

Conference on Disarmament

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English

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

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President: Mr. Minelik Alemu Getahun.....(Ethiopia)

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The President: I declare open the 1258th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. Before we turn to our substantive work of today, allow me to warmly welcome two new colleagues, Ambassador Boujemâa Delmi of Algeria and Ambassador Mazlan Muhammad of Malaysia. On behalf of the Conference, I wish to assure them of our full cooperation in the performance of their duties.

Last week, on behalf of the six presidencies for the 2012 session, I submitted a draft schedule of activities for the Conference. Since then we have informally received all your support, but two technical improvements to the text have been introduced. Just to indicate those to you, one is on the second page, on the revitalization of the Conference. Initially it was scheduled for 28 August; now it is for 21 August, just to finish off the items and then to proceed to the reports. The second is on the reports. The wording is now improved. It used to say “consideration and adoption of the annual report and any other report as appropriate”, so we just deleted “any other report as appropriate” to just indicate that this year we envisage adopting one report.

With these two improvements and with the proviso that I provided last week indicating the framework in which we are submitting this, affirming that our priority for the presidencies should always remain arriving at a comprehensive programme of work for the Conference, and other issues that I indicated and entered into the record of the Conference last week – on that basis I now invite the Conference to agree with us to work on the basis of the schedule before you.

I thank the Conference for its confidence in the six presidencies of this session, and for agreeing to work on the basis of the schedule submitted in document CD/WP.571/Rev.1. I will now turn to the list of speakers. I would like to open the floor to people who have registered to speak. This week we have scheduled cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament, and prevention of nuclear war, including all related matters, with a general focus on nuclear disarmament.

The first speaker on my list is Ambassador Fasel of Switzerland. You have the floor.

Mr. Fasel (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, as this is the first time my delegation has taken the floor under your presidency, let me congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency and assure you of our full support for your efforts.

We welcome the agreement reached by those assembled here to carry out our work according to the schedule you suggested, and so I propose to make a few comments about nuclear disarmament.

While nuclear disarmament has undoubtedly experienced a revival in recent years, we cannot ignore the fact that serious threats and challenges remain. Thousands of nuclear weapons continue to pose an existential threat to humanity. Many of these weapons are still on high alert, ready to fire in an instant. Some nuclear powers are still expanding their arsenals, and all are currently conducting a qualitative upgrade of their arsenals. We are concerned that these modernization efforts could slow, if not jeopardize, the reduction of the quantities of these weapons.

Moreover, despite existing long-time disarmament obligations, and despite the end of the cold war, the logic of deterrence still holds sway. This logic no longer has any basis in reality and can no longer be accepted as a guarantee of safety. On the contrary, it represents a serious threat to our collective security.

Our delegation is convinced that, to address these pressing challenges, it is time to refocus our approach to tackling the issues and challenges on our agenda. We must incorporate national security considerations into the broader notions of security and stability, and to approaches based on a vision of security in the narrow sense we must add the notions of human security, human rights, development, climate change, environmental

protection and overall health. We should promote the view that we live in a global, interdependent world that, as a community, is confronted with a multitude of challenges in the areas of disarmament and non-proliferation.

In this spirit, we are pleased to have had the honour to speak, on behalf of 16 States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), about the humanitarian dimension of nuclear disarmament in the context of the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2015 NPT Conference, held recently in Vienna under the leadership of our colleague Ambassador Woolcott, whose noteworthy efforts I salute.

This dimension should, in our view, be part of the debate on nuclear disarmament. Switzerland believes that nuclear weapons are weapons with unprecedented destructive capabilities that raise basic moral issues. If nuclear weapons were to be used again, either intentionally or by accident, that would inevitably have catastrophic humanitarian consequences. These weapons also raise serious questions as to their compatibility with international humanitarian law, because of the impossibility of controlling their effects in time and space.

We therefore believe that we all have a responsibility to redouble our efforts. This conviction should lead us out of our impasse so that the Conference regains its crucial role as a forum for negotiating multilateral disarmament instruments. It should also inspire us to work together to achieve concrete progress in nuclear disarmament so as to reduce the risk that these weapons' existence represents for us all.

Nuclear disarmament has traditionally been at the heart of the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament. Numerous General Assembly resolutions specifically designate this as a priority issue for the Conference. The General Assembly, at its sixty-sixth session, urged the Conference on Disarmament to adopt and implement a programme of work that would allow it to resume the substantive work on its agenda at the start of the 2012 session.

Finally, speaking of the NPT, a key instrument in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation, it is also worth noting that the States parties to the treaty adopted by consensus, in 2010, an action plan whose measure 6 reflected the hope that the Conference on Disarmament would immediately establish a subsidiary body to deal with disarmament issues.

Switzerland is convinced that the Conference on Disarmament, and Geneva as a centre of multilateral disarmament, have a fundamental role to play in achieving progress in nuclear disarmament. While experience has shown that it can be difficult to enter directly into negotiations, it is necessary for the Conference to lay the groundwork. That is why we supported the approach of the most recent Egyptian presidency, which proposed the creation of a working group to deal with nuclear disarmament.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Switzerland for his statement and for his support. I now give the floor to Ambassador Borodavkin of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Borodavkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. President, allow me to congratulate you on your election to this position of responsibility.

The Russian delegation is grateful to you and the other five presidents of this session for having organized the thematic discussions. We consider them useful, including for clarifying positions regarding the key issues on the agenda and for developing a realistic, consensus-based programme of work.

Russia has repeatedly expressed its commitment to the goal of ridding the world of nuclear weapons. We consider the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) to be one of the main tools for achieving this goal. During its more than 40 years of

existence, this international legal instrument has proved its unique and irreplaceable value for moving towards nuclear disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation and free access by States to peaceful uses of nuclear energy. This was highlighted by many participants at the recently held first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2015 NPT Review Conference.

The existence of the NPT, with the requirements of its article VI, contributed significantly to the progress in the limitation and reduction of nuclear weapons that has been achieved over the past decade.

We fully implemented the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF Treaty), which made it possible to eliminate an entire class of nuclear weapons. In the development of the Treaty Russia proposed to develop an agreement that would confer a global nature on the Treaty's regime. In our view the implementation of this initiative would give new impetus to efforts to ensure global and regional stability.

Our country has complied fully with its obligations under the Treaty on the Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (START I) of 1991, which broke new ground with regard to coordinated, verifiable reductions in the strategic offensive weapons of Russia and the United States. Along with Russia and the United States, participants in START I included Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine. These countries' responsible choice in favour of coordinated withdrawal of nuclear weapons from their territories and their accession to the NPT as non-nuclear-weapon States strengthened their security and enhanced strategic stability as a whole. On 4 December 2009, in a joint statement, the presidents of Russia and the United States confirmed the guarantees for the security of Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine established in the Memorandum on Security Assurances in Connection with the Republic of Belarus's Accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (Budapest Memorandum) of 5 December 1994.

The Moscow Treaty on Strategic Offensive Reductions concluded by Russia and the United States in 2002 was another contribution by our country to nuclear disarmament. In accordance with its terms, by 31 December 2012 Russia and the United States had to reduce the levels of their strategic nuclear warheads to 1,700–2,200, an approximately threefold reduction compared to the limits established by the START I treaty. These obligations have been fulfilled.

Along with reducing its stocks of strategic nuclear weapons, the Russian Federation substantially reduced the number of its non-strategic nuclear weapons. Our non-strategic nuclear potential currently stands at a mere 25 per cent of the level that the Soviet Union had in 1991. All of Russia's non-strategic nuclear weapons have been transferred into the non-deployed category. They are all located in the national territory and concentrated in centralized secure storage facilities.

We have repeatedly urged other countries with non-strategic nuclear weapons to follow the example of the Russian Federation and bring them to their own territory, to eliminate all foreign infrastructure for their rapid deployment, and to stop conducting training in their use with the involvement of non-nuclear States. We are convinced that such steps would contribute to strengthening international security and stability. They would also help to pave the way for the further reduction and limitation of nuclear arsenals.

A current priority in the area of nuclear disarmament is the implementation of the Treaty between the Russian Federation and the United States of America on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms. It replaces both START, which expired on 4 December 2009, and the Moscow Treaty on Strategic Offensive Reductions of 2002. The new treaty requires each party to reduce and limit its strategic offensive weapons so that by seven years after its entry into force and thereafter the total numbers will not exceed 700 deployed intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs),

submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs) and heavy bombers, 1,550 deployed warheads, and 800 deployed and non-deployed ICBM launchers, SLBM launchers and heavy bombers.

Thus, Russia and the United States have once again demonstrated their commitment to large-scale reductions in strategic offensive weapons. The parties agreed to reduce the total number of warheads by one third and the number of strategic delivery vehicles by more than half.

Russia and the United States are working systematically to implement the Treaty. We believe that the experience gained from the implementation of START will be useful for determining the conditions, content and pace of further reductions and limitations in strategic offensive weapons.

In the context of further steps towards nuclear disarmament, we attach importance to the final document of the 2010 NPT Review Conference. We believe that it has created a good basis for the further development of multilateral approaches in this area. We believe that its provisions should be implemented comprehensively and cooperatively.

It is becoming increasingly evident that the efforts of two nuclear powers, albeit major ones, are not sufficient to achieve further progress in nuclear disarmament. Achieving the goal of universal and complete elimination of nuclear weapons will remain difficult if the process is limited to those States belonging to the “nuclear five”.

Russia is ready to continue on the path of verifiable and irreversible reductions in nuclear weapons in accordance with its obligations under article VI of the NPT. However, this should be done only in the context of a global phase-out. Achieving this goal requires an integrated approach based on strengthening strategic stability and ensuring equal and indivisible security for all, and on meeting the following conditions, among others: continuation of the process of nuclear disarmament by all States with nuclear potential and their gradual joining in the efforts already undertaken in this area by Russia and the United States; prevention of the deployment of weapons in outer space; provision of guarantees by States that they lack “breakout nuclear capability”; a prohibition against increasing conventional-weapons capacity and creating “compensatory potential”; renunciation of the unilateral development of strategic missile defence systems, which undermines strategic stability and upsets the system of checks and balances that ensures global parity; elimination of quantitative and qualitative imbalances in conventional weapons in parallel with the resolution of other international problems, including the settlement of regional conflicts; the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty; and, finally, effectively ensuring that the key multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation instruments are viable.

Recently more and more initiatives have been proposed concerning nuclear disarmament that contain many elements resembling the Russian approaches. With due attention to such undertakings, we are in favour of constructive dialogue on this subject with all interested parties.

We intend to present our views and approaches on other aspects of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation during the forthcoming thematic discussions.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of the Russian Federation for his statement. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Croatia, who will speak on behalf of the informal group of observer States.

Ms. Vuković (Croatia): Mr. President, on behalf of the informal group of observer States, I would like to welcome and support the draft schedule of activities presented by you and agreed upon by the six presidencies, as distributed at last week’s plenary.

Specifically of interest for our group are the two dates dedicated to the topic of the revitalization of the Conference, 14 June and 28 August.

As we stated in our previous statement, we fully share the strong conviction expressed by the Secretary-General of the Conference that procedural reforms can indeed serve as a stepping stone towards generating political will. The topic of revitalization of the Conference is much wider than the expansion of its membership only. Given the latest developments in and around the Conference, including relevant General Assembly resolutions, the topic is timely and necessary.

Regardless of the legal status of the paper, we hope the Conference membership will proceed with its implementation.

We join the former speakers in welcoming three new colleagues, the ambassadors of Bulgaria, Italy and Finland. We look forward to continuing our good cooperation.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Croatia, speaking on behalf of the informal group of observer States, for her statement and her support, and I now give the floor to the Ambassador of China.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Mr. President, as this is the first time since you assumed the presidency that the Chinese delegation has spoken in plenary meeting, I would first like to congratulate you on assuming the presidency and express my appreciation for your efforts to lead the Conference towards the start of substantive work. The Chinese delegation supports the schedule of activities for the next phase of our work as proposed by you and the other presidents of the session and will fully cooperate with you in your work. I would also like to take this opportunity to sincerely welcome our new colleagues who have recently taken up their posts.

Mr. President, at the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which has just concluded, the States parties held an in-depth exchange of views on the implementation of the action plan contained in the final document of the Eighth NPT Review Conference and on the procedures for the new review conference. They also held a debate devoted specifically to nuclear disarmament. We are pleased to observe that all States parties are actively working to implement the action plan, and that the goal of the complete prohibition and total elimination of nuclear weapons and the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free world is gaining broader acceptance.

As a nuclear-weapon State, China has never shied away from its own responsibilities regarding nuclear disarmament, and has consistently advocated the complete prohibition and total elimination of nuclear weapons. Over the past 50 years, China has taken a number of initiatives in favour of nuclear disarmament, has taken practical measures and has made its own contribution to the international nuclear disarmament process. The Chinese delegation is of the view that, given the new circumstances, the international community should continue to carry forward the nuclear disarmament process on the following four fronts:

First, it should effectively reduce the threat of nuclear war.

Since the advent of nuclear weapons, humankind has always lived under the enormous shadow of the threat of nuclear war. A world that offers universal security for all must first of all free itself from the threat of nuclear war. Ever since China first acquired nuclear weapons, the Chinese Government has been committed to the principle of no first use of nuclear weapons at any time or under any circumstances and has unconditionally pledged not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States or in nuclear-weapon-free zones.

The Chinese delegation is of the view that reducing the role of nuclear weapons in the security policies of all States and renouncing policies of nuclear intimidation that are based on the first use of nuclear weapons would constitute a real and important contribution to improving the international security environment and effectively reducing the threat of nuclear war. The nuclear-weapon States should make a clear commitment to upholding the principle of no first use of nuclear weapons, and should negotiate and conclude a treaty stipulating that they mutually agree not to be the first to use nuclear weapons. The nuclear-weapon States should also make a clear commitment not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States or in nuclear-weapon-free zones, and should negotiate and conclude a legally binding international instrument to this effect as soon as possible.

Second, the international community should steadily push forward the nuclear disarmament process.

In order to achieve the complete prohibition and total elimination of nuclear weapons and the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free world, we must make an earnest effort to carry forward the nuclear disarmament process. In this regard, all nuclear-weapon States should take practical steps to meet their obligations under article VI of the NPT, and should make a public commitment not to seek to hold on to their nuclear weapons indefinitely. The countries with the largest nuclear arsenals should go a step further by making verifiable, irreversible, large-scale reductions in their nuclear arsenals. Once the conditions are right, the other nuclear-weapon States should also join the multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiation process. In order to ultimately achieve the complete prohibition and total elimination of nuclear weapons, the international community should in due course draw up a practically feasible, phased long-term programme that includes concluding a treaty on general and complete nuclear disarmament.

China is resolutely pursuing a nuclear strategy based on self-defence, has always exercised the utmost restraint regarding the scale and development of its nuclear weapons, and will continue to maintain its own nuclear forces at the lowest possible level that meets its national security requirements. China has never deployed nuclear weapons in other countries. We have never participated in any form of nuclear arms race, nor will we ever do so. This, in itself, is our unique contribution to the cause of nuclear disarmament.

Third, the international community should make efforts to promote the entry into force at the earliest possible date of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the early start of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the FMCT constitute important steps towards the complete prohibition and total elimination of nuclear weapons. China constructively participated in the CTBT negotiations, and in 1996 it signed the Treaty and declared a moratorium on nuclear testing. The Chinese Government is committed to ratifying the Treaty as soon as possible and will continue to make positive efforts to this end. We would like to work with the international community in a joint effort to promote the early entry into force of the Treaty. China supports the start of FMCT negotiations within the Conference as soon as possible.

Fourth, the international community should follow the principles of maintaining global strategic balance and stability and ensuring that the security of States is not compromised, as these are prerequisites and conditions for making progress in the international arms control and disarmament process. If this balance is ever upset, the arms control and disarmament process will come to a standstill or may even be reversed.

The Chinese delegation is of the view that the development of missile defence systems undermines the global strategic balance and stability and should be abandoned, that we should vigorously promote multilateral negotiations on the non-weaponization of outer

space and the prevention of an arms race in outer space, and that we should actively seek to achieve comprehensive security, common security and cooperative security. Only by taking these measures can we continue to carry forward the nuclear disarmament process and create a favourable international strategic security environment.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of China for his statement and for his support, and I now give the floor to the representative of Denmark, speaking on behalf of the European Union.

Ms. Gounari (Denmark): Mr. President, I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The acceding country Croatia aligns itself with this statement.

At the outset let us congratulate you, Mr. President, as well as the previous presidents, for your energy and your tireless efforts to take our work forward.

In our statement of 24 January 2012 we outlined the overall views of the European Union on the current situation at the Conference on Disarmament. We continue to be deeply concerned about the persisting impasse. For the European Union the immediate commencement of substantive work through the adoption and implementation of a programme of work building on document CD/1864 is the highest priority. Substantive discussions could be useful for achieving that objective. We would like to thank you for providing us with the calendar of discussions contained in document CD/WP.571/Rev.1, but we would like to stress once more that we consider that this new approach definitely does not constitute a substitute for our main focus, which is the adoption and implementation of a programme of work leading to the negotiations which are the core mandate of the Conference. This approach will give us the opportunity to exchange views on the main issues on the Conference's agenda in some detail.

The European Union reaffirms its commitment to the global efforts to seek a safer world for all and to creating the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons, in accordance with the goals of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), in a way that promotes international stability, and based on the principle of undiminished security for all. The NPT remains the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament system. In view of current proliferation risks we are convinced that today it is more vital than ever. We must preserve and strengthen its authority and its integrity. With the adoption by consensus of the forward-looking action plan set out in the final document of the 2010 NPT Review Conference, States parties reaffirmed their shared commitment to complying with the obligations of, and fulfilling the goals of, the NPT. The successful outcome of the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2015 NPT Review Conference, which took place in Vienna from 30 April to 11 May 2012, reaffirmed this shared commitment. The European Union calls on all States to work on implementing, without delay and in a balanced manner, all actions designed to strengthen the three pillars of the Treaty. The implementation of the action plan is a collective responsibility shared by all States parties. In this regard, the European Union welcomes the nuclear-weapon States' meetings to follow up on the NPT Review Conference, as well as initiatives of non-nuclear-weapon States members of the European Union promoting the implementation of the 2010 final document.

The European Union strongly supports the recommendations by the 2010 NPT Review Conference for implementing the 1995 NPT resolution on the Middle East, which includes in particular the holding of a conference in 2012 on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems. We have actively contributed to this process through two European Union seminars in 2008 and in 2011. In the run-up to the 2012 Conference, and beyond, the European Union looks forward to working together with the facilitator and all concerned and interested parties, including by follow-up initiatives to the 2011 seminar.

Reverting back to the theme of today's discussion, I would like to stress that the European Union is committed to the pursuit of nuclear disarmament. The European Union consistently underlines the need to continue the overall reduction of global stockpiles of nuclear weapons, especially by those States with the largest arsenals, taking into account the principles of irreversibility, verifiability and transparency to guide all measures in the field of nuclear disarmament and arms control as a contribution to establishing and upholding international peace, security and stability. The European Union therefore welcomes the increased transparency shown by some nuclear-weapon States, in particular European Union member States, regarding the nuclear weapons they possess, and calls on others to do likewise.

The European Union welcomed the entry into force of the New START Treaty between the United States of America and the Russian Federation. The implementation of this treaty and the pursuit of the bilateral disarmament process constitute important issues on the disarmament agenda. The European Union encourages the United States and the Russian Federation to continue negotiations in order to achieve greater reductions in their nuclear arsenals, including non-strategic weapons.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is of crucial importance to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation and a top priority for the European Union. The European Union calls on all States that have not done so, in particular the remaining Annex 2 States, to sign and ratify the Treaty at an early date. Pending the entry into force of the Treaty, the European Union calls on all States to uphold a moratorium on nuclear-weapon test explosions or any other nuclear explosions, and to refrain from any action that would defeat the object and purpose of the Treaty.

The European Union attaches a clear priority to the immediate commencement of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT), which is an indispensable step towards fulfilment of the obligations and final objective enshrined in article VI of the NPT. We will address the issue of an FMCT in a separate statement.

The European Union remains deeply concerned by the ongoing stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament, including the persistent failure to agree on a programme of work, despite recent attempts to achieve consensus. We encourage this year's presidencies to continue working actively to overcome the deadlock as we discuss the important topics noted in the schedule, and we assure them of our commitment and full cooperation.

The President: I thank the representative of Denmark, speaking on behalf of the European Union, for her statement and kind words.

I now give the floor to the representative of Turkey.

Mr. Öskiper (Turkey): Mr. President, from the presentation at the plenary meeting last week, it was our understanding that we were to state our views on the draft schedule of activities in this plenary. Allow me to go back very briefly and make three points. I shall be very succinct for the sake of allowing everyone, or as many delegates as possible, to express their views.

First, we carefully studied this draft and are looking forward to the discussions on the discussion items. It was stated before that this is the product of consultations of the President or the six presidencies of this session. If this is to mean that the President had made bilateral talks, I have to stress that Turkey was not one of the delegations which was consulted.

Second, Mr. President, we see the addition of a new item in the schedule of activities, namely the revitalization of the Conference. We are indeed looking forward to the discussions on this item, since the Conference obviously needs to be revitalized. Just to make it very clear for the Conference and to set the record straight, for Turkey the concept

of revitalization means solely the beginning of negotiations, and nothing else. The operative paragraphs of General Assembly resolution 66/66 should guide us on what should be discussed under this rubric.

And finally, Mr. President, it is the conviction of this delegation that the present and future presidents of the Conference will continue to exert every effort in order to come up with a consensual programme of work that will pave the way for negotiations. This remains the priority for Turkey. All other sorts of discussions, regardless of whether they are done at official plenary settings or not, cannot be construed as a substitute for official negotiations.

Mr. President, to conclude, along with all other items, we will share our detailed views on the issue of revitalization with the Conference when that discussion item is taken up.

The President: I thank the representative of Turkey for his statement.

Just to clarify: the consultations were with regional groups and with the other five presidencies of this session. There was no bilateral consultation initiated by this delegation. Only delegations that wished to comment contacted us, but we never initiated any bilateral consultations on this draft. There was one whole regional consultation that I conducted, with the Group of Western European and Other States, in which Turkey was represented, but there was no separate bilateral delegation with all countries. As you would imagine, this would be logistically impossible for us to undertake. So please take note, but we have taken note of your statement.

I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Pakistan.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): Mr. President, at the outset, I would like to congratulate you on assuming the presidency of the Conference, and to express our appreciation for your efforts that have led to the adoption of this schedule of activities on which we are beginning our work today.

As per the schedule of activities, I have taken the floor to express our views on nuclear disarmament, which is not only the most important item on the agenda, but indeed the *raison d'être* of the Conference on Disarmament.

The Conference was created, pursuant to paragraph 120 of the final document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, as “a single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum”. Indeed, the underlying international motivation that resulted in the adoption of that document existed in the first preambular paragraph, wherein the General Assembly expressed alarm at the continued existence of nuclear weapons as a threat to the survival of humanity. While paragraph 19 declared general and complete disarmament as the ultimate objective in the disarmament process, it also called for “genuine measures” of disarmament, taking into account the security needs of States. Moreover, paragraph 20 stressed that “among such measures, effective measures of nuclear disarmament and the prevention of nuclear war have the highest priority”.

Therefore, for my delegation, there is no doubt regarding which issue has the highest priority in the work of the Conference. Our conviction towards nuclear disarmament is firmly rooted in the final document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, a document adopted by consensus in the General Assembly.

The highest priority accorded by Pakistan to nuclear disarmament is equally shared by the Group of 21, which comprises half the membership of the Conference. The primacy of this issue is also endorsed by the Non-Aligned Movement, a group to which 118 United Nations Member States belong. Yet the call for commencing negotiations on a nuclear-weapons convention remains unheeded. Obviously, there are States that do not desire to commence negotiations on this issue, despite a lapse of more than three decades.

Interestingly, the States that have forced a deadlock on this issue of nuclear disarmament are the ones that are most vociferous in lamenting the stalemate in the international disarmament machinery.

When, in October 2008, the Secretary-General of the United Nations expounded on his five-point proposal as his contribution to revitalizing the international disarmament machinery, his very first proposal urged the nuclear-weapon States to fulfil their obligations under the NPT by undertaking negotiations on effective measures leading to nuclear disarmament. We should not forget that this responsibility of nuclear-weapon States does not emanate solely from the NPT. Paragraph 65 of the final document of the first special session places similar obligations on nuclear-weapon States. In fact, paragraph 48 of that document entrusted special responsibility to the nuclear-weapon States in achieving the goals of nuclear disarmament. The reality, however, is that three decades have passed by and the Conference has not even begun to negotiate this single most important disarmament issue. With the repeated refusal of States to negotiate nuclear disarmament, one cannot help wondering if nuclear disarmament was a deliberately crafted, ever-elusive mirage – an oasis as distant today as it was several decades ago, offered only to make the inherent discrimination in the NPT more palatable for the non-nuclear-weapon States.

As the world remains mired in efforts to reduce the number of nuclear weapons, we often seem to forget the qualitative aspects of nuclear disarmament. In the twenty-first century the arms race is not about the number of weapons but the smarter and technologically advanced weapons. Anticipating the effects of rapid developments in technology, paragraph 39 of the final document declared, “Qualitative and quantitative disarmament measures are both important for halting the arms race. Efforts to that end must include negotiations on the limitation and cessation of the qualitative improvement of armaments, especially weapons of mass destruction.” In line with the importance of this declaration, paragraph 50 of the same document went on to identify cessation of the qualitative improvement and development of nuclear-weapon systems as the foremost step required to achieve nuclear disarmament.

On the other hand, and in complete contrast to the declarations and aims identified above, some nuclear-weapon States have continued to invest heavily in developing sophisticated technologies and modernizing their nuclear arsenals, systems and means of delivery. Qualitatively, nuclear weapons have seen a huge vertical proliferation, thus aggravating the arms race.

Some major nuclear powers continue to pursue policies based on the concept of nuclear deterrence despite the end of the cold war two decades ago. How can they possibly claim that the present global environment is conducive to making progress on nuclear disarmament when they have demonstrated an insatiable desire for the acquisition of ever more powerful and lethal nuclear weapons? Equally complicit are their partners who benefit from extended nuclear deterrence but have the luxury to preach to others about nuclear weapons. The refusal by these States to commence negotiations on nuclear disarmament while making tall claims about their commitment to “nuclear zero” is baffling, to say the least. Only a blatant expression of double standards can justify such a disconnect between their commitments and their actions.

There is yet another dimension to the threats posed by the continued existence and modernization of nuclear weapons. The notion that such weapons could actually be used even against the non-nuclear-weapon States is not only morally reprehensible but in stark violation of the Charter of the United Nations. Article 2 of the Charter obligates States not to use or threaten to use force. This obligation extends to the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. Indeed, the landmark advisory decision of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) of 8 July 1996 provided that “the threat or use of nuclear weapons would generally be

contrary to the rules of international law applicable in armed conflict, and in particular the principles and rules of humanitarian law”.

Moreover, among the separate votes cast on seven separate questions on nuclear disarmament before the Court, all the judges voted unanimously and affirmatively stating that “there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control”.

Mr. President, in terms of importance, no other issue can claim primacy over nuclear disarmament. Pakistan, along with the other members of the Non-Aligned Movement, believes that the Conference must act on its obligation of negotiating a convention on nuclear disarmament, without further delay, if it has to justify the purpose of its creation.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Pakistan for his statement and his kind words. I now give the floor to the representative of India.

Mr. Vipul (India): Mr. President, the Indian delegation would like to express appreciation for your efforts in organizing discussions in the Conference on Disarmament on the issues on its agenda. We would also like to recall the plenary statement delivered by our Ambassador on 15 May in which we outlined our views on the different priority items on the agenda. Allow me to briefly address the issue of nuclear disarmament, which is the subject of our discussion today.

India attaches the highest priority to global, non-discriminatory, verifiable nuclear disarmament, a principle which has strong and consistent domestic support in our country. In 1988, our then prime minister Rajiv Gandhi presented to the third special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament an action plan for a nuclear-weapon-free and non-violent world order. This action plan set out a vision and a road map to attain the goal of nuclear disarmament in a time-bound, universal, non-discriminatory, phased and verifiable manner. We remain committed to the objective of that plan and the realization of its vision.

The complete elimination of nuclear weapons is a long-cherished goal of the international community. The General Assembly, in its very first resolution, adopted unanimously in 1946, sought the elimination from national armaments of atomic weapons and all other major weapons adaptable to mass destruction. The final document of the first special session, the only document on nuclear disarmament adopted by consensus by the international community, also accorded the highest priority to nuclear disarmament.

We believe that nuclear disarmament can be achieved through a step-by-step process underwritten by a universal commitment and an agreed global and non-discriminatory multilateral framework. In particular, we believe that there is a need for a meaningful dialogue among all States possessing nuclear weapons to build trust and confidence, and for reducing the salience of nuclear weapons in international affairs and security doctrines.

Progressive steps for the delegitimization of nuclear weapons are essential to achieving the goal of their complete elimination. Measures to reduce nuclear dangers arising from accidental or unauthorized use of nuclear weapons, increasing restraints on the use of nuclear weapons, and de-alerting of nuclear weapons are all pertinent in this regard. India’s resolutions in the First Committee give expression to a large number of these proposals, and our resolutions have found increasing international support. In our working paper CD/1816, submitted to the Conference in February 2007, India suggested a number of such measures, including reaffirmation of the unequivocal commitment by all nuclear-weapon States to the goal of complete elimination of nuclear weapons and specific legal measures such as a global no-first-use agreement.

The countries with the largest arsenals of nuclear weapons bear a special responsibility for progress on nuclear disarmament. In this regard we welcome the ratification of the new START agreement between the United States of America and the Russian Federation. Efforts should continue for generating the necessary momentum for achieving the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons.

As the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, the Conference on Disarmament has the weighty responsibility of advancing the goal of complete elimination of nuclear weapons. The need for progress towards this goal remains as important today as three decades ago when the first special session identified nuclear disarmament as the priority disarmament agenda item for the international community. India remains ready to work with others to take forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament.

The President: I thank the representative of India for his statement and his kind words. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of the United States of America.

Ms. Kennedy (United States of America): Mr. President, thank you for developing a schedule of discussion topics. Of course, as many have noted, our collective goal must be to achieve consensus on a programme of work that would allow for negotiations. That should be a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT), a goal that has been with us since the special session of 1978, and that many today have referred to.

The United States of America recently gave an extensive statement on disarmament at the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2015 NPT Review Conference in Vienna which is directly relevant to our discussions today. Allow me to summarize a few key points from our disarmament goals on record.

Many of you will recall the April 2009 speech in Prague, in which President Obama highlighted the nuclear dangers of the twenty-first century and declared that, to overcome these threats, the United States reaffirms our enduring commitment to “seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons”. Speaking in Seoul this March, the President reaffirmed United States support for this goal and highlighted the near-term, practical steps that the United States is taking to move in that direction.

The United States practises what it preaches in terms of nuclear disarmament. The United States has been reducing its inventory of nuclear weapons for more than four decades. By September 2009, the United States nuclear stockpile had been reduced by 84 per cent to approximately 5,000 nuclear warheads from its peak of approximately 31,000 nuclear warheads in 1967. When the New START Treaty is fully implemented, the strategic nuclear forces of the United States and the Russian Federation will reach their lowest level since the 1950s. Moreover, when President Obama signed the New START Treaty in April 2010, he pledged that the United States would pursue a future agreement with the Russian Federation for broad reductions in all categories of nuclear weapons.

The United States is now conducting the follow-on analysis called for in the 2010 Nuclear Posture Review to set goals for future nuclear reductions in line with strategic requirements. Concerning modernization, let me reiterate in the clearest terms that the Nuclear Posture Review has ruled out the development of new United States nuclear warheads and ruled out new missions and capabilities for existing warheads.

The United States has also demonstrated leadership through unilateral transparency measures. Examples include the release in 2010 of United States nuclear-weapon stockpile figures and articulation in the Nuclear Posture Review of the reduced role of nuclear weapons in the United States national strategy. In addition, the United States nuclear community is exploring the technical steps needed to ensure irreversibility, verifiability and transparency as essential building blocks of nuclear disarmament.

Since the 2010 NPT Review Conference, the five NPT nuclear-weapon States have met regularly to discuss our commitments under the NPT action plan. Following the 2009 London and 2011 Paris conferences of the five permanent members of the Security Council, the United States will host another such conference in Washington from 27 to 29 June 2012, as we just announced at the first session of the NPT Preparatory Committee.

With regard to nuclear testing, the Obama administration has been laying the groundwork for positive Senate reconsideration of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. The United States, of course, has maintained a voluntary moratorium on nuclear explosive testing since 1992.

With regard to fissile material, the United States has not produced highly enriched uranium for weapons since 1964 or plutonium for weapons since 1988. The United States has worked with the Russian Federation for a number of years to eliminate excess stocks of highly enriched uranium and plutonium that could be used for nuclear warheads. In July 2011, the United States and the Russian Federation brought into force the Plutonium Management and Disposition Agreement and its 2006 and 2010 protocols, committing each country to dispose of at least 34 metric tons of excess weapons-grade plutonium. This is enough for a total of 17,000 nuclear weapons. The United States remains committed to completing an agreement with the Russian Federation and the International Atomic Energy Agency to enable the Agency to verify each side's disposition programmes.

Now, as we bring down our stocks of fissile material, the United States remains committed to negotiation of the FMCT that would ban the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices as an essential, and the next logical multilateral, step towards nuclear disarmament and an important foundation for future nuclear reductions worldwide.

Implementation of President Obama's Prague agenda and the 2010 action plan of the NPT is well under way. Much progress has been achieved, yet much, of course, remains to be done. The Conference on Disarmament too must do its part to advance nuclear disarmament, beginning with this critical next step, which we will discuss in detail at next week's plenary.

Finally, let me extend a very warm welcome to our new colleagues from Algeria and Malaysia.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of the United States of America for her statement and kind words. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of France.

Mr. Simon-Michel (France) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, as this is the first time I have taken the floor under your presidency, let me first of all assure you of my full support and congratulate you on the excellent cooperation among the six presidents of the session.

France would like to associate itself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union.

Mr. President, the schedule of activities that you proposed is very relevant. It should enable all members of this body, as well as observer States, to address the issues on the agenda adopted earlier this year under the presidency of Ecuador. France will participate actively in these discussions. It is clear to me that the thematic discussions we will hold should not be a substitute for the adoption, as soon as possible, of a programme of work for the Conference on Disarmament. This programme of work should enable the Conference to fulfil its intended mission, that of negotiating disarmament agreements. This programme should be based on document CD/1864, which contains the only programme adopted by consensus during the past more than 15 years, and on the excellent work done in 2009 by Algeria. It should give to the negotiation of a treaty banning the production of fissile

material for nuclear weapons a priority matching the urgency of this negotiation, as recognized in United Nations Security Council resolution 1887 (2009), in action 15 of the action plan in the final document of the 2010 NPT Review Conference, and in the resolution adopted each year by the General Assembly.

My country's actions and commitments with regard to nuclear disarmament are clear. France has never participated in any nuclear arms race. It applies the principle of strict sufficiency, that is to say, it maintains its arsenal at the lowest possible level consistent with the strategic context. France's nuclear deterrence, which applies only in extreme circumstances of legitimate self-defence, is not contrary to the principles of international humanitarian law cited in the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice in 1996.

Late last year my country completed the reduction by one third of the air component of its nuclear deterrence force, which it had announced in 2008. France had already completely dismantled the surface-to-surface component of its nuclear deterrence force — both missiles and strategic and sub-strategic warheads — and had reduced the submarine component by one third. In total, in a mere 15 years or so, France has halved the number of its nuclear warheads, bringing it to less than 300.

France stopped producing plutonium for nuclear weapons in 1992 and highly enriched uranium in 1996, and has dismantled the related facilities, which represents an ongoing expenditure of 6 billion euros. Some of you have visited the Pierrelatte and Marcoule sites and witnessed the irreversible nature of the dismantling operations. Pending the conclusion of a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons, we call on all countries concerned to respect, as France is already doing, an immediate moratorium and to take such irreversible steps as we have done. France, along with the United Kingdom, was the first nuclear-weapon State to ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and to irreversibly dismantle its nuclear test site.

These national-level efforts, made possible by the strategic context, were combined with collective action taken with the other nuclear-weapon States under the NPT.

Thus France, along with the other permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, has made every effort to finalize, in the course of three sessions held in Geneva last August and in New York, in the margins of the First Committee, the negotiations on the protocol to the Bangkok Treaty establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in South-East Asia, which could be signed soon. This will bring to nearly a hundred the number of States belonging to a nuclear-weapon-free zone. Such zones are useful for codifying in multilateral instruments the security assurances given by France, as by other nuclear-weapon States, in its legal declaration of 1995, which is referred to in Security Council resolution 984 (1995). Finally, France supports the organization in 2012 of a conference on the establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East in accordance with the final document of the NPT Review Conference.

France also organized the first NPT Review Conference follow-up meeting for representatives of the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council in Paris on 30 June and 1 July of this year. This conference helped to strengthen dialogue and trust among nuclear-weapon States and to reaffirm our commitment to taking concrete actions to ensure full compliance with our commitments under the NPT. These discussions helped to enhance the transparency and confidence that are necessary to pursue disarmament. A terminology group has been created and will meet again in Washington on 28 and 29 June of this year.

Mr. President, disarmament depends above all on mutual confidence among States and the general perception of security. It cannot be decided in isolation from the strategic context in which we live. This implies that we must find an urgent solution to proliferation

crises, as otherwise disarmament cannot progress, and also situate our nuclear disarmament efforts in the broader context of general and complete disarmament. We must thus take into account other weapons of mass destruction (chemical and biological ones) as well as conventional disarmament and control of conventional weapons. We will return later to this issue of general and complete disarmament. More than ever, France remains committed to continuing its efforts to build a safer world for all and to create the necessary conditions for a world without nuclear weapons, in accordance with the objectives of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and in a manner that promotes international security based on the principle of undiminished security for all.

Right now the context seems ripe for further progress, step by step. In concluding the negotiation of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the Conference on Disarmament acted to limit the qualitative improvement of nuclear weapons. We welcome the recent ratifications of this treaty and call on all States that have not yet done so, particularly those listed in Annex 2, to do so without delay. The next step, however, is to set quantitative limits for arsenals by banning the production of raw material for weapons, namely fissile materials.

This negotiation is an imperative set for us by the Security Council and the General Assembly. It is also, for the vast majority of us, a commitment in the framework of the action plan adopted at the NPT Review Conference, and we must find a way to respect it. The impasse in which we find ourselves is alarming.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of France for his statement and for his kind words. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Japan.

Mr. Amano (Japan): Mr. President, since this is the first time that I take the floor under your presidency, allow me to congratulate you on your assumption of this high post. While the Government of Japan believes that agreeing to a programme of work is imperative to achieving progress and responding to the strong expectations of the international community, we appreciate all your efforts to organize these substantive discussions on the core issues. I assure you of my delegation's full support as you lead the Conference of Disarmament.

In the field of nuclear disarmament, there have been a number of recent achievements. Notably, the two States with the largest nuclear arsenals, the United States and the Russian Federation, ratified the New START Treaty, and France and the United Kingdom announced unilateral nuclear reductions. In addition, the five nuclear-weapon States have established a working group to continue working on an agreed glossary of definitions for key nuclear terms. Japan welcomes these voluntary measures and encourages the nuclear-weapon States to continue to make progress.

Despite these developments, however, it is indispensable for all States possessing nuclear weapons to make disarmament efforts on a multilateral basis in order to achieve the goal of a world without nuclear weapons. In order to realize this ultimate objective, Japan believes that practical and effective measures taken in a step-by-step manner are necessary. In this regard, we are willing to participate, with a longer perspective, in discussions on what a multilateral nuclear disarmament framework or a nuclear-weapon convention should look like in the final phase of nuclear disarmament. However, the total elimination of these weapons cannot be achieved overnight or by a single convention; it will require a cumulative process. In this regard, we consider that the following two steps are the most urgent.

First, as I mentioned in a previous plenary meeting this year, Japan recognizes a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT) as the next logical step on our path to a peaceful and secure world without nuclear weapons. I will cover this topic in more detail during another session.

Second, we view the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) as essential. We would like to take this opportunity to welcome the ratification of the CTBT by Indonesia in February of this year. We have seized every occasion to urge all States not parties, particularly the Annex 2 States, to promptly sign and ratify the Treaty, and we intend to continue such activities. Furthermore, we urge all the States possessing nuclear weapons to maintain existing moratoriums on testing and call upon all States to refrain from any tests pending the entry into force of the Treaty.

While awaiting the realization of multilateral and global nuclear disarmament, we also appeal to all States possessing nuclear weapons to make an early commitment to reducing, or at least not increasing, their nuclear holdings.

From the same perspective of practical and effective multilateral measures, Japan considers that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is vitally important. In this context, we attach high value to the final document of the 2010 NPT Review Conference, which includes specific nuclear disarmament measures. In the action plan, the nuclear-weapon States are called upon to honour their unequivocal undertaking to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals and to make further efforts to reduce all types of nuclear weapons. Action 5 is particularly significant as it calls for the nuclear-weapon States to accelerate concrete progress on the steps leading to nuclear disarmament and to report their undertaking to the 2014 session of the Preparatory Committee. The five nuclear-weapon States are urged to fulfil this commitment.

These efforts should not be limited only to those five States. Japan calls upon the three States not parties to accede to the NPT as non-nuclear-weapon States promptly and without any conditions and, pending their accession, to adhere to the Treaty's terms and take practical steps in its support. We would also like to reiterate that applying the principles of irreversibility, verifiability and transparency is crucial when implementing any kind of nuclear disarmament measures. Among these principles, ensuring transparency is especially vital at this stage as a confidence-building measure for creating the basis of a stable global security environment. In this connection, we encourage all the nuclear-weapon States to agree as soon as possible on a standard reporting form as called for in the 2010 NPT action plan and reiterated in the chair's factual summary of the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2015 NPT Review Conference, held this month in Vienna. We also encourage all other States possessing nuclear weapons to do likewise.

Japan continues to work with member countries of the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative to make practical and concrete proposals and to express our political will for the steady implementation of the 2010 NPT action plan.

Before I conclude my statement, I would like to reiterate the importance of the qualitative aspect of nuclear disarmament. In this regard, the nuclear-weapon States are called upon to promptly engage with a view to further diminishing the role and significance of nuclear weapons in all military and security concepts, doctrines and policies.

Japan is fully committed to achieving the total elimination of nuclear weapons, and with this in mind we intend to continue to steadily promote practical steps and effective measures to this end.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Japan for his statement, his kind words and his active engagement and particular support in his capacity as regional coordinator for the Group of Western European and Other States.

I now give the floor to the representative of Iran.

Mr. Daryaei (Islamic Republic of Iran): Mr. President, since this is the first time that I have taken the floor under your presidency, allow me to congratulate you on the assumption of the presidency. I am pleased to see that Ethiopia, one of the members of the

Non-Aligned Movement, is presiding over this august body so efficiently. I would like to assure you of the full support of my delegation.

If you allow me, I would also like to welcome the ambassadors just joining us, including the ambassadors of Algeria and Malaysia, and I assure them of the full support of this delegation.

This august body, ever since its establishment, has contributed significantly to the major achievements of the international community in the field of disarmament. However, it has yet to strive to contribute to the realization of nuclear disarmament as the highest priority of the global community and the Conference's *raison d'être*.

The existence of nearly 23,000 nuclear warheads in the stockpiles of the nuclear-weapon States indeed poses the greatest threat to the prospect of building a safe and secure inclusive global system. The absence of such a system has exacerbated the current security dilemma. Threats stemming from nuclear warheads have deep effects on international stability, international security and international safety. The production, possession and use of nuclear weapons, under whatever pretext, is illegitimate, inhuman, and a very dangerous act which first and foremost makes the country of production and stockpiling exposed. It is a fact that, as long as nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction exist and are being modernized, there will always be a risk of their use and vertical or horizontal proliferation. The risks are real, and disturbing evidence of this fact can be cited.

Nuclear disarmament is the highest priority for the majority of States members of this Conference. In the last few years we have witnessed the emergence of a determined global movement that includes both non-nuclear-weapon States and non-governmental actors, urging total elimination of nuclear weapons and putting forward various initiatives in this regard. It reflects the true tendency of the so-called international community or global public opinion. This development is a matter of satisfaction in the field of disarmament. But, save for some piecemeal undertakings, the lack of effective and systematic progress towards implementing nuclear disarmament obligations under article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is disturbing.

The obligations under article VI of the NPT and the commitment made by the nuclear-weapon States at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference, paragraphs 3 and 4 (c) of the 1995 decision on principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, the 1996 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, the 13 practical steps for the systematic and progressive efforts to implement article VI of the NPT, and in particular the "unequivocal undertaking by the nuclear-weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals leading to nuclear disarmament", under article VI of the Treaty, at the 2000 NPT Review Conference, and the agreed action plan on nuclear disarmament of the 2010 Review Conference provide no room for the nuclear-weapon States to evade their responsibility for nuclear disarmament.

A real change is needed regarding the removal of the emphasis on the doctrine of nuclear deterrence. A review of the nuclear policy of certain nuclear-weapon States shows a reverse trend. A continued emphasis on maintaining nuclear weapons and the deterrence policy, continuation of nuclear sharing and the nuclear umbrella, the plan to spend hundreds of billions of dollars on the modernization of nuclear arsenals, constructing new facilities for production of new nuclear weapons, preparing for shortening the time for the resumption of nuclear testing, and raising new excuses for keeping nuclear weapons are clear indications of the continued policy of evading nuclear disarmament obligations.

These actions, alongside the pursuit of ambitious and destabilizing military projects, like global missile defence systems and nuclear-weapon modernization aimed at preserving military supremacy, have regrettably exacerbated international concerns about a new round

of the arms race. At the current stage it is crucial that nuclear-weapon States display sincerity and political will with regard to their nuclear disarmament obligations.

It is a great concern that no practical steps have been taken by the nuclear-weapon States to reduce tactical nuclear weapons and that limited reductions of nuclear weapons mostly do not go beyond mere decommissioning. Therefore, these measures cannot be considered as abiding by the nuclear disarmament requirements. Such reductions in nuclear weapons can never be a substitute for the main obligation of the nuclear-weapon States, namely the total elimination of nuclear weapons. Transparency, irreversibility, verifiability, time frame and predictability, legal undertaking and political will are the main prerequisites for moving towards any meaningful steps towards nuclear disarmament and total elimination of all nuclear weapons. The international community cannot wait forever to witness the total elimination of nuclear weapons. A clear time frame with a target date for the full implementation of article VI, namely 2025 as proposed by the Non-Aligned Movement, is an urgent need.

Taking into account these principles and also the fact that the piecemeal approach is no solution to achieving a world free from nuclear weapons, Governments' support for a convention eliminating nuclear weapons has grown significantly in recent years. It is noteworthy that in the initial stages of negotiation of the Biological Weapons Convention and the Chemical Weapons Convention, the ban on those categories of weapons of mass destruction was considered somehow ambitious, impractical and unfeasible, but through the mobilization of necessary political will at the global level, the international community was able to resolve many fundamental differences over issues which apparently seemed insurmountable.

In this context, we believe it is high time for the Conference to establish an ad hoc committee to start its negotiation on a nuclear-weapons convention, as a matter of top priority. This convention could be a framework treaty encompassing areas such as banning the production, development and use of, or the threat of use of, nuclear weapons, renouncing the deterrence value of nuclear weapons in all defence doctrines, a total ban on all weapons-grade fissile material and destruction of all the stocks of such material, preventing deployment of nuclear weapons in all areas, declaring all nuclear warheads and de-alerting them in a verifiable manner, and elimination of nuclear warheads in a phased programme and in an irreversible manner within a specific time frame.

In this context, my country is of the firm belief that such negotiations must lead to the legal prohibition, once and for all, of the possession, development and stockpiling of nuclear weapons by any country, and provide for the destruction of such inhumane weapons within a specified time frame.

The President: I thank the representative of Iran for his statement and for his kind words. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Germany.

Mr. Hoffmann (Germany): Mr. President, I would like to begin by joining others in welcoming our new colleagues from Algeria and Malaysia, and I look forward to working with both of them.

Mr. President, I would like to make an announcement. As colleagues are aware, Germany attaches much importance to an early commencement of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty. We believe that the present inability of the Conference on Disarmament to open such negotiations should not prevent technical work on complex issues with regard to fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices, and it is against this background that the German Foreign Office together with the Foreign Ministry of the Netherlands will organize a meeting of scientific experts in Geneva next week on 29 and 30 May.

The meeting of experts is based on General Assembly resolution 66/44, adopted on 12 January of this year, which “encourages interested Member States, without prejudice to their national positions during future negotiations on such a treaty, to continue efforts, including within and on the margins of the Conference on Disarmament, in support of the commencement of negotiations, including through meetings involving scientific experts on various technical aspects of the treaty, drawing on available expertise from the International Atomic Energy Agency and other relevant bodies, as appropriate”.

I take it that all delegations in this chamber have in the meantime received the invitation, together with the programme for the meeting, which we sent out, and we would of course very much appreciate the active participation of all delegations in the meeting.

Finally, Mr. President, since this will, I understand, be the last plenary meeting under your presidency, I would like to make use of the opportunity to thank you and congratulate you on the way you have conducted your term of office. As we all know very well, the Conference is in a difficult situation and I am sure that we will have interesting discussions about the state of play and what should be done about it under the topic of revitalization of the Conference in the weeks ahead. Given the situation, it strikes us as eminently sensible that under your guidance the successive presidents of the annual session organize the Conference’s activities in as efficient a way as possible. As far as I am aware, it is the first time in recent memory that the Conference has worked on the basis of a thematic schedule covering in fact four successive presidencies. We owe the fact that this has become possible to your wise guidance, and I wish to express our appreciation and gratitude for that.

But I would conclude — and this will not surprise you — by making one point in this connection. As useful as thematic discussions certainly are, they cannot replace the fulfilment of our task to negotiate new instruments in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Germany for his statement, for his announcement and for his kind words. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of the Netherlands.

Mr. van den IJssel (Netherlands): Mr. President, like others, let me start by thanking you for your work and assuring you and your successors of the support of the Netherlands delegation.

I would also like to welcome all the new colleagues from Algeria, Bulgaria, Italy and Malaysia.

We fully associate ourselves with the views expressed by the European Union this morning, and I would like to add some comments.

First of all, it goes without saying that we rather would like to devote our time in the Conference to negotiating instruments and a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT). Unfortunately, for reasons well known to all of us, this has so far not been possible, and, despite the admirable efforts of you and your predecessors, for which we are grateful and which we have supported, the stagnation in this forum continues. Against that background, Mr. President, we appreciate the schedule of activities for the rest of this year contained in document CD/WP.571/Rev.1, so that at least we make the best use of the time available to us. This is, of course, with the understanding that this will not be detrimental to ongoing efforts to start real work in the Conference.

Mr. President, we particularly appreciate the fact that you included the subject of revitalization in the schedule. For us it is self-evident that, following the adoption by consensus by the General Assembly of resolution 66/66, a resolution which was originally sponsored by Switzerland, South Africa and my own country, the Netherlands, on

revitalizing the work of the Conference and taking forward multilateral disarmament negotiations, it is self-evident that the Conference itself should take stock of where we stand, and this stocktaking will also help delegations to prepare for the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly this fall.

On the topic of today, nuclear disarmament, the Netherlands regrets that after 13 years we are still not able to move to substantive work, to real negotiations, the task this body was created for, to take real substantive multilateral steps towards a world free of nuclear weapons. Despite, or perhaps because of, this lack of progress, we think it is important to continue inside and outside this hall a substantive discussion on the issues related to an FMCT. Therefore we are happy to inform you that, together with the German Foreign Office, the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs has organized technical experts' meetings on topics of a technical and scientific nature related to an FMCT. The first of these meetings has just been announced by my German colleague, and the second of these meetings will take place most probably in the last week of August here in Geneva. As I said, the aim of these meetings is to facilitate future negotiations, not to replace them, and we hope that by continuing these discussions and preparations we will facilitate the start of real negotiations on this important issue as soon as possible.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of the Netherlands for his statement and his kind words.

This concludes my list of speakers for the first item on the schedule of activities, on cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament and on the prevention of nuclear war, including all related matters, with a general focus on nuclear disarmament.

As this is the last meeting under the presidency of Ethiopia, allow me to make some closing remarks on activities undertaken during Ethiopia's presidency, on the effort on the programme of work for the Conference on Disarmament, and on the relevance and worth of substantive plenary discussions for the Conference.

First, the presidency of Ethiopia focused on carrying forward the progress made under the presidency of Egypt with the proposal for the programme of work for the Conference on Disarmament contained in document CD/1933/Rev.I. This has remained the main focus of informal discussions with regional groups. I thank the regional groups for their time and for their active engagement with the Ethiopian presidency. Most speakers in these informal discussions expressed their frustration with the impasse in this Conference. Most are also firmly committed to the Conference on Disarmament as the sole multilateral negotiating body for disarmament. There have also been important voices supporting the continued relevance of document CD/1864.

On the effort on a comprehensive programme of work, it is advisable that this matter be seen in some detail as to what we mean by "comprehensive programme" and the possibilities of either delinking some of the items or taking them by turn for subsequent sessions of the Conference. This might allow some flexibility to start negotiations with items that could easily command consensus, while building confidence and allowing for parallel substantive discussions.

It is now widely recognized that the problem with the programme of work is not simply a drafting exercise that could be overcome by doing away with the consensus rule, or with the wise use of language. Such agreement to negotiate a particular treaty should be made with utmost clarity regarding terms of negotiations, scope and content. This could be done with sufficient political understanding of the value of the norm to be negotiated. It is also clear that political and security issues weigh heavily on this matter. Proper handling of such issues in appropriate forums could contribute to the work in the Conference on Disarmament. We should now work more diligently towards such stocktaking rather than general expressions of frustration. Similarly, countries that are seeking alternative avenues

and those that are convinced of the Conference's continued relevance have the opportunity to realistically exhaust the possibilities. We should use the good offices of the Secretary-General of the United Nations as one important and ideal avenue to continue to seek solutions.

Rules and structures are simply tools we use to reflect our substantive positions. Nevertheless, the item on revitalization allows the Conference to explore ideas to improve the work of the Conference. It would also allow the possibility for exchange of views on the future course of action, including ideas countries are floating for submission to the General Assembly.

On the relevance of the substantive discussions the Conference agreed to undertake, delegations have expressed different views. Most see merit in holding plenary discussions on substantive aspects of the items on the agenda. We agree with the view that continuing plenary discussions held in previous sessions on substantive issues helps the Conference further distil the different aspects of eventual negotiations on items on the agenda. I am sure you would agree with me that today's debate confirms this view.

Some delegations, on the other hand, are sceptical, expressing fear that this exercise might further undermine the Conference and efforts to reach a comprehensive programme of work. But this view underestimates the capacity of delegations, along with political alignments and groupings, to make the substantive debates meaningful and contribute to identifying elements for treaties to be negotiated under different agenda items.

For Ethiopia and other G21 countries pushing for a comprehensive convention on nuclear disarmament, substantive plenary debates on this item should be seen as progress towards eventual negotiation. The substantive debate on this item should focus on a Convention for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons on a phased-in and time-bound programme. Similarly, a comprehensive fissile material cut-off treaty, a treaty on negative security assurances that would protect non-nuclear States against any nuclear threat, and prevention of an arms race in outer space are all noble goals we firmly support.

These are global issues of common concern to all States and communities around the world. While the current focus is on a programme of work, treaties and negotiations on these matters of global concern should be elaborated and agreed upon with the full and active involvement of the widest number of countries around the world to ensure inclusiveness and the sustainability of the norms that we will agree on.

Finally, I would like to thank the Secretary-General of the Conference and colleagues from the secretariat for their support. I would like to particularly express my gratitude to my colleagues during the 2012 session, the ambassadors of Ecuador, Egypt, Finland, France and Germany and their colleagues, for their active engagement with a very good team spirit. The arrangement whereby the six presidents of the session work together is an informal process. While the responsibility for the conduct of the Conference remains with the sitting president, we should nurture this approach of working together towards a comprehensive programme of work for the Conference on Disarmament with some level of complementarities and continuity. I thank my colleague Ms. Lulit Zewdie Gebremariam, Minister Counsellor at the Permanent Mission, for her hard work during the presidency. My best wishes to Finland, France and Germany in their presidencies. This concludes our business today. The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held under the presidency of Finland on Thursday, 31 May 2012 at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 12.05 p.m.