informally, clear signs in this regard, which should be interpreted in a political key.

This year we yet again find ourselves facing the need to adopt a programme of work. It is clear that we have reached a point where something must be done. Attempts to explain the stalemate, including today's, suggest that the problem arises from external factors and the nature of this forum, from procedural issues and from legitimate standpoints reflecting national interests.

An exercise in analytical assessment and causality should make way for a political agreement that would allow us to make the world a safer place, especially with regard to weapons of mass destruction and nuclear disarmament. We have a fresh opportunity and should reflect carefully in order to avoid repeating yet again what has happened in past years.

Clearly, it is fruitless to confront one another with differing priorities. The challenge would appear to be to find realistic middle ground, particularly on the four core issues. That middle ground should maintain consensus and inclusiveness, and foster responsibility for negotiating agreements that truly promise to be universal.

We believe that this should be the year of renewal and negotiation, and that we should ensure that the mandate of the Conference is not transferred to another forum. This is a real risk and should be avoided in order to preserve the political role of the Conference.

I would like to finish by reiterating that the Conference has the potential to make a real impact on global security. If its mandate as a negotiating body is implemented, we must accept the fact that the three concepts of human, national and global security are interdependent and interconnected. Indeed, the global security that it is our task to build together is the key to viable and effective national and human security.

Therefore, Mr. President, we will continue to promote a Conference that makes an effective contribution to the functioning and legitimacy of multilateralism in the service of disarmament and non-proliferation.

Mr. Danon (France) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, first allow me to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and to thank you very much for your very kind words.

This first meeting of the Conference in 2012 will indeed be my last. Perhaps one day I will return to this room, just as you have done, Mr. President. Who knows?

It is not unusual for a departing ambassador to make some personal observations about the Conference. I will refrain from doing so as I do not wish to spread my feelings of pessimism. The past 20 years have seen great progress in bilateral and unilateral nuclear disarmament, and France has done its part to reduce its nuclear arsenal. However, multilateral nuclear disarmament is making no headway in this forum. The last multilateral disarmament treaty with universal ambitions, the last treaty to enter into force, was the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, and that was 40 years ago.

The Conference has gradually become a sounding board for certain international tensions, when it should be reflecting the will of the broad majority to advance

progressively towards general and complete disarmament. I am quite sincere in expressing my hope to see you collectively find a solution acceptable to all so as to demonstrate the relevance and thus the effectiveness of this forum. After three and a half years in Geneva, I fully realize how difficult that may be.

However, while I understand and often share the frustration, I utterly refuse to resign myself to the current situation. I have every confidence in the capacities of my colleagues and friends in this room. However, I also believe that a more robust policy approach is needed in order to break the stalemate.

So I will soon return to Paris. My own fate will be decided in the coming days. One option is for me to remain involved in nuclear issues. Be that as it may, it will always be a great pleasure to see you all as we move forward in our careers and in our personal lives.

I thank you, Mr. President, Mr. Secretary-General, and all of you, dear colleagues and friends, for the years spent here together working and trying to improve the international situation.

Mr. Bakhtiar (Malaysia): Mr. President, as this is the first time that my delegation is taking the floor, I wish to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference of Disarmament. My delegation deeply appreciates the sincere efforts and consultations that you have undertaken thus far to ensure that the Conference remains relevant as the sole multilateral negotiating body for nuclear arms control.

Mr. President, allow me to take us back to the year 1999. The dawn of the new millennium brought a sense of hope and optimism for all. We were embarking on a new era. The cold war was buried. Capitalism was booming and people were trading their weapons and ammunition for shovels and hoes. There were a few, however, who painted a doomsday scenario. Looking back at the past 12 years suggests that maybe they were really not off the mark.

The world went through many conflicts and wars and confronted many new threats. Even our economies were affected. The world has gone through a lot during the past 12 years, and — how ironic — we are still here trying to move the Conference forward, just as our predecessors did before the new millennium.

The Conference's failure to have any serious substantive work on its agenda for more than a decade should be taken as a challenge. Despite the difficulties, my delegation will continue to engage constructively in the Conference to pursue the effective implementation of an agreed programme of work. Malaysia is indeed encouraged by the positive developments in various international security settings over the past year, including the recently concluded Seventh Review Conference of the Biological Weapons Convention, the Chemical Weapons Convention as well as discussions in the First Committee of the General Assembly. These positive developments showed that there are ample commitments and political will for pursuing the disarmament agenda. It is incumbent upon us to build on this momentum and commence substantive discussions as soon as possible.

The world today is no safer than that envisaged by our predecessors before the new millennium. We have to strengthen our resolve and work towards reinvigorating the multilateral process in pursuing the aim of bringing this Conference back to substantive work. It is my delegation's sincere hope that at this year's session, the Conference will be able to find consensus on a programme of work.

My delegation would like to reiterate our position that nuclear disarmament remains our highest priority. However, pending negotiations on a nuclear weapons convention, the fissile material cut-off treaty, similarly to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, remains one of the next essential steps towards preventing the proliferation of nuclear material, which eventually would lead towards the attainment of genuine nuclear

disarmament. We hope that other core issues of equal importance — namely, nuclear disarmament, negative security assurances and the prevention of an arms race in outer space — will be addressed in the Conference.

Mr. President, in concluding, let me assure you of my delegation's readiness to work with you and other members of the Conference with a view to achieving a positive and successful outcome to this session of the Conference on Disarmament.

Mr. Khvostov (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. President, we of course subscribe to the position presented by Ambassador Ganev on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States, but would also like to make a statement at the national level. In this regard, I would like to congratulate you on your election to the presidency of our negotiating body, wish you success and assure you of the full support of our delegation as you carry out your mandate. We would also like to welcome Secretary-General Tokayev, who is with us today and is opening this year's session of the Conference.

We are starting under difficult circumstances. The unfortunate turn that matters have taken in the Conference is plain for all to see. For more than 10 years this negotiating body has been unable to proceed with substantive work. Last year's session also proved fruitless, as we failed to agree on a fully fledged programme of work. All of this demonstrates the lack of common ground on matters of multilateral disarmament, not only within the Conference but also at other, more serious levels. This, of course, deprives us of specific tools for resolving the growing number of security issues facing our peoples.

During the last session we had a thorough and valuable discussion of all the agenda items. As often occurs in multilateral forums, diametrically opposed views could on occasion be heard. Our delegation understands the concerns of supporters of an uncompromising and robust approach, who are dissatisfied with the failure of the Conference to produce results. However, we support a more cautious approach. Looking through the full spectrum of opinions presented last year, it is possible to say that there was not one delegation in this room that would be fundamentally opposed to initiating the negotiating process in the Conference on Disarmament. This means that the Conference still has the necessary capacity to resume substantive work. We must continue to seek compromise options and outcomes, and obviously we need to consult each other more, not only here in the Conference but also in other forums. In this regard, the role of the five permanent members of the Security Council and their good offices is growing considerably, and they could contribute significantly to progress, given the complexity of international relations today. In our opinion, the Conference remains the sole multilateral negotiating body on disarmament and arms control, in which all of the world's key States take part. We must not forget that the main objective of the Conference is to safeguard the interests of all humanity with regard to disarmament.

Mr. President, it is difficult to assess the prospects for the document you have prepared, and which you yourself refer to as a "non-paper". It is difficult because we do not see what you intend to achieve with this document, but I would like to say that we welcome its very existence. We are ready to support the proposal to establish working groups to review the issues addressed in agenda items 1, 2, 3 and 4, and we especially appreciate your willingness to seek compromise on fissile material cut-off treaty negotiations. Naturally, we also support your initiative to appoint a special coordinator to address the issue of new types of weapons of mass destruction. In this regard, I wish to thank the delegations that supported our draft resolution on banning new types of such weapons, submitted at the sixty-sixth session of the United Nations General Assembly, and express particular gratitude to those that co-sponsored the resolution. With regard to your suggestion on information security, we are unlikely to be able to be as active on this issue as on other agenda items, insofar as we consider that a United Nations group of experts is already working on a similar issue. We believe that our efforts in the Conference on Disarmament

should be focused on finding solutions to issues already pinpointed during our debates, solutions that are ripe and could in the future be given shape in the framework of the relevant treaties.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I think it would be preferable to discuss these issues bilaterally, but I already explained that the non-paper is just that, a non-paper designed to stimulate further thought, not a proposal. In any event, I would be happy to discuss with the delegation of Belarus the initiatives that we have put forward in the search for consensus.

Mr. So Se Pyong (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Mr. President, at the outset, let me congratulate you on your assumption of the first presidency of the 2012 session of the Conference on Disarmament. I am confident that under your leadership the Conference will be able to make progress. You can rest assured of the full support and cooperation of the delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Let me also take this opportunity to highly commend your predecessor Ambassador Rodríguez of Cuba for his valuable contributions as the last president of the Conference in 2011. At the same time, I would like to wish a warm welcome to our new distinguished ambassadors who have joined us and assure them of our full support.

Mr. President, my country's delegation looks forward to the substantive work of the Conference this year in line with the agenda that was adopted this morning. We appreciate the fact that you have conducted consultations with delegations to find common ground for reaching consensus on a programme of work which is acceptable to all members, in keeping with the rules of procedure of the Conference. We hope that you will continue your strenuous efforts until the last moment of your presidency.

Mr. Shradi (Libya) (*spoke in Arabic*): Mr. President, I would first like to offer you our sincere congratulations on assuming the presidency of this Conference for this session and wish you every success in the task assigned to you. We are certain that your expertise and experience will contribute to obtaining positive results, which will achieve international peace and security. Free Libya is attending the meetings of your Conference for the very first time since the success of our revolution of 17 February and is fully determined to assume its regional and international responsibilities.

Libya reaffirms the importance of the major role played by this Conference, as the sole multilateral negotiating body on disarmament, established by the first special session of the General Assembly of the United Nations devoted to disarmament. In this regard, we call for all efforts aimed at reaching consensus on a comprehensive and balanced programme of work for 2012 to be stepped up. We do so taking into account the need to begin serious negotiations leading to the conclusion of international instruments on the complete elimination of nuclear weapons and prohibiting the use, testing, production, transfer, stockpiling, use or threat of use of such weapons – and to the eventual eradication of these weapons under strict, effective and verifiable international control in accordance with a specific timetable.

Libya today is convinced, more than ever, of the importance of respecting all its obligations in respect of treaties and conventions relating to the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, first and foremost nuclear weapons. It is absolutely ready to cooperate with the international community in order to implement all the provisions of these international treaties and conventions, through all international and regional forums. We will work with the international community to create a conducive climate in which real negotiations can be conducted with a view to concluding international instruments for the elimination of weapons of mass destruction and nuclear weapons.

It is a matter of concern that more than four decades since the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) was concluded the dangers posed by nuclear

armament remain, since a number of nuclear-weapon States retain their nuclear arsenals and remain on high alert. Unfortunately, no palpable progress has been made in respect of full nuclear disarmament. Thus the objectives of the Treaty will remain elusive, in particular if we continue to focus on the non-acquisition by non-nuclear-weapon States of nuclear weapons and at the same time prevent nuclear-weapon States from taking tangible, practical steps towards full nuclear disarmament. From this platform we reiterate, as indicated in the Declaration of the Summit Conference of Non-Aligned Countries, held in Sharm el Sheikh in Egypt in 2009, our agreement in principle concerning nuclear disarmament. The Non-Aligned Countries reiterated their call to the Conference on Disarmament to begin negotiations on a phased programme for the total elimination of nuclear weapons within a specific time frame, including by concluding a nuclear weapons convention.

The total elimination and eradication of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against their use or the threat of their use. As long as some countries stockpile nuclear weapons, there is a possibility that they might be used, or that terrorist groups might acquire them. Pending the total elimination of these weapons, we emphasize that non-nuclear-weapon States need effective guarantees from nuclear-weapon States that they will not use or threaten to use such weapons against them. Therefore, we call on this Conference to start work immediately on the conclusion of an international, legally binding instrument that would make non-nuclear-weapon States safe from the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons against them. This was re-emphasized by the International Court of Justice in its legal opinion of 1996 concerning the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons. The Court found that the threat or use of such weapons was contrary to international law in times of armed conflict, in particular the principles of international humanitarian law, and that there existed an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control.

The security and stability of the Middle East region cannot be achieved by the possession by one party of nuclear weapons, in particular as Israel is the only country in the region that has not acceded or expressed the desire to accede to the NPT. We emphasize the extreme importance of implementing the resolution relating to the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East adopted by the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference, in accordance with Security Council resolution 487 (1981). We urge all countries sponsors of the resolution adopted in 1995 pertaining to the Middle East to take all necessary steps, including calling on Israel to accede to the NPT and to subject all its nuclear facilities to International Atomic Energy Agency comprehensive safeguards. In addition, we call for the implementation of the 2010 NPT Review Conference action plan relating to the three pillars of the Treaty and the Middle East question. We also emphasize the importance of holding a conference in 2012 on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, attended by all countries in the Middle East region, with the focus on means of implementing the resolution on the Middle East.

In conclusion, Libya re-emphasizes how important it is for the Conference on Disarmament to consider seriously the possibility of expanding its membership and to appoint a special coordinator for 2012 to address this matter. We hope that the Conference will consider and approve the accession of Libya to the Conference, since the new democratic Libya is very keen to play an effective role in the maintenance of international peace and security in cooperation with the international community in general and with members of the Conference on Disarmament in particular.

Mr. Demiralp (Turkey): Mr. President, I wish to congratulate you on the assumption of the first presidency of the Conference on Disarmament in 2012. I wish you success in your endeavours to advance the work of the Conference this year.

We listened carefully to the message of the Secretary-General of the United Nations. As usual, the Secretary-General's message contains wise recommendations on disarmament and non-proliferation issues and encourages the Conference to move forward. Indeed, this year is a very important one, keeping in mind that 2012 is the year of the commencement of this new NPT cycle and of the upcoming nuclear security summit in March. We hope that the Conference on Disarmament will not lag behind and will begin undertaking substantive work.

Indeed, there are positive developments taking place in the sphere of non-proliferation and disarmament. Nevertheless, these developments are not sufficient. Admittedly, the overall disarmament process is facing major problems. To be able to disperse the gloom and pave the way for greater achievements in the future, we believe that the international community needs to attain meaningful progress in the short term. The commencement of negotiations at the Conference, as well as a successful Middle East conference and the gradual establishment of a Middle East zone free from weapons of mass destruction, are but two examples.

Mr. President, Turkey commends your efforts to overcome the present stalemate. We acknowledge that they were meant to motivate the Conference members to have a fruitful discussion. We are looking forward to additional such initiatives. We also thank you for the thought-provoking statement you made today.

The Conference is indeed a unique platform. It has a special responsibility with regard to the contemporary disarmament agenda. We should all strive to maintain the relevance of the Conference by fulfilling its fundamental task. This year Turkey will work for the resumption of substantive work in the Conference with its present membership. We welcome the adoption of the agenda. The agenda is comprehensive and flexible, enabling us to address all issues in the field of arms control and disarmament. Our next step must be to agree by consensus on a programme of work. This will not only pave the way for the commencement of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty but also yield parallel advances on other agenda items. These include substantive work on the core issues, namely nuclear disarmament, prevention of an arms race in outer space and negative security assurances. The challenge is considerable, for the problems faced by the Conference are not created by its procedures or internal dynamics. We need, more than ever, mutual understanding and creative thinking against a background of important developments at the global level.

To conclude, let me reiterate our support to Ecuador and the other States presiding over the Conference this year, and wish you success.

Mr. Wai (Myanmar): Mr. President, it is indeed a great honour for me to speak at this meeting at the beginning of the 2012 session as we renew our efforts to revitalize the work of the Conference.

First of all, I would like to extend our warm congratulations on your assumption of the presidency at this time of great importance for the future of the Conference. I am convinced that with your wisdom and able leadership we will achieve the desired results in our work at the Conference. I wish to assure you of my delegation's fullest support and cooperation in the discharge of your responsibilities.

My delegation commends your efforts during the intersessional period to reach out to all members of the Conference, including the conducting of the first round of informal engagement or consultations. We also commend you for your non-paper or, as you term it, "non-non-paper" on the programme of work for the 2012 session.

I would like to thank Mr. Tokayev, Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations,

for being here with us today and for delivering the statement of the Secretary-General of the United Nations. The Secretary-General's message provides us with a sense of direction for the way forward for the Conference.

I would also like to take this opportunity to warmly welcome our new colleagues, the ambassadors of Brazil, Canada, China, India, Japan, Norway and the Russian Federation. Ambassadors, your diplomatic skills and experiences will no doubt enrich our work in the Conference. I would also like to take this opportunity to bid a very warm farewell to the Ambassador of France on his leaving. Ambassador, we wish you all the best in your future responsibilities.

Mr. President, Myanmar consistently attaches paramount importance to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. As long as nuclear weapons continue to exist on the planet, the risk of their proliferation will also remain. It is our conviction that the best and the only genuinely effective defence against a nuclear catastrophe is the total elimination of these ominous weapons. The very first resolution of the United Nations General Assembly in 1946 called for the elimination of nuclear weapons from national arsenals. Today, this call is yet to be heeded.

Myanmar is also committed to other important issues such as a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices, the prevention of an arms race in outer space and negative security assurances.

Mr. President, allow me to share our views on the state of affairs in the Conference. It was 16 years ago that the Conference fulfilled one of its mandates by successfully negotiating and concluding the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty in 1996. My delegation has been greatly frustrated by the continued deadlock since then in the Conference. However, despite our disappointment, my delegation is still convinced that the unique composition and historic achievements of the Conference provide us with a reason to believe that the Conference is still relevant as the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum. However, one thing is very clear today: The Conference and its members have to be immensely creative and cooperative in this year's consultations.

It is obvious that the destiny of the Conference is in our hands. Procedural issues in the Conference cannot be held responsible for its stagnation. The members of the Conference will have to take serious decisions that will have a profound effect on the failure or success of the Conference. The time has now come for us in the Conference to take such bold decisions.

My delegation reaffirms our readiness to participate constructively in all efforts aiming at reaching agreement on a programme of work for the Conference this year. We are open-minded and ready to look at all avenues that will lead to breaking the deadlock. In the same vein, we would like to call upon all member States to show utmost flexibility and demonstrate their political will to achieve our common objectives in the Conference.

Mr. Lusiński (Poland): Mr. President, let me congratulate you on the assumption of your distinctive function and assure you of the support of my delegation in your endeavours. It is really good that our debate has a political character because, indeed, the challenge we face is of a political nature, not a procedural one, so I would prefer not to spend too much time on procedures. I appreciate the fact that you kindly submitted a non-paper to facilitate our discussions. Probably the initial session, during which we adopted the agenda, which already represents progress in comparison with the previous year, would not be the proper time for overly specific discussions on how we should proceed in the weeks to come.

I feel obliged to make a couple of remarks that came to my mind when you were reading the non-paper, especially in respect of part 2, where you kindly propose to

elaborate the elements of a treaty banning the production of fissile material, which is the formula we worked on during the First Committee's session. It comes as a surprise to me that what is quoted is a treaty to prevent the use of existing fissile materials, civilian or military, nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, keeping in mind that we are to start negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty, meaning to focus on materials which shouldn't be produced in the future. Poland has no particular reason to obstruct the issue of taking stock, but to mention the stocks only seems to be a lack of balance indeed.

It also occurs to me that while elaborating our future programme of work, we should carefully read the rules of procedure and document CD/1864.

My last comment is that, while the number of working groups and special coordinators is really impressive, this impressive number does not compensate for the lack of negotiation of a fissile material cut-off treaty. While a comprehensive programme of disarmament sounds good, there is not very much substance behind it. That is not the case with new types of weapons of mass destruction, and to make real progress, I believe that we have to focus on crucial things.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to clarify again, as I said at the beginning of this meeting and during the consultations, that the non-paper was drafted by my delegation to stimulate thought and is not a proposal by Ecuador for a plan of action.

Mr. Kwon Haeryong (Republic of Korea): Mr. President, at the outset, let me begin by congratulating you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference at this critical juncture. I assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation during your presidency.

Let us turn our attention to the state of play in the Conference. For more than a decade the Conference has failed to fulfil its mandate as the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum. The international community has expressed its frustration with the years of stalemate in the Conference, and its patience is running out. The relevant resolution adopted by the General Assembly last year reflected this sentiment. The First Committee, during the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly, said that the 2012 session had a deadline for moving on and implementing a comprehensive programme of work. This year may be the last window of opportunity that the international community gives this forum. Whether or not we will seize this opportunity depends solely on us.

It is clear, then, that in order for the Conference to move forward, its member countries should think more creatively and exercise more political flexibility with respect to both security concerns and rules of procedure in the Conference, as the Secretary-General of the United Nations stated in his message. In this context, I assure you once again that my delegation remains ready to contribute fully and in a flexible manner.

My delegation believes that document CD/1864, which was adopted by consensus in 2009, is still a good basis for this year's programme of work and that a fissile material cut-off treaty is the most ripe for negotiation among the four core issues of the Conference.

Mr. Khelif (Algeria) (*spoke in Arabic*): Mr. President, the Algerian delegation would first like to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference and, at the same time, to reassure you and following presidents of the full support of the Algerian delegation with a view to achieving progress in our work and coming up with a programme of work as soon as possible. The deadlock in which the Conference has remained for many years cannot continue; it is a source of real concern. We welcome your efforts that made it possible for us to adopt an agenda at the first formal meeting, which is something that I think has not happened for years. We hope that this positive spirit in which we were able to adopt the agenda in good time will remain with the Conference and enable us to reach consensus on the programme of work. The delegation of Algeria requested the

floor today only in order to briefly mention some views in response to statements by some delegations inviting comments.

First, the delegation of Algeria is committed to nuclear disarmament as a priority, on the basis of the final document of the first special session of the United Nations General Assembly of 1978 establishing the mandate and the road map for the work of the Conference. Consequently, we are committed to the need to maintain the Conference. As the Ambassador of France said in his statement, we do not want to give in to despair.

As many delegations indicated in their statements, the main reason for the deadlock in the Conference is political. We do not believe that resorting to alternative frameworks or changing the Conference's method of work would enable us to progress in our work or come up with effective international instruments in the area of nuclear disarmament that enjoyed the necessary political grounding and legitimacy.

We listened with great interest to those who said that if the deadlock continued, the General Assembly would assume the responsibilities of the Conference. We would like to ask whether the situation in the General Assembly of the United Nations is different from that in the Conference. Can we envisage obtaining different results when the reasons remain the same? Are the political motivations behind our positions in the Conference on Disarmament not the same as those behind the positions of our States and delegations in New York? How can we envisage obtaining different results in New York when the reasons and the political climate remain the same? This is why the Algerian delegation believes that there is a need for a comprehensive approach that can reconcile the priorities of different States parties and groups of States parties.

We understand that the role of every delegation here in the Conference is to represent its country and defend its national security interests. What we find difficult to understand is how the conclusion of an international legal instrument on negative security assurances could pose a threat to the security of some countries. We would like to say that this is a priority issue for non-nuclear-weapon States. Ambassador Danon reminded us in his farewell speech that the last instrument to be adopted and enter into force in the area of multilateral nuclear disarmament was the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, in 1968. We would like to emphasize that the non-nuclear-weapon States are not standing in the way of new international instruments on nuclear disarmament.

Mr. President, in order to assess the possibilities for making progress in our work, we call on you to continue your consultations on the basis of the documents and decisions that have the support of many States, in particular document CD/1864, and focus on the related background issues, rather than taking new courses of action and raising new questions that could lead us further from reaching consensus on our programme of work. In the meantime — this is not a proposal but merely an idea — we could think about a method of work that would allow us to continue substantive discussions on agenda items with a view to preparing for the possibility of obtaining consensus on a programme of work.

Mr. Hoffmann (Germany): Mr. President, I did not intend to speak today, but let me congratulate you first, as is customary, on assuming the presidency of the Conference and wish you well for the next four weeks. Without wanting to go into substance at this stage, I would like to thank you also for your think piece – let's call it that. I think it is important that presidents try to find ways forward, and I think it's quite in order to present a non-paper so as to make us consider what possibilities there might be.

I have actually taken the floor because I attach importance to thanking my colleague from France, who has left already, but I would ask his delegation to pass on what I want to say here. I would like to thank Ambassador Danon very much for his contributions in this forum. While I have not always agreed with what he said, I have always listened with great interest to what he had to say. It depends also, I think, a little bit on the objective situation

— France is a nuclear-weapon State, Germany is not, so necessarily there may be different approaches to our issues — but, as I said, I have always found what he had to say very thoughtful, and I would really like to thank him for that and wish him well in his future work. I would actually look forward to meeting him again. He said that he might be working in the nuclear field, so maybe we'll see him again at some point in Geneva.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Does any other delegation wish to take the floor? As that does not appear to be the case, the secretariat now wishes to make some announcements.

Mr. Sareva (Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament): First of all, I would like to draw the attention of delegations to document CD/INF.62, which is an information note for members and non-members of the Conference. It has been made available to you and also appears on the website. I would ask delegations to kindly acquaint themselves with a number of key points in the document, including the request to submit to the secretariat, as soon as possible, a letter or a note verbale with the composition of their delegation, as well as a request, which we have also submitted to you by letter, to indicate whether you still wish to get hard copies of official documents and, if so, in which languages those documents should be provided. As you know, the United Nations Secretariat is working under increasing constraints. We have to do more with less, and this means that we have to economize, including in the area of documentation.

Second, I would like to draw attention to a letter that has been sent to you asking delegations to provide a dedicated e-mail address for the purpose of communicating with you. The secretariat intends to phase out the use of fax machines in the near future and would like to move to an e-mail-based communication system.

Finally, I would like to draw your attention to a flyer which has been placed on your desks. It is an invitation to an exhibit entitled “Fashioning Future History: 80th Anniversary of the World Disarmament Conference”. The exhibit will open on Tuesday, 14 February, and you are kindly asked to reply, should you like to attend. This exhibition is organized by the library of the United Nations Office at Geneva with the cooperation of the Office for Disarmament Affairs.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the secretariat for these announcements. I would like to finish the meeting by inviting delegations to consider the thoughts that I put forward today in an attempt to make progress in overcoming the stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament. In one of the informal consultation sessions held earlier, one ambassador said that the Conference was heading for collective suicide. There is much truth in that, and I would like to invite all delegations to make a creative effort in the coming meetings to find a way out of the dead end in which we find ourselves. I would like to thank all of you for attending, adjourn the meeting and call the next plenary of the Conference, which will be held on Tuesday, 31 January 2012, at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.