

Conference on Disarmament

14 February 2012

English

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

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 14 February 2012, at 10.10 a.m.

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

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The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I call to order the 1246th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

I am going to begin with something which is not orthodox, but the fact is I have a chocolate heart here. I thank the delegation or person who put it there. I wish you all a very fruitful Valentine's Day. In my culture it is also the Day of Love. So for all of you and your families, a very good day.

I would like to begin with the list of speakers for today's meeting. The following delegate wishes to take the floor: Croatia, on behalf of the informal group of observer States – Ambassador Vezna Vuković.

Ms. Žunec Brandt (Croatia): Unfortunately, Ambassador Vuković is at the European Union coordination meeting, so she couldn't join us right away, but in the meantime I will deliver the statement on behalf of the informal group of observer States that Croatia coordinates.

On behalf of the informal group of observer States, it is my pleasure to thank you, Ambassador Gallegos, for the excellent effort you have invested in kicking off this year at the Conference on Disarmament. As we are aware, this year should not be just another year where the only negotiations conducted are on the Report of the Conference.

In the limited time at your disposal, you managed to open frank and transparent plenary discussions on the future of this body, engaging both the current membership and the observer States. In our opinion, this set the stage for further progress we all would like to see. As the Secretary-General of the United Nations stated in his message delivered by Mr. Tokayev at the first plenary, 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. With your thought-provoking presidency and working paper CD/1929, you certainly avoided such debates.

In the context of the observer States, it is worth recalling that Ecuador is one of the newest members of the Conference. Your excellent work is just another demonstration of the value of further expansion in achieving an effective multilateral democratic system for negotiations. The Conference is mandated to negotiate legally binding instruments with universal effect, and it is incomprehensible to refuse to allow interested States to join this process. Every new member State consolidates its accountability and relevance. At times when the international community's spotlight is on the Conference, the expansion will especially be seen as its success.

We took note with satisfaction of the support expressed by a number of member States, both individually and regionally, regarding the issue of enlargement and the appointment of a special coordinator. The informal group of observer States stands ready to see this will translated into actions.

(*spoke in Spanish*)

Mr. President, that you very much for your work at the Conference and for supporting the informal group of observer States.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Many thanks to the representative of Croatia for her statement and her kind words addressed to the Chair. The next speaker is the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ambassador Seyed Mohammed Reza Sajjadi.

Mr. Sajjadi (Islamic Republic of Iran): Mr. President, allow me to congratulate you on the assumption of the presidency of the Conference. I am pleased to see that one of the members of our group is presiding over this august body. I would like to thank you for your open and transparent informal consultations and your diligent work in trying to start the substantive work of the Conference. I assure you of the full support of my delegation.

I note with appreciation the message of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, which shows the increasing level of consideration and attention about the work of the Conference and its achievements. I also recognize the interest of many delegations in attaching importance to the work of the Conference as the only disarmament negotiation body. In revitalizing its work, I believe that we have to be cautious not to mix our consideration with exaggeration, pessimism, prejudgement and threat. The Conference is a well-known unique body in the field of disarmament multilateral diplomacy, with a good record of achievements in the field of legally binding instruments that creates the cornerstone and major body of the international non-proliferation regime. All of us have the responsibility to strengthen its credibility.

I welcome the adoption of the Conference agenda at the beginning of his year's meeting. The agenda is designed in a manner that helps the start of negotiation of concerted and jointly reinforcing international instruments for nuclear disarmament. It is clear that the mandate of the Conference is negotiation of legally binding instruments in the field of disarmament with due respect to its rules of procedure. Therefore, the Conference is not a single-issue venue, and lack of consensus on the scope of negotiation on one issue cannot prevent delegations from starting negotiations on the others. We believe that early commencement of negotiations within the Conference on a phased programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons with a specified framework of time, including a nuclear weapons convention, is the urgent need of the disarmament machinery today.

This convention will prohibit the possession, development, production, stockpiling, transfer and use of nuclear weapons, leading to their ultimate destruction. If we start this negotiation in the Conference, we would be in a position to comprehensively tackle all the core issues in our agenda in a balanced manner. This, of course, will deal with fissile materials in all its aspects in a comprehensive manner, tackle the legitimate right of non-nuclear-weapon States for security assurances and also the prevention of an arms race in outer space. This provides an overall broad structure that coherently preserves the security of all nations by avoiding the current piecemeal, disjointed and cost-free approach for nuclear-weapon States.

The total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. Pending that time, a universal, unconditional and legally binding instrument on security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States should be pursued as a matter of priority through establishment of an ad hoc negotiation committee in the Conference. Negative security assurances are also a ripe issue for negotiation, because the negotiation on this issue would not encompass technical dimensions, and the only prerequisite for convening such an instrument is the political will of nuclear-weapon States.

We support the start of negotiations in the Conference on a legally binding treaty to fully ban the possibility of an attack from space or a war in space and prevent the weaponization of space. This legally binding instrument increases the security of all nations and provides the necessary requirement for peaceful uses of space.

On the fissile material treaty, we said with no ambiguity that the issue of stocks and verification should be covered under a possible treaty. The treaty should be a clear and meaningful step for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation in all its aspects. Past production and existing stocks, as well as the future production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, must be covered under the scope of the treaty. Any negotiation on the fissile material cut-off treaty which doesn't include the stocks of all key players would have no content and consequently it is fruitless. Therefore, the best place for the negotiation of this treaty is the Conference on Disarmament.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and I call on the Ambassador of Switzerland, Mr. Alexandre Fasel.

Mr. Fasel (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, as this is the first time that my delegation is taking the floor before this official body under your leadership, I would like to congratulate you on taking the Chair of the Conference on Disarmament and to assure you of Switzerland's full support.

The international community is confronted with an ever-expanding set of challenges in the areas of disarmament and non-proliferation. However, for nearly 15 years now, the Conference on Disarmament has not been able, or has not been willing, to respond to these challenges. Switzerland is concerned at the fact that, since 1996, this body has not managed to fulfil its mandate to conduct multilateral negotiations. It is regrettable for the United Nations that such an essential organ of the multilateral system should be incapable of addressing the pressing challenges associated with global security and multilateral disarmament.

Given the impasse in which the Conference on Disarmament finds itself, our delegation is convinced that the time has come to rethink our approach to the issues and challenges included in the agenda. We must regard national security interests as part of broader visions of security and stability. We must develop an approach that extends beyond security, in the strict sense of the word, to include such perspectives as human security, human rights, development, climate, environmental protection and even global health. We should promote the understanding that we live in a global, interdependent world, which, as a community, faces a multitude of disarmament and non-proliferation challenges.

Mr. President, we commend you for having launched the debate on the deadlock in the Conference on Disarmament early in the session and for having raised two key issues in this regard: the programme of work and the wider issue of the future of the Conference.

Your working paper, contained in document CD/1929, makes interesting observations and poses pertinent questions. With regard to the question of whether the Conference on Disarmament's lack of productivity would endanger its credibility and existence, the reply is a resounding yes.

Consequently, the Conference on Disarmament should not spare any effort with regard to its own revitalization before any draconian and potentially irreversible steps are taken, such as putting the Conference on standby or curtailing its sessions. Members of the Conference must explore the various paths for reform that could be implemented internally and consider them carefully.

To start with, members of the Conference should move forward with the discussion on revitalization, which began in 2010 and continued in 2011, doing so in a more systematic and results-oriented manner. We could, for example, begin a process of exploring, developing and consolidating options, proposals and ideas for the revitalization of the Conference.

Still on the subject of possible paths for reform, we are gratified to note the increased support expressed for the proposal to appoint a special coordinator on enlarging the Conference, and we particularly endorse the idea of granting civil society a more active role. If approved, those developments would go a long way towards ensuring that the Conference remains relevant and responsive, and that it continues to act as the centre of gravity of the disarmament community in general.

We would also be willing to consider any other option for reforming this body that might be proposed by the members of the Conference.

Clearly, the best revitalization measure at this stage would be the adoption of a programme of work. We should do our utmost to overcome the well-known obstacles we face in the short amount of time available to us for adopting the programme of work at the start of the 2012 session.

The programme of work should, in our view, allow the Conference to make progress on the question of a treaty on fissile material for nuclear weapons, which would represent an admittedly late but nevertheless crucial step forward for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. While we remain convinced that addressing the issue of fissile material for nuclear weapons is the next important step for moving ahead, we also seek, at the same time, to make significant progress on several of the other priorities of the Conference.

It is particularly important that we spare no effort to reach consensus on a programme of work. We call on all member States of the Conference to understand that, now more than ever, it is essential to exhibit flexibility and pragmatism if we want to avoid a situation in which the Conference becomes sidelined, thereby depriving the international community of a forum for addressing the urgent challenges associated with disarmament.

To conclude, I would like to emphasize that the United Nations General Assembly, the Secretary-General, the Member States, and civil society are becoming more and more frustrated and impatient at the deadlock in the Conference on Disarmament. I would also like to recall that the General Assembly is watching the Conference closely to see if it proves capable of overcoming the current impasse and of adopting a programme of work that would allow it to promptly resume its mandate during its 2012 session. Should this not turn out to be the case, at its sixty-seventh session, the General Assembly would have to consider other options for finding a way out of the impasse.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Many thanks for your statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. The next speaker on my list is Ms. María Antonieta Jáquez Huacuja of Mexico.

Ms. Jáquez Huacuja (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is a great pleasure for me to take this opportunity to remind the Conference on Disarmament that today is not only the day of love and friendship, as you reminded us yourself, Sir, when opening the session, but also marks the forty-fifth anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Tlatelolco, which provided for the establishment of the first nuclear-weapon-free zone in a densely populated region of the planet, as well as the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL), based in Mexico City.

As you all know, the Treaty of Tlatelolco is unquestionably one of the most important cooperation and unity initiatives ever undertaken among the Latin American and Caribbean nations. The signing of the Treaty of Tlatelolco is a historic milestone that inspired 115 non-nuclear-weapon States to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones in other parts of the world. This shows us that the Tlatelolco initiative, embraced by regions whose political, geographical and historical realities differ from those of Latin America, is ultimately universal in nature, given that it was motivated by the only rational and coherent objective there is: that of safeguarding international peace and security. As a result, the Treaty of Tlatelolco is a testimony to the fact that States such as mine that have rejected the nuclear option are assuming responsibility for their security and are emphasizing and underlining the search for a world free of nuclear weapons, and we are counting on it.

The negotiation of the Treaty of Tlatelolco at the height of the cold war demonstrates that, even when international conditions are unfavourable, satisfactory agreements can be reached. Tlatelolco also encouraged States possessing nuclear weapons to consider granting negative security assurances to countries in nuclear-weapon-free zones, such as ours, thereby setting a precedent that we hope will one day crystallize into a multilaterally agreed instrument.

Nevertheless, I must reiterate that nuclear-weapon-free zones are not an end in themselves; they do not even, in themselves, constitute a disarmament measure. Mexico has consistently stressed that these zones are merely an intermediate step towards a much more ambitious and complex goal, given that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only

real protection against their use and proliferation. To reach this goal, it is necessary to raise global awareness and provide greater incentives for the establishment of new nuclear-weapon-free regions by means of new treaties concluded voluntarily by the countries concerned.

In view of the general stagnation of nuclear disarmament negotiations within the Conference on Disarmament, the spirit of Tlatelolco can and should encourage us to set high standards in the search for concrete measures to address current needs for international peace and security. In that regard, the legacy of those distinguished figures who have helped to promote the nuclear disarmament process is of fundamental importance to present and future generations.

In conclusion, let me remind you that this year, 2012, also marks the thirtieth anniversary of the Nobel Peace Prize that was awarded jointly to the Ambassador of Mexico to the Conference on Disarmament, Alfonso García Robles — who was the architect of the Treaty of Tlatelolco — and to Ambassador Alva Myrdal of Sweden. Ambassador García Robles recalled in his Nobel Prize acceptance speech that we should underscore the fundamental relationship that exists between disarmament and peace. I hope that his example will sensitize all of our Governments, especially those represented at the Conference on Disarmament, to the fact that nuclear weapons, far from constituting a bulwark of international security, are actually a threat which we must eliminate as a matter of urgency in order to ensure the survival of humanity.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of Mexico for her statement, which my delegation endorses fully. I should like to give the floor to Ambassador Khabbaz-Hamoui of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Khabbaz-Hamoui (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): Mr. President, I would like to begin by congratulating you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. We have complete confidence that your experience and that of the members of your delegation will contribute to extricating our Conference from the deadlock it has been in for 14 years, and also hope that future presidencies of the Conference will enjoy success and good fortune.

We congratulate you on the adoption by the Conference of its agenda at its first meeting, and thank you and your delegation for having presented the non-paper on the first day, as well as the working paper circulated under document symbol CD/1929. This contribution and the sincere efforts of your presidency and your delegation to formulate it are an important achievement.

The Syrian Arab Republic — as an active member of the Conference and of the Group of 21, which today includes 33 States, in other words more than half of the member States — believes in the importance of the Conference on Disarmament — and the need for its continued existence. It also believes that achieving complete nuclear disarmament is the highest priority. The continued stockpiling of nuclear weapons in the arsenals of a limited number of States will lead to continued tension and will escalate the arms race, as well as posing a persistent threat and danger either of the use of those weapons or of natural disasters leading to the destruction of human beings and the environment. At this point I would like to recall the words of President Dilma Rousseff of the Federative Republic of Brazil, speaking last September in New York:

“A world which accepts the existence of nuclear weapons will become a dangerous world in which there is no security. The existence of such arsenals in a limited number of States will give them the right to perpetrate any act they please.”

These wise words apply to the situation in the world today, in particular in the Middle East, where one State possesses an enormous nuclear arsenal with which it

threatens its neighbours and the region as a whole. It stubbornly refuses to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons or to allow international inspections of its installations, while at the same time pursuing dangerous policies such as attacking, raiding and occupying the territory of its neighbours.

The current year will be crucial for determining the fate of the Conference on Disarmament. An important meeting on nuclear disarmament in the Middle East will also be held this year. This is a matter of urgent necessity for which the Syrian Arab Republic and many other States have long called in numerous meetings and resolutions with a view to reducing tension and halting any nuclear arms race in an already inflamed region. In this context, we welcome the appointment of Mr. Laajava, Finnish Under-Secretary of State, as facilitator of this meeting, and wish him success in his work. In view of the sensitivity of the current and future situation of the Conference on Disarmament and the long deadlock in the Conference, my delegation calls on the members of the Conference to redouble their efforts and show one another the greatest flexibility and constructive cooperation possible. In the view of my delegation, most States of the international community believe that nothing must prevent the four core issues being dealt with equally and in parallel. We therefore welcome the establishment of subsidiary bodies to discuss those four issues, as provided for in the Conference's rules of procedure, despite the view expressed by some that one of those issues is more fully developed than the others. We believe that no issue should be advanced at the expense of the others.

In order to foster an atmosphere of trust and cooperation in the Conference, we must all stop directing criticism and accusations at one or more States for being the cause of the deadlock in the Conference. At this point, we would like to recall that all members of the Group of 21 believe in the priority of nuclear disarmament. We therefore call on everyone to show greater political flexibility, as well as an understanding of States' concerns for their security and interests. We do not support the view that the deadlock in the Conference is due to its rules of procedure; this view is incorrect. The Conference was able to arrive at a programme of work by consensus when the sagacious efforts of the Algerian presidency, under the experienced leadership of Ambassador Idriss Jazairi in 2009, led to the formulation of document CD/1864, which was adopted by consensus. We therefore believe that the absence of political will, and not the rules of procedure, is the main factor behind the deadlock at the Conference. My delegation, like others, believes that taking initiatives outside the Conference on Disarmament would have a negative effect on its future, because it is the sole multilateral forum for conducting negotiations on nuclear disarmament and related issues.

Negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty, would be a positive step if undertaken as a nuclear disarmament measure, and not just with a view to non-proliferation, because the elimination of nuclear weapons and non-proliferation are complementary and interconnected processes. We believe that a treaty that fails to address the question of stockpiles would be neither positive nor useful. Moreover, we believe that disagreement on this issue has narrowed and that there is an increasing convergence of opinion of which we must take advantage.

We strongly support the numerous calls emanating from this Conference to hold a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament and to review the whole disarmament machinery. My delegation supports the contributions of observer States to the Conference and of civil society organizations concerned with nuclear disarmament issues. This is the position of our Group of 21. We also support your opinion as expressed in CD/1929, in which you highlight the importance of pursuing substantive discussion of the four core issues, despite the absence of agreement on the programme of work. However, at the same time, we are not comfortable with the idea of temporarily putting the Conference on standby or limiting the time it is given, because the substantive discussions

which took place in earlier years, during sessions and with coordinators, were serious and constructive and brought us together.

In conclusion, my delegation hopes to stimulate efforts to achieve rapid progress in the work of the Conference in order to arrive at a well-balanced programme of work acceptable to all sides. My own delegation will cooperate fully with sincere efforts made by member States or by Presidents of the Conference during this year.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of Syria for his statement and the kind words he addressed to the Chair. The next speaker on my list is Ambassador Hisham Badr of Egypt, who, in addition to being a distinguished colleague and friend, will be the next President of the Conference.

Mr. Badr (Egypt): For the last three years I have been sitting on the other side of the chamber, and I can tell you that the first time you sit on this side, on the podium, it is a different view, it is a holistic, definitely a holistic view, but I think it also comes with a price, a responsibility to act, and I think that when you see the view from here, and when you think of the words that we speak always in this chamber — strategic issues, security, etc. — there is a word that sometimes we use in the other chamber, in the Human Rights Council, that we don't use here, and that is "victims". And I think when you sit in this part of the podium you also think of victims, victims of war, victims of nuclear weapons. I was Ambassador to Tokyo in Japan, and I have visited Hiroshima and Nagasaki and saw of what we are talking. So, if you are also here to discuss issues of a strategic and security nature, we must not forget this kind of dimension in our work.

Mr. President, let me deeply thank you for a very diligent and transparent presidency of the Conference. Your effort, sincerity and dedication are all very apparent. Let me also, through you, thank the Secretary-General of the Conference for his statement and continued efforts in revitalizing the work of the Conference.

Your presidency comes and came at a crucial juncture. I know this phrase is somewhat overused, but in this case it is a clear fact. As we start a new year, we are facing the challenges of bringing the substantial work of this body to the forefront. After all, the Conference on Disarmament is the sole multilateral negotiating body on disarmament affairs. It is an example of the kind of venues that, if they did not exist, we would have to create them. This body has worked in the past producing landmark multilateral disarmament treaties, and we are sure that this deadlock is not a reflection of the body itself, but of the lack of political will, as we heard so much stated in this chamber. Some parties, I feel, have been sitting in their comfort zone for far too long, and the only result to show is our inability to start substantial work for the last 15 years.

We sincerely appreciate your effort, Mr. President, to search for a way to break the deadlock, and we will continue working with you and other members of the Conference to achieve this goal.

This year, 2012, is very important for issues of disarmament. This year's disarmament agenda is starting with this year's session of the Conference, which many hope would be the year to break the deadlock. This would be followed, during the year, by the review conference of the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons, the negotiating conference on an arms trade treaty and the first Preparatory Committee for the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. This year will also witness the international conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear and all other weapons of mass destruction. During the last meeting of the 2011 Conference session, this delegation expressed its hope that, by the beginning of the 2012 session, the decision on the facilitator and the venue for that conference would be finalized. This did materialize. It is our hope that, by the beginning of the 2013 session, we will have convened a successful conference

on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction.

Finally, Mr. President, I hope to continue in your footsteps so that together we can try, seriously, to chart a genuine path towards disarmament.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of Egypt for his statement and for the kind words he addressed to the Chair. I wish him every success in his new functions and assure him of my delegation's willingness to cooperate with him. Are there any other delegations who wish to take the floor? Chile, please.

Mr. Oyarce (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation would like to take a few moments to thank you, Ambassador Gallegos, for your talent, your views — of which you have advanced many — and the papers you have drafted, especially your efforts to revive the substantive work of this forum in a year that should prove decisive for the future of the Conference. As the Egyptian Ambassador and future President of the Conference noted, you have helped to foster the notion of the responsibility to act. During the plenary meetings we have held in the past few weeks, the growing frustration over the lack of progress was evident once more, and repeated references were made to the advances achieved by other arms limitation, disarmament and non-proliferation mechanisms. They are well known and need not be mentioned here.

Regrettably, the Conference has still not resumed the task of negotiation that allows it to contribute to formulating legal rules and instruments. We are all aware of the successive efforts and specific proposals that have been made to overcome this situation, and we are also all aware of the messages we have received at the highest level calling for the resumption of this task. Although there is no need to name the individuals concerned, it is worth noting that they have all appealed to the collective responsibility imposed on us by multilateral action to create forums for dialogue and negotiation where we can safeguard legitimate national interests and the broader interests which we share as members of the international community, and which should be reflected in the international regimes that are an essential component of a global system.

We have reached the end of the presidency of Ecuador with a fresh warning about the extent of our inertia. The paper you prepared, Mr. President, raises questions that should move us to reflect on the functioning and continuity of this forum. We are optimistic but also realistic in our hope that the outcome of our discussions over the course of the next few weeks will help us to arrive at a political compromise. Certain ideas persist in our thinking and analysis. First, it is clear that, on one occasion, we were able to reach a consensus on the various aspects of the decision contained in document CD/1864; however, we were not able to implement it. The main issue is to determine whether it is possible to improve the conditions that would allow for the readjustment of that decision in order to make it operable.

Some people regard document CD/1864 as continuing to provide a sound basis for reaching a working political agreement. It might be possible to consider fine-tuning that decision, thereby reinforcing the concept of step-by-step negotiation. We must admit that, during our term of office, at the beginning of last year, we had entertained the notion of constructive ambiguity. This would help us to preserve the negotiating role inherent in our mandate for all topics without exception; yet that simpler path — a more simplified decision — was an option on which we also failed to reach the necessary political consensus. We believe that it might be worth pursuing other avenues, and in so doing, that we might draw inspiration from the consensuses we have reached on other agreements, such as the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

Second, the core issues, to which reference is continually being made, form part of a negotiating equilibrium, and the fissile material cut-off treaty appears to be pursued outwardly as a necessary step in bringing about a world free of nuclear weapons in accordance with the principles laid down in the NPT. This would in no way invalidate or weaken the consideration of other items on the agenda.

Third, it is also clear that it is probably not necessary to refer to endogenous or exogenous factors. These factors can help to enhance a theoretical analysis but will most likely not help us to resolve practical issues. Nor does insisting on the use of consensus in procedural matters appear to be of much help to us. What is quite apparent is that we need sustained political effort in order to reach agreement. In short, we have to assume that only States can change this situation, and that we have a responsibility to act.

Fourth, judging by what we have been hearing, it is becoming increasingly apparent that we must respond to the request of the General Assembly to explore all options in order to overcome the current situation. This is a very clear political message. It is difficult to analyse the crucial political context of the Conference on Disarmament without discussing the disarmament machinery as a whole, and in order to do so, it is wise to reflect on what has been repeatedly expressed here by many delegations regarding a fourth special session of the General Assembly on matters relating to disarmament. That, too, represents a holistic approach.

Fifth, the issue of expansion has also been raised, and the participation of civil society should perhaps be included in this holistic approach. We need functioning multilateralism and viable international institutions, not ones that maintain the status quo, because this helps to protect our own security, our interests and those of humanity in general.

We have made a modest contribution to the architecture of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Like the distinguished representative of Mexico, we wish to reaffirm the value of the Treaty of Tlatelolco as a commitment by our region to nuclear disarmament through the establishment of the first nuclear-weapon-free zone in a densely populated region.

This is an important step in the evolution of international regimes for the elimination of nuclear weapons. We continue to believe that our willingness to reaffirm our political commitment to the Conference on Disarmament should take the form of the commencement of substantive work that would allow it to discharge its mandate. Failing that, we will have to decide collectively on a course of action for overcoming inertia. We trust that the deliberations of the past few weeks, which took up the concerns raised at the 2011 session and in the General Assembly, will assist the Egyptian presidency and clarify matters for it at this critical juncture.

We call for efforts to preserve this Conference and to work towards a political agreement that will allow us to negotiate. We hope that the Secretary-General of the Conference will send a message today that will enable us to pursue our substantive work during this pivotal year.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Ambassador Oyarce for the very kind words he addressed to the Chair and for his statement. The next speaker on my list is Ambassador Laura Kennedy of the United States.

Ms. Kennedy (United States of America): Mr. President, our delegation has already given two formal statements, so I won't repeat them here. I just wanted to offer a few comments, and first among them is that I wanted to join other speakers who have noted the service that you have provided. You certainly have stirred the pot. You have put forward in stark terms some unpleasant options concerning the future of this body, and I also wanted

to say that we very much look forward to hearing what will I am sure also be very thought-provoking sentiments by our distinguished Secretary-General, and I think the issue of this body certainly deserves serious consideration, and we should continue the serious debates on this subject that we have been discussing.

I wanted to, in this connection, point to a statement made by our Swiss colleague, Ambassador Fasel, in which he stated that the best way to revitalize the Conference would be to agree on a programme of work and, in this connection, I want to offer in advance, of course, our support to our next President as he takes on this challenge. I was about to say burden, but I'll just say challenge.

I also wanted to pick up and also pay tribute, as our Mexican and Chilean colleagues did, to the Treaty of Tlatelolco, which is indeed celebrating its forty-fifth anniversary. This was truly a path-breaking treaty, and I am delighted to note that we have sent a senior official to attend important meetings in Mexico City in connection with this treaty.

I also agree, of course, with the point made by our Mexican colleague that, vital as this treaty, other nuclear-weapon-free zones are, they are but — I think the phrase was — stepping stones to the goal that we must all strive for, that is, a world without nuclear weapons, a goal that my own President has spoken to repeatedly. In terms of steps, obviously you may recall our own view that the best way to reach that goal would be through a series of mutually reinforcing steps, and key among them again is, we believe, the necessity for dealing with fissile materials, a point that was enshrined in the last programme of work that was the handiwork of our very, very distinguished Algerian colleague.

So, indeed, I hope that we can rededicate ourselves to the effort to find a programme of work, and we hope again to deal with fissile material, a point that was enshrined in the action plan of the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons — I realize of course an action plan that did not include three members of this body, but nevertheless represented virtually the whole body and also of course enshrined the goal of having a 2012 Middle East weapons-of-mass-destruction-free zone, another goal in that document that we very strongly associate ourselves with and support.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Ambassador of the United States for the kind words she addressed to the Chair and for her statement. The next speaker on my list will be Mr. Valencia Muñoz of Colombia.

Mr. Valencia Muñoz (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President. First of all, since it is the first time that my delegation is taking the floor during your presidency, which is drawing to a close this week, we would like to congratulate you for your work and your efforts. We know how difficult it is to serve as President of the Conference, and for that reason, we commend your courage in taking the initiative early in the session to continue discussing the state of the Conference and the way forward.

My delegation prefers not to dwell on points already discussed by other delegations concerning the current situation of the Conference. “Stagnation”, “frustration”, “fatigue”, “crucial year” and “alternatives” are words that sum up the feelings and perceptions that our countries share regarding this body.

We deliver this statement for the purpose of commenting on and answering the questions you posed to us in your non-paper, contained in document CD/1929. We would like to take this opportunity to reiterate four specific points. First, Colombia insists that one viable option would be a simplified programme of work, as described in the rules of procedure, providing for a schedule of activities that would allow us to focus on the establishment of negotiating mandates and on the preparation and start of negotiations.

Second, we can understand that there is a divergence of views on the priority to be given to the topics, their degree of maturity and how to balance them, but we cannot accept that this divergence should paralyse this forum. For that reason, we believe that working on two issues at a time, in the two areas that appear to meet the conditions of sufficient maturity, would be a possible option. Making progress on the fissile material cut-off treaty and on negative security assurances could be a very valuable exercise for this 2012 session.

Third, my delegation would also like to underscore once more the shortcomings in our working methods. Responsibility for achieving progress in the Conference on Disarmament cannot be offloaded onto to a rotating presidency. We all have an obligation towards this forum. Consequently, we repeat the call we made last year that we — the States — should be more active and participative, and assist in the current President's efforts to achieve an agreed programme of work and the commencement of substantive work by making collective, concrete proposals. Colombia stands ready to cooperate in this endeavour.

One final thought is that we agree with the Chair and with various delegations on the need for further reflection on the revitalization of the Conference. This process began in 2010, and interesting developments took place last year. The self-examination that was carried out during the Colombian presidency and the resulting initiatives are a good example. In order to accomplish this revitalization, we also consider it necessary to provide for the election of a coordinator for enlargement of the membership.

Finally, as other delegations have stated, and since we believe it to be our common wish, we would like to emphasize that the ultimate goal that unites us is that of a world free of nuclear weapons. It is a legal, political and moral obligation shared by all States, not only for the sake of global peace and security, but also for the economic and social development of our countries. It is not utopian to think that we can aspire to this scenario. The Latin American regional experience of which Mexico reminded us today, which succeeded above and beyond the security and political considerations of its time, shows that, given political will, defined as flexibility, creativity and pragmatism, this is indeed possible; in the case of our forum, however, it is an obligation.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of Colombia for his statement and for the kind words he addressed to the Chair. Let me see if any other delegation would like to take the floor. That does not seem to be the case. The Philippines – I beg your pardon, I did not see you.

Mr. Domingo (Philippines): Mr. President, the Philippine delegation would just like to express our pleasure at seeing you at the helm of the Conference and our appreciation for your efforts at taking us forward, and to our colleagues who have also expressed support for the appointment of a special coordinator on membership expansion.

We are just taking the floor for a brief announcement. We would like to reiterate our invitation to all for a seminar which we are holding this afternoon, entitled “Disarmament education: Re-energizing the international agenda”, which is co-organized by the Permanent Missions of the Philippines and Costa Rica, the University of London School of Oriental and African Studies, the Centre for International Studies and Diplomacy and the International Peace Bureau. The seminar will be held this afternoon in room XI at 4 p.m.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of the Philippines. Let me check with participants once more to see whether any other delegation would like to take the floor. That does not appear to be the case. I now call on the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Tokayev.

Mr. Tokayev (Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament): As the Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Ban Ki-moon,

I take this opportunity at the end of the successful presidency of Ecuador to draw your attention to the persistent calls of the Secretary-General for serious decisions to be taken with regard to the future of the Conference on Disarmament. The Secretary-General formulated his latest call in particularly strong and eloquent terms in his message at the opening of this year's session. Today, I would like to present some concrete suggestions for heeding this call.

Almost one month has already passed in this year's session. Yet, despite the diligent work by the President, there seems to be little likelihood that the Conference any time soon will be able to bridge the differences between its members to start negotiations on any of its substantive agenda items.

This is a cause for very serious concern. The level of frustration is approaching a tipping point, not only here but also among the broader United Nations membership. Continued inaction by the Conference may lead to action elsewhere, thus potentially passing an important threshold and damaging the record of the Conference.

As a reflection of a wider disappointment, the number of disarmament experts among the Geneva delegations has been steadily reduced over the past several years.

This could be further proof of serious concerns among governments about the relevance of the Conference. It undermines the profile and efficiency of the Conference.

How, then, to overcome the current situation in the Conference?

I agree with the President that further fine-tuning of existing proposals is unlikely to bring us much further at this stage. With respect to a possible programme of work, it has become clear during the current presidency, once again, that at least one country cannot accept a programme of work that includes any concept of negotiating an FMCT. At the same time, many others cannot live with one that excludes an FMCT. We are trying to square a circle. Therefore, none of the existing proposals, including CD/1864 or any variant thereof, are going to command consensus. I consider this highly unfortunate, because a negotiating mandate for an FMCT would be in line with the expressed priorities of the international community. It would also be another important and logical step on the road towards a world free of nuclear weapons.

In the absence of agreement on a programme of work with a negotiating mandate, I believe we should focus on alternative options on issues where we can find common ground. We should not underestimate both the practical and political value of procedural reform. Concrete steps to improve the functioning of the Conference can be politically significant as a demonstration of the membership's collective will to chart a way out of the impasse, and can help to build trust.

With this in mind, allow me to briefly outline concrete steps for consideration. These suggestions represent a further development of the proposals outlined in my vision paper circulated in August of last year.

First, presidency activity and structure. I see potential for a more active role for the P6 mechanism.

The successive Presidents serving over a year have a valuable opportunity to bring direction and dynamism to the Conference, bridging different perspectives and identifying common ground. Collective proposals and initiatives by all six Presidents would carry important political weight.

Ultimately, extending the length and modifying the method of selection of the presidency should be considered. As is widely recognized, one month does not give the incumbent sufficient time to engage with the members and lead the work of the Conference.

Presidencies of a longer duration, rotating among the regional groups, could help to overcome the challenges inherent to the frequent turnover.

Second, membership. The composition of the Conference has not been static since its creation. In the past, new members have been added, without affecting the ability of the Conference to agree on substantive issues. A broader membership would make the Conference more representative and thereby increase its legitimacy in the interest of members and non-members alike. I am conscious that some members are reluctant due to concerns that expansion could further delay substantive progress when additional interests have to be taken into account. I urge them to reconsider this position in the light of the collective benefits of an expansion that is agreed to by consensus and respects the need for appropriate regional distribution.

Third, addressing other issues. Some have advocated addressing, in the interim, issues other than the four core ones. Some fear this may detract from the major issues. It is, however, legitimate to ask whether the Conference should not at least pursue some tangible results while it waits for a convergence of positions on the core issues. The draft programme of work circulated earlier by the President in his non-paper included such a proposal, and a suggestion along the same lines was made at the plenary meeting on 1 February. These are worthy of careful consideration.

As the agenda dates back to 1978, it is time for a reassessment to ensure that it reflects the current international security environment.

Some may argue that in the absence of substantive negotiations, housekeeping is at best futile or possibly even counterproductive by distracting attention. Personally, I see procedural reform as a stepping stone towards generating political will. I therefore support the suggestion to appoint three special coordinators on the agenda, rules of procedure and membership respectively. In the hope that the Conference will eventually overcome its impasse, maybe now is exactly the moment to effectively address issues that are long overdue.

Fourth, political will. As has been highlighted often in this chamber, the lack of progress is a reflection of inability to reconcile different priorities. This can only be overcome through greater political will, and we should step up efforts directly at the political level. In this regard, I welcome the commitment of the permanent members of the Security Council to the Conference on Disarmament and their intensified efforts to find a way out of the present situation. Their enhanced cooperation and coordination has given important political impetus, and I hope for continued engagement in this format.

I have been encouraged by the significant interest in addressing the Conference at the forthcoming high-level segment in late February and early March. We must build on this demonstration of political engagement. The current state of affairs in the Conference needs and deserves attention at the level of heads of State and government. I believe that the highest political levels must be fully focused on disarmament and non-proliferation, in their bilateral discussions, summits and at the Conference itself. In this vein, a special high-level meeting to revitalize the Conference could help elevate the level of political attention, and merits further consideration.

I believe that these two dimensions, procedural and political, need to be addressed in parallel, as they are interlinked and can be mutually reinforcing. In this regard, I fully support the recommendation by the Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters for the possible establishment of a group of eminent persons to explore further innovative ways to break the stalemate.

We should not lose sight of the fact that there is a need to rethink the broader United Nations disarmament machinery to ensure greater efficiency. It is not far-fetched, for

example, in the light of the situation both in the Conference on Disarmament and the United Nations Disarmament Commission, to consider merging these two into a new body with universal membership in charge of disarmament with both a deliberative and a negotiating mandate. A process towards this goal could only be initiated on the basis of the broadest possible agreement.

As Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, I am fully committed to preserving it as the sole multilateral body in charge of disarmament negotiations. My commitment is based on the deep-seated belief that the Conference on Disarmament offers the international community the best possibility for meaningful disarmament and non-proliferation efforts. But the seriousness and negative long-term implications of the current stalemate cannot, and must not, be underestimated.

I have been encouraged by the expressions of unequivocal support for the Conference by many members. Yet we must realize that we cannot preserve or indeed reinvigorate this unique body simply by repeating well-known positions. While we continue to work for the political will to emerge that will hopefully one day enable us to embark on negotiations on the current core issues, I therefore invite all members to make concrete — I repeat, concrete — proposals on how to use our time and our resources effectively in the interim.

Against a background of budgetary austerity, United Nations Member States need to be assured that all resources are well and wisely spent. This applies also to the Conference on Disarmament, which is supported by all member States through the regular budget.

As has been pointed out many times in this chamber, the stalemate is the result of different priorities, determined by different national security interests. National security interests are legitimate and must be recognized. However, as the Secretary-General stressed in his message to the opening of this year's session, it is during negotiations that national security interests can most effectively be defended. I call on all members to pursue their national security interests by building bridges with others through a process of negotiations.

I have also noted that a number of members of the Conference have not yet taken a public position with regard to its future. It is important that all those present in this chamber speak up and make their stance known.

The time left to produce tangible results during this session is shrinking rapidly. A sixth of the 2012 session, and even more of the time that we have effectively available for generating results, has ebbed away, with no solution in sight.

Important discussions do continue within the Conference. But we must be frank and realistic in our assessment. Mere discussions are no longer sufficient for the Conference to live up to its mandate as the world's sole standing multilateral negotiating body. The current situation has created a serious credibility and legitimacy deficit. The future of the Conference is at stake.

Let us not forget our duty to coming generations: a world at peace. Just like climate change, nuclear weapons present an existential threat to our collective future. Disarmament and non-proliferation are absolutely indispensable to realizing our common vision of a better world for all.

The time to act is now.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament for his statement and for the kind words he addressed to the Chair.

Let me check. Does any delegation wish to take the floor? That does not seem to be the case. I will therefore read my final statement.

At the beginning of this year, Ecuador took the Chair of the Conference on Disarmament with the knowledge that it would not be an easy task and that this noble body was going through some difficult moments. These included the calling into question of its *raison d'être* and usefulness by a world clamouring for peace and stability while simultaneously expressing disappointment over the lack of progress being made on disarmament issues. Many of the member States in this room have been overcome with frustration and have been left wondering why the promises of a world free of nuclear weapons have not been met, even though more than two decades have elapsed since the end of the cold war. Why have the bodies established for the purpose of disarmament not produced the desired results but have instead maintained a status quo that many find intolerable?

This was the context in which we took the Chair, doing so from the perspective of a country that, as I mentioned in my opening statement, has no other agenda than that of disarmament and world peace, and no other interest guiding our actions than that of ensuring humanity's survival.

While it is true that a State can legitimately invoke its national security as an argument for not negotiating a particular disarmament convention or treaty, it is also true that the birthright of humanity is peace, and that we should focus all of our efforts on securing it.

With this in mind, we began a process of informal consultations that included each and every one of the members in this room, without discrimination of any kind – a joint effort by a small delegation but one that was guided by strong principles and a profound commitment to peace and peacebuilding. We analysed all the ways and means of breaking the deadlock of the Conference and commencing our substantive work. Regrettably, as we announced at the first plenary meeting, there is no agreement to take up the agenda items of the Conference.

Aware of the critical stage at which the Conference on Disarmament finds itself, after a period of stagnation of nearly 15 years, and in response to the urgent appeal for action by the international community, we called for a period of reflection. To that end, we distributed the working paper contained in document CD/1229, which included a series of questions and considerations that we believed would stimulate an honest and frank discussion about the future of this body and about the causes of the deadlock.

A great many member and observer States participated in this exercise by presenting new ideas and making significant contributions. We plan to make a synthesis of some of these contributions because we believe that they will undoubtedly serve as guidance for the future work of the Conference and that of its Presidents throughout this year. We believe that this reflection process in itself constitutes a form of progress that will allow us to reconcile our differences and renew our commitment to disarmament and to humanity.

Generally speaking, the majority of delegations clearly conveyed feelings of frustration and impatience at the more than 15 years of paralysis in the Conference. Although some of them confirmed the importance of the Conference on Disarmament as the sole multilateral forum on disarmament, others expressed support for disarmament but not for the instrument established to facilitate that process. They also agreed with the President's statement that the continuing failure of this organization to produce results has played a part in seriously damaging its structure and credibility.

Some delegations called for a period of existential reflection on the deadlock in the Conference on Disarmament, especially at this juncture when we risk not meeting the Millennium Development Goals owing to a lack of resources and the global economic crisis that is affecting everyone. As a result, the issue of disarmament has become an urgent and essential one from a moral and economic perspective. Other delegations chose to question

the lack of progress and the maintenance of the status quo, which they characterized as a very comfortable position for some members. In addition, certain countries supported the possibility of negotiating the agenda items of the Conference on Disarmament in other forums which, do show evidence of movement and progress. If we want to preserve the Conference on Disarmament as the sole multilateral forum in this area, it is clearly necessary to make major strides, bridge distances and explore alternatives to the four items on the agenda, as proposed by our delegation at an early stage of the consultations with members of the Conference. Our obstinacy in relation to the four agenda items on which no consensus has been reached will not bring us any closer to negotiation, nor is that our intention. The Conference on Disarmament cannot exist in a time capsule or a vacuum, remaining disconnected from reality in a fixed and immutable state. It is time to seize the moment. There is no need to fear change, but change must come from within. It must come from those who are familiar with the failings and the stumbling blocks of this old machinery, which needs massive infusions of oxygen in order to survive and a collective will to carry out reform.

In our working paper, we proposed the possibility of reviewing the whole disarmament machinery. In that connection, we asked whether it might not be advisable for the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament to be held once and for all. Many delegations agreed with that idea, arguing that the Conference on Disarmament is not the only one that is deadlocked, but rather that the deadlock extends to other disarmament forums as well. Some delegations argued against this course of action, asserting that it was not necessary to undertake such drastic and sweeping reform. Let us therefore start with an in-house reform, as we suggested in our working paper. We believe that there is a shared interest among a large number of delegations to move forward on the issue of expanding the membership, with the participation of civil society, and on that of revitalizing the Conference on Disarmament. These issues could be taken up in the future by subsequent Presidents of the Conference.

There appears to be near-unanimous support for the Conference on Disarmament and for the appointment of a special coordinator for that process. The dedication and hard work of some observers are worth mentioning, since they will no doubt offer fresh ideas and newcomers' enthusiasm to the revitalization of the Conference.

Some delegations expressed support for the idea of involving civil society in issues of disarmament and, in particular, in the Conference on Disarmament. They even drew comparisons with the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the First Committee of the General Assembly, in which civil society plays an important role.

On the issue of a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT), which was addressed in the President's document CD/1229, opinions remain divided – and not uniform, as proclaimed by some countries. While some delegations defended the idea of affording the FMCT a central role within the Conference on Disarmament as a logical and essential step towards nuclear disarmament, others supported the negotiation of an FMCT as part of a balancing exercise, based on the Shannon mandate, in which stockpiles should be included. Additionally, some delegations questioned the importance of an FMCT and reaffirmed the priority that should be given to nuclear disarmament.

In the working paper, we called on delegations to consider the possibility of putting the Conference on Disarmament on standby. A variety of opinions were expressed. Many delegations welcomed the idea, while others emphasized the consequences that it would entail, viewing it as a drastic and irreversible measure that would lead to an inevitable decrease in the economic resources allocated to disarmament and to its negotiating framework.

I wonder if it is morally justifiable to continue to invest resources in an organization whose chronic lack of results has led it to the state of paralysis in which it currently finds itself. As the Permanent Representative of Ecuador, I would like in this last intervention as President of the Conference on Disarmament to convey the message of a country that believes that no effort should be spared in achieving peace and security for all inhabitants of the planet. We believe that we have made progress in these four weeks during which Ecuador has occupied the Chair. We have done this by engaging the mechanisms of diplomacy and negotiation and by seeking consensual solutions. We have fulfilled our commitment to reveal the profound concerns and frustrations of many countries within and outside this Conference. This frustration extends beyond these walls and jeopardizes multilateralism in general, since the Conference on Disarmament is not the only multilateral body that finds itself in a state of deadlock; trade negotiations within the World Trade Organization and environmental issues have also fallen prey to this same disease, which erodes the foundations of multilateralism and forces us to seek change and find a way out. This way out must come from our collective imagination. Utopian concepts and ideals provide the impetus for change – not for immobility.

I leave the Chair of the Conference on Disarmament with the conviction that my delegation has attempted to make progress on the path of peace and security, and I hope that the efforts of the remaining Presidents will allow for the resumption of our substantive work as soon as possible. Despite the obstacles, I am optimistic, because a new awareness of reality and the challenges facing the Conference on Disarmament has been generated. It is this new awareness which will push us to change and to find a lasting solution. To future Presidents of the Conference on Disarmament, I convey my best wishes for more favourable winds to blow when it is their turn and for them to hold their ground when it comes to revitalizing the Conference. They should not allow frustration and discontent to prevail, but rather should forge ahead.

Lastly, I would like to thank you all for the kindness and respect with which you have always treated my delegation and to assure you that we will continue our efforts to advance the cause of humanity and peace together with subsequent Presidents of the 2012 session. I would also like to thank the secretariat of the Conference for its cooperation, as well as to commend it for its professionalism. The same goes for the staff of the translation and interpretation services.

Finally, I want to thank my team, especially Counsellor Verónica Aguilar, who has been in charge of coordinating this topic.

I now give the floor to the secretariat.

Mr. Sareva (Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference): Just a reminder of the opening tonight at 6.30 of the exhibition entitled “Fashioning future history”, marking the eightieth anniversary of the World Disarmament Conference of 1932. The opening will be followed by a reception, to take place near door B.20.

And, finally, Mr. President, thank you for the kind words that you just extended to the secretariat. It has been a pleasure indeed working with you.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The next meeting of the Conference on Disarmament will be held on Tuesday, 21 January 2012, at 10 a.m., under the presidency of Egypt.

The meeting rose at 11.35 a.m.