
Conference on Disarmament

21 August 2012

English

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

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 21 August 2012, at 3.10 p.m.

President: Mr. Hellmut Hoffmann(Germany)

The President: I declare open the 1268th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

Before we begin our work, I would like to express my own most sincere condolences, also on behalf of the Conference on Disarmament, to Ethiopia on the death of its Prime Minister Meles Zenawi.

Colleagues, I should like to express my gratitude and appreciation for the excellent work accomplished by my predecessors in this annual session, Ambassador Luis Gallegos Chiriboga of Ecuador, Ambassador Hisham Badr of Egypt, Ambassador Minelik Getahun of Ethiopia, Ambassador Kari Kahiluoto of Finland and Ambassador Jean-Hugues Simon-Michel of France.

I am pleased that the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, is honouring us with his presence today. We are grateful to him for the valuable advice he continues to give to us.

Colleagues, allow me, as is customary, to make some general remarks on the occasion of assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament.

I regard it as an honour to assume this office. Let me cite only two outstanding reasons:

First of all, the Conference on Disarmament and its predecessor institutions can lay claim to significant and proud achievements in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation. Landmark treaties were negotiated in this chamber: the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons of 1968 (NPT), the Biological Weapons Convention of 1972, the Chemical Weapons Convention of 1993 and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty of 1996. Seen as a whole, these treaties are fundamental building blocks of today's global security structure, without which the world would undoubtedly be a much more dangerous and hazardous place.

Secondly, the State I represent, the Federal Republic of Germany, has always had a strong interest in advancing the disarmament and non-proliferation agenda. There are historical motivations for this going back on the one hand to the traumatic experience of two world wars in the last century, and on the other hand — still within the living memory of most of us here in this hall — there is the experience of a country caught for nearly half a century in a heavily armed confrontation of two blocs in the cold war, which split not only my country but the whole of Europe, and indeed much of the rest of the world, into antagonistic camps.

It was only natural that the Federal Republic of Germany tried to make its contribution towards a sustained process of disarmament, arms control and détente to overcome this not only unfortunate but also dangerous situation, in particular in view of the advent of the nuclear age. When at long last the wall came down in Berlin in 1989, these efforts had finally borne fruit.

But, contrary to overly optimistic expectations in the early years after 1989, the international community was very soon reminded painfully that many parts of the world continue to be a dangerous place. The German Government therefore retains the view that disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation remain indispensable elements in the quest for a cooperative security order at the regional and global level.

Which brings me directly back to the Conference on Disarmament and to our common work here.

Colleagues, I am not sure how fruitful it is to engage in debates about whether the Conference on Disarmament is the single or sole or the only standing multilateral forum

mandated to negotiate new instruments in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation. The fact of the matter is that there is no other institutionalized forum at present other than the Conference on Disarmament with the potential of making a significant contribution to international security by working out new instruments to complement the already existing body of rules in the field of disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation, and with such a broad remit allowing it — at least in principle — to tackle all relevant issues and challenges in this field with a potentially universal reach.

The fact that quite a number of States continue to express a strong interest in becoming members of the Conference — which has once again been articulated in this session very clearly — underlines that the potential of the Conference on Disarmament continues to be rated highly by many in the international community. But this is the point where I have to say that I would feel even more honoured presiding over our work, if the Conference on Disarmament were actually in a state where it makes active use of this potential, that is where it fulfils its own mandate. Unfortunately, as we are all aware, for many reasons this has not been the case for well over a decade. As a result, an acute sense of frustration and disenchantment has crept into this chamber in the last couple of years. Any interested observer can verify this easily by simply reading the statements made here, which — cutting across all affiliations and groupings — are full of complaints about the deplorable state of the Conference on Disarmament.

This is particularly noteworthy when it is observed in statements by holders of important office like the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and the President of the United Nations General Assembly. If there is one recurrent theme in their comments it is the complaint about the Conference on Disarmament's "stalemate" or "impasse" or "deadlock" and the fear of losing the Conference's *raison d'être* if it does not find a way out of its inability to start substantive work by engaging in negotiations on new instruments. Let me offer a few quotations only from this year's session.

In his message of 24 January the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, stated that "this distinguished body is no longer living up to expectations as the last occasion on which the Conference fulfilled the negotiating role given to it by the United Nations General Assembly was in 1996". He went on to warn us that he could "not stand by and watch as it (that is the Conference on Disarmament) declines into irrelevancy, as States consider other negotiating arenas". Referring to our "shared responsibility" the Secretary-General appealed to us "to restore the Conference to the central role it can and must play in strengthening the rule of law in the field of disarmament". As a practical way out he appealed to us "to support the immediate commencement of negotiations in the Conference on agreed disarmament issues".

The Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations to the Conference, Mr. Tokayev, in his statement of 14 February saw the "frustration" in the Conference on Disarmament "approaching a tipping point", referring to "serious concerns among Governments about the relevance of the Conference". He called upon member States "to chart a way out of the impasse".

And, last but not least, the President of the United Nations General Assembly, the highest body in the international system representing the community of all States, Ambassador Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, while lamenting in his statement of 15 May that the "failure of the Conference on Disarmament in making substantive progress for well over a decade" had "undoubtedly put the credibility of this crucially important body at high risk", urged the Conference to get its act together and "to do its part to advance the international agenda".

Now colleagues, these are in no way selective quotations – these are quotations which capture the very essence not only of the message the speakers endeavoured to convey, but the statements made by countless colleagues in this hall in the past years. It is not surprising, therefore, that the working paper which the President, Ambassador Gallegos Chiriboga of Ecuador, circulated at the beginning of this session, contained the very same message, based on which it developed ideas to enable “the Conference to move forward”.

So there is no doubt about the reality of the state of the Conference on Disarmament. It is no accident that it has been described in these stark terms of concern coupled with exhortations for quite a number of years already.

Colleagues, our continued failure to start substantive work notwithstanding, there were — in a relative sense — positive developments in this year’s session as well. To begin, I would mention the sheer fact that after intensive consultations a draft programme of work was actually formally put on the table for adoption by the President, Ambassador Badr of Egypt, on 15 March. Now, it goes without saying that, as became abundantly evident, nearly all of us would have wished to see this programme of work adopted rather than fail again, but the fact that a draft programme of work was actually put on the table for adoption ensured a degree of transparency which is in itself a good thing. I make this point because the customary and rather arcane habit of the Conference on Disarmament to usually leave in the dark the reason why consensus fails to emerge plays no small part in the Conference on Disarmament’s growing credibility problem.

Another positive development I wish to mention in this year’s session is the fact that, after the adoption of a programme of work had once again failed, the next President, Ambassador Getahun of Ethiopia, took the initiative by presenting a schedule of activities developed in cooperation with the other presidents, which foresaw discussions on all agenda items, with the addition of the issue of revitalization of the Conference on Disarmament, in plenary meetings. This was followed by the Conference and led not only to a series of structured thematic debates on familiar subjects, but also to systematic reflections on the state of the Conference on Disarmament and possible ways forward.

Let me in this connection express my appreciation for the excellent cooperation of the six successive presidents on this and other matters.

Listing positive developments I would also mention that the Conference heard once again a statement from a non-governmental organization (NGO) which helped to emphasize the enhanced engagement between civil society and the Conference.

On the positive side I believe the fact should also be highlighted that many delegations participated in a meeting of scientific experts dealing with one of the key projects before the Conference, namely a treaty on prohibiting the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons purposes and related matters, which was organized by two member States on the margins of the Conference in accordance with General Assembly resolution 66/44 of 12 January 2012. The discussions at this meeting — and there is another one to follow next week — demonstrated once again the strong interest in many quarters of the international community to make progress in this field.

Colleagues, the primary duty of the last President in the annual session of the Conference is to guide the consideration and adoption of the Conference’s annual report to the United Nations General Assembly.

I will make some observations and offer some reflections on this work and other aspects of my task at a later stage in today’s plenary.

For now, I would first wish to focus on the topic planned for today in the schedule of activities, as contained in CD/WP.571/Rev.1, which is “Revitalization of the Conference on Disarmament”.

However, before I come to that I would like to address an issue of housekeeping, so to speak, and that is to bid farewell to two of our colleagues. Ambassador Hisham Badr's term of office is coming to an end. Ambassador Badr has without doubt left his imprint on our work in the four years he served his country, Egypt, not only in terms of his knowledge, sharp perception and eloquence, but also in view of the fact that he went all the way as President in putting a draft programme of work actually on the table for adoption. Ambassador Alexandre Fasel of Switzerland is also in the plenary today for the last time and I understand he will take up other duties in this place, Geneva, and I would like to congratulate him on that too. He too distinguished himself as a diplomat of the highest calibre. On behalf of the Conference and on my own behalf, I wish both Ambassadors every success in their future endeavours.

Now colleagues are there any points delegations may wish to raise before we come to the item which is on the schedule of activities for today, which is revitalization of the Conference on Disarmament?

I would give them the floor, but with the request that all questions to do with the report of the Conference on Disarmament to the United Nations General Assembly and its handling should be raised after we have finished the topic of revitalization.

Now, I have a long list of speakers before me but I would have to restructure it a little bit because I would like to maintain this order and understand delegations who intend to speak on various matters, revitalization and other issues as well.

Japan, you have the floor, please.

Mr. Amano (Japan): Mr. President, firstly I would like to express my congratulations to you, Ambassador Hoffmann, on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. I assure you of my delegation's utmost support and cooperation over the period of your leadership.

Mr. President, two weeks ago, I mentioned in my statement that conveying accurately the realities of nuclear weapons to the future generations is immensely important. In that context, I would like to acknowledge the presence in this chamber today of 20 Nagasaki High School Peace Messengers.

Every summer since 2000, the Peace Messengers have been visiting the United Nations Office at Geneva, to deliver petitions calling for a world free of nuclear weapons that they have gathered. Over these 12 years they have submitted to the United Nations more than 840,000 signatures. Today before the opening of the Conference on Disarmament, they called on the Office of Disarmament Affairs (ODA) and handed over to Mr. Jarmo Sareva, the Director of the Geneva branch of the ODA, 155,002 signatures they collected this year.

Given my country's earnest efforts in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation education, I am greatly encouraged when I see young people like the Nagasaki High School Peace Messengers voluntarily participating in such activities. I wish that their passion for action towards a world without nuclear weapons spreads over the world.

The President: I thank Ambassador Amano for his statement and for his kind words addressed to me and I would also like to welcome the Nagasaki High School Peace Messengers in our chamber and thank them for their good work and actually congratulate them on their very good work.

Now, are there any delegations who wish to take the floor not on revitalization and not on the report?

I see the Ambassador of Egypt, Hisham Badr. Please, you have the floor.

Mr. Badr (Egypt): Mr. President, since this is the first time and probably the last time that I will take the floor under your presidency let me congratulate you on assuming this position. I congratulate you, but at the same time recognize the sense of responsibility that is placed upon you; yet, having worked very closely with you during the Conference on Disarmament and also during our presidency I am fully confident in your ability, performance, in guiding the Conference on Disarmament in the important task it will undertake under your presidency which is to agree on its report of this important year. I wish you all the luck and want to thank you for the very kind remarks and comments you made about me and about our presidency. Let me also seize this opportunity to salute the Nagasaki youth peace delegation.

(spoke in Japanese)

(continued in English)

Four years ago when I was chosen to be the Permanent Representative of Egypt to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva I was particularly congratulated on becoming my country's representative to the Conference on Disarmament. In Egypt we highly value the Conference on Disarmament, not only for its past work but also for its function as the single multilateral negotiating body on disarmament affairs. I approached this task with a sense of responsibility knowing well in advance that only the select few had been dealing with what we consider in Egypt as the quintessential multilateral diplomacy. However, before arriving I was given a slight warning: "You know that the Conference on Disarmament is facing some difficulties and it hasn't recently been negotiating multilateral disarmament treaties so don't raise your hopes too high for this venue." I thought they were exaggerating, unfortunately, this proved to be prophetic.

During the last four years there were many new starts as we tried to find something that would kick-start the substantive work of the Conference on Disarmament. We have had some great expectations and we had some real disappointments, yet after four years I cannot but say that this was a very rich experience. For one thing, despite the lack of negotiations, I still have an enriching experience in all disarmament matters and got to learn many arcane concepts whether on earth or in outer space. Moreover, facing an impasse and not being able to bridge a gap is not something that is unique to the Conference on Disarmament. Other disarmament forums are also facing similar problems and our colleagues who spent their July in New York would attest to that. Moreover, as other colleagues that are serving as ambassadors to other international organizations would tell you that disarmament is not the only field where a lack of agreement on a programme of work is preventing us from proceeding to substantive work. Similar problems are facing the World Trade Organization (WTO) on an even larger scale since, in WTO, 10 years of the Doha Round are now hanging by a very, very thin thread.

I know it has become a kind of a tradition for departing ambassadors to decry the state of affairs in the Conference on Disarmament and predict doom for this venue. I am afraid I will not be joining the chorus on that. For one thing I am by nature optimistic. After all, who else would present a draft programme of work on the ides of March and still expect good things to come out of it? But also I remain optimistic because of what I saw in these four weeks as president of the Conference on Disarmament in the beginning of this year. What I saw was commitment by everyone to try to make the Conference on Disarmament work, even if the notion of what constitutes work remains controversial. I witnessed the willingness of all parties to be as flexible as they could be and actually try to get flexibility from sceptical capitals at this juncture. I also saw the hungry glare in the eyes of diplomats here for the possibility of starting substantive work. Given what I saw, I strongly believe in this institution and its strong potentials. I am glad that this farewell statement comes during the session on the revitalization of the Conference on Disarmament as there is no true

farewell statement that is complete without dealing with this issue. So let me make the following remarks.

The Conference on Disarmament is a venue that provides us with a predictable structured way to negotiate, but we make of it what we do. After all, venues don't negotiate international agreements, member countries do. So failing to commence negotiations on any of the four core issues only reflects the lack of political will of some of the members of the Conference who are blocking consensus on these issues, and not the shortcomings of the venue itself.

Changing the venue to negotiate a treaty is also flawed as it will only produce a selective, incomplete, a non-universal treaty that many relevant countries will not negotiate on and or accede to. It will be a success only in name and it can actually be counterproductive by moving the issue to the back-burner.

The Conference on Disarmament is not a single-issue venue. Rather it covers a wide-ranging agenda. To judge the success or failure of this venue on negotiating a single treaty, especially on an issue that does not represent the priority of the majority of the members of this venue, is not completely accurate. Indeed if there was a litmus test for the success of the whole disarmament machinery it should be nuclear disarmament, which was set as the priority since the first General Assembly resolution and reconfirmed by the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.

The Conference on Disarmament is only a component of the disarmament machinery that came, was recognized and created by the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. Singling out the Conference for change without making a comprehensive review of the whole disarmament machinery will always be limited and not particularly helpful. Instead the approach should be to hold a new General Assembly special session on disarmament.

This is by no means to claim that there is nothing that can be done to make the Conference function better. Far from it, indeed there is much room for change in some of the elements of the rules of procedure to make it more efficient, but this could only be done from within and it won't solve the cardinal problem which is the lack of negotiations.

I have mentioned before that the impasse in the Conference on Disarmament is not a separate phenomenon; rather, many multilateral forums are facing a similar malaise. I believe this in part stems from recent phenomena that are afflicting the State in respect of multilateralism and multilateral diplomacy. There is a current flux in the international system and we are indeed waiting for the dust to settle with a new paradigm in international relations. This is all the more true in the field of disarmament where a new paradigm is way overdue. Such a paradigm needs to take into consideration the security needs of all States and not just to select a few. More importantly, this paradigm needs to be built on trust in the system and that it will deliver increased security for all; but, above all, such a system also needs to build trust that when we agree on something it gets implemented. We cannot afford a system like the NPT that waits for 40 years to start negotiating arrangements for nuclear disarmament and still nothing is done on nuclear disarmament in a sufficient manner. One cannot afford to agree on establishing a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction and then set aside this agreement for 15 years without any action. Such a paradigm is what we need and not just tinkering with the Conference rules of procedure or arguing what is the priority for the next negotiations and where to negotiate the next treaty.

Since this is a captive audience I try to make use of the opportunity to elaborate my ideas at length but I'm really pressed to summarize my departing remarks in one sentence. If I'm pressed to put it in one sentence it would probably be like this: "The problem is not the Conference on Disarmament, it is the weakening commitment to multilateralism and to

the cause of disarmament, and so the solution is not to change the venue but to renew commitments to multilateral diplomacy and to nuclear disarmament and to implement what we agree – this is a sine qua non for a successful Conference on Disarmament and disarmament regime.”

Thank you again Mr. President, I wish you and all the colleagues here, my friends and ambassadors, the best of luck for the years to come. Peace be upon you.

The President: I thank Mr. Badr for his statement and for his kind words addressed to the presidency. Let me wish him once again every success in his important post in Cairo at the time when his country and region are faced with many challenges.

Colleagues, are there any more requests for the floor on other issues than revitalization or the report? The Syrian Arab Republic, you have the floor.

Mr. Hamoui (Syrian Arab Republic): Mr. President, as we are dealing with general issues I would like to deliver a statement on nuclear disarmament on behalf of the Group of 21 (G21).

1. I have the honour to deliver the following statement on behalf of the Group of 21. At the outset, the Group wishes to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and to thank you and your predecessors for the work that they have undertaken during their respective presidencies.
2. The Group of 21 reiterates that the Conference on Disarmament is the sole multilateral negotiating body on disarmament, and in that context, the Group stresses that its highest priority on the Conference on Disarmament agenda is nuclear disarmament.
3. The Group reiterates its deep concern at the danger posed to the survival of humankind by the continued existence of nuclear weapons and their possible use or threat of use. As long as nuclear weapons exist, the risk of their use and proliferation will remain.
4. The Group reiterates its position, as conveyed in its previous statements to the Conference on Disarmament, and recalls the Final Document of the Tenth Special Session of the General Assembly — the first special session on disarmament — and the 2009 Sharm el-Sheikh Summit Declaration and Final Document of the Non-Aligned Movement, and the Final Document of the seventeenth Ministerial Meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement, held in Sharm el-Sheikh in May 2012. We recall, in this regard, that the very first resolution of the United Nations General Assembly, resolution 1/1 of 1946, adopted unanimously, called for the elimination of nuclear weapons from national arsenals.
5. Furthermore, the International Court of Justice, in its advisory opinion of 1996, concluded that there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and to bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control.
6. The Millennium Declaration in 2000 also reaffirmed the commitment of Member States of the United Nations to strive for the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons.
7. The Group, while noting the steps taken by nuclear-weapon States for the reduction of their arsenals, reiterates its deep concern over the slow pace of progress towards nuclear disarmament and the lack of progress by the nuclear-weapon States towards accomplishing the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals. The Group stresses the importance of effective implementation of concrete measures leading to a nuclear-weapon-free world.
8. The Group, stressing its strong commitment to nuclear disarmament, underscores the urgent need to commence negotiations on this issue in the Conference on Disarmament without delay. In this context, the Group reaffirms its full readiness to start negotiations on

a phased programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, including a nuclear weapons convention prohibiting the development, production, stockpiling and use of nuclear weapons and on their destruction, leading to the global, non-discriminatory and verifiable elimination of nuclear weapons, with a specified framework of time.

9. In this regard, the Group emphasizes that the fundamental principles of transparency, verification and irreversibility shall be applied to all nuclear disarmament measures.

10. The Group reaffirms that nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation are substantively interrelated and mutually reinforcing.

11. The G21 emphasizes that progress in nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation, in all its aspects is essential to strengthening international peace and security. The Group reaffirms that efforts toward nuclear disarmament, global and regional approaches and confidence-building measures complement each other and should, wherever possible, be pursued simultaneously to promote regional and international peace and security.

12. The Group reaffirms that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. Pending the achievement of the complete elimination of such weapons, the Group reaffirms the urgent need to reach an early agreement on a universal, unconditional and legally binding instrument to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.

13. The Group expresses its concerns about strategic defence doctrines of nuclear-weapon States and a group of States which set out a rationale for the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, and in this regard, there is therefore a genuine and urgent need to eliminate the role of nuclear weapons in strategic doctrines and security policies, to minimize the risk that these weapons will ever be used again and to facilitate the process of their elimination. In this regard, the Group recalls its strong support of the objectives of General Assembly resolution 65/71 of 8 December 2010, on decreasing the operational readiness of nuclear weapons systems, as well as resolution 66/48 of 2 December 2011, on reducing nuclear danger.

14. The G21 stresses the significance of achieving universal adherence to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, including by all nuclear-weapon States, which, inter alia, should contribute to the process of nuclear disarmament. The Group reiterates that if this objective of the Treaty were to be fully realized the continued commitment of all States signatories, especially the nuclear-weapon States, to nuclear disarmament would be essential.

15. The Group reaffirms the absolute validity of multilateral diplomacy in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation, and expresses its determination to promote multilateralism as the core principle of negotiations in these areas. In this regard, the Group strongly supports the objectives of resolution 66/32 of 2 December 2011, on the promotion of multilateralism in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation.

16. The G21 States parties to the NPT note with satisfaction the deliberations of the first Preparatory Committee for the 2015 NPT Review Conference that took place between 30 April and 11 May 2012 in Vienna. The G21 States parties to the NPT call for the full implementation of the recommendations for follow-on actions adopted at the 2010 NPT Review Conference on all three pillars of the NPT, including those related to the work of the Conference on Disarmament, and the Middle East, particularly the implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East. The G21 States parties to the NPT re-emphasize the importance of the commitment of nuclear-weapon States to accelerate concrete progress on

the steps leading to nuclear disarmament contained in the Final Document of the 2000 Review Conference and take note of the fact that nuclear-weapon States agreed to report on their undertakings related to nuclear disarmament to the 2014 Preparatory Committee, and that the 2015 Review Conference would take stock and consider next steps for the full implementation of article VI of the NPT.

17. Regarding the implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East, the G21 States parties to the NPT welcome the initial steps taken towards realizing the follow-on actions agreed to during the 2010 NPT Review Conference for a process leading to the full implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East. The G21 States parties to the NPT recall that the 1995 resolution was an essential element of the package of decisions adopted at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference and of the basis on which the NPT was indefinitely extended without a vote. They look forward to the successful convening of the 2012 conference on the establishment of a Middle East Zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction, welcome the efforts undertaken by the conference Facilitator, and call on the Secretary-General of the United Nations and co-sponsors of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East to continue to exert all efforts toward the success of the 2012 conference. The G21 States parties to the NPT also recall in this context the reaffirmation of the 2010 NPT Review Conference of the importance of Israel's accession to the NPT and the placement of all its nuclear facilities under comprehensive International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards.

18. The Group reiterates its readiness to make constructive contributions to the work of the Conference, and in this regard wishes to recall the contents of documents CD/36/Rev.1; CD/116; CD/341; CD/819; CD/1388; CD/1462; CD/1570; CD/1571 and CD/1923, presented by the G21 towards this end.

19. In view of the Group's strong commitment to nuclear disarmament and a world free of nuclear weapons, the G21 reiterates the following concrete steps:

- Reaffirmation of the unequivocal commitment of the nuclear-weapon States to accomplish the complete elimination of nuclear weapons;
- Elimination of the role of nuclear weapons in security doctrines;
- Adoption of measures by nuclear-weapon States to reduce nuclear danger, such as de-alerting of nuclear weapons and decreasing the operational readiness of nuclear weapons systems;
- Negotiation on a universal, unconditional and legally binding instrument to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons;
- Negotiation of a convention on the complete prohibition of the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons;
- Negotiation of a nuclear weapons convention prohibiting the development, production, stockpiling and use of nuclear weapons and on their destruction, leading to the global, non-discriminatory and verifiable elimination of nuclear weapons with a specified framework of time.

The President: I thank the Ambassador for the statement on behalf of the Group of 21 and for his kind words addressed to the presidency.

Are there any other requests for the floor on issues other than revitalization and the report to the General Assembly?

This does not seem to be the case, I would then now ask you to indeed address the topic on our agenda today which is "Revitalization of the Conference on Disarmament".

But before I give the floor to the first speaker on my list, let me make a few introductory remarks.

This is a very important discussion. After the plenary on 14 June this is the second time in this annual session that the item “Revitalization of the Conference on Disarmament” is on our schedule of activities. I believe it is very appropriate that the Conference on Disarmament deals with this item in a focused way after the Secretary-General of the United Nations has taken the commendable initiative of convening a high-level meeting on 24 September 2010 in New York on revitalizing the work of the Conference on Disarmament and taking forward multilateral disarmament negotiations, in which an impressive number of foreign ministers participated, and also in the light of other activities in this direction. Here I would highlight the debate on this topic in the General Assembly on 27 July 2011, furthermore the fact that the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters devoted the major part of its fifty-sixth session in mid-2011 to the issues raised at the high-level meeting. Last but not least, I would draw your attention to the very lively debate in the First Committee of the General Assembly in 2011, which had four draft resolutions before it dealing with revitalizing the Conference on Disarmament and/or how to take multilateral disarmament negotiations forward.

Twenty-seven delegations took the floor in our plenary meeting on 14 June on this issue. This shows how much attention this question — I believe quite rightly — gets. The statements also demonstrated a wide variety of views. Now, I will refrain from trying to characterize them, or to make an attempt at structuring today’s debate. What I will do, however, is to express the hope that all these discussions and endeavours will lead as soon as possible to a practical outcome which takes the project of multilateral disarmament negotiations indeed forward in a concrete and productive way.

Now, to start our discussion on the topic, I intended to give the floor to the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, Mr. Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, who had unfortunately to leave for another commitment, but I understand that the Deputy Secretary-General, Mr. Sareva, will read out his statement.

Mr. Sareva (Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference): Thank you Mr. President and before I deliver the statement of Mr. Tokayev, who will be attending another event here in the Palais on World Humanitarian Day, let me just congratulate you Mr. President on the assumption of office and wish you luck and pledge the support of the secretariat to you during the next four weeks. So I’m going to read out the statement which Mr. Tokayev had intended to deliver and it reads as follows:

“Mr. President, dear colleagues, at the very outset I would like to express my congratulations to Ambassador Hoffmann on assuming his presidential duties in the Conference on Disarmament. I have no doubt that his rich experience and strong professionalism will be very useful for the Conference on Disarmament at this difficult moment.

“As we approach the end of the 2012 session of the Conference on Disarmament, we all have to admit that our forum is not yet able to bridge the differences between its members and start negotiations on any of its agenda items. The Conference therefore continues to miss a precious opportunity to strengthen the rule of law in disarmament and to deliver what the international community expects from us.

“As stressed repeatedly by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, and by a growing number of high-level representatives of United Nations Member States, the failure of the Conference is regrettable and unacceptable. It is clear that the continuation of the current deadlock has worrying implications for the role, function and even the very future of the Conference on Disarmament.

“Under the Ethiopian Presidency, the Conference last May agreed on a timetable of two rounds of substantive discussions in the plenary during the second and third parts of its 2012 session. These discussions are now coming to a close. They have focused on the substantive agenda items but have also featured two meetings, including that of today, dedicated to the issue of the much-needed revitalization of the work of the Conference. I am pleased by the inclusion of this topic in the agreed timetable, and I believe it indicates a deep and growing concern among the membership about the gravity of the situation.

“The discussions have yielded a variety of ideas to help revitalize the work of the Conference. These include, *inter alia*, review of the use of the consensus rule as well as a comprehensive assessment of the links between the various organs of the disarmament machinery as a starting point to eventually render it more efficient. Although some of these ideas look to be rather controversial there is, as I stated in my remarks on 14 February, an increasing need to address the functioning of the broader United Nations disarmament machinery. I ask all delegations to seriously consider my concrete proposals made in this statement.

“However, while these discussions have been useful, we must bear in mind that they cannot be a substitute for efforts towards an agreement on a programme of work that would include negotiations of new legal instruments. And even if we recognize that the impasse in the Conference on Disarmament has deep-seated political origins, this recognition must not provide an excuse for complacency and inaction. The clock is ticking and the international community cannot wait much longer.

“Last year, the deliberations in the First Committee were very much focused on the revitalization of the Conference, and this year will be no different. Last year, the First Committee sent a message of urgency to the Conference on Disarmament. Ten months later, with no progress in the Conference, more drastic measures may eventually be called for by the General Assembly. I believe that any efforts being made outside the Conference on Disarmament should serve the purpose of unblocking the current impasse in the Conference on Disarmament and sustaining it as a unique and indispensable forum for multilateral negotiations on disarmament.

“I am fully committed to restoring its role as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating body.

“My commitment is based on the belief that the Conference can still offer the international community an effective tool for strengthening the rule of law in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation.

“Therefore I urge you to find a way to enable this body to rise to the occasion before its whole *raison d’être* is really called into question. We all must exercise responsibility and skill to justify our presence in this historic chamber. We need to be both patient and innovative, we need new ideas and proposals to push forward the negotiating machinery on a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT) as well as other issues on the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament. Thank you, Mr. President.”

This concludes the statement by Mr. Tokayev.

The President: Thank you Mr. Sareva for the statement on behalf of the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, Mr. Tokayev, and the kind words addressed to the presidency.

The next speaker I have on my list is the representative of Switzerland, Ambassador Fasel.

Mr. Fasel (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, as this is the first time that my delegation is taking the floor under your presidency, allow me to congratulate you on assuming office and to assure you of our full cooperation in the discharge of your duties. It is an honour for me to take the floor after having heard the statement of the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament just read out by the Deputy Secretary-General. Once again, I would like to thank the Secretary-General of the Conference for his commitment given the current difficult situation in the Conference and for his support. I would also like to take this opportunity to bid farewell to my colleague and friend, the Ambassador of Egypt, Mr. Badr, who has spared no effort in the Conference this year. I send him my very best wishes for the future.

Mr. President, dear colleagues, perhaps you are aware that I am about to take up a new post. I am soon to become the new Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva. As a result, I will be leaving my post as Permanent Representative to the Conference on Disarmament. Speaking personally, I have to say that I am taking this step with some regret. In particular, I have appreciated the spirit of cooperation within the disarmament community and I thank you all for the excellent cooperation that we have enjoyed. I also thank you, Mr. President, for the kind words addressed to me.

I will, however, refrain from making a farewell speech. In my statement I will focus on an aspect that both I and my country view as essential: the revitalization of the Conference on Disarmament, the item on today's agenda. Because, although I am leaving this post with a certain feeling of sadness, it is also with a feeling that I have not completed my work.

My delegation took the floor at the first meeting on this topic on 14 June 2012. At that time we underlined the importance of keeping a standing group of ambassadors and experts on disarmament to meet the challenges of disarmament and non-proliferation that the world has to face. We also highlighted the factors which, in our view, have led to the current deadlock, and underlined how important it was to consider, in greater depth, the options and possible elements for revitalization, as requested by the General Assembly.

This topic is so crucial to the future of multilateral disarmament and for the achievement of progress in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation that I am taking the floor again to underline and clarify a few basic points.

On 14 June 2012, at the first plenary meeting on the topic, many delegations took the floor. We welcome the interest aroused by the issue of the revitalization of the Conference on Disarmament and could not help noticing that the vast majority of delegations made their views known on that occasion. From that we deduce that the issue of the revitalization of this Conference is of great importance to many members of this body.

Allow me to reiterate the fact that we do not share the view that the problems with the way the Conference on Disarmament is functioning are caused solely by external factors. Of course we understand that they may make reaching consensus extremely difficult or even unlikely, but we find it difficult to accept that the members of the Conference are still incapable of at least commencing negotiations in the area of disarmament.

Many of us share this view and I am thinking of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the President of the General Assembly too, both of whom requested that the Conference should take its future in hand. The Secretary-General of the Conference, in his address to the Conference on 14 February, also laid emphasis on the fact that some procedural reforms would foster greater political will. We share this view.

Recently, the diplomatic conference responsible for drafting an arms trade treaty showed that negotiations are possible, even on highly complex issues where consensus is difficult to reach. This exercise confirmed that progress can be made while respecting the legitimate interests of all. In this connection some States have stressed that we should not be discouraged by the results of the Conference held in July in New York, but that efforts must be pursued and consolidated upon. Just because one cannot be sure of completing a process does not mean that it should not be started. The members of the Conference must be inspired by this spirit and this exercise, particularly since national interests are better protected within the framework of the Conference on Disarmament by virtue of its rules of procedure.

Instead of attributing the situation to external factors, the members of the Conference should seriously focus on changing things, or, at least, focus their efforts on the realistic aspects of reform. For our part, we are convinced that change is necessary. The status quo will only serve the interests of a minority, in particular the nuclear-weapon States, to the detriment of the majority of States.

In this connection, we would like to express special thanks to all those who made concrete proposals for possible options to be considered in greater depth to revitalize the Conference on Disarmament. In particular, we thank Mr. Tokayev for his various suggestions. The proposal made by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland on 14 June last concerning interaction among the different arms of the disarmament machinery also introduces new and useful ideas. The idea of trying to rethink the roles of the different arms of the disarmament machinery so that it regains its effectiveness seems to make good sense and have potential.

Thus a range of proposals has been made that warrants greater attention. Rather than providing an exhaustive list, I will simply highlight a few of them: to review the matter of the brevity of the presidents' term of office; to consider the possibility of expanding the membership of the Conference, as provided for by the rules of procedure; to bring the agenda more into line with current reality and challenges; to improve access to the Conference for the specialized agencies of the United Nations and representatives of civil society; to reconsider the procedure for the report to the General Assembly so that the document reflects more accurately the situation in the Conference on Disarmament; to review how the agenda is implemented and separate the mandates for the four core issues so that the start or continuation of negotiations on a given topic is not linked to progress in other areas; last, but not least, to review the strict interpretation of the rule of consensus concerning its application to procedural matters.

While many delegations have declared their readiness to work on these issues, it has not been possible to reach consensus on any of them so far. We therefore consider that it is not only important to ensure that debate continues on this issue, but also that this exercise is conducted as efficiently as possible.

It is thus crucial for the Conference to make further and more intensive efforts next year with a view to its revitalization. Moreover, such an exercise should be carried out in a more structured way than in recent years. I would stress that such a structured approach on the functioning of the Conference is not a revolutionary idea or anything new per se. The Conference has already followed such an approach in the past.

Switzerland therefore proposes that, next year, a structured process of internal review should be launched within the Conference. It would also be appropriate to establish a rule that such a process should be introduced and carried out periodically. We are all familiar with the periodic reviews of the disarmament treaties. In our view, the Conference could only benefit from such a periodic review.

Although the Conference must work internally on its own revitalization, efforts in this area should also be undertaken on a broader scale. In its resolution 66/66, the General Assembly invited us to explore, consider and consolidate options, proposals and elements for revitalization of the United Nations disarmament machinery as a whole. This was accomplished by holding two meetings on the issue this year.

The General Assembly also decided to review progress made in the area during the sixty-seventh session. Thus the report that the Conference on Disarmament will submit to the General Assembly this year is of particular importance. It should duly reflect members' views on the issue of revitalization and concrete proposals made along those lines. This is necessary so that the General Assembly can take full stock of the situation. It will also allow for a constructive debate to take place this autumn on the revitalization of the disarmament machinery.

In conclusion, as we have already stated, like many other delegations, the Conference can still do great things. However, in order to play once again the role assigned to and still expected of the Conference by the international community, a process of modernization enhancing its strengths and improving its weaknesses is necessary.

Speaking personally, it is very important for me to see the Conference on Disarmament reassume its role as an international negotiating forum on disarmament matters. I can therefore only encourage you to pursue your efforts with a view to attaining this objective and I wish you every success in that endeavour.

The President: I thank the representative of Switzerland for his statement and for his kind words addressed to the Chair and I would once again like to congratulate Ambassador Fasel for his appointment and wish him every success, and I would also say that he holds a particularly important position for us in the sense that he is a representative of the host country in Geneva.

Colleagues, I have, if my counting is correct, 15 speakers on my list and the next speaker on the list is the representative of Argentina. Ambassador Pedro D'Alotto, you have the floor, please.

Mr. D'Alotto (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, first of all I would like to congratulate you on assuming the presidency and wish you every success in the coming weeks when we will negotiate the final report of the Conference to the General Assembly. Allow me also, through you, to convey my congratulations to the former presidents of the 2012 session, and to thank them for their efforts to ensure the commencement of substantive work. I would also like to bid farewell to the Permanent Representative of Egypt and to wish him a successful future career in his capital, and to salute the departure of the Ambassador of Switzerland while, of course, congratulating him on the new duties that he will take up in this city.

In past exchanges on the revitalization of the Conference, including at the high-level summit convened by the Secretary-General of the United Nations in 2010, Argentina maintained that the main reasons for the paralysis experienced by this forum must be sought in the different views on security held by member States. Such matters which are external to the Conference have internal repercussions, making it impossible to establish a lowest common denominator on matters of substance, in other words, making it impossible to have a programme of work that allows us to make progress towards negotiations on disarmament.

It is clear that this impossible situation within the forum — I repeat, on matters of substance — is heightened in a setting with rigid working procedures. Although my delegation can support initiatives aimed at making the working methods of the Conference

more flexible, it must be borne in mind that stopgap solutions will not resolve the far more structural problems encountered by this forum.

However, as we said in our statement last February, Argentina considers that an immediate step member States could take is to have a more flexible interpretation of what a programme of work entails. Clearly a programme of work that contains merely a schedule of activities for each of the agenda items without spelling out the respective mandates may be a concrete step towards achieving greater consensus. This will make it possible to carry out some form of analysis as to whether it is appropriate to commence negotiations on items and for them to be reflected in the final report of the Conference.

We believe that this year such a possibility could have been explored a little further. However, we have opted for holding debates in plenary meetings, repeating the same exercise for the seventh consecutive year. Although such exchanges facilitate a better understanding of the respective national positions, it is clear that they do not have the momentum that will facilitate the commencement of negotiations.

We share the concerns of those who see the risks of adopting a simplified programme of work, since it could dash even further the hopes of negotiating. However, we cannot allow this type of meeting to become the new *modus operandi* in the Conference on Disarmament. For this reason we must consider very carefully what work we will be doing in 2013.

Argentina believes that it is necessary to preserve the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum on a permanent basis. For this reason, with a view to our work next year, and in order to maintain the status quo, a special coordinator for the programme of work could be appointed, whose mandate would be to hold periodic consultations with member States and to inform the plenary meetings of the Conference regularly of their progress.

Without amending its rules of procedure, the Conference could hold monthly meetings to take stock of the situation, without wasting time and effort on mere formalities. Meeting less frequently would mean that the Conference would be maintained on a permanent basis, and would not renounce its objectives of commencing negotiations, while continuing to explore ways of reaching consensus. Meeting less frequently should not be seen as an opportunity to reduce the resources allocated to the forum. On the contrary, it will be necessary to keep such resources available for when conditions are ripe again for the resumption of negotiations.

The Conference should not close down, despite the fact that the member States have thus far proved incapable of using it for the purposes for which it was created. However, it should not be reduced to a platform for complaining about the inability of its members to move towards general and complete disarmament, which does not seem to be the right way either. Clearly we have reached the edge of our comfort zone even for those who defend the existence of this institution and the disarmament machinery.

Without wishing to enter into a debate here on the virtues or disadvantages of the current disarmament machinery, I must emphasize that the institutional logic established in 1978 is compatible with the interests of non-nuclear-weapon States; although, at present, it would appear that we are the only ones who see ourselves as the injured parties.

Argentina welcomes the ongoing review of institutions and does not believe in the virtues of the status quo. For this reason, it will continue to support the convening of a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament with the aim of identifying institutional reforms that will better serve the aims of achieving, above all, a world free of nuclear weapons.

However, until such a reform takes place, we should not be afraid of the possibility of exploring any type of initiative that allows us to make headway with this endeavour,

bearing in mind, as a priority, the interests of those States that have already renounced the nuclear option for military purposes.

Argentina has always maintained the importance of involving nuclear-weapon States in any type of negotiation. Nonetheless, it will be necessary for these same States — whether or not they are party to the NPT — to make tangible progress in the multilateral arena in order to demonstrate the importance they allegedly attach to the issue of nuclear weapons.

Otherwise there will be little alternative but to start and test other models, which will be labelled as unrealistic, not very constructive or a waste of time. Nonetheless, time is running out for the nuclear-weapon States to really respond to the calls for greater international security that must be based on the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

The President: I thank the representative of Argentina, Ambassador D'Alotto, for his statement. The next speaker on my list is the representative of the Ukraine. Ambassador Maimeskul, you have the floor please.

Mr. Maimeskul (Ukraine): Mr. President, since this is the first time that the Ukrainian delegation is taking the floor under your presidency, I would like to congratulate you on assuming this position. Let me express our highest appreciation for the work done by you and your predecessors so far, including extensive consultations with member States, regional groups and civil society, as well as successful moderation of ongoing substantive discussions on the four core issues of the Conference on Disarmament's agenda. I assure you of the strong support of my delegation in your endeavours.

We regret this continuing slow mode of the Conference on Disarmament, the record of achievements of which has been overshadowed by inertia lasting for more than a decade. During this year's session the Conference has not justified the hopes of the international community that the forum would fulfil its mandate and restart negotiations. There also appears to be a disappointing disconnect between the Conference and the recent positive developments in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation.

However, despite the long-standing impasse in the Conference on Disarmament my delegation has not lost hope in this forum and believes that it remains the most relevant venue for consideration of the disarmament agenda. It's so far the best-suited institution by its composition, mandate and requisite sensitivity to the security agenda. Moreover, its vast experience in delivering even in the toughest environment proves the Conference on Disarmament's vital place in the disarmament machinery.

Ukraine considers the Conference on Disarmament to be the forum that is capable of resolving all pressing issues of disarmament, provided there is a will to consolidate efforts in order to reach compromise. Despite the protracted period of foot-dragging, the Conference's potential is not exhausted yet and, using the Secretary-General's language, the major focus is not on the vehicle but on the driver. In this regard, we supported all the initiatives of Mr. Ban Ki-moon to take forward multilateral disarmament negotiations, including the 2010 high-level meeting, as well as the 2011 General Assembly July special sitting and sixty-sixth session activities.

Ukraine appreciates the inclusion of the revitalization topic in the schedule of discussions, which we all should prioritize in the current situation. In order to fulfil this task, all the existing options must be thoroughly examined and if there is a mere possibility of finding a key for resolving deadlock it should be implemented without any delay.

The adoption of the substantive programme of work and its implementation could be the only veritable evidence of the revitalization of the Conference on Disarmament. And, as we all know, overcoming the current impasse and bringing the Conference back to work requires the right balance on the FMCT issue. Although a vast majority of members are

ready to start negotiations on an FMCT, the core differences regarding the scope of such a treaty have pre-empted their start and put the Conference on Disarmament in deadlock.

We are grateful to the Egyptian presidency for its thorough efforts aimed at finding a commonly accepted draft programme of work, as was suggested in document CD/1933/Rev.1, as well as to our Russian colleagues for the proposal on its rewording. Ukraine is very disappointed that this initiative has not succeeded. In our view, it was a unique chance to bridge the existing gap and to bring the Conference on Disarmament back to life. At the same time, we stand ready to render support for further elaboration of the needed magic formula on an FMCT on the basis of document CD/1864, which will unblock potential for progress on other core issues.

The Conference on Disarmament is the right place for this to happen. Due to the specific nature of an FMCT, holding negotiations and signing the treaty without the participation of primary actors in this field would be questionable at the least. Especially if lessons learned and unpalatable experiences with regard to negotiations of other security issues are duly taken into account. Any actions that bring substantial issues outside the Conference on Disarmament, further undermining its standing, should be based on a clear, widely acceptable and result-oriented strategy, defined well in advance of making far-reaching decisions. So that one day we will not face another protracted process with foggy perspectives confounded by the demise of the existing disarmament machinery.

Furthermore, we have to admit that bearing in mind the traditional pace of negotiations on disarmament issues and with due respect to the widely supported step-by-step approach, considering issues of future production and existing stocks as a separate consecutive step would be overly time-consuming, further blurring the perspective of a nuclear-free world. However, as the substantive programme of work still remains an unattainable goal, the following options should be taken into consideration.

Firstly, the Conference on Disarmament could consider adoption of a simplified or a “light” programme of work dealing on an equal footing with all four core issues. This could be a venue to hammer out compromise which would give an opportunity to start substantive work. The possible revival of this practice could de facto bring the Conference on Disarmament out of the current deadlock. The very adoption of such a programme of work would send a strong message to the whole international community and to the General Assembly in particular, witnessing the readiness of the Conference on Disarmament to move forward.

Secondly, as we see it, the main stumbling block in efforts to revitalize the Conference on Disarmament and to proceed with even the simplified programme of work is a matter of choice of the approach to nuclear disarmament in general. My country has been standing firm for many years in its call for the total elimination of nuclear weapons, which is the common goal of all United Nations Member States. We consider that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons and we support the call for the immediate adoption of a comprehensive international agreement on the ban of nuclear weapons. Hence, the step-by-step process of reduction and elimination of nuclear weapons must be developed in the wider framework of the comprehensive approach to nuclear disarmament.

The strategic vision should envisage practical steps and effective disarmament measures to be taken by the international community in a transparent, non-discriminatory, verifiable and irreversible manner, building a system of mutually reinforcing instruments for the achievement and maintenance of a world without nuclear weapons. We believe that in the absence of a clear, universally supported vision of general disarmament, a substantive discussion in the Conference on Disarmament on how a phased multilateral nuclear disarmament process should look like is long overdue.

There are reasonable doubts that performing any concrete step without a clear understanding of what step would follow next could be successful in the implementation of a long-term approach. Thus, there is an urgent need for broad and deep consideration of a strategy and tactics for comprehensive nuclear disarmament, which in our view could forcefully revitalize the Conference on Disarmament and contribute to establishment of a coherent political framework for attaining a nuclear-free world.

Thirdly, both disarmament and non-proliferation objectives should be considered on an equal footing and get the same level of our attention. Parallel negotiation of the issues which have evidently proven to be ripe and are widely supported by the international community is the only credible avenue to overcome persisting discords.

Due to the specific nature of the disarmament agenda and most pressing issues at hand — namely placing production and stocks of fissile materials under a transparent and non-discriminatory internationally verified regime, as well as entrenching the quest for a nuclear-free world by providing legally binding negative security assurances (NSAs) — there is hardly any viable alternative option in sight. Negotiating an FMCT and NSAs in parallel processes will contribute to confidence-building and mutually reinforce each other, providing pertinent support to the entire process of disarmament.

Fourthly, should the above-mentioned proposals fail, we are of the opinion that member States should utterly focus attention on an untapped potential of the Conference on Disarmament, which we unfortunately have not explored yet in detail.

Launching the modernization process of the Conference on Disarmament through raising its functionality and procedural efficiency could well become a starting point for reconsidering the outdated agenda and unblocking the substantive work. The package of proposals put forward by the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, Mr. Tokayev, has, to our regret, not yet been given sufficient attention during discussions on revitalization and therefore could constitute a solid basis for future thorough in-depth discussions. Even slight changes in this direction could send a positive message to the international community, proving that the Conference on Disarmament is preparing itself to be back on track.

Let me once again reiterate our call to the Conference on Disarmament to find reserves to demonstrate willingness for compromise to enable the resumption of the substantive work, thus revitalizing the process of multilateral disarmament negotiations and reaffirming its credibility and legitimacy.

Ukraine, for its part, stands ready to give all-round support to the efforts of the P6 and member States to reinvigorate the work of the Conference on Disarmament. Finally let me take this opportunity to say goodbye and to wish every success to our colleagues, Ambassador Badr from Egypt and Ambassador Fasel from Switzerland.

The President: I thank the representative of the Ukraine, Ambassador Maimeskul, for his statement and for his kind words addressed to me.

Colleagues, there are another 12 speakers on the list and in view of the fact that I intend to inform you about how I planned to approach the process of dealing with the report, I would really ask you to keep your statements as short as possible and there is always the possibility of actually reading out a shortened version and giving the full statement to the secretariat to be reproduced in the record of our meeting.

The next speaker on my list is the representative of Spain.

Mr. Gil Catalina (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, it goes without saying that I wish you every success in the task before you.

We are gathered here today for the second time to discuss the topic of the revitalization of the Conference on Disarmament, as part of the cycle of meetings addressing the major items on our agenda. We can spend this time doing two things: explain our national position in greater detail than at the previous meeting or respond to — in other words support or contradict — the comments made by other delegations in June.

My delegation wants to speak on the latter — we believe that it is precisely debate that is conspicuous by its absence in this chamber. Unfortunately, we are convinced that the only benefit we can derive from these sessions is the modest precedent of an exchange of opinions in plenary meetings. Without further ado, I am going to refer to some of the ideas that were mentioned and to explain our position.

At the June session, various proposals were discussed for reducing meeting time, in the event of there being no clear prospect of negotiations. My delegation agrees with all such proposals, or should I say, any proposal aimed at making savings. While in the past, our low productivity was a matter of concern, now, in view of the current economic crisis, holding a meeting once or twice a week merely for the purpose of seeing each other's faces in this wonderful setting is becoming rather tiresome.

Lots of figures have been bandied around about the cost of each of these sessions although nothing definitive has been decided. We have all heard talk of the complexities of calculating the budget for this forum, which does not have its own budget line. Under the current circumstances, knowing whether the Conference costs a lot or a little is of secondary importance: for the sake of consistency we must request the different international organizations to apply the same austerity measures applied on a daily basis by national administrations, and, of course, this Conference has no reason to be the exception. What is more, it has spent 15 years without making any savings.

There has also been talk of a reform of the rotation system for the six presidents of the Conference, known as the P6, and once again, we are in agreement. The current system, although an improvement on what we had previously, because it requires some degree of coordination, is little more than a parade of presidents in alphabetical order. Any delegation that has had the task of presiding over this forum — we know from experience — is aware that, save in exceptional circumstances, in four weeks one scarcely has the time to hand over the baton with a degree of dignity, while looking the other way and trying to ensure that the burden is as light as possible.

We would be in favour of any system of elections and broad mandates, with clear objectives, which results in presidencies with a real capacity for leadership. This is not because we believe that a stronger presidency will help us out of the current impasse, but at least a real presidency would have the necessary drive to help us make progress in some direction, the one we mentioned before — in the absence of clear prospects for negotiation — towards saving time, money and energy.

There has also been talk of broadening the scope of the items on the agenda to allow for related issues not covered previously by this forum. We are neither in favour nor against the idea. It is simply that it seems to be a debate which is not very relevant and diverts us from the real problem in this chamber: the ongoing problem of always tripping over the same stone. If we remove the stone, in other words, if we change the focus of our debates, we would probably keep on tripping over, because what we have in this chamber is a well-consolidated habit of tripping over — and of making others trip over any stone on our path.

The rules themselves (the so-called rules of procedure) are fraught with obstacles, starting with the insurmountable obstacle of the need to start each session every year by addressing the programme of work. Such Conference procedures, to continue with the stone metaphor, are reminiscent of the myth of Sisyphus in the underworld. I should explain that Sisyphus is a character from Greek mythology, whose punishment for having defied the

gods, was to push a heavy boulder up a very steep mountain; the boulder never reached the top, rolled back down and Sisyphus had to start all over again and push the boulder for eternity. So the Conference procedures are reminiscent of the myth of Sisyphus in the underworld, but in a slightly crueller version. Imagine that one day, after various failed attempts, Sisyphus finally manages to reach the top and stop the boulder from rolling back down. (The Conference managed to do something of that sort in May 2009 by approving the programme of work contained in document CD/1864, which was never given careful enough consideration.) Euphoric and exhausted after his great feat, Sisyphus is ready to thank the gods, but when he raises his eyes, he suddenly turns pale. Behind the summit that he has just reached there is another, higher mountain that he could not see from the bottom. In the rules of procedure, this new mountain is the need for the Conference, after adopting the programme of work, to approve its implementation. Stunned, Sisyphus is distracted for a moment and lets the boulder roll down the mountain. Thus the poor man has no choice but to spend another year pushing the boulder uphill.

This little fable convinces us, at least, of the pressing need to amend the rules of procedure and I must add that behind the conversion of the Conference on Disarmament into the myth of Sisyphus, there is, of course, the perversion of consensus that I referred to in my previous statement.

Furthermore, the wide range of topics that some members advocate for discussion should not distract us from the main theme of the Conference since the mid-1990s, namely the prohibition of the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons purposes. Some may question whether — or not — the next logical step forward is to strengthen the non-proliferation regime, and this also seems to us to be a pointless discussion.

We can discuss the approach that should be taken towards an FMCT, whether it should include, or not — and how — fissile material stocks, or what verification system should be applied. What cannot be discussed is the question of fissile materials — an essential element for manufacturing nuclear explosive devices — which, by its very nature, falls squarely within the terms of reference of this forum, and failing to negotiate a prohibition against its production — regardless of its scope — means relinquishing our mandate.

Some delegations took advantage of the session in June to update us on developments in the debate on an FMCT in a parallel but smaller forum. We support any initiative that will help end the current paralysis. Our position on this matter is what might be called voluntarist. Voluntarism, as you know, is a philosophical doctrine according to which will prevails over the intellect. We understand that such efforts have little prospect of success; however, insofar as there is a minimal chance of success, they will have our approval and support.

Lastly, during the June session, many delegations referred to the withered notion that this forum is irreplaceable, or that if it was re-established, it would be along very similar lines. We are not convinced by this argument, because it has a logical flaw: it is both irrefutable and cannot be proved; and, in the meantime, we are expected to stay put, sitting in this chamber, waiting for the black and gold paintings on the ceiling to shower us with political will manna. Therefore, allow me to conclude by inviting you to reflect on a quote from Alexis de Tocqueville, which, in my opinion, is very fitting for the Conference on Disarmament. De Tocqueville said: “What we are accustomed to calling necessary institutions, are sometimes only institutions to which we have become accustomed.”

The President: I thank the representative of Spain, Ambassador Gil Catalina, for his statement. The next speaker on my list is the representative of Myanmar.

Mr. Tun (Myanmar): Mr. President, my delegation very warmly congratulates you on your assumption of the Conference on Disarmament presidency. We would like to

assure you of our full cooperation in the discharge of your presidential responsibilities. My Ambassador is away today, and, on his behalf, I am making this intervention. Myanmar highly appreciates all the Conference on Disarmament presidents this year for their active role and constructive contribution to the work of the Conference on Disarmament.

My delegation would also like to express its sincere thanks and appreciation to Mr. Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, for playing an active role in the process of the revitalization of the Conference on Disarmament. My delegation associates itself with the statements made and to be made by the delegation of the Syrian Arab Republic on behalf of the G21.

Allow me to reiterate at this meeting Myanmar's long-standing commitment to the Conference on Disarmament. Despite a period of prolonged stagnation, Myanmar continues to attach great importance to the Conference as the sole multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament created by the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. Nuclear disarmament remains the highest priority on the disarmament agenda of Myanmar. In line with this priority and commitment, Myanmar, since 1995, has been submitting, annually, a draft resolution on nuclear disarmament at the First Committee of the General Assembly. The resolution on nuclear disarmament adopted at the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly reiterates its call to the Conference on Disarmament to establish, as soon as possible and as the highest priority, an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament early in 2012. It is regrettable that the call has not materialized yet. Furthermore, Myanmar is also committed to other important issues on the disarmament agenda, such as the treaty banning the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices, the prevention of an arms race in outer space and negative security assurances. We would welcome negotiations on these issues, within the framework of the Conference on Disarmament.

My delegation is greatly frustrated by the continued deadlock in the Conference for over 16 years. However, despite this, we do not lose hope. We continue to believe that the Conference on Disarmament is still relevant as the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum. It is not that the Conference on Disarmament alone has been stagnant; we must admit that the United Nations disarmament machinery as a whole has been stagnant.

In this regard, my delegation believes that a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament would have the authority and legitimacy to comprehensively review the functioning of the entire United Nations disarmament machinery, including the Conference on Disarmament. Myanmar would welcome an early convening of a fourth special session.

With regard to the expansion of membership in the Conference on Disarmament, Myanmar welcomes the call for the appointment of a special coordinator on this matter to examine modalities of review without any prejudice to the outcome. In keeping with the nature of the Conference on Disarmament as a negotiating forum, we support the strengthening of the Conference on Disarmament's interaction with civil society in the field of disarmament, particularly nuclear disarmament. The Secretary-General of the United Nations, in his message to the Global Forum on Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Education, which was held in Nagasaki, Japan, on 10 August, highlights the view that cooperation among Member States, international organizations and civil society is essential to ridding the world of nuclear weapons. My delegation fully shares his view.

The destiny of the Conference on Disarmament is in the hands of Conference member States. In this regard, my delegation joins hands with other members of the Conference to take multilateral disarmament negotiations forward. To this end, we will

continue to appeal to the whole Conference membership to show its utmost flexibility and demonstrate a genuine political will to achieve the common objectives of the Conference.

The President: I thank the representative of Myanmar for his statement. Colleagues, before I give the floor to the next speaker, just let me read out a list of speakers that I have before me: the Russian Federation, Cuba, India, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Ireland, Indonesia, the Netherlands, Chile, Sweden and Algeria.

The next speaker on my list is the representative of the Russian Federation, Mr. Vasiliev, please.

Mr. Vasiliev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. President, first of all, allow me to join those who congratulated you on assuming the presidency, to wish you every success and to assure you of my delegation's willingness to assist and support you in every way.

I would also like to convey my best wishes to those who are leaving us: Ambassador Badr of Egypt and Ambassador Fasel of Switzerland. I hope that Ambassador Badr will retain that optimism which was his hallmark in this forum and that Ambassador Fasel will continue to be guided by pragmatism and optimism. I hope that, with their departure, the one thing that does not remain in this chamber is pessimism. I would also like to welcome the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, and commend his efforts to find a way out of the difficult situation in which we find ourselves.

Mr. President, you started your presentation today with a brief historical overview. As the representative of the successor State to the Soviet Union, I must admit that we played a significant role in the division of Germany, and perhaps also in the division of the world during the cold war. However, perhaps more importantly, I would like to point out that we played an equally significant role in the unification of Germany and the end of the cold war. As a result, the strengthening of multilateralism in international relations in general is more important to us than anyone else.

The same may be said of the multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation mechanisms, which is why we actively support maintaining the existing multilateral disarmament triad, the United Nations disarmament triad: the United Nations Commission on Disarmament, the First Committee of the General Assembly and the Conference on Disarmament. We believe that these forums have proved their worth and have contributed to the maintenance of peace and security. We are convinced that, even today, they retain their value as a platform for seeking common ground and devising solutions based on the Charter of the United Nations for the key challenges of disarmament and non-proliferation.

The Conference is the sole multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament whose membership includes all States with nuclear capabilities. Its considerable experience shows that, when States have the political will, constructive negotiations can be held on a wide range of disarmament and non-proliferation issues based on the existing rules of procedure, including the rule of consensus. However, we all have to learn to live with the rule of consensus, on the understanding that the interests of one or more States should not prevent other States from holding negotiations on disarmament. It is also true that the Conference is going through a difficult period. Overcoming the deadlock in the Conference and strengthening other disarmament forums is one of the main challenges facing the international community in the near future. On various occasions we have shared our views on the situation. I will therefore only repeat that, in our view, the deadlock in this forum is not caused by administrative matters or the rules of procedure, but political matters, owing to the fact that the forum's activity is directly related to the sensitive issue of national security.

We are thus convinced that we should not seek a radical reorganization of the Conference or the United Nations disarmament machinery in general, but that States must become aware of the need to take full account of the legitimate security interests of other States. It must be remembered that no other disarmament forum has such unique expertise and administrative and technical skills; and, in the event of the closure or suspension of the Conference, we may lose all of that.

We see no alternative but to work consistently and painstakingly towards seeking a compromise on a balanced programme of work for the Conference. Reaching agreement on a programme of work, aside from getting the forum out of a long period of stagnation, could also be a viable alternative to a radical reform of the United Nations disarmament machinery. Mention has already been made of the fact that, for its part, the Russian delegation, has made and continues to make efforts along these lines.

I would like to recall that in the First Committee during the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly, on the subject of a balanced programme of work for the Conference, we proposed starting work on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons purposes and continuing substantive discussion on three other core issues – nuclear disarmament, negative security assurances and the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

During this session, we also proposed that agreement should be reached on the so-called “simplified programme of work” providing a mandate for discussion on the four core issues. We believe that such discussions would create a backdrop for the expert study on elements of a possible agreement. Unfortunately, there is no consensus on this proposal. Of course, we are prepared to discuss other approaches with the aim of commencing the substantive work of the Conference and preserving its status. However, we are firmly convinced that moving any negotiations, including the establishment of an FMCT outside the Conference, to an alternative forum, would actually lead to the collapse of the forum. Moreover, in our view, if such a scenario was to materialize, the successful establishment of a universal agreement that meets the national interests of all States would be unlikely, since, in other forums, we will not be able to bring together all of the major players, namely those States with nuclear capabilities. Thus, the negotiations will simply be pointless.

The discussions on the various ways of revitalizing the Conference show that we have reached a critical stage, and that we must make a responsible choice. Either we move towards a compromise and start practical work on the most pressing problems of multilateral disarmament, or face the threat of the collapse and complete paralysis of the United Nations disarmament machinery, primarily, the Conference on Disarmament. As experience has showed, we cannot rely on the General Assembly or any other body to take the decision for us. We therefore call on all member States of the Conference to do everything in their power to prevent the situation from deteriorating. We have little time left — until the end of the current session — and, consequently, until the conclusion of the discussion of the report of the Conference to the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly. Perhaps we have come to a point where, like other forums, we might consider establishing a “group of friends” or “action groups” in support of the Conference on Disarmament, in order to prevent such a negative scenario from materializing.

The President: I thank Mr. Vasiliev for his statement. Colleagues, I was just informed that the Syrian Arab Republic intended to make a statement on behalf of the Group of 21 as well as on revitalization. This has escaped me so I would ask you that I now give the floor to the Syrian Arab Republic to make the statement because it is a group statement, then we will continue with our list I read out a minute ago. Ambassador, you have the floor, please.

Mr. Hamoui (Syrian Arab Republic): Mr. President, I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of 21. The Group of 21 underscores the absolute validity of multilateral diplomacy in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation and reiterates its determination to promote multilateralism as a core principle of negotiations in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation.

The Group re-emphasizes that the Conference on Disarmament remains the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum of the international community as mandated by the first special session of the United Nations General Assembly devoted to disarmament.

Bearing in mind the very great danger both to humankind and to the survival of civilization posed by the continued existence of nuclear weapons and of their possible use or threat of use, the Group stresses once more that nuclear disarmament continues to be its highest priority.

The Group therefore continues to support an urgent need for the early commencement of negotiations within the Conference on Disarmament, on a phased programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons with a specified framework of time, including a nuclear weapons convention. This convention will prohibit the possessing, development, production, stockpiling, transfer and use of nuclear weapons, leading to their ultimate destruction.

While reaffirming the importance of the Conference on Disarmament, the Group expresses its disappointment that the Conference on Disarmament has not been able to undertake substantive work on its agenda. The group takes note of various efforts to reach consensus on the Conference on Disarmament's programme of work, including the programme of work adopted on 29 May 2009 that was not implemented and all subsequent efforts and proposals for a programme of work, the last of which was tabled on 14 March 2012 but was not adopted.

The Group reiterates the urgency that the Conference on Disarmament should adopt and implement a balanced and comprehensive programme of work on the basis of its agenda and dealing with, *inter alia*, the core issues, in accordance with the rules of procedure.

The Group furthermore believes that promoting the work of the United Nations disarmament machinery hinges on a suitable political environment, taking into account the security interests of all States.

In this regard, the Group, while expressing its deep concern over the persistent lack of consensus on the multilateral disarmament agenda and machinery, reaffirms its support for an early convening of a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.

The Group recognizes the importance of continuing consultations on the question of the possibility of expansion of the membership of the Conference on Disarmament.

The Group also continues to support strengthening the Conference on Disarmament's interaction with the civil society in the field of disarmament, particularly nuclear disarmament, in keeping with the nature of the Conference on Disarmament as a negotiating forum.

The Group of 21 wishes to bid farewell and to thank the departing Ambassadors of Egypt and Switzerland for their contributions to work of the Conference on Disarmament. We wish them every success in their future endeavours.

The President: I thank the representative for his statement on behalf of the Group of 21. The next speaker on my list is the representative of Cuba. You have the floor.

Mr. Quintanilla Román (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, allow me to congratulate you on assuming the presidency of the Conference. From our own experience we know that this is a difficult time, since we need to reach agreement on the final report to the General Assembly. However, we are convinced that with your skills and experience and under your guidance we will successfully complete our work. We also wish the best of luck to the ambassadors of Egypt and Switzerland, in their professional and personal life, as they end their term of office in the Conference and in Geneva.

Cuba fully associates itself with the two statements made by the Ambassador of the Syrian Arab Republic on behalf of the Group of 21. As for the item on today's agenda — the revitalization of the Conference — we would like to make the following comments: we reaffirm the importance of multilateralism as the basic principle of negotiations on disarmament.

Solutions reached on a multilateral basis, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, are the only sustainable means of addressing issues related to disarmament and international security. Within the disarmament machinery, the Conference on Disarmament plays an indispensable role in the negotiation of universally acceptable treaties. If the Conference did not exist, it would have to be established without delay.

We regret that the Conference has been unable to carry out substantive work for more than a decade. Some insist that this is due to the working methods and rules of this body. Cuba does not share that view. It is no coincidence that, for the twelfth consecutive time, the United Nations Disarmament Commission concluded its work this year without reaching agreement on any substantive recommendations. Furthermore, every year, dozens of resolutions adopted by the First Committee, particularly those relating to nuclear disarmament, are simply not complied with.

Cuba is in favour of making the best possible use of the United Nations disarmament machinery, including the Conference on Disarmament; but we are convinced that the paralysis currently affecting much of the disarmament machinery is due, first and foremost, to the unwillingness of some States to make real progress, particularly on matters of nuclear disarmament. The Conference should adopt, as soon as possible, a comprehensive and balanced programme of work, taking into account the real priorities in the field of disarmament.

Cuba is prepared to negotiate, in parallel with the Conference, a treaty which eliminates and bans nuclear weapons, prohibits an arms race in outer space, provides effective security guarantees for non-nuclear-weapon States like Cuba, and which bans the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. We believe that the Conference has the capacity to undertake these negotiations together.

Furthermore, the proposals to change the procedures we have heard about would only be cosmetic and would not meet all the security interests of States parties. In the past, under the same rules, we managed to negotiate and approve important international instruments. This proves that it is the change of circumstances that is the cause of the real lack of political will of the great Powers, especially the nuclear ones, who do not wish the disarmament machinery, including the Conference, to make progress. The current status quo is very comfortable for some, who hold others responsible for the deadlock and demonstrate their alleged "intention" to negotiate, while retaining their nuclear arsenals. That is the truth, let us not fool ourselves.

The President: I thank the representative of Cuba for his statement and for his kind words addressed to me. The next speaker on my list is the representative of India. Ambassador Sujata Mehta, you have the floor.

Ms. Mehta (India): Mr. President, I am happy to felicitate you on taking over the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and to assure you of our fullest cooperation. I am also happy to have this opportunity to appreciate the work and contribution of Ambassador Badr who is leaving Geneva and of Ambassador Fasel who, though he is leaving us, is not actually leaving Geneva.

In the view of my delegation it is useful to remember that since multilateralism took its present form, the international community has always found it expedient and useful, whatever its form and name, to have a standing disarmament negotiating forum of limited size, distinct from deliberative bodies of universal membership, and with the appropriate rules of procedure.

While designating the Conference on Disarmament as the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament specified that the Conference on Disarmament will take its decisions on the basis of consensus. This is particularly important as this rule ensures that every member State's vital and legitimate security interests are protected and that negotiated outcomes have the legitimacy that global disarmament instruments deserve. In the view of my delegation doing away with or diluting the rule of consensus through any artificial distinctions between substance and procedure as has been noted would have an adverse impact on the confidence which member States have in this body and thereby on its effective functioning.

While we share this disappointment that the Conference on Disarmament has been unable this year again to undertake its primary task of negotiating multilateral treaties, it is not the Conference on Disarmament rules of procedure that are to be blamed. Let me also make a broader point that the rules of procedure in our view do cater for a variety of situations. They provide several mechanisms for conducting work by way of plenary meetings, informal meetings, with or without experts and "under any additional arrangements agreed by the Conference". There is also a provision "to establish subsidiary bodies, such as ad hoc subcommittees, working groups, technical groups or groups of governmental experts". Given such flexibility in the choice of working mechanisms, the rules of procedure in themselves do not stand in the way of the creative use of any mechanism as long as there is reasonable expectation on the part of the members of the Conference on Disarmament that any chosen arrangement would serve a productive purpose.

The Conference on Disarmament's agenda is a reflection of the long-standing objectives of the international community on disarmament, many of which remain unfulfilled. As the Conference on Disarmament is a negotiating forum, the inclusion of an item in the Conference on Disarmament's annual agenda implies that the international community seeks negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament for global agreements on that item. The road map is clear. We have negotiated in the Conference on Disarmament universal and non-discriminatory multilateral treaties dealing with two categories of weapons of mass destruction: biological weapons and chemical weapons. We need to work towards adopting a similar approach to deal with nuclear weapons. The global elimination of nuclear weapons remains the highest priority for negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament.

This was established by the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament and continues to be the priority of the Group of Non-Aligned States. When there has been requisite political will, the agenda and the programme of work have been adopted early enough in the year to allow the Conference to begin and carry on substantive work. The issue therefore is not the structure or content of the programme of work. The issue today is a deeper one and that is one of the absence of common understandings on fundamentals which is evident in the fractured consensus on disarmament issues. In the

view of my delegation, we need an intensification of dialogue among United Nations Member States for rebuilding and strengthening the international consensus on disarmament and non-proliferation. In particular, there is 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 in national security doctrines.

As we debate the issue of the revitalization of the Conference on Disarmament, we should remember that the disarmament machinery cannot be looked at in isolation from the larger international security architecture and the need for broader reform in the United Nations. Introduction of ad hoc and piecemeal changes would not be productive or necessarily effective. The Movement of Non-Aligned Countries has emphasized the need to convene another special session of the General Assembly dedicated to disarmament. That would be an acceptable and an authoritative way to revisit the disarmament agenda and the machinery established by the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.

In conclusion, in our view, the Conference on Disarmament is not an organization with programmes and project delivery mechanisms. It is a forum with valuable expertise and unrivalled credibility ready to be used when we, its members, so decide. It continues to have the mandate, the membership, the credibility and the rules of procedure to discharge this responsibility. We hope that our debate today will reaffirm the critical role of the Conference on Disarmament as the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum and help build positive momentum for the resumption of substantive work, including negotiations as we were poised to do in May 2009 on the basis of document CD/1864.

The President: I thank the representative of India, Ambassador Mehta, for her statement and now, colleagues, I am looking at the watch, getting a bit worried because I think it is in your interest if I inform you today about how I intend to approach the work on the report. So I would interrupt the discussion on the revitalization of the Conference on Disarmament for a moment and give you this information. And then we would see how much time is left today to continue in our discussion on revitalization and, if necessary, I would have to ask you to make these statements next week.

Now, as I indicated earlier, the consideration and adoption of the report will take centre stage in the final presidency of the session. I would add, however, that I continue to feel that every President has the duty to explore whether there are any possibilities of making progress with regard to the programme of work. In fact, I have already started consultations to that effect. But I have to say with much regret that, given the situation as it is well known in this chamber, I am afraid that I will not need much time or many rounds of consultations to find out that the prospects for consensus on a programme of work continue to be very dim indeed at the present time.

Turning to the report, I would like to underline that in this respect I am a true believer in our rules of procedure, which stipulate in rule 45 that “the reports of the Conference shall be factual and reflect the negotiations and work of the Conference”. As a matter of fact, I regard it as my duty as President to provide you, the members, with a draft report which reflects the factual situation of the Conference as accurately as possible.

While it is true that reports of the Conference on Disarmament have customarily been largely procedural, that does not mean that they have to be restricted to stating bare formal facts like when meetings took place, what the agenda looked like, who delivered statements and which documents were circulated. If reports of this type are to be of any real use beyond sheer practicalities, their recipients or addressees, in our case the General Assembly of the United Nations, have a legitimate right to learn from them, as a bare minimum, whether the submitting institution is actually fulfilling the task and mandate given to it. Just by way of comparison: no one would accept it if a listed company were to

confine its report to technical formalities, while making no, or only the most hazy, statements about whether it had been doing any business at all in the last couple of years – not to speak about making a profit.

Colleagues, let me briefly outline the process of the consideration and adoption of the report. As a first step I have shared a draft with my P6 colleagues this morning. All delegations will be delivered advance copies in English this coming Thursday, 23 August, in their pigeonholes. Translations in all official languages will be made available on 30 August, which — as required by article 44 of the rules of procedure — is exactly two weeks before the scheduled date for the adoption of the report, i.e. 13 September.

The first reading of the draft report will take place in the plenary meeting on Tuesday, 28 August, in which I would ask you to make comments of a general nature, but which may also include overall indications where you might wish to propose amendments. The drafting work I intend to do in informal meetings, but with interpretation provided. In order to prepare appropriately for that I would expect to deal only with amendments which are sent in writing to the secretariat by Thursday, 30 August, at 3 p.m. I would like to repeat this, I would expect to deal only with the amendments which are sent in writing to the secretariat by 30 August, at 3 p.m.

The secretariat would then circulate a compilation of all amendments received, with attribution, by Friday, 31 August, close of business. The first drafting session will take place immediately following the plenary meeting on Tuesday, 5 September.

Colleagues, I would like to express my confidence that the draft report you will receive this Thursday will command broad consensus.

Since the question of the rule of consensus continues to be a matter of much debate in this chamber — which is not surprising given the role it has played in making things possible or not possible in our work in the last decade or so — let me quite emphatically say at this point that, in my book of multilateralism, working towards consensus is a goal of great importance. At the same time it has to be said as well that for multilateralism to be effective, achieving consensus must not be misunderstood as a licence to force vast majorities to settle for outcomes at the very lowest common and at times banal denominator. We should not harbour any illusions: if achieving consensus is misunderstood as a free ticket to veto whatever one does not like, even if entirely isolated on an issue which is not involving one's fundamental interests, multilateralism cannot achieve any substantive results at all. If and when this happens multilateralism starts to exist for its own sake as a more or less empty process. The Conference on Disarmament represents a good example of this danger.

Colleagues, as President, I am in your hands. You can count on my readiness to listen and to consult with delegations; I am also happy to come to group meetings if desired. But at the end of the day the outcome of our endeavours on the report is, and represents, our collective work. I count on the support of each and every one of you in producing a report which reflects truthfully what has happened in the Conference on Disarmament in the 2012 session.

It is my hope that the report can be adopted swiftly. Since a number of colleagues will be away for the Convention on Cluster Munitions Meeting of States Parties in Oslo in the last week of our session, I would hope we can conclude the work on the report on a provisional basis already by Friday, 7 September, with the formal adoption to take place in the last week of this year's session. Once this is achieved I will, as is customary, invite you in the second half of September to informal meetings to prepare the draft Conference on Disarmament resolution for this year's First Committee of the General Assembly. We will schedule these meetings in a pragmatic perspective whenever it appears useful to have these informal meetings.

In conclusion, let me say that I look forward to our work on the report and the Conference on Disarmament resolution and I hope that, with the much valued assistance of the secretariat, I can make a useful contribution.

This ends what I wanted to convey to you on our common work before us.

Does anyone wish to address this item directly now?

I recognize the representative of Pakistan. You have the floor please.

Mr. Khan (Pakistan): Since I'm taking the floor for the first time, let me congratulate you on the assumption of the Conference on Disarmament presidency. I'll be very short here, to the point, and I would also wish to reassure you of my delegation's cooperation in fulfilling your fundamental tasks, one of the fundamental tasks being the writing of the report. You gave your understanding of what reports should be but — since you spoke on record, I also wish to speak on record — that report, irrespective of the President's own interpretation and understanding of what purpose it should or should not serve, is collective endeavour of the body, which is the Conference on Disarmament. Secondly, I also take note of your rather innovative, I would say, interpretation of the rule of consensus. I think that's germane to this debate today. We were listening to the delegation of Egypt, for example and the distinguished Ambassador of India on what the rule of consensus means: again, irrespective of the President's interpretation of the rule of consensus, we all know what the rule of consensus is. Having said that I wish to reassure you of my delegation's full cooperation and understanding and we'll be constructive in trying to conclude the report as soon as possible.

The President: I thank the representative of Pakistan for his statement and I see that the delegation of Algeria has asked for the floor. You have the floor please.

Mr. Khelif (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, first of all my delegation would like to congratulate you on assuming the presidency of the Conference, assure you of its full support and wish you every success. We know that we can count on your professional skills and experience to ensure the successful conclusion of our work, particularly with regard to the adoption of the programme of work and the annual report.

My delegation would like to commend the efforts of your predecessor, Mr. Simon-Michel, the Ambassador of France, and the members of his delegation who were able to inject some dynamism into the proceedings under their presidency of the Conference.

Concerning the annual report, first of all, my delegation would like to state that the conclusion you presented at the opening of the session in which you recalled the positive and negative aspects of the current session, by and large, reflects what has been achieved in the Conference. If we base ourselves on this factual presentation, in accordance with the rules of procedure, Conference procedure and established practice concerning the elements to be included in the annual report, we are confident that we can adopt, without further delay, a report reflecting all the discussions held in the Conference.

In this connection, we would also like the report to address, in particular, the activities of the Conference on Disarmament, since we have listened with great interest to what has been said by some delegations about what should be covered in the annual report, especially during today's discussion on revitalizing the Conference on Disarmament. My delegation would also like to point out — and this is also for the record — that this discussion is based on an initiative of the Ethiopian presidency. The discussion on the revitalization of the Conference was not the result of a formal decision taken by the Conference on Disarmament. We supported and commended the initiative, but it remains an initiative of the presidency. We believe, in keeping with the spirit of General Assembly resolution 66/66, that the most appropriate place to hold a discussion on the revitalization of the general disarmament machinery is the fourth special session of the General Assembly

devoted to disarmament, and the Group of 21 and the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries are still requesting that such a conference should be convened.

The President: I thank the representative of Algeria for his statement and I see the Islamic Republic of Iran has requested the floor, I take it is also on the procedure of the report and not on revitalization because I have a list of speakers. Please, you have the floor.

Mr. Daryaei (Islamic Republic of Iran): Mr. President, as this is the first time that I am taking the floor under your presidency I would like to congratulate you on the assumption of the presidency of the Conference. I assure you of the full cooperation of this delegation.

Mr. President, you elaborated on some of the elements for factual reports which reflect the work of the Conference on Disarmament. I just wanted to add, if you allow me, of course that's one of the principles, and that would be to somehow follow the past practices that we adopted because we really do not want to reinvent the wheel. We had a past practice which really helped us to get consensus and I'm sure that you will also take this factor into account, in your principle regarding guiding the work of the Conference on the report.

The President: I thank the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran. I can assure him that I am certainly not planning to reinvent the wheel. I do not see other requests for the floor on this particular point, so I will return to the list of speakers on the issue of revitalization of the Conference on Disarmament, and the next speaker on the list is the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Ambassador So Se Pyong.

Mr. So Se Pyong (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Mr. President, thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to take the floor otherwise I would miss the chance today.

First of all I have also to join previous ambassadors and representatives who have expressed their farewell greetings to the outgoing Ambassadors of Egypt and Switzerland. I also wish them all the best in their future and high offices. I would also like to warmly congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. I am confident that with your wisdom and diplomatic experience, you will surely guide the proceedings of the Conference in an impartial, objective and balanced manner. You can count on the support and cooperation of my delegation.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea associates itself with the two statements read by the distinguished Ambassador of the Syrian Arab Republic on behalf of the Group of 21.

The principle of equality is a fundamental rule of conduct to be observed in relations among States. Failure to observe the principle of equality would lead to the violation of the sovereignty of countries in the international arena and the appearance of unequal relations among countries, by allowing some countries to conduct high-handed and arbitrary acts, hurdles in the way of ensuring democracy in the international community.

Now, some countries still seek to preserve and strengthen unequal relations on the basis of their superior military potential. On the one hand, they have pursued a policy of nuclear blackmail, ignoring the requirements and the obligations of international law, while stepping up preparations for mounting a pre-emptive nuclear attack on other countries at any moment. Such behaviour runs counter to the demands of the international community and disturbs peace and stability in all parts of the world.

The application of double standards is an expression of extremely arbitrary practice in international relations and is not helpful to the development of the world situation. If double standards are allowed, it will not only make international relations unfair and

complicated, but also make it impossible to settle world affairs fairly. It is the view of my delegation that the existing double standards policy and unequal relations among countries obstruct the Conference on Disarmament's progress.

Nevertheless, some countries assert that the solution to the problem of the Conference on Disarmament is to change or reinterpret its rules of procedure with the consensus principle at the core and its working method; but my delegation does not share this assertion. We do believe that it is possible to build confidence within the Conference on Disarmament and create a true political environment for negotiation and dialogue only when the principle of cooperation, reciprocity and non-interference in each other's internal affairs is strictly observed among countries.

Regarding other options outside the body, we also believe that there is no alternative for the Conference on Disarmament at this stage. As the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum mandated by the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament in 1978, the Conference is a unique body for the negotiation of universally accepted disarmament treaties. We take this opportunity to reiterate support for an early convening of a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, which is overwhelmingly favoured by the non-aligned and other developing countries.

Nuclear disarmament is the prime issue to be addressed in the field of disarmament. Disarmament can be said to have attained its goal only when the total elimination of nuclear arsenals leading to nuclear disarmament is achieved. Accordingly, the prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons and their total elimination should be considered as the basic mission of nuclear disarmament. We therefore consider that there is an urgent need for the early commencement of negotiations within the Conference on Disarmament, through a phased programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons with a specified framework of time, including a nuclear weapons convention. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea will make its positive contribution to the common efforts for a fair settlement of the issue in the future too.

The President: I thank the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Ambassador So Se Pyong, for his statement and for his kind words addressed to the President.

Colleagues, it is now about 13 or 14 minutes to 6. I have still a number of speakers on my list. The interpreters have graciously accepted to work on a bit longer, if statements are reasonably short we have a chance to come through. So I would ask you to keep that time constraint in mind.

And the next speaker on my list is the representative of Ireland, Ambassador Corr.

Mr. Corr (Ireland): Mr. President, may I first congratulate you warmly on your assumption of the office of President of the Conference on Disarmament. It goes without saying that Ireland will give you every cooperation and support, and may I also wish the Ambassadors of Egypt and Switzerland every success in their new posts and thank them for their contributions to the Conference on Disarmament and to disarmament.

This is our second annual plenary discussion this year on revitalization of the Conference on Disarmament. It is unlikely, to put it mildly, that we are going to find in these discussions any magic key to unfreeze the stalemate that has prevented this body doing any substantive work for well over a decade.

Nonetheless, it is important in these discussions to register once again regret at this failure and also to say two main things: that this failure has shaped our past, not necessarily our future; and second, that time is running out for this body. It is facile to think that there is a single simple cause for our continued paralysis in the Conference on Disarmament. Nor is it true that there is a wider failure of political will — a failure that might somehow justify

our paralysis in the Conference on Disarmament — in the wider international community to move forward multilateral disarmament negotiations. Outside the Conference on Disarmament, we need only look at progress and agreements reached on cluster munitions and anti-personnel landmines to show that this is not true.

That said, there is not a great deal of point either in placing the failure only in this room. The international community, going back to the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament in 1978, has favoured a single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum. We have to now ask, is this as strictly necessary as it once was judged to be? As a United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) paper pointed out two years ago, it is no longer a big deal to convene a negotiating forum when negotiations on a specific set of disarmament issues are required.

And yet, a single multilateral disarmament negotiation body — a functioning one — would be an enormous asset to the international community, and the United Nations and in advancing disarmament which is itself a key dimension of strengthening international peace and security. But to do this we need to look at both process and substance, although of course they are in this case, in some ways, two sides of one coin. The Secretary-General of the United Nations put it well two years ago in opening the high-level meeting on the work of the Conference on Disarmament and taking forward multilateral disarmament negotiations when he said “moving forward requires political courage, creativity, flexibility and leadership”. We are still at this point today.

Ireland considers that the consensus rule, as interpreted and applied in the Conference on Disarmament, has to be re-examined when it comes to issues of procedure in our work. We do not consider, for that matter, under rule 28, that a programme of work, which includes a schedule of activities for the session should be subject, as a theological principle, to consensus. It is a recipe for paralysis.

We strongly favour all United Nations Member States who wish to be able to do so joining the Conference on Disarmament. We consider this would greatly strengthen the multilateral disarmament machinery. Ireland would also like to see this happen as a matter of urgency, on its own merits and regardless of other issues.

We strongly favour strengthening the ties between this body and civil society and academia: this could only be to the good as happened elsewhere in international and United Nations forums.

If it helps — although less because of any great hopes than that it may clarify the issues that hardly need any more clarity — we could also consider appointing a special coordinator to look at all issues relating to our work or lack of it and make recommendations on how we could move forward. Alternatively, we could establish a time limited working group to look at procedural issues, including the issue of presidencies, but also substantive issues such as how a programme of work/schedule of activities could be made to work.

We are under a very serious illusion if we think the Conference on Disarmament any longer has a constituency of support or respect in the international community. The concept of a single multilateral disarmament negotiation body is valued, but each year that value is diminished by our failure here.

In conclusion, we have run out of time in seeking to any longer make excuses for the profound and prolonged paralysis in the Conference on Disarmament. Either we or the General Assembly will soon have to take action: it would be best if the decision to have a working Conference on Disarmament was taken in the Conference itself, but, if not, it must be taken elsewhere.

The President: I thank Ambassador Corr for his statement and let me just say I have now six more speakers on the list. I will see how far we get. The next speaker on my list is the representative of Indonesia. Ambassador Yusup, you have the floor please.

Mr. Yusup (Indonesia): Mr. President, allow me, first of all, to congratulate you on assuming the presidency of the Conference. I wish to assure you of our full cooperation and support in your endeavours to move the Conference forward. I will try to be very brief.

Indonesia associates itself with the statement made by the Ambassador of the Syrian Arab Republic on behalf of the Group of 21.

Despite many challenges facing the Conference, Indonesia remains optimistic. If we continue, with enthusiasm, an open and honest dialogue amongst us, I believe we can find ways and means for the Conference to make progress. Indonesia stands ready and is pleased to engage and contribute to this dialogue.

In this spirit and in order to revitalize the Conference, Indonesia is of the view that the following steps are necessary. First, political will is imperative. Second, the Conference should adopt a balanced and comprehensive programme of work. Third, we also see the merit of establishing an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament. Fourth, we need to make the process more inclusive through the possible expansion of the membership of the Conference and possible participation of civil society and NGOs.

Finally, I would like to conclude by reiterating Indonesia's support for the work of the Conference. Let us work together to ensure that the Conference is able to fulfil its mandate and commence its substantive work.

The President: I thank Mr. Yusup for his statement and in particular also for the brevity of his statement if I may say so. The next speaker on the list is the representative of the Netherlands, Ambassador van den IJssel.

Mr. van den IJssel (The Netherlands): Mr. President, I will do my best but I don't know whether I will match Indonesia. I'll try to be brief. First of all, of course, let me assure you at the beginning of your presidency of our full support for the weeks ahead and your presidency and I also would like to say farewell and join others in that effort to say farewell to Hisham Badr and Alexandre Fasel, our two distinguished colleagues who are leaving us. I hope that their delegations will convey to them that I enjoyed very much working with them and I wish them all the best in their future endeavours.

Mr. President, it is no surprise to you and I think to other delegates that the Netherlands has considered the issue of revitalization to be of great importance. We have expressed our views and unfortunately, I have to add, our growing frustration many times here in the Conference on Disarmament and in New York and on other occasions. Growing frustration, let me stress that, because we value multilateral disarmament as one of the important tools that can and should help us to achieve a more secure and stable world. It is in our view vital to our collective security.

In our earlier session on this issue we already concluded that, realistically, the chance of starting multilateral disarmament negotiations here in the Conference on Disarmament this year are very slim. Now it is the end of August and in the Conference on Disarmament calendar that is almost the end of the year and, I just repeat your words, it is very unlikely that we will have a working programme and hence, multilateral disarmament negotiations, this year in the Conference on Disarmament. That means another lost year and, whatever will be the exact wording of our report to the General Assembly later this year, in our view the main message should be, unfortunately, that for the fourteenth or fifteenth year, I lost count I must say, in a row the Conference on Disarmament was not able to fulfil its mandate.

Because of the importance we attach to the issue, we have been involved in the past years actively in drafting and submitting resolutions to the First Committee and the General Assembly. Last year, together with our colleagues from South Africa and Switzerland we submitted resolution 66/66, which was adopted by consensus, and as my Swiss colleague already pointed out by adopting that resolution by consensus we all agreed that, if necessary, the General Assembly should be ready to further explore options for multilateral disarmament negotiations. And if we do find multilateral disarmament important, if we do think multilateral disarmament is an important tool to improve collective security, we think it's necessary to look at options with a creative and open mind. We, as we have said many times, are willing to look at and discuss all options within but also outside the Conference on Disarmament and we, like many other delegations, have spent a lot of time thinking about possible options that may be both useful and viable. And I regret I cannot present the egg of Columbus or the magic key as my Irish colleague just said. I have not heard of such an egg or key being presented by someone else yet, and maybe it's impossible to find a single egg or a single key, and will be very difficult to find the ideal option; but I also think that with our collective creativity we may come up with something that helps us to make meaningful progress. We for our part remain supportive of every effort that can get the Conference on Disarmament, and more importantly multilateral disarmament negotiations, back on track. That's also why we have, together with Germany, organized the expert meetings on an FMCT. The first meetings took place in May and, as you have already mentioned, Mr. President, the second meetings are scheduled next Tuesday and Wednesday, on 28 and 29 August, here in the Palais, in room VII, and invitations and an agenda have been circulated to all delegations.

Mr. President, progress in multilateral work is often described as a combination of 999 steps backwards and 1,000 forwards. A certain amount of patience and most certainly optimism, as we heard from Ambassador Badr, are therefore indispensable requirements for a multilateral diplomat. And let me end therefore, despite our frustration, let me end by expressing the hope that we the Conference on Disarmament delegates and perhaps the United Nations community at large, with sufficient creativity, open mindedness and flexibility will be able to make that step number 1,000 shortly.

The President: I thank Ambassador van den IJssel for his statement. The next speaker on my list is the representative of Chile, Ambassador Oyarce. You have the floor please.

Mr. Oyarce (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, my delegation congratulates you. You can count on our support and we will begin by trying to be as brief as possible. We would also like to acknowledge the input and contributions to this forum by the ambassadors of Egypt and Switzerland.

In various discussions, not only those related to revitalization, mention has been made of the conditions affecting political will, which seems to be a key concept. There are probably internal and external conditions involved and it seems pointless to argue in favour of one or the other; they interact and are mutually reinforcing, hopefully, in a virtuous circle.

It would seem necessary, as the Ambassador of the Netherlands said, to support various efforts to revive the Conference. And if, in that connection, we need to refer to revitalization, we believe it is appropriate to do so. With this reasoning we will refer to five very specific points – procedural rules.

First, it has been suggested that a change in the rules of procedure could help us come closer to negotiations. The conditions do not seem right for departing from the rule of consensus. What is clear, however, is that we should avoid the use of consensus that will lead to situations of paralysis. In short, the consensus rule has become a sort of institutional

safeguard or essential condition for the functioning of this Conference. We do not see as a realistic option the assumption that there is scope for amending this rule, as legitimate as the positions of those who hope to change the consensus may be. What does seem possible is to reach agreement on better practices, such as not resorting to consensus when discussing procedural matters.

Second, extending the term of office of the presidents, could increase, it is said, the productivity of the Conference. The possibility of changing the structure of the P6 could also be considered, which would probably facilitate substantive work. We are simply thinking about practical measures, but, ultimately, we will have to assess whether the Conference should continue to meet with the same frequency.

Third, extending the duration of the programme of work. As has been repeatedly stated here this afternoon, the programme of work is a substantive matter. It is not easy to change this annual process, in accordance with rule 27 of the rules of procedure, but we believe that it is necessary to find a way, through a special agreement, to structure a programme of work with a time frame that, for strategic purposes, would go beyond one year. More than a procedural matter, this a political one that should be reflected in a balanced programme of work.

Fourth, the review of the disarmament machinery: we are not contemplating drastic changes, it is clear that the machinery is not in line with what was agreed on during the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. The links and interaction between the various forums can facilitate the process of revitalization. An assessment should also be made, probably in the United Nations Disarmament Commission, of the resolutions of the First Committee, many of which are directly related to the Conference agenda.

Clearly the link between this Conference and the General Assembly is special, but it should never be a limitation on dynamic interaction. What interests us is the effectiveness of multilateral disarmament. That is the essential issue and it is a political issue.

Fifth, a modern multilateral system, and the disarmament machinery should aspire to that, should enjoy the greater involvement of civil society and other institutions. Finding a way of achieving that is our responsibility, since it affects the very legitimacy and credibility of this forum.

Lastly, I would like to point out that the Secretary-General of the Conference has put forward his ideas for this critical stage. We believe that such initiatives could include an analysis of revitalization. In particular, we endorse the idea that the political and procedural aspects should be worked on in parallel, as they are mutually reinforcing concepts.

What is clear is that it is hard to consider concrete options for revitalizing the Conference in the present climate without reviving, as has been mentioned, a substantive political commitment. Evidently, and with this I will conclude, there is a general willingness to preserve this forum and thus addressing the issue of revitalization may also be appropriate.

Chile is willing to make a modest contribution to this process because our intention is not to replace the Conference, but to try to revive its substantive activities as soon as possible.

The President: Dear colleagues, can I say again that interpreters were so kind to offer us their interpretation services until 6.15 p.m., but that is really, you know, sharp. If necessary, we might continue without interpretation, but I would hope that we get through everything by 6.15 p.m. Could I now give the floor to the representative of Sweden, please.

Mr. Lindell (Sweden): I am very much aware of the late hour. I will be very brief. Mr. President, allow me to congratulate you on the assumption of the presidency of the Conference at this important juncture and to wish you success in your work.

My remarks on revitalization can be brief, since the European Union took the floor in the discussions on 14 June, as did the Swedish delegation on a national basis at that time. My delegation's position remains unchanged. In short, we welcome the debate as such, and many of the proposals expressed by the Secretary-General of the Conference and by delegations. This includes, *inter alia*, proposals on the length of each presidency, extension of the lifespan of any programme of work, openness towards a broadening of the membership, and increased transparency and inclusiveness.

The fact that we are approaching the end of yet another session, having again in all likelihood failed to reach agreement on a programme of work and to conduct substantive work, is lamentable. In the absence of substantive negotiations, the Conference turning some of its attention to revitalization and reform is appropriate and probably necessary we believe. Whether it is sufficient is perhaps another matter.

Having said this, we would submit though that the discussion has been a valuable feature of this year's session, and one which might have some potential for progress. Therefore, and if the stalemate in the Conference persists, we would welcome its continuation and its follow-up in a speedy and action-oriented manner.

The President: I thank the representative of Sweden for his statement. I was just informed by the secretariat that for technical reasons we cannot go on beyond 6.15 p.m., so we have exactly seven minutes left. We will see how it works out. If necessary, I will conclude the meeting by 6.15 p.m. and we can take up this item in our next plenary next week.

The representative of Algeria asked for the floor.

Mr. Khelif (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, my delegation would like to convey its best wishes to all Muslim colleagues for Eid al-Fitr, and join previous speakers in wishing good luck to the ambassadors of Switzerland and Egypt, who are leaving the Conference on Disarmament; we commend their efforts and contribution to the Conference.

Sir, your presidency comes at a time when we have to negotiate and adopt the report of the Conference to the General Assembly on the activities carried out during this session, which, unfortunately, failed to give effect to the numerous General Assembly resolutions that the Secretary-General transmitted to us at the beginning of the session; we also have to consider the results, which are also, unfortunately, not encouraging.

This second round of discussions on the revitalization of the Conference comes at a good time, and we hope that it will allow us to address the main causes of the deadlock in our work and to consider together, with the sense of responsibility that is incumbent upon us, the path to follow so that the Conference can fulfil its mandate. Algeria is firmly committed to the Conference on Disarmament as the sole multilateral negotiating body on disarmament and believes that the international security conditions and multiple security threats and challenges facing the Conference require an urgent response. Algeria also believes that, faced with such dangers, the members of the Conference might call into question the relevance of the Conference. In order to understand the situation in which the Conference finds itself, there must be a thorough analysis of the relationship between the mandate, environment, rules of procedure and functioning of the Conference. This exercise should also take into account the mandates of other bodies and parallel negotiating forums whose field of activities could directly affect the functioning of the Conference. Various interpretations, explanations and proposed solutions have been provided by different groups of States, according to their agenda. Basically, in my delegation's view, the paralysis in the

Conference is not caused by the approach adopted. The main reason, as rightly pointed out by the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters in document A/66/125 of 11 July 2011, is the lack of political will. Specifically, it is the combination of political factors stemming mainly from the diverging views of States and groups of member States concerning the priorities to be established and how to strike a balance between the mandates and elements of the programme of work, particularly for nuclear disarmament.

It will be recalled that the Conference was established in 1978 during the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament in order to revitalize the disarmament machinery at that time. Its mandate was to negotiate disarmament instruments with a view to facilitating the implementation of the programme of action adopted at that session, where nuclear disarmament was the highest priority.

Since then we have adopted the Chemical Weapons Convention and, despite constant appeals, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty has still not entered into force. Save these two exceptions, the Conference has not made any progress, especially in the field of nuclear disarmament. Moreover, there has been a delay in the implementation of systematic and progressive measures for the transparent, verifiable and irreversible elimination of nuclear arsenals because of the attitude of some nuclear Powers. Thus, the Conference is not the cause of the deadlock but is hostage to the lack of political will, and, as a result of its inaction, the whole process of nuclear disarmament is being held up.

Some minor adjustments could no doubt be made with regard to the functioning of the Conference, but to consider a solution to the impasse in the Conference from that standpoint alone, through the revision of the rules of procedure, for example, by limiting the scope of the consensus rule, could lead us down the wrong path. The Conference on Disarmament has worked in the past under the same rules and with the same terms of reference as those we have now.

The President: It does not give me any pleasure at all to have to do this, but we have to come to an end by 6.15 p.m. and I would kindly ask you and the other members, that is Nigeria and the Islamic Republic of Iran, to make their statements in our next plenary meeting. There is no other way. I am afraid we did not anticipate that there would be so many relatively long statements this afternoon. This only shows that we have a great interest in this matter. Therefore let me say that we had, I think, a very rich discussion this afternoon and I would like particularly also to thank the interpreters that they agreed to work beyond 6 o'clock.

And let me say that the next meeting will take place on Tuesday, 28 August, at 10 o'clock, and we will focus on the consideration and adoption of the annual report to the General Assembly of the United Nations.

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.