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# Conference on Disarmament

7 February 2012

English

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## Final record of the one thousand two hundred and forth-fifth plenary meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 7 February 2012, at 10.10 a.m.

*President:* Mr. Luis Gallegos Chiriboga ..... (Ecuador)

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I declare open the 1245th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. May I offer a cordial welcome to the Ambassador of France, Mr. Jean Hugues Simon-Michel, who took up his post recently. I would like to take this opportunity to assure him of our full cooperation and support in his new position, just as we are confident of his contribution to progress in the Conference.

I turn now to today's list of speakers. I give the floor to Ambassador Hilale of Morocco.

**Mr. Hilale** (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): Thank you, Mr. President. I would first like to congratulate you on assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and to assure you of the active support of my delegation in seeking to reach our common goal, namely, to restore to the Conference its relevance and role as the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum. I am in no doubt that your long experience of diplomacy and your vast knowledge of disarmament issues will give fresh impetus to the work of the Conference. We have already seen the evidence of what can be achieved thanks to your sense of dialogue, which led to the rapid adoption, at the first meeting, of the Conference agenda.

We welcome in particular your admirable initiative in organizing the Conference debates around document CD/1929, which has the merit of launching a discussion on new ideas on the future of the Conference and its revitalization. We will only achieve this common objective if our commitment is a collective and sincere one, far removed from the sterile discussions on the validity of such-and-such a document that have paralysed the debate in this chamber in recent years.

The urgent need to resume negotiations on international disarmament instruments within the Conference is dictated by the current international situation, which is marked by unprecedented turmoil, an economic and financial crisis with disastrous consequences, the fight against terrorists whose avowed desire is to acquire weapons of mass destruction, and, above all, a sense of weariness over the deadlock that has paralysed the Conference for over a decade.

Moreover, the relevance of the Conference on Disarmament is increasingly being questioned; some have even begun to openly express doubts about whether it will last. Confidence in this body has been ebbing since its usefulness was debated by the First Committee at the sixty-first session of the General Assembly of the United Nations. Some of its members are beginning to worry about its validity, or even legitimacy, as the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum. Let us be frank: the Conference is sinking under the weight of procedural wrangling and its prolonged inability to agree on a programme of work.

These concerns are worrying, and should motivate us not only to redouble our efforts but also to seek imaginative ways to breathe new life into this disarmament negotiating forum and to make real progress towards total nuclear disarmament.

Morocco believes that the discussions in the Conference over the last two years have run counter to the momentum created by the repeated calls and initiatives of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, as well as the declarations made and action taken by the major nuclear Powers. It is therefore time for us to get over this sterile debate on an outmoded methodology and to come up with new thinking and an approach that matches the security challenges of the twenty-first century, so that we can devote ourselves fully to the mandate entrusted to us: to negotiate disarmament instruments.

The rules of procedure of the Conference may require us to adopt a programme of work in advance, but this formality is not an end in itself. On the contrary, its purpose is to allow the Conference to embark on its work and so it should be adopted quickly to facilitate

the more substantive work of serious negotiations on the various items on the Conference agenda. The programme of work should not be a problem that divides us but a solution that will enable us to reach compromises that will maintain the Conference's relevance without contravening the spirit of its mandate.

The fact is that, despite having negotiated the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention, the Conference on Disarmament is struggling to start negotiations on a convention banning nuclear weapons. All the attempts to proceed by stages have so far been inconclusive. We therefore need to act quickly while the fate of the Conference is still in our hands. In the absence of concrete action, the very survival of the Conference on Disarmament could be decided elsewhere, and we will bear sole responsibility for that.

There is therefore an urgent need for us to agree on painful but politically responsible concessions that will enable working groups to negotiate on the four core issues of the Conference, without being apprehensive or prejudging the outcomes of their work. Morocco sees no insoluble problem here, and does not wish to be a party to the marginalization, or demise, of the Conference.

In order to overcome differences over the mandates of the working groups, it would be wise and sensible to simplify the programme of work as far as possible, by establishing a first working group on fissile material, a second on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, a third on negative security assurances and a fourth on nuclear disarmament. Each working group would then define its own terms of reference and organize its programme of work without prejudging the outcome, which can only be reached through negotiation and with the consent of all members. Once a working group had managed to define its terms of reference in this way, it would start work without delay.

Revitalizing the Conference on Disarmament also involves opening it up to civil society and institutions specialized in disarmament issues, an area in which its input to the work of other bodies is undeniable. The Conference should be in tune with the times and should set aside the old cold war reflexes. Although the negotiation of legal instruments remains the sole responsibility of member States, the contributions and expertise of specialized NGOs can only be beneficial to the substantive work of the Conference. It would, of course, be for member States to set the conditions for NGO accreditation.

In the same general vein, it is important to bring new blood into the Conference by admitting new members whose participation and commitment would be an added bonus for the Conference.

Revitalizing the Conference on Disarmament on the basis of a simplified programme of work would also undeniably give a major boost to the Conference in its efforts to establish a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons, as decided in the action plan adopted at the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). The international community, and more especially the countries in that region, are looking forward to that conference with renewed hope of freeing the region of weapons of mass destruction. All actors in that region, as well as the international community, have a duty to work towards a positive outcome, which would constitute progress towards the consolidation of peaceful coexistence and trust among the peoples of the region.

The Conference on Disarmament does not operate in a vacuum; its vocation is to provide the international community with the legal instruments needed to halt the frantic race by terrorists to acquire nuclear weapons.

It is in this context that Morocco participates actively in international efforts to combat terrorism in general and nuclear terrorism in particular. As a founder member of the

Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism, on 21 and 22 November last year it hosted, in Rabat, an African regional seminar to raise awareness of the results of the Washington Nuclear Security Summit and the Global Initiative. The seminar was organized in cooperation with the U.S. Department of State, and attended by Ambassador Jenkins, the coordinator for the U.S. Department of State at the Nuclear Security Summit, “sherpas” from the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation and Spain, and top officials of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Interpol and the European Commission. The seminar aimed to inform African States who had not attended the Washington summit about its outcome, nuclear security issues and the summit’s action plan.

The seminar established the paired, complementary nature of the Washington Nuclear Security Summit and the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism. Among other things, it confirmed the determination of the 26 African countries represented at the seminar to endorse the commitments of these two multilateral initiatives and to frame their action as part of the multilateral process in the areas of nuclear safety and security.

Again in the context of the fight against nuclear terrorism, from 22 to 25 March 2011 Morocco organized in Rabat, in collaboration with the United States and Spain, an exercise simulating the international response to a malicious act involving radioactive substances. The exercise, known as “Rabat 2011”, falls within the framework of the implementation of principles 4 and 7 of the Global Initiative. It simulated the search for a potentially very dangerous radioactive source (cobalt 60) stolen in sub-Saharan country *x* and the response to malicious acts involving radioactive materials, and studied ways of strengthening international cooperation in combating the illicit trafficking of radioactive nuclear materials. The exercise involved a series of round tables, indoor exercises covering the theoretical aspects and outdoor demonstrations covering the practical aspects.

This exercise — the first of its kind in Africa and the Arab world — confirmed Morocco’s role as a reliable partner that has the human and technological capacity to fully implement the principles of the Global Initiative and to contribute to the implementation of the recommendations contained in the action plan adopted at the Washington Nuclear Security Summit in April 2010.

This pioneering initiative was followed by bilateral meetings in Madrid, held from 10 to 13 May 2011, between Moroccan officials and the Spanish authorities responsible for foreign affairs and the Global Initiative, with the participation of IAEA and the United States of America in their capacity as co-chairs of the Global Initiative.

In the course of these meetings, Morocco proposed to host a meeting of the Global Initiative’s planning group in Marrakesh in February 2012 — this month — in cooperation with the United States, Russia and Spain, to be chaired by Spain. The aim of the meeting will be to draw up a schedule for the meetings of the three new groups in the lead-up to the Global Initiative plenary in 2013.

Thanks to its active role in the Global Initiative since the latter was launched at the plenary meeting in Rabat on 30 and 31 October 2006, Morocco has acquired solid experience in dealing with the response to nuclear radiation incidents, especially since its successful organization of two international seminars on the subject. Its leading role in facilitating the adoption by consensus of the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism was recognized during its chairmanship of the Sixth Committee of the General Assembly of the United Nations.

Its work on, and commitment to, the prevention of illicit trafficking in nuclear and radioactive materials led to its election to the chairmanship of the Response and Mitigation Working Group of the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism in the build-up to the Seoul Summit due to be held in the Korean capital on 26 and 27 March this year.

I cannot end my statement without reaffirming Morocco's ardent wish to see the Conference on Disarmament embark right away on substantive work and live up to the expectations of the international community. What is at stake is the Conference's credibility and relevance, if not its very survival.

I would like to end by wishing a warm welcome to all the new ambassadors who have joined us at the Conference on Disarmament, with a special word of welcome to the Ambassador of France; I wish him all success and assure him of the continued full cooperation between our two countries, France and the Kingdom of Morocco.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of Morocco for his statement. The next speaker on my list is the representative of Cuba, Mr. Yusnier Romero Puentes. You have the floor, Sir.

**Mr. Romero Puentes** (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you, Mr. President. In the last few plenary meetings of this Conference we have heard a number of statements that leave no room for doubt about the importance that States attach to the Conference on Disarmament. Cuba fully shares the view that the Conference on Disarmament must be the sole body charged with negotiating multilateral disarmament treaties. No alternative forum can replace the one set up for that purpose. With this in mind, Mr. President, allow me to make a few points in response to your call for reflection and discussion.

First, we believe that the search for consensus in major forums like the Conference on Disarmament cannot be limited in time, but requires deep discussion, analysis and thought. It is clear to my delegation that the Conference's unproductiveness is jeopardizing its very existence, especially in the current circumstances, when various States are seeking other ways to negotiate disarmament treaties.

Our position on the subject is well known. Cuba will not associate itself with the break from multilateralism implied by selective negotiations over certain issues.

Perhaps all these years of discussion in the Conference have not sufficed to make it clear no progress will be made in this body if progress is tied to the issue of interest to a group of Powers, especially when they impose obstacles and constraints as they see fit, basically in relation to the scope of the negotiations on that issue. Why, then, do we persist with an approach that hinders the progress of the discussions?

A majority of the members of the Conference on Disarmament continue to say that the group's priority is nuclear disarmament. This is also the priority identified by the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries at its Sixteenth Ministerial Meeting, held in Bali in May 2011. Likewise, the recently formed Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) adopted just one month ago, in December 2011, a special communiqué on the complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

So why not move forward on all the issues identified as priorities by the international community, with no distinctions between them and without different expectations in terms of speed or level of agreement?

May I draw attention to article 6 of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which states, and I quote: "Each of the Parties to the Treaty undertakes to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control."

If such an international obligation is in force for the majority of the international community, then we are compelled to recognize it and to implement it in the forum devoted to the negotiation of disarmament treaties; to this end, we could easily begin negotiations

that also covered the issue of fissile material, though as part of a broader treaty actually aimed at nuclear disarmament.

It would also be possible to return to the very important issue of preventing an arms race in outer space. The international legal regime in this area is quite clear: outer space is the common heritage of humanity and should be used for peaceful purposes only. That being so, what is to prevent the application of those principles by means of a treaty that clearly confirms the prohibition of their use in the arms race?

Currently, the majority of States do not possess nuclear weapons, and countries like my own are proud to have none. However, what guarantees does that majority among the international community have that States that do have nuclear weapons will not use them against their populations? Perhaps the answer might oblige us to invoke the principles of international law that are so often violated in conflicts today. Every day we observe with growing concern the movements of nuclear submarines. We have seen many examples in the past month alone. This leaves us to reflect upon the legality or otherwise of the use of this type of weapon. It would be better to clearly state that the use of such weapons is illegal in a treaty that provides guarantees for States like Cuba that have no nuclear weapons, and which resolves once and for all the present legal limbo surrounding this subject.

In conclusion, we believe that the issues on the agenda are of primordial importance. Cuba confirms its readiness to negotiate on any of these issues, but we continue to believe that, without a shadow of doubt, nuclear disarmament is still the most important issue. As a sign of our commitment to general and complete disarmament, we would also be ready to consider other issues deemed appropriate.

Mr. President, as you said in your opening statement, the Conference on Disarmament should be able to function without a fissile material cut-off treaty. We have become hostages to that particular issue, leaving to one side others of vital importance. I would like to stress the need to exhaust the discussions on those other issues before passing judgement on the Conference on Disarmament. Perhaps in this way we can identify more clearly the real obstacles to negotiations and progress in this important multilateral negotiating forum.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of Cuba for his statement. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Mexico, Mr. Ulises Canchola Gutiérrez.

**Mr. Canchola Gutiérrez** (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, my delegation would also like to welcome the new ambassadors and to thank you for inviting us to reflect on some issues that concern us, since, as you have pointed out, your consultations have not produced the only outcome acceptable to Mexico: the fulfilment by the Conference on Disarmament of its mandate.

On the basis of your working paper CD/1929, I would like to clarify my Government's views.

Mexico will continue to emphasize that the Conference on Disarmament is an important part of the disarmament machinery created at the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD-I). However, as everyone knows, Mexico has been critical of the Conference's inaction, since, despite all its hard work, it has conducted no negotiations since 1996.

We wonder if this body is fulfilling its purpose and mission, since, instead of producing binding disarmament agreements, it is delaying them, even though its members are not refusing to take part in negotiations that might lead to a safer world.

I would like to clarify my country's position on the so-called core issues on the agenda, and to accept your invitation, Mr. President, to reflect on their validity. As far as nuclear disarmament is concerned, Mexico is convinced that a collective security system capable of establishing, maintaining and consolidating global peace and security cannot be based on a balance of deterrence or on strategic security doctrines that envisage the development and build-up of nuclear weapons.

Our criticism of the situation in the Conference on Disarmament stems from the view that the mere existence of nuclear weapons, as well their build-up and the emergence of new nuclear-weapon States, poses a constant threat to international peace and security. Indeed, the final document of SSOD-I, which led to the creation of the Conference on Disarmament, pointed out that, unless its avenues were closed, the arms race constituted a threat to the very survival of mankind.

The exchange of views and information on this issue and the identification of disarmament measures, such as expanding nuclear-free zones and applying the principles of irreversibility, transparency and verification, could lay the foundations for negotiated agreements on this issue. May I remind you, Mr. President, that the 2010 NPT Review Conference, in its action plan, urged the Conference to establish a subsidiary body to deal with nuclear disarmament.

On the question of a fissile material cut-off treaty, my delegation is ready to negotiate and prepared to explore, in a constructive spirit and without prejudices or preconceptions, the various positions on a future legally binding treaty that provides for an effective verification system. Mexico believes that such a treaty is really the next logical step, as some delegations have called it, towards disarmament. Mexico also believes that the future treaty, if it is to add value and help further the disarmament process, should take account of current stocks. This would seem logical to us.

It is essential to include verification measures in any treaty in order to establish trust between the parties, especially non-nuclear-weapon States, and to resolve the question of inequity and asymmetry that is a concern for various States that have agreed on the establishment of comprehensive safeguard systems with IAEA. It would also place all parties on an equal footing, without leaving some at a competitive disadvantage in the development of civilian nuclear programmes. The parties to the NPT have agreed to start negotiations on action 15 of the 2010 NPT Review Conference action plan.

Another key component of the disarmament and non-proliferation regime is the unequivocal guarantee by nuclear-weapon States that they will not use, or threaten to use, nuclear weapons against any State that has voluntarily and legally renounced the nuclear option.

As will be recalled, within the framework of the NPT and its review conferences, Mexico has submitted, both in its own right and as a member of the New Agenda Coalition, drafts of a protocol or agreement that would fill that gap and give legal certainty to the political commitments of nuclear-weapon States. Again, the parties to the NPT have agreed to include this issue in the programme of work of the Conference on Disarmament.

Mexico is also concerned that the scientific and technological progress made in the exploration and use of outer space could make it possible to deploy missile defence systems or other military systems that could unleash an arms race. The present legal regime cannot guarantee the non-militarization of outer space; it therefore needs to be strengthened by means of measures to increase transparency, trust and security.

For these reasons, we believe that the above issues continue to be important and valid. Mexico would like, once more, to urge the Conference on Disarmament to consider

each of the issues before it on its own merits, without needlessly linking them together, making one or more conditional upon others or prejudging their relative importance.

The idea that the Conference on Disarmament could dispense with the core issues and adopt and implement a programme of work that does not involve starting substantive work, i.e. negotiations, on any of the items on the agenda would distance us from the mandate set out at SSOD-I and bring us a step closer to institutionalizing and perpetuating a status quo that has brought no tangible results.

If the Conference on Disarmament continues to make no progress on these issues, Mexico takes the view that, given their importance, they can be addressed in another forum. To put it quite unambiguously: Mexico is committed to making progress on disarmament and on these issues in any forum, whether it be within or outside the Conference on Disarmament.

Lastly, Mr. President, Mexico considers it vital to review some of our working methods, including, as you suggested, by exploring the possibility of shortening Conference sessions or even suspending the work of the Conference. At the moment, our work is harming or undermining the disarmament machinery, since the Conference on Disarmament is duplicating the work of the Disarmament Commission and, at the end of the day, ensuring that the machinery remains immobile. We should remember that the General Assembly has invited us to explore options in the event that the Conference on Disarmament does not start any substantive work in 2012. We thank you once again, Mr. President, for giving us the opportunity to reflect on these options.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of Mexico. The next person on my list of speakers is Ambassador van den IJssel of the Netherlands.

**Mr. van den IJssel** (Netherlands): Mr. President, let me also congratulate you on assuming the presidency of this Conference and, of course, assure you, as well as the other five presidents for this year, of our full support and cooperation. And, of course, I warmly welcome all newly arrived ambassadors to the Conference and I look forward to working with them.

Mr. President, we welcome very much the active and energetic way in which you have started our work this year. In document CD/1929 you have put to us some very important and realistic existential questions about the future of this forum. Unfortunately, and I stress unfortunately, it is high time that we asked ourselves collectively these pertinent questions. I am also very glad that you have chosen to have this debate here in the open and that we do not resort again to the usual shadow-boxing about a programme of work.

We are ready to engage in an interactive discussion, in a formal or informal setting, on these questions. We share your analysis that only frank discussions and innovative ideas will help us to overcome the current impasse.

As many have said before me, and as was repeated again today, 2012 is a critical year for the Conference. Its credibility and legitimacy as a body for multilateral disarmament negotiations is at stake. Last year at the General Assembly it was clearly demonstrated that there is a growing concern among many delegations about the state of the multilateral disarmament machinery, and the Conference on Disarmament in particular. General Assembly resolution 66/66, which the Netherlands tabled together with South Africa and Switzerland, clearly states that the General Assembly is ready to further explore options for multilateral negotiations if the Conference is again unable to adopt and implement a programme of work this year. The patience of the General Assembly with the status quo, or, I should actually say, stagnation, in the Conference is running out, as was also indicated by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in his recent statement.



We, for our part, are ready to discuss all options inside and outside the Conference. Simply continuing the status quo and waiting for political will to emerge may seem a comfortable position for some and an argument against considering alternatives, but in the end doing nothing will erode this body even further and make it decline further into irrelevance. The Conference on Disarmament may formally still exist, but it will have faded away.

Should we not be able to get our act together, then I think your suggestion of putting the Conference on standby, or mothballing it, as another colleague put it, is worth considering, especially against the background of times of austerity and shortage of governmental funds. The Conference is indeed not operating in a vacuum.

However, before we decide on these options, I think we owe it to ourselves and to the international community to try our utmost to get the Conference back to work. I have said often in this room that we take a pragmatic approach to the programme of work. For us, a programme of work is not a goal in itself, but a means to start substantive work, including negotiations here in the Conference.

We would find it difficult to accept a programme of work that will turn this forum into yet another talking shop without any real perspective for negotiations. That would not be consistent with the Conference's mandate and its role in the disarmament machinery and, in our view, will not save it. We are willing, however, to look creatively at all possibilities that will enable us to start negotiations.

From that perspective, we do not share your analysis that the Conference must be able to function without a fissile material cut-off treaty. Of course, the Conference and the FMCT should be viewed separately. However, our primary goal is not to save the Conference, but to start negotiations on priority issues on the disarmament agenda. For a great — I even think an overwhelming — majority of delegations and countries, including the Netherlands, starting FMCT negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament is the first priority as an important and essential step towards a world free of nuclear weapons. This long-standing support for the start of FMCT negotiations in the Conference has been reaffirmed on many occasions, in the action plan agreed at the 2010 NPT Review Conference and subsequent FMCT resolutions of the General Assembly, just to name a few. Setting the FMCT aside will not bring consensus on the start of negotiations on the other core issues of the Conference's agenda, or any other issue for that matter, closer in our view.

Mr. President, let me conclude by thanking you once again for laying these provoking questions on the table. You and your successors can count on our full support and on our creativity and flexibility during the 2012 session.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of the Netherlands for his statement. I have no other speakers on my list.

Does anyone else wish to take the floor? I recognize the Ambassador of France. You have the floor, Sir.

**Mr. Simon-Michel** (France) (*spoke in French*): I would just like to take the floor for a few minutes to thank you, Mr. President, for your words of welcome, and other colleagues too.

I am expecting a lot of everyone here. As I step into this chamber — and this is a great honour for me — I expect you will all help me find my feet and, of course, I hope that during my time here the Conference on Disarmament and our countries will witness a new dynamism and the revitalization of our work.

France is convinced that the Conference on Disarmament should be capable of fulfilling its role as the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum. More than ever, the negotiation of a treaty banning the production of fissile materials is key to further tangible, real progress on disarmament, that is, on nuclear disarmament or, more broadly, general and complete disarmament, to which my country is more committed than ever.

In the course of this year, France, which will hold the presidency in summer, will spare no effort to help the Conference reach consensus and revitalize its work.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Ambassador of France for his statement. The next speaker on my list is the representative of Sweden.

**Mr. Knutsson** (Sweden): Mr. President, my delegation welcomes this open discussion on the future of the Conference. It is, indeed, necessary and long overdue. Allow me here to briefly address some of the issues in document CD/1929. Yes, we should certainly acknowledge that the chronic lack of productivity endangers the Conference's credibility and existence. The erosion of credibility is, in fact, already happening and is on its way to becoming irreversible.

At this early stage in the session, we should not give up trying to bring about real progress despite the poor track record. The 2012 session should be used to the fullest with energy and flexibility. I think anything less would hardly meet the expectations of the international community as expressed at the United Nations General Assembly.

Regarding the fissile material cut-off treaty, this is an indispensable part of the agenda and cannot be overlooked. We don't have to look any further than the NPT action plan and the General Assembly resolutions. Our task is not to import new topics never previously dealt with in the context of the Conference in order to keep ourselves busy. The survival of the Conference can never be an end in itself; it is an instrument and our task is to make use of it by negotiating binding treaties on disarmament matters. Should we be open to trying new ideas? Yes. To showing flexibility and creativity? Yes, certainly. Should we begin such a process by dropping the FMCT from a programme of work? No, we should rather approach CD/1864 with maximum flexibility and ambition. We should also recall what the programme of work is: a trigger to get substantive work going. And what it is not: the framework to resolve substantive disagreements. We must move away from the habit of pre-negotiations and even pre-pre-negotiations.

There is also the notion of putting the Conference on standby or reducing the length of the sessions. Perhaps it will come to that if we again fail to commence substantial work. If it does, we should beware that the standby mode or reduced session will likely lead to a progressive erosion of mission resources for disarmament and a weakening of the strength of the Geneva environment, which will be extremely hard to recreate. While this would be unfortunate, it may be inevitable if the deadlock continues, given the fact that the international community, including the General Assembly, for a long time has signalled its increasing unwillingness to continue to accept business as usual.

In CD/1929, the question of a special session of the General Assembly on the disarmament machinery is mentioned. We do not have strong objections in principle, but we note that we have already tried the high-level meeting process in recent years. We also suspect that such an exercise would be likely to be a time-consuming endeavour without any guarantees of a successful outcome. We do believe it would be preferable to devote that time and effort to seeking solutions here and now.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Ambassador of Sweden for his statement. There are no further speakers on my list.

Does any other delegation wish to take the floor? I recognize the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

**Mr. Jon Yong Ryong** (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): The delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea takes this opportunity to reiterate its full support to the Ecuadorian presidency. We also highly appreciate your great efforts, Mr. President, to further the progress of the Conference in 2012 decisively.

Mr. President, my delegation can go along with your idea, which was circulated last week to all members. We believe that it is reasonable and timely in view of the current situation of the Conference on Disarmament. It helps us to find common ground for moving the Conference forward in conformity with its basic mission, which is the negotiation mandate.

However, Mr. President, we still don't see any proposal that is acceptable to all members. My delegation considers that the reason for this is related to the tendency to be unwilling to deal with all disarmament issues, including nuclear disarmament, equally. It is also due to the lack of confidence and trust among member States.

My delegation, therefore, considers that the important thing at this juncture is to address all the causes which stand in the way of the progress of the Conference. Having said that, my delegation would very much like you, Mr. President, to have more time to continue the discussions on your idea.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea for his statement. The next speaker on my list is the representative of Tunisia.

**Mr. Baati** (Tunisia) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, I am taking the floor in the first place to offer you our sincere congratulations on assuming the presidency of the Conference. I have no doubt that, if the requisite conditions are met, our work will, under your leadership and thanks to your skills and all your diplomatic experience, be crowned with the success we are all hoping for. Mr. President, let me assure you, and all the other presidents in 2012, of the full cooperation of my delegation in successfully carrying out this very difficult task.

I would also like to thank you and congratulate you for the various initiatives taken since you were appointed to lead this Conference. May I also welcome all those new colleagues who have just joined us as new ambassadors and permanent representatives of their country to the Conference.

Many speakers before me have described the situation in which the Conference finds itself today. The conclusion is clear: there is deadlock, paralysis, in the sole multilateral forum set up by the United Nations to negotiate on disarmament issues and to conclude legally binding instruments in this area.

For lack of consensus, members of the Conference have been unable to agree on a programme of work for their deliberations, but this is not the whole story: it reflects a glaring reality that is independent of our wishes. It is quite simply an admission of failure, and we can all agree that our efforts have been found wanting and that we have failed in the tasks entrusted to us under the mandate and structure of the Conference.

The lethargy that has characterized the Conference since its exhilarating and promising start should not leave us indifferent at a time when the world is undergoing extraordinary upheavals that bring new challenges and when the international community is showing some signs of solidarity in facing up to the difficult times that lie ahead for many of us.

It is therefore more important than ever to act responsibly and not to evade our core responsibility, which is to negotiate and indeed to negotiate ceaselessly, since our views are

different: there would be no need for negotiation if there were no insurmountable differences.

It is high time we got down to work selflessly and, above all, pragmatically, to get back on an even keel and be more successful in our work. The diagnosis has already been made by a number of representatives of States members of the Conference. The Conference on Disarmament suffers from two kinds of failing: one is political, in the sense that its member States tend to put their individual interests before the collective action that could give more conclusive and lasting solutions; and the other is structural, in that the rules of procedure of the Conference require consensus, which means compromise and agreement on a realistic bottom line.

Some pertinent analyses and laudable initiatives have been put forward to try to revitalize this body. My delegation is convinced that the status quo and deadlock are not inevitable; the initiatives that you have taken, Mr. President, since you took on the presidency are the best illustration of this.

We should do everything possible to get the Conference out of the rut it is in and to restart negotiations in this forum. Clearly, the international community is paying special attention to the Conference and expects us to live up to the hopes placed in it.

My delegation has no specific proposal to put forward, but believes that, in this crucial year for the Conference, we have a duty to work together to achieve consensus and give hope to all those who believe in peace, security and development for all.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Ambassador of Tunisia for his statement. Does any other speaker wish to take the floor? I see none.

The next plenary meeting, and the last one under the Ecuadorian presidency, will be held on Tuesday, 14 February at 10 a.m. The Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva and Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament has told me that he will make a statement at that meeting.

**Mr. Sareva** (Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference): Mr. President, I have two brief announcements.

Firstly, you should all have received, in your pigeonholes, document CD/2012/Misc.1. This is the provisional list of participants and the secretariat invites all delegations that have not yet done so to provide the secretariat with up-to-date lists of the names of members of their delegations so that the names and full composition of all delegations can be duly reflected in the final list of participants.

Secondly, I would like to remind newcomers, and anyone who may have forgotten, that Conference documents are available. Some delegations have informed us that they do not wish to be provided with paper copies of documents, but for those delegations that do wish to have a paper copy — one per delegation, in the language of your choice, as is now the custom in the United Nations Office at Geneva — they can be found in the pigeonholes next to conference room III.

*The meeting rose at 11.05 a.m.*