

Conference on Disarmament

27 March 2012

English

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

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 27 March 2012, at 10.15 a.m.

President: Mr. Minelik Alemu Getahun(Ethiopia)

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The President: I declare open the 1256th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. I would like to extend a warm welcome to Mr. Gombojav Zandanshatar, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of Mongolia. I have the pleasure and honour to invite him to take the floor.

Mr. Zandanshatar (Mongolia): Mr. President, first of all, I would like to extend to you my sincere congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of the current session of the Conference, and wish you every success in your important mission.

It is a special privilege to address this august body as we celebrate this year the twentieth anniversary since Mongolia declared its territory a nuclear-weapon-free zone and started making efforts to institutionalize its nuclear-weapon-free status. Today the initiative enjoys wide international support, as reflected in numerous United Nations General Assembly resolutions and other international documents. Taking this opportunity, I wish to thank the international community for supporting our initiative from its outset. Though we are not yet there, our consistent policy and the results achieved so far demonstrate that all nations, including individual small States, can make their concrete contribution towards the goal of achieving a nuclear-weapon-free world.

Over the past years, Mongolia has continued its efforts to secure appropriate assurances from the nuclear-weapon States for its nuclear-weapon-free status. The consultations with the five permanent members of the Security Council regarding the content and format of the assurance that is needed to institutionalize its unique status are under way. Its uniqueness resides in the fact that it cannot be part of any traditional nuclear-weapon-free zones. This unique status needs an equally unique approach. The assurance that Mongolia is seeking, bearing in mind that it is located between two nuclear-weapon States only, is to have the five permanent members of the Security Council formally recognize its status and commit to not contributing to any act that would violate that status. Mongolia appreciates their engagement on this issue and expresses its earnest hope that the renewed spirit of understanding displayed by the parties would soon lead to formalizing this status.

Today the world community is focused as never before on advancing the goals of disarmament, particularly nuclear disarmament. While significant progress has been marked in recent years, including the successful 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the New START Treaty between Russia and the United States and the United Nations Secretary-General's visionary five-point proposal on nuclear disarmament, the existence of nuclear weapons constitutes the greatest danger to mankind and the survival of civilizations. It is well known that the United Nations throughout its history, starting from its very first resolution, has striven for the elimination of nuclear weapons. The member States also reaffirmed their commitment at the highest level in the Millennium Declaration. Now the time has come for more concrete action.

Mongolia fully shares the view that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only guarantee against the risk of their use and proliferation. Pending the achievement of this ultimate goal, a number of steps should be undertaken as a matter of urgent priority, including the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the provision of security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States, and vigorous implementation of forward-looking action plans agreed upon in the Final Document of the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. This also includes putting an end to the protracted stalemate at the Conference on Disarmament, the world's sole multilateral disarmament negotiation forum, and the early start of negotiations on a nuclear weapons convention and a fissile material cut-off treaty. In this regard, we greatly value the efforts of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and member States to revitalize the work of the Conference.

Political will and innovative approaches are needed to make resumption of meaningful disarmament negotiations possible. As a member of the Conference, Mongolia is open to any constructive proposals aimed at revitalizing the work of this body. In this regard, we note that some concrete steps and thoughts were outlined by Mr. Tokayev, Secretary-General of the Conference, in his statement on 14 February this year, which should be given due attention. In view of the present deadlock in this body, we might have to think about other options for taking forward multilateral disarmament negotiations, including one related to merging the Conference and the United Nations Disarmament Commission into a single body. As the Secretary-General of the United Nations pointed out in his message, the future of the Conference is in the hands of its member States. Mongolia joins the others in the quest for the commencement of its substantive work.

This year will witness a number of important events that would focus the attention and joint efforts of the international community on the issues related to nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and security. They include the Nuclear Security Summit now being held in Seoul, the conference on the establishment of a nuclear-weapons-free zone in the Middle East, and the Fukushima Ministerial Conference on Nuclear Safety to be convened in December this year. We hope that the outcomes of these gatherings would greatly contribute, not only to the course of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, nuclear safety and security, but also provide another impetus for the resumption of the Conference's substantive work.

The early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is absolutely vital for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Mongolia welcomes the recent signing of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty by Trinidad and Tobago and its ratification by Indonesia. As we celebrate this year the fifteenth anniversary of this Treaty, Mongolia joins others in urging the Annex 2 States to ratify the treaty in the near future.

The potential spread of weapons of mass destruction to non-State actors who would not hesitate to use them under any circumstances remains an immediate threat. Mongolia reaffirms its commitment to Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), which, inter alia, provides a good basis for improving national control facilities with the assistance pledged under the resolution. We welcome the extension of the mandate of the Security Council 1540 Committee to the year 2021.

Among the core agenda items of the Conference on Disarmament, I wish to single out the issue of negative security assurances. There is no question that for a small non-nuclear-weapon State like Mongolia, the provision of unequivocal and legally binding security assurances against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons is of paramount importance. In this regard, we are pleased to note recent progress in the process of granting negative security assurances by nuclear-weapon States to the nuclear-weapon-free zones. We welcome the transmission by the United States of relevant protocols to the African and South Pacific nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties for ratification by the Senate. We also welcome the renewed discussions between the States parties to the Bangkok Treaty and nuclear-weapon States on a protocol to that Treaty.

Mongolia strongly believes that nuclear-weapon-free zones greatly contribute to enhancing global and regional peace and security, expanding and strengthening the nuclear non-proliferation regime, and advancing the goals of nuclear disarmament. Therefore, it supports and encourages the further strengthening of the existing nuclear-weapon-free zones, as well as the establishment of new ones. In this regard, Mongolia welcomes the appointment of Mr. Jaakko Laajava of Finland as facilitator of the 2012 Conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction, and wishes him every success in his important and highly delicate mission.

As a North-East Asian country, Mongolia has always supported the idea of establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region, and we believe that the Six-Party Talks are an important first step for such a zone to become a reality. Although Mongolia is not party to the Six-Party Talks, we greatly value their importance for regional peace and stability. Mongolia has sought to contribute to the Six-Party process and hosted bilateral meetings between Japan and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in Ulaanbaatar. Furthermore, Mongolia has been working to host a working group meeting on the mechanism of peace and security in North-East Asia when the talks resume.

On the membership of the Conference, Mongolia speaks for its expansion. Thus, we fully support the proposal of appointing a special coordinator on the issue. The Conference discusses and negotiates disarmament issues vital to the national security of all States. Therefore, we are of the opinion that the membership should be open to all United Nations Member States.

Last but not least, I wish to highlight the important role of civil society in achieving the goals of disarmament. We view the active engagement of civil society in the work of the Conference as a valuable contribution to bringing the voices of common people to be heard and reckoned with. Thus, we strongly support broader and more meaningful civil society participation in the Conference.

Finally, allow me to reiterate our call and express our earnest hope that this year will be marked as an important turning point in the history of the Conference on Disarmament as it emerges from its prolonged impasse and resumes its substantive work, thus contributing to the cause of international peace and security.

The President: I thank the Foreign Minister for his statement and also for his kind words to the President. Allow me now to suspend the meeting for a short moment in order to escort him from the chamber.

The meeting was briefly suspended.

The President: On my list of speakers today, I have two colleagues whose term in Geneva has, unfortunately, come to an end. Ambassador Giovanni Manfredi and Ambassador Hannu Himanen both joined us in September 2008, four days apart, and will leave Geneva in the coming weeks. During almost four years, Ambassadors Manfredi and Himanen have shown great professionalism, combined with impressive diplomatic skills. But, above all, during their term, they have been wonderful colleagues and friends. On behalf of the Conference, I would like to thank both for their many valuable contributions to the work of the Conference during their tenure and offer our sincere wishes for their success and satisfaction in their new assignments, or a very good rest in whatever they do after their current posts.

I have the honour now to give the floor to Ambassador Manfredi.

Mr. Manfredi (Italy): Thank you, Mr. President, for your very kind words. In a little over a week I will leave Geneva to return to Rome to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In July I will be 65 and will retire after 38 years in the Italian diplomatic corps and 44 years in the service of my country. This year also marks the 104th year of uninterrupted presence in Italy's diplomatic corps of someone in my immediate family. I have no idea what my seven-year-old son wants to do when he grows up, but what I do know is that now the Conference on Disarmament and its lack of programme of work are far down his list of priorities, if they are there at all.

I will spare you and colleagues the customary farewell address that many of us declaim on leaving their posts at the Conference. During these past four years, and the last time only 12 days ago, I have said all I have wanted to say. Frankly, I do not see the point of repeating myself, and unfortunately I have no new nuggets of wisdom to share with you.

The nearly four decades that my career has spanned have witnessed changes too numerous and too deep to quickly analyse. Many of us here weren't even born yet in 1974, or if we were, were too young to really remember what the international scene was like then.

In many aspects the situation has improved since 1974, in others it hasn't. By and large, the level of prosperity of our populations has risen, and so has the number of countries governed by proper democratic governments. We live today in the age of globalization, whose positive effects on our daily lives cannot be put in doubt. On the other hand, in 1974 the countries owning nuclear weapons were six. Today they are nine. It is difficult to pretend that this represents a sign of progress.

On a more anecdotal level, in 1977 our Ambassador in Kuala Lumpur, in Malaysia, admittedly a mildly eccentric gentleman, could safely drive his car, unarmed and accompanied only by his personal driver, from Madras in India to Rome in Italy. Today, this would be all but impossible, no matter how eccentric you are.

A major disappointment in today's diplomatic scene, despite what appears to be a near universal wish to the contrary, is the failure, spanning a decade and a half, to undertake any new multilateral negotiations on nuclear disarmament and arms control. The reasons are numerous and complex, as all of us well know. Theories abound on who is to blame, but it is indisputable that 15 years are far too long.

Let us not dwell on our past mistakes though, but look to the future and remember that as our countries' representatives to an international conference, we are responsible not just to our national authorities, but to the international community as a whole. An initiative or a proposal that may not seem acceptable for strictly speaking national interests, when viewed in the wider context of the general good may instead merit further attention. This is especially true in our field, disarmament. After all, there has never been, in recorded history, any instance of a country voluntarily disarming itself out of existence. Therefore, it follows that in our field, when we negotiate, the potential for flexibility is in fact vaster than we think.

The time has arrived to say goodbye. To you, Mr. President, who have assumed the difficult task of steering the Conference towards a more productive future after your predecessor's determined, skilful and highly praiseworthy attempt to provide us with a programme of work, I wish you every success.

I would also like to say goodbye to all of you, my colleagues in the Conference. The courtesy and cordiality in our method of work, the readiness and generosity in exchanging experiences and information, are something that I will always treasure, miss and remember with enormous pleasure.

Also, a cordial goodbye to Secretary-General Tokayev, to Mr. Jarmo Sareva and the entire secretariat staff; I am very grateful for their constant and unstinting assistance, excellent advice and friendly manner in which they have always discharged their duties. Especially great is my admiration for Mr. Tokayev's strong messages to convince us to break the 15-year deadlock that has tarnished the Conference's reputation.

And goodbye and thank you to the interpreters, who have never failed to provide excellent service, in spite of the many noisy cell phones in our pockets and some of us reading our statements too quickly.

And, finally, goodbye and sincere thanks to the NGOs up there in the balcony, especially to the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and Reaching Critical Will. I confess that I have never been able to fully grasp the subtle differences between the two, in spite of the best efforts of their representative to explain them to me. Reaching Critical Will not only has been a source of dependable, prompt and accurate

documentation, but also a discreet stimulus to my and our collective consciences. Their polite prods perhaps need to be replaced by a more forceful shove.

The President: I thank Ambassador Manfredi for his statement and for his kind words to the Chair.

I have now the pleasure, great honour to give the floor to my good friend, colleague, Ambassador Himanen.

Mr. Himanen (Finland): Mr. President, let me begin by congratulating you personally, and the Ethiopian presidency, upon your assumption of the presidency and wish you all the best in your endeavours. Yours will be followed by the Finnish presidency at the very end of May. I also commend the skilful work carried out by Ecuador and Egypt before Ethiopia this year. The draft programme of work tabled by Egypt in document CD/1933 brought us close to agreement, for the first time since 2009. The Egyptian proposal had all the elements of a compromise, but as we know came to naught.

This is my last plenary meeting of the Conference, as you rightly noted — and I thank you very much for your kind words, Minelik — because I will be transferred to another position as of the beginning of May. As is customary, I would like to use this occasion for some personal concluding reflections on the work of the Conference. I, of course, regret that I will not be here at the time of the Finnish presidency, but this was not to be. But I am all the more happy to assure delegations that the Finnish presidency is in very good hands, with Ambassador Kari Kahiluoto and my deputy, Minister Counsellor Tarja Pesämaa, in the lead.

I could maybe say that my moment of glory at the Conference lasted about 90 seconds. Thirteen months ago, my then Foreign Minister made a concise statement at the Conference. He made three points: that the Conference remained deadlocked even after the high-level meeting of September 2010 in New York; that it should immediately begin negotiations on key issues, notably on a fissile material cut-off treaty; and that by resuming negotiations, the Conference could regain its authority as the sole multilateral negotiating body on disarmament.

Today, we can only note that the stalemate at the Conference continues unchanged. Yes, we had this other attempt earlier this year, just a couple of weeks ago, to agree on a programme of work, leading to near-agreement. But at the end, as we know, we were faced with a frustrating failure. The Conference's authority has been dealt another serious blow. This may lead to negotiations taking place elsewhere outside the Conference, and you could even say that the very existence of the Conference, at this point, is questioned and may be threatened.

So, how to get out of this impasse? Can the Conference get down to serious substantive work on its four core agenda items without agreement on a programme of work?

I believe that there is very little that we can pretend to achieve by loose discussions on core issues. We have done it many times before; it has almost become an annual ritual. As we all know, realistic expectations cannot be very high regarding the utility of these exercises.

While a fissile material cut-off treaty remains an unequivocal priority for Finland, we for our part are fully prepared to proceed on all four main issues in a balanced and equitable manner. This must not mean, however, that progress on one item would be held hostage to non-agreement on another.

Many ideas and interesting proposals have been presented, including by the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Kassym-Jomart Tokayev. I agree that the present arrangement regarding the presidencies, the so-called P6, could be made more conducive to

efficient work. We should be ready to look at a more radical reform of the whole institution of the presidency, aiming at longer terms in office and possible regional, as opposed to the present alphabetical, rotation.

I also agree that the Conference should be ready to look at other issues beyond its present agenda. But then a big question remains: how could the Conference agree on other issues when it cannot agree on the present four? Furthermore, the issue of enlarging membership is clearly, squarely on the table. But, as we know, for the time being, it is virtually impossible to move towards enlargement.

Besides reforming the presidency, there are a number of other things that the Conference could do to streamline its processes and make itself more efficient. It should look at how the consensus rule is interpreted and applied, if it cannot touch it through changing the rules of procedure themselves. The programme of work could be rolled over from year to year, and so on. I remain to be convinced, however, that these sorts of measures to develop procedures would break the present impasse.

What could and should be done, though, is to increase the Conference's transparency and its accessibility to civil society organizations. Whether the Conference truly negotiates or just spends time disagreeing on a programme of work, NGOs should have a substantial presence in this chamber. It is an anachronism, indeed, to maintain that negotiations in this body should somehow fundamentally differ from what other intergovernmental forums and bodies are doing today.

Then, instead of merging the Conference on Disarmament and the United Nations Disarmament Commission, I would rather speak of doing away with the Commission as a deliberating body. It adds very little to what the First Committee and the General Assembly are doing anyhow.

As to the Conference, in contrast, one hears the argument that it continues to have an important role as the negotiating body, even if it does not negotiate. In other words, we should preserve the institution so as not to lose it and cause irreparable damage to the disarmament machinery at large. I certainly follow this logic, but I am not entirely convinced by it. As someone who has been many years in charge of ensuring adequate resources for his Foreign Service, I know governments are not in a position to maintain institutions in a holding pattern, just in case something useful would emerge. This is ever more true in the conditions today of the financial and economic crisis. Here the burden of proof lies squarely on the Conference's shoulders. The Conference must indeed redeem itself if it wishes a continued existence and role. And, of course, when I say the Conference, it is us, the delegations in this chamber.

In a nutshell, and to conclude, simple, small practical steps should be taken to improve the institution of the Conference and to improve its capacity. But that is obviously not enough. We need the political will to make the Conference do what it is mandated to do, that is, negotiate.

I wish to conclude by thanking all colleagues for a cooperation that without exception has been not only collegial but cordial and friendly. I have established contacts and friendships which I know will last. I also wish to thank the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Tokayev, my countryman, Mr. Sareva, and the secretariat, for their services to the Conference, which have always been impeccable and which I have been able to personally also enjoy a number of times.

The President: I thank Ambassador Himanen for his statement, his kind words and on a personal note, I thank Hannu for his encouragements to this presidency and his advice.

I have on my list Ukraine, Croatia and Switzerland this morning. The first speaker, Ambassador Mykola Maimeskul of Ukraine.

Mr. Maimeskul (Ukraine): Mr. President, at the outset let me congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. I am confident that your able presidency would contribute to attaining the desired goal, the resumption of substantive work. In this regard I assure you of the strong support of my delegation.

Let me also wish all the best to our colleagues and friends, Ambassador Manfredi from Italy and Ambassador Himanen from Finland.

Ukraine firmly believes that the Conference on Disarmament is an indispensable instrument for achieving ultimate disarmament and building a world free of nuclear weapons. In this regard, we are seriously concerned about more than 13 years of stalemate, which puts the credibility and legitimacy of this unique multilateral forum at risk.

We greatly appreciate efforts made by national delegations, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, and the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Tokayev, to find an acceptable way of revitalizing the CD and approving the programme of work for this year.

During previous months, we carefully followed and supported the initiatives of the Ecuadorian and Egyptian presidencies aimed at hammering out compromises, and we greatly appreciate their efforts to facilitate progress towards the resumption of the substantive work of this body. Both draft proposals put before the Conference incorporated results of extensive consultations, and though not perfect in certain dimensions, they surely deserved our support for the sake of long-awaited and urgently needed compromise. We regret the sad fact that no consensus was found, and support the proposal of continuing consultations, formal and informal, so as not to lose momentum in the efforts generated so far. Our primary goal is the adoption and implementation in 2012 of a balanced and comprehensive programme of work in line with requests expressed by the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly.

We believe that document CD/1864 could still constitute a basis for the relevant draft programme of work. Though recent developments indicate that this document is unlikely to achieve the needed consensus, its major components should be taken into account while drafting a new programme of work.

We also think that the proposals delivered by the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, on improvement of the functioning of the Conference and charting a way out of the current impasse, should receive our careful consideration. Operational revitalization of the Conference, in the view of my delegation, is our next priority.

Therefore the issues of modernizing the Conference's agenda and raising the procedural efficiency of the Conference, and a review of the system of presidency rotation and extension of their terms of office, as well as continuity of the previously adopted programme of work, should be incorporated in our discussions and possible programme of work.

Allow me to address several issues of the Conference's agenda that Ukraine considers to be of particular importance.

The ultimate goal of the international community is clear: complete and irreversible nuclear disarmament as the only guarantee of protecting humanity from the deadly consequences of possible use of nuclear weapons.

One of the important aspects of international nuclear non-proliferation efforts is securing nuclear materials from potential dangerous misuse.

During the Washington Nuclear Security Summit in 2010, Ukraine announced a decision to get rid of all existing stocks of highly enriched uranium.

This decision was affirmed by a number of policy documents, including the joint statement by the Presidents of Ukraine and the United States of America, and by the bilateral intergovernmental Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation on nuclear safety dated 26 September 2011.

I am pleased to inform you that on 22 March this year our country not only secured all vulnerable nuclear materials, but fully implemented the commitment to renounce the use of highly enriched uranium in civil nuclear research facilities and get rid of all highly enriched uranium stocks – i.e., for Ukraine, 220 kilograms by the time of the Seoul Nuclear Security Summit, now taking place. Thus, Ukraine has set another good example of firm political will and confirmed its adherence to the all-out strengthening of the non-proliferation regime.

Another crucial issue attracting wide attention in the international community and being a priority for my country, Ukraine, in the Conference, is the granting of effective security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States. Although this approach has not yet materialized in a formal mandate proposal, the issue of negative security assurances (NSAs) is a priority of the Conference's agenda and is widely supported by the vast majority of members. Numerous international consultations, including the discussions in the framework of the Conference, have repeatedly acknowledged the urgent need to conclude the relevant binding instrument and demonstrated the ripeness of this issue for negotiations.

NSAs would not only send a strong message dissuading States from acquiring nuclear weapons, but would also be highly instrumental for strengthening confidence, building a new quality of regional and global security. Elaboration of a draft legal international agreement on effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons will represent an achievable step towards fulfilment of the commitments undertaken in pursuance of article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, and will strongly promote the further non-proliferation agenda. In this regard we appeal to all States, especially the nuclear-weapon States, to continue intensive deliberations with a view to reaching early agreement on an international instrument of a legally binding character on this matter.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Ukraine for his statement and for his kind words to the Chair. I now give the floor to Ambassador Vuković of Croatia.

Ms. Vuković (Croatia): I have the great privilege to speak on behalf of the observer States united in the informal group of observer States, which Croatia is coordinating for the first half of this year. This group is truly universal in its composition, counting 38 States from all regions of the world, 26 of them applicants for membership in the Conference, the Republic of Moldova being the latest to request full membership, on 15 March.

On behalf of all of us, I would like to congratulate you on the assumption for the presidency and assure you of the full support of the observer States in your efforts to get the Conference to work. You are walking in the footsteps of the two excellent preceding presidencies of Ecuador and Egypt, and we would spare no opportunity to thank Ambassadors Gallegos and Badr for their efforts so far. Allow me to recall the Arab proverb from Ambassador Badr's opening statement, saying that: "It is better to light a candle than curse the darkness". The Egyptian presidency has indeed lit a very bright candle, lighting up many dark corners, but it seems the winds are still blowing too strongly.

The observer States are disappointed at the inability of the current membership to adopt the programme of work so ably crafted by the Egyptian team in document CD/1933/Rev.1. As we have repeatedly called for, we want to join a Conference that is fully operative in order to contribute to the crucial global debates in the area of disarmament that would provide increased security for all. The observer applicant States to the Conference,

as States parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, stand ready to fully contribute to the negotiations and discussions in seeking a safer world for all without nuclear weapons.

A number of the member States of this body continuously ask us why we want to join the Conference at all in this situation of stalemate. The answer is very simple. It lies in the three values outlined by Ambassador Adamson of the United Kingdom only last week: we too believe in multilateralism, disarmament and compromise. As long as the Conference is here, we will try to do our utmost, in the limits of our own capacity, to bring it back to life.

In this context of what is known as the “revitalization process”, this group would like to strongly support the remarks to the Conference made by Secretary-General Tokayev a month ago. We find them to be insightful, forward-looking, concrete and action-oriented, featuring membership consideration as the second priority. We fully share his strong conviction that procedural reforms can indeed serve as a “stepping stone towards generating political will”. Procedural issues are not at the heart of the Conference impasse, and we do not pretend that the next expansion will by magic guarantee the long-overdue commencement of substantive work here. However, appointing special coordinators and opening structured debates, including on membership, would increase the chances of success. At this critical moment, and allow me to speak very candidly: the observer States’ expression of interest to join this body is a plus to the Conference itself as it serves as a much-needed confirmation of its global relevance and legitimacy. We may want to bear this fact in mind when considering the issue of enlargement.

Mr. President, we are looking very much forward to the scheduled forthcoming discussions as outlined in your opening speech last week, and especially the ones dedicated to revitalization.

Let me also wish all the best to our Italian and Finnish colleagues in their future endeavours.

The President: I thank Ambassador Vuković of Croatia for her statement. I now give the floor to Ambassador Fasel of Switzerland.

Mr. Alexander Fasel (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, as I am taking the floor for the first time during your term of office, I would like to convey to you our sincere congratulations on taking up this major task and assure you of the full and complete support of our delegation.

I also wish to say a cordial farewell to Ambassadors Manfredi and Himanen and to thank them for their friendship, their kindness and their contribution to the work of this Conference.

I should like to put forward some ideas about the current situation of the Conference and on our future work. The current situation is extremely frustrating. What happened two weeks ago has dealt yet another harsh blow to the multilateral processes in the field of disarmament; we greatly regret the fact that the adoption of a programme of work has once again been blocked.

Nevertheless, we must pursue our efforts; significant progress in multilateralism takes time, and even blockages can be the opportunity for a new start.

There have been promising developments in the discussions these past weeks, largely thanks to the efforts of the Egyptian Chair. More States have been asking themselves what is the proper balance between non-proliferation and disarmament. More delegations have been thinking about how to approach the scope of application of a future treaty on fissile material, and a great many members have shown a strong spirit of

compromise and considerable flexibility, both of which are needed for the smooth progress of this Conference.

The Conference must reflect on the way in which national security concerns drive some States to block the initiation of certain processes. In our view, entering into negotiations in no way threatens national security interests, which can be fully defended during the negotiating process, including through the rule of consensus. We believe that this logic is also valid with regard to the four core issues on the Conference's agenda.

Now I should like to address the way forward in our work. On substance, it would be timely and necessary to open discussions on how the Conference on Disarmament works and what it should do. In our view, what has already been tried on numerous occasions in the past must not be repeated. If we are to succeed in having substantive discussions on the issues perennially before the Conference, something for which we hope fervently, we must do so in plenary. The Conference's work would then be reflected in the report it submits to the General Assembly.

As to revitalization, we think that it must now be given serious discussion in plenary. The time has come to respond to the request made by the General Assembly in its resolution 66/66. We call for an exploration, consideration and consolidation of solutions, proposals and ideas with a view to revitalizing the disarmament mechanism and preparing ourselves for the discussion to take place in October 2012.

We support some of the proposals made by Mr. Tokayev, Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva. For example, a discussion of the role, continuity and duration of Conference presidencies or the appointment of special coordinators would be perfectly acceptable and rapidly feasible, in our view. Other areas also deserve to be explored.

In conclusion, and so that we can get down to work, we invite the six Presidents of the session, under your leadership, Sir, to draw up without delay a timetable for activities for the remainder of the 2012 session.

The President: I thank Ambassador Fasel for his statement and his kind words to the Chair. Ambassador Kennedy of the United States.

Ms. Kennedy (United States of America): I wanted to commend our distinguished Mongolian colleagues on the very thoughtful speech of Foreign Minister Zandanshatar, and also offer congratulations on the twentieth anniversary of their nuclear-weapon-free status declaration. And I'd also like to say the United States looks forward to continuing our cooperation with Mongolia in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation. Indeed, in all spheres.

I also wanted to commend the very sober and realistic assessments offered by our two departing colleagues, and also thank them and recognize their always astute observations over the years, their distinguished leadership of this body, and to wish them both the very very best.

I note that our Italian colleague admonished us to look to the future. I hope that that future includes the young Manfredi's decision to follow in the distinguished footsteps of his parents and join the diplomatic service. So, ciao Manfredi from Laura, and Hannu all the best in Moscow, farewell.

The President: I thank Ambassador Kennedy for her statement. I now give the floor to Ambassador Kwon Haeryong of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Kwon Haeryong (Republic of Korea): Since it is my first intervention of your presidency, let me begin by congratulating you on your assumption of the presidency. Of course, I assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation during your presidency.

I ask for the floor to inform my colleagues of the outcome of the Seoul Nuclear Security Summit held yesterday and today. As you are well aware, leaders from 53 States and four international organizations participated in the summit. They discussed how to strengthen the international nuclear security regime, preventing nuclear terrorism with the ultimate goal of a world without nuclear weapons.

The Seoul Communiqué adopted today translates the Washington Summit declaration into concrete actions and provides the measures to prevent nuclear and radiological terrorism in a comprehensive way.

In addition, Seoul contributed to fortifying the nuclear security discourse by adding agendas, especially in two areas: first, addressing nuclear safety issues in the context of nuclear security and secondly, prevention of radiological terrorism. The leaders assessed the progress since the Washington Summit and made public national commitments. They include minimization of the use of highly enriched uranium, ratification of the relevant international agreements on nuclear security, such as the amended Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material and the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism, and the establishment of centres of excellence to provide relevant training and education.

Last but not least, it is agreed that the Netherlands will host the next nuclear security summit in 2014, which will keep the momentum of strengthening the international nuclear security regime.

Lastly, I would like also to join previous speakers in wishing the two departing Ambassadors good luck.

The President: I thank Ambassador Kwon Haeryong of the Republic of Korea for his statement and kind words to the Chair. I now give the floor to Mr. Lindell, representative of Sweden.

Mr. Lindell (Sweden): Mr. President, allow me to congratulate you on the assumption of the presidency and to assure you of my delegation's full support. We pay tribute to Ambassadors Manfredi and Himanen and wish them all success in their future endeavours.

Mr. President, we would like to thank you for the information conveyed to us regarding the plans for the Ethiopian presidency and to give some brief comments on these, as well as on the situation in which the Conference finds itself.

This delegation wholeheartedly supported the recent efforts of the Egyptian presidency. We would again like to warmly thank Ambassador Badr and his team for all the hard work which they undertook. The results of these efforts would have been of great benefit for the Conference and would have paved the way — could have paved the way — for real progress in multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation. The attempt that was made was ambitious, serious and competent. The text contained in document CD/1933/Rev.1 was well crafted and deftly calibrated on key points. We, for our part, saw it as something on which consensus should have been possible. This being so, we deeply regret the outcome, the lack of consensus on the draft programme of work.

This was, of course, yet another clear indication of how difficult it is to overcome the long-standing deadlock, but it was, indeed, also a disappointment which can only add to the frustration of which many members have often spoken. And it occurred when we are well into what has rightly been described as a crucial year for the Conference on Disarmament. My delegation has several times in the past noted that the Conference can never be an end in itself, it is an instrument. Our task is to make use of it by negotiating binding treaties on disarmament matters.

Against this background, we have felt some hesitation when we have heard proposals to turn the Conference's attention to revitalization with a focus on institutional and procedural matters. Such a discussion should not, we believe, be allowed to occupy us as a substitute for the quest for substantial progress. Having said this, we can, however, also see merit in some of the proposals which have been made regarding procedures. This goes, for example, for the proposals raised by the Secretary-General of the Conference regarding the duration of the presidencies and regarding membership. We would be prepared to participate actively in the coming weeks in a discussion about measures in order to revitalize the Conference.

It is also proposed that we proceed with discussions on the four core issues. This has indeed been tried in the past, unfortunately without success in the form of substantive negotiations. This, we believe, should not be viewed as an alternative to negotiations, and it will remain important not to portray the holding of informal discussions per se as real progress in the Conference. Nevertheless, we might also benefit from exploring the core issues further.

The President: I thank Mr. Lindell for his statement and for his kind words to the President. I now give the floor to Mr. Hamza Khelif, representative of Algeria.

Mr. Khelif (Algeria) (*spoke in Arabic*): The Algerian delegation would like to begin by wishing the ambassadors of Finland and Italy every success and thanking them for their valuable contribution to the Conference. Turning to the subject of our work in the Conference during the remaining part of the annual session, it would also like to say that continuing at the current pace will inevitably cause great harm to the credibility of the Conference, which is already faltering due to the continuing stalemate that has lasted for so long.

We had hoped to arrive at a consensus text which reflected everyone's concerns, and the proposal made by the Egyptian presidency did in fact bring us close to such consensus. Unfortunately, however, the same political and security concerns which prevented the implementation of CD/1864 and subsequent proposals also prevented the Egyptian proposal from seeing the light of day as an adopted resolution. Nonetheless we continue to believe that, as the Ambassador of Ukraine has said, CD/1864 still constitutes the logical foundation from which to seek a text that reconciles the security needs of all States with those of a group of States. As the Ambassador of Italy said, we must look to the future. In the same context, we agree with the views expressed by the Ambassador of Switzerland that any future discussions of the agenda items, in particular as regards the four core issues, must not merely replicate the discussions of the Conference in previous years. In this context, we again suggest the idea of adopting a simplified programme of work based on a timetable which includes provision for substantive discussions on the agenda items, especially the four core issues. In our view, this programme of work should include the following elements: firstly, the adoption of a timetable agreed on by the Conference allowing for substantive discussions during the official sessions. Secondly, those discussions should be documented in reports prepared by the President of the Conference for adoption by the Conference in accordance with the rules of procedure, and those reports should be annexed to the annual report of the Conference on Disarmament to the General Assembly. We agree with those who believe that this is not the most effective way to respond to the important issues that have been hindering us since negotiations began; however, we do believe that this formulation or this way may represent a fresh starting point that would allow us to deal effectively with the agenda items and, at the same time, send a clear message on the real situation of the Conference on Disarmament to the United Nations General Assembly at its next annual session.

The President: As I see no other indication for the floor, this concludes our business today. The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be on Tuesday, 15 May, at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 11.25 a.m.