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# Conference on Disarmament

3 June 2014

Original: English

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## Final record of the one thousand three hundred and eighteenth plenary meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 3 June 2014, at 10.10 a.m.

*President:* Mr. Mukhtar Tileuberdi.....(Kazakhstan)



**The President:** I call to order the 1318th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

As you may recall, last week I suggested that we devote the present plenary meeting to the consideration of the proposal made by the Acting Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Michael Møller, on 20 May. After further consultations with many of you, I have decided that the plenary of today should also provide an opportunity for delegations to raise any other issue deemed important to our work.

With this in mind, I would like now to turn to the list of speakers for today. The following delegations have requested to take the floor: Japan, Malaysia, Ecuador, the Netherlands, Finland, Italy and France. I give the floor to Ambassador Sano of Japan.

**Mr. Sano (Japan):** Mr. President, since this is the first time for me to take the floor under your presidency, I would like to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and assure you of my delegation's full support throughout your tenure.

Today, I wish to briefly respond to the statement made by the Acting Secretary-General, Mr. Møller, on 20 May and set out some preliminary views of my delegation on the four proposals contained therein. These proposals are all dedicated to revitalizing the work of the Conference, and I would like to sincerely thank Mr. Møller for the leadership he has shown and for his thought-provoking ideas.

First, regarding the negotiations on areas of common ground with a view eventually to producing framework conventions, I would like to know in more detail what Mr. Møller has in mind as framework conventions. As my delegation has repeatedly emphasized, the priority of immediately commencing negotiation on a fissile material cut-off treaty remains unchanged. This does not, however, exclude Japan from accepting other measures addressed to achieving a secure world free of nuclear weapons, because we believe a number of concrete measures can be taken in parallel and simultaneously without aligning them in a strict linear sequence. Together with other member States, we therefore introduced the "building blocks" approach in the Open-ended Working Group last year, and referred to it at the third session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and in the Conference's informal meeting last week. Since nuclear disarmament influences national security, the emphasis here lies naturally upon the steady and continuous implementation of practical measures, or building blocks. We would like to know more about how the proposed framework convention would fit into this approach.

Furthermore, the majority of the States are already engaged in at least one solid framework, the NPT. Though it faces severe challenges these days, the NPT still serves as a fundamental overarching scheme covering the three pillars, including nuclear disarmament, and it is supported overwhelmingly by the majority of the international community. In the NPT there are already agreed benchmarks for nuclear disarmament, such as the 13 practical steps of the 2000 Review Conference and the action plan agreed in the 2010 final document. The priority should be placed first on accomplishing these benchmarks, so we will cautiously examine the necessity of another framework concerning nuclear disarmament on top of what we have under the NPT.

Second, I also would like to clarify if Mr. Møller has any specific ideas regarding the voluntary, politically binding regimes to be negotiated in the Conference. Although the Conference is a disarmament negotiating forum, as indicated in rule 1 of the rules of procedure, it does not explicitly confine its scope only to legally binding instruments. It is therefore possible to understand that the

Conference could negotiate such a politically binding instrument. At the same time, the momentum of commencing such a negotiation would mainly depend on what item was to be negotiated. If we can stimulate the appetite of the member States by finding an item of common interest, bringing added value to the international disarmament rule of law, this proposal could become a breakthrough in the deadlock we face. I therefore think it is worthwhile to further explore among ourselves what we negotiate as voluntary, politically binding regimes. This can be discussed in the informal working group, since we will be touching upon the question of how we shape a future negotiation.

Third, with regard to working methods, I think it is a good idea to establish a subsidiary body on this issue. As many member States have stressed over the past years, there should be something we can do to facilitate the work of the Conference without hindering the principle of the consensus rule. Since the stalemate has continued for a long period, it is utterly pertinent and healthy for the Conference to be motivated in reviewing and attempting to improve its working methods. For example, as suggested in Mr. Møller's statement, it is worth examining a longer duration of the presidency.

Fourth, Japan would be ready to participate in the Conference on Disarmament/civil society forum hosted by Mr. Møller. Since the Conference is the multilateral disarmament negotiating body, and what we are expected to negotiate here is directly related to our national security, the main actors in the Conference should be States. However, exchanges with civil society can be helpful to acquire public support, as well as their realistic understanding of States' intentions. One idea would be to hold such a forum, for example, after the end of the informal substantive meetings under the schedule of activities in mid-August.

**The President:** I thank Ambassador Sano for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. Now I give the floor to Ambassador Muhammad of Malaysia.

**Mr. Muhammad (Malaysia):** Mr. President, as this is also my first time in taking the floor, allow me to congratulate you on your assumption as President of the Conference on Disarmament. My delegation deeply appreciates the efforts and consultations that you, as well as the previous Presidents of the Conference, have undertaken thus far. I wish to assure you of our full cooperation and support for you to carry out your mandate as President.

We would also like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to Mr. Møller, the Acting Secretary-General of the Conference, for his address to the Conference on 20 May, sharing his thoughts on the way forward for the Conference. We have studied the four ideas proposed by the Acting Secretary-General, and we are of the view that the ideas merit further deliberation and study by members of the Conference.

As highlighted previously by my delegation, we feel that the continuing impasse in the Conference to establish its own programme of work reflects a serious lack of commitment on the part of delegations towards achieving the goal of general and complete disarmament, especially with regard to nuclear weapons. The Conference has been stagnant for far too long, and we, regretfully, have grown so accustomed to this period of inactivity that we have become lethargic. Mr. Møller's assertion that the Conference's negotiating mandate needs re-energizing is correct, but one wonders how, when the political climate remains the same as before.

The absence of consensus for the past 18 years on the way forward for its four core agenda items is more than sufficient reason for the Conference to take a step back and consider alternative means. Mr. Møller's first proposal — to consider negotiations

on areas of common ground, with a view to eventually producing framework conventions to which substantive protocols could be subsequently added — sounds like a practical suggestion. The Acting Secretary-General has provided examples in which this approach has proved to be effective. As it stands, the current deadlock is due to the different positions with regard to the four core issues. Rather than arguing about which is the Conference's priority, we can achieve progress by focusing on ideas, focusing on areas of shared interest and building upon these foundations. Then again: what are those common grounds or areas of shared interest? Are they sufficient or substantial enough to build upon, or too flimsy and fragile to withstand the test of divergent views? Mr. Møller would do us a great service if he could expand more on this proposal.

From our perspective, the Conference's role as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum is to negotiate legally binding instruments. In this regard, we would need further elaboration whether the second proposal on negotiating voluntary, politically binding regimes falls within the ambit of the Conference. Malaysia remains to be convinced whether non-legally binding or so-called politically binding instruments would be the way forward in the effective prohibition of nuclear weapons.

Malaysia also welcomes the proposal to establish a subsidiary body in accordance with rule 23 of the rules of procedure to examine and make proposals on the improvement of the working methods of the Conference. It is perhaps timely for the Conference to have a discussion on this matter as we explore whether its current methods are sufficient to meet the current demands of the ever-changing security environment.

There will be a number of proposals to amend the security methods, to be sure. Each will have its pros and cons, and we deserve to know all of them so we can make an informed decision. In this regard, we look forward to having further deliberations on this matter in the near future. Focusing on the consensus rule may not be the answer, but on paper it is unacceptable that the whole of the Conference could be prevented from doing its work by a minority. It would be interesting to see what new ideas could be explored to untangle this mess.

Finally, on Mr. Møller's proposal for the holding of an informal Conference on Disarmament/civil society forum to be hosted by the Secretary-General of the Conference, Malaysia has pointed out in the past that we recognize the positive contributions made by civil society in the field of disarmament. My delegation has certainly benefited from the active involvement of civil society in other disarmament forums and is of the view that the Conference would benefit tremendously through a similar arrangement.

Civil society has played positive roles in other United Nations forums, such as human rights and humanitarian assistance. We fail to see why it cannot contribute positively in the field of disarmament. Much of this resistance, we fear, is born out of the worry that civil society's stance of righteousness is not advantageous to certain quarters in the disarmament debate. We therefore look forward to receiving further elaboration on the modalities of such a forum. Perhaps this forum could take place initially outside of the Conference until such time as it becomes acceptable — which we hope will not be too long.

We keep hearing assertions by various delegations that the Conference is in danger of losing its relevance. We must now perhaps accept the fact that the Conference has already lost its relevance, since so many efforts are being undertaken outside its ambit, some of which were elaborated by Mr. Møller in his statement. We therefore welcome every proposal to advance the work of the Conference, and the

suggestions put forth by the Acting Secretary-General are certainly a positive contribution in the conduct of our work. We look forward for further discussions and elaboration on these proposals. Failure to even discuss them is a bad sign for the Conference.

**The President:** I thank Ambassador Muhammad for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. Now I give the floor to the representative of Ecuador.

**Mr. Avilés** (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): As this is the first time that the delegation of Ecuador is taking the floor during your presidency, allow me to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of these important functions and to wish you every success in them. My delegation pledges to provide full support and cooperation to your presidency and is convinced that, under your leadership and efforts, the Conference on Disarmament will make significant progress. The delegation of Ecuador would also like to recognize the important efforts made by the previous Presidents of the Conference — Israel, Italy and Japan — which have yielded tangible results, such as the re-establishment of the informal working group with a mandate to produce a programme of work robust in substance and progressive over time and the approval of the schedule of activities for substantive and focused discussions on all the items on the Conference's agenda.

The first informal discussions on nuclear disarmament held under the able leadership of the Ambassador of Egypt, whom we congratulate for his excellent work, demonstrate the usefulness and importance of this initiative. Delegations were actively involved in the topic, generating a number of good ideas that can constitute a common basis of shared interests and facilitate the commencement of multilateral negotiations on nuclear disarmament in this distinguished body. We wish the greatest success and pledge our full support to the Ambassadors of Germany, the United Kingdom, Chile and Belarus, who will lead informal discussions on the other items on the agenda of the Conference.

On 19 May, the informal working group held its first working meeting to discuss the proposals submitted by the Co-Chair and the Vice-Co-Chair. A draft programme of work was presented that included proposals for negotiation of all the items on the Conference's agenda. The informal discussions held as part of the schedule of activities could be instrumental to creating a common basis for negotiations. Proposals were also made to negotiate two of the core issues on the Conference's agenda in combination — agenda item 5 — aside from the four core items. These are efforts aimed at seeking consensus and putting an end to the long stalemate in the Conference, but they are not the only such efforts. The return of the Conference to negotiations is a shared responsibility of all member States, and the working group is therefore open to and looks forward to the cooperation and support of all the delegations, in particular to new suggestions and ideas for reaching consensus on the long-sought programme of work. The second meeting of the informal working group will take place immediately before or after the Third Review Conference in Maputo; the date and time will be communicated in a timely manner to the members of the Conference on Disarmament. In this regard, and in its national capacity, since the issue is being discussed within our regional group, my delegation supports your suggestion, Mr. President, to invite outside experts to the meetings of the informal working group, as it believes that their participation could be very useful to our work.

I would like now to share some preliminary comments from my delegation on the proposals presented in recent days by the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva and Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, Mr. Møller. I do so without prejudice to our making a subsequent statement on this matter once we receive replies to the queries passed on to our capital.

Regarding the first proposal, on attempting to negotiate a framework convention, we note with interest that this idea is used extensively in diplomatic relations to further the various aspects of bilateral and regional relations — their economic, social, cultural, educational and scientific aspects, for example. This is an interesting approach that has the advantage of trying to lead the Conference to negotiations, initially on a comprehensive or framework convention that should not present major obstacles, and would make it possible in the future to initiate negotiations on specific additional protocols on each item on the Conference's agenda. Ecuador is in favour of beginning negotiations in the Conference and, if, as with any other item, there is general consensus, it is prepared to provide its support.

Ecuador views with interest and favour the innovative proposal to negotiate politically binding instruments and supports that proposal in the belief that such instruments, by being politically accepted at the highest level, would substantially improve the international political climate and establish commitments in the sphere of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation that would enable later negotiations of legally binding treaties.

Regarding the Conference's working methods, Ecuador has stated on several occasions, and wishes to reiterate today, that the root cause of the stalemate in the Conference is the lack of flexibility and political will of States to start negotiations on nuclear disarmament. In any event, if there is consensus on this proposal, Ecuador will support it and is ready to become involved in analysing and developing it with a view to optimizing the methods of work, which can be improved.

Finally, on the interaction of the Conference with civil society and the idea of organizing a forum with broad participation by civil society, we naturally support and welcome this initiative. Ecuador believes that peace, international security, disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation are fundamental to the peaceful coexistence of the States and peoples of the world, so it strongly supports the active participation of civil society in the work of the Conference, as well as the expansion of the membership of this key body of the United Nations.

**The President:** I thank the representative of Ecuador for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. Now I give the floor to the representative of Poland.

**Mr. Flera (Poland):** Mr. President, first of all, let me congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. I would like to assure you of my delegation's full support for your efforts during this assignment. Let me also thank the Acting Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Møller, for his statement of 20 May, and make a few initial comments on some of his assessments and proposals.

My delegation continues to believe that the Conference is still able to regain its role as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating body, in particular in the area of nuclear disarmament. We share the Acting Secretary-General's assessment that the disarmament machinery, and the Conference in particular, has been clogged for much too long. Therefore, in our view, any proposals, including those made by the Acting Secretary-General, that may lead to breaking the Conference's deadlock deserve careful consideration.

At the same time, it is fair to say that the level of our engagement will depend on the assessment of whether or not suggested efforts will bring us closer to achieving a concrete, practical outcome to our work. By such an outcome, we understand first and foremost binding instruments negotiated by the Conference. With this in mind, let me share with you some facts on how this may relate to the proposals made by the Acting Secretary-General.

Concerning the schedule of activities, we already have at our disposal a large number of proposals and materials on all of the Conference's four core agenda items. Building on that and trying to identify during discussions the areas of common ground on each of the core issues can indeed move things a bit forward, without prejudice to whether and how this may be further used.

On negotiating politically binding regimes, it is a fact that we have a number of examples showing that politically binding regimes or even organizations built almost exclusively on political commitments, such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, can function quite effectively, even in challenging circumstances. At the same time, as the Acting Secretary-General has noted, the Conference does not exist in isolation and we are not meeting in a vacuum here in Geneva. Consequently, we cannot ignore the fact that trust in political declarations has recently been rather seriously undermined. This implies that efforts to rebuild this trust would probably be required before considering the issue in further depth.

Finally, concerning a review of the rules of procedure, which could also include relations with civil society, the question is to what extent consideration of this issue can be helpful in breaking the stalemate in the Conference. In our opinion, the principal problem faced by the Conference is of a political rather than procedural nature. Therefore, if we decide to have a discussion on the methods of work, we should frame it in a way that would lead to making this body more efficient.

Part of the reason for the long stalemate in the Conference can be found outside of this chamber. The debate in the Conference merely reflects the state of play in the international security environment. Just keeping the Conference busy would not be enough. We should focus on, as I have already said, achieving a concrete, practical outcome to our work or, using the words of the Acting Secretary-General, fulfilling our moral obligation to ensure that the Conference contributes to the broader efforts to build a safer and more secure world.

**The President:** I thank the representative of Poland for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. Now I give the floor to Ambassador Kairamo of Finland.

**Ms. Kairamo (Finland):** Allow me also to begin by congratulating you, Ambassador, on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. I wish you every success in this important endeavour, and you can trust that you will have the full support of my delegation.

With this statement, I would like to comment on some of the points raised by the Acting Secretary-General, Mr. Møller, in his speech two weeks ago. Finland welcomes all initiatives aimed at getting the Conference back to work. We agree with Mr. Møller that there have indeed been some positive developments in the disarmament field overall.

Today marks exactly one year since the first signing date of the Arms Trade Treaty on 3 June 2013. As of yesterday, 113 States had signed and 32 had ratified the Treaty, including my own country. Again today there is a ceremony in New York where several countries will deposit their instruments of ratification, bringing the number of ratifying States to about 40. We are hopeful that before the end of the summer we will reach the threshold of 50 ratifications, at which point the Treaty comes into force.

Regarding Syrian chemical weapons, we are pleased to note the progress in removal and destruction activities. Finland has been supporting this operation in various ways. The Finnish Institute for Verification of the Chemical Weapons Convention, as one of the laboratories designated by the Organization for the

Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), contributed to the investigation of a Syrian chemical weapons attack in August last year. My country's contribution to the two OPCW Syrian trust funds totals 650,000 euros. Furthermore, a Finnish chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear defence (CBRN) unit is taking part in the maritime transport operation conducted by Denmark and Norway. In addition, Finnish expertise will be used in the destruction of Syrian chemicals, as Finnish waste management company Ekokem will be one of the facilities in which the treatment and destruction of chemicals will take place.

Moreover, active discussions are under way in various forums. The Group of Governmental Experts is working on a recommendation on a fissile material cut-off treaty, and experts met recently under the framework of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons to discuss lethal autonomous weapons systems.

Agreements are reached and discussions are progressing elsewhere. How about in the Conference on Disarmament?

Regarding the Acting Secretary-General's specific proposals for the Conference, I would like to state as follows.

We are willing to explore ideas such as framework negotiations or negotiating politically binding regimes, for example within the context of the informal working group. We should not hold ourselves back if issues outside of our traditional agenda or a framework approach call for action.

We agree that the Conference's working methods are rather old-fashioned. The monthly rotation of the presidency, the blocked expansion of membership, the scant connections with civil society and the manner in which the consensus rule is applied are not really conducive for promoting an effective working environment.

Holding a Conference on Disarmament/civil society forum could be helpful and, at the same time, be a rather modest step for the Conference to get more engaged with civil society. Should such a forum be organized, the Conference could then consider possible further action as it sees fit.

I would like to thank the Acting Secretary-General, Mr. Møller, once again for his active engagement in the promotion of the work of the Conference and for his proposals.

**The President:** I thank Ambassador Kairamo for her statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to Ambassador Mati of Italy.

**Mr. Mati (Italy):** Mr. President, as this is the first time I am taking the floor during your presidency, allow me to join the previous speaker in congratulating you on your assumption of this important responsibility. I would also like to wish you a successful outcome to your presidency and, as one of the six Presidents of the current session, I can assure you of the full support of my delegation in your endeavours to take forward the work of the Conference on Disarmament. In that respect, we appreciated your constructive approach to move forward in line with the previous presidencies and your invitation to member States to exchange views and comments on the proposals made two weeks ago by the Acting Secretary-General, Mr. Møller.

On that point, let me express our gratitude to the Acting Secretary-General for his initiative aimed at encouraging a shared reflection on how we can further promote disarmament and revitalize the work of the Conference on its negotiating mandate. We greatly appreciated his statement to the Conference, and we consider the series of constructive proposals put forward in that context worthy of careful consideration. We deem a debate on these proposals useful as it would help our reflection on which concrete and practical steps could be taken to improve the efficiency and the

effectiveness of the work of the Conference. In particular, on the working methods of this body we share the view that the deadlock in the Conference is due primarily to a lack of political will. However, in the light of my previous experience as President of this Conference, I am also convinced that this body should rely on processes and procedures that facilitate its work on consensus-building, rather than making it more complicated.

Therefore, we welcome the proposal to review the Conference's working methods and to establish a subsidiary body for this purpose. A similar exercise, as you know, has been conducted in the past. Member States could usefully build upon the outcome of such work to identify possible best practices that could improve the functioning of the Conference.

We also favour the idea of having an informal Conference on Disarmament/civil society forum hosted by the Secretary-General before the end of 2014. Italy strongly believes that the Conference would benefit from greater integration and interaction with civil society — under appropriate modalities, of course. That would enable the Conference to receive valuable external inputs and expertise, and thereby advance its work. The forum proposed by Mr. Møller seems to us a very reasonable solution. It would provide an opportunity for the Conference to have a dialogue with civil society to assess its expectations and to identify ideas that could prove helpful to the work of the Conference. We share the view that the forum could take place after the completion of the schedule of activities agreed for this year.

We also welcome the other two proposals mentioned in the statement of the Acting Secretary-General on how to re-energize our negotiating activities. On that point we are ready to explore further the suggestions put forward by the Acting Secretary-General in the light of the substantive discussions under way within the framework of the schedule of activities and the informal working group.

**The President:** I thank Ambassador Mati for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to Ambassador Simon-Michel of France.

**Mr. Simon-Michel (France)** (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, I too would like to express my congratulations to you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. I assure you of my personal support and that of the French delegation in the performance of your duties. I am very pleased and honoured to work under your leadership. Kazakhstan has a unique record to draw on in the area of disarmament. Our two countries have just taken an important step towards nuclear disarmament with the signing, on 6 May 2014, in New York, of the protocol to the Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia. It was a great honour for me to sign the protocol on behalf of France. It is a major step forward and it demonstrates the effectiveness of the step-by-step approach underlying the action plan adopted by consensus at the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. The implementation of this action plan is under way.

Two weeks ago, we all listened carefully to the statement made by our Acting Secretary-General, Mr. Møller. That statement was an important one. It formulated ways of helping us to revitalize the Conference on Disarmament. Last year, as a result of the efforts and proposals of his predecessor, Mr. Tokayev, we managed to set up the informal working group.

Among the ideas set out by Mr. Møller were some relating to the working methods of the Conference. No one can be unaware of the deadlock existing in the Conference. The cause of this deadlock is primarily political: there is a “consensus minus one” on launching negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile

material for nuclear weapons. However, even if the deadlock is seen as something political rather than procedural, it should not prevent us from thinking about improving the work done in our forum.

It goes without saying that, for France, the consensus rule should be preserved. This rule ensures the participation of all relevant stakeholders. It also ensures that the negotiated agreements will be enforced by all those who have adopted them. For France, the consensus rule is therefore a requirement for effective multilateralism. Over the years, however, the practice of the Conference has gradually turned from consensus to unanimity, which is a much more formal and restrictive approach. A unanimity rule is applied, moreover, to all decisions, regardless of whether they are substantial or procedural in nature, at every stage of the procedure and regardless of the importance of the issue.

The role of the President needs also to be considered. There is no body that works effectively by consensus without a presiding officer able to make proposals, sum up positions and broker compromises. The situation was somewhat different in the past, when the Conference was negotiating; then, although the presidency of the Conference rotated every four weeks as it does now, the working groups had more stable presiding officers. Furthermore, the prerogatives of the President of the Conference have been scaled down over the years by an increasingly narrow interpretation of the rules of procedure.

Obviously, some procedural matters can be very important, for instance, the establishment of a working group, the decision to start negotiations or, indeed, the definition of a negotiation mandate. But when it comes to simply organizing thematic debates in the plenary as part of the agenda adopted at the beginning of the year, is it reasonable to require the same formalities and seek an explicit agreement of the Conference? By the same token, I believe that the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, for example, should be able to make statements at meetings in a more flexible fashion.

Mr. President, I do not recall our ever having ruled out considering commitments of a political nature. Political commitments often play an important role in the field of arms control. In my view, we must be open to this proposal. I think that one reason for our having largely neglected to explore this avenue in the past is that we are in thrall to the “four core items” concept that we have allowed ourselves to be confined to. We have therefore often preferred to leave such political instruments to other disarmament machinery institutions, as was the case with the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, which was negotiated at the United Nations General Assembly.

Our Acting Secretary-General has also proposed organizing, within the framework of the Conference, a forum for informal discussion open to various speakers, speakers from academia, I imagine, or from think tanks or civil society. My delegation is always open to discussion. If this should happen, we believe that care should be taken to ensure the broadest possible representation and genuine diversity of views of speakers by calling not only on civil society organizations and academia but also on think tanks of all different stripes and without preconceived ideas. Needless to say, such a forum, even informal, should retain a link to the Conference rather than move towards an outside setting.

The idea of a framework convention or agreement, on the other hand, is likely to be much more complex than it seems. It would lead to debate on what should be included in the framework convention and what can be left for later. I am not sure that this is a pragmatic option. Rather, I am afraid that this idea will lead to futile and highly dogmatic discussions. A framework convention would naturally be limited to

general and complete disarmament, in accordance with article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), as disarmament forms a whole: one dimension of disarmament cannot be considered independently of the others or of the strategic context. It goes without saying that France, in accordance with article VI of the NPT, is committed to general and complete disarmament. Starting — or restarting — the negotiation of a general and complete disarmament convention, a long-term goal that my country naturally subscribes to, is likely, however, to prove tremendously complex at this point, even in the form of a mere framework convention.

**The President:** I thank Ambassador Simon-Michel for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair, and for his personal involvement in the signing of the protocol to the Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia.

I now give the floor to Ambassador Ahn of the Republic of Korea.

**Mr. Ahn** Young-jip (Republic of Korea): Mr. President, first of all, I would like also to join our colleagues in congratulating you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament at an important time when substantive discussions are under way.

For decades, the Conference has undoubtedly served as the world's single multilateral negotiating forum, giving birth to milestone treaties such as the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Biological Weapons Convention, the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Despite the long dormancy of the Conference, the Republic of Korea still believes in its potential. My delegation welcomes the proposal made by the Acting Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Møller, in that this could serve as an opportunity for member States to demonstrate flexibility and to revive a spirit of cooperation for normalizing the function of the Conference. However, in order to translate this into concrete momentum, each point of the proposal needs to be elaborated through organized and in-depth discussions. In this regard, I would like to comment on the proposal in the hope that this could contribute to constructive discussions.

First, the Republic of Korea is open to various options to get negotiations started within the framework of the Conference, including the one proposed by the Acting Secretary-General to negotiate on an area of common ground with a view to eventually producing a framework convention. In our view, however, there is still a grey area concerning the idea of a framework convention. For example, it is unclear how different the negotiation on common ground would be compared with a framework convention, or at which stage a framework convention should be taken into deliberation. This idea needs to be elaborated more for further discussion.

Second, with regard to the option of negotiating a politically binding regime, I am sure that there must be several merits in introducing a non-legally binding or a politically binding instrument in the Conference. However, as the Conference was designed from the beginning to be a negotiating body, if we introduce a politically binding instrument, the Conference itself may be the victim of its own success in this instrument. So, we need a clear relationship between legally binding and politically binding instruments.

Third, it is worthwhile to review the working methods of the Conference. Among many other things, the current rotational basis for a relatively short-term presidency disrupts the evolution of discussions which build on previous progress. It is our view that a longer-term presidency is needed in order to generate momentum for a breakthrough on many complex issues. We prefer, however, a more informal setting than the establishment of a subsidiary body, as that could nurture a frank exchange of views among member States.

Lastly, interaction with civil society is important. Their insights and fresh ideas could provide this multilateral disarmament forum with a strong impetus for its revitalization. However, in the context of the Conference, there has been a limitation on civil society participation in order for member States to focus on the priority of the Conference, that is, to get the negotiations to move forward. It is our belief that the priority should continue to focus on the negotiating process among member States. Although we could see benefits from an informal forum with civil society, its role should be limited to an extent that it must not hinder the process of negotiating within the Conference.

Overall, my delegation is in favour of the proposal made by the Acting Secretary-General. However, from the viewpoint that the Conference is a negotiating body, we need to make efforts not to lose this focus, lest this new process result in the Conference being a mere talking shop. I believe that it should be carried out in a more organized manner.

**The President:** I thank Ambassador Ahn for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to Ambassador Van der Kwast of the Netherlands.

**Mr. Van der Kwast (Netherlands):** Mr. President, let me first congratulate you on your assumption of the Conference on Disarmament presidency. We assure you of the full support of our delegation. Kazakhstan has a tradition in acting on disarmament, and we trust that under your chairmanship we will make further progress, which is indeed needed, as has been argued by different delegations.

Today you have asked us to reflect on the proposals made by the Acting Secretary-General of the Conference and Personal Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General to the Conference, Mr. Møller.

Let me start by underlining that we share the sense of urgency expressed for getting the Conference to move on its mandate. We all know this is not an easy task, and we very much appreciate the suggestions made. It is, however, the Conference itself that has to move. This year the informal working group and the schedule of activities have shown new possibilities and interesting discussions on which we have built and can build further. We see the proposals of the Acting Secretary-General as a further chance to make real progress in this regard.

Let me now go through the proposals one by one.

The first proposal in our opinion consists of two parts. First, it is suggested to explore via our discussions under the schedule of activities where common ground can be found under the four core items. Second, it is suggested to start negotiations on these areas of common ground with a view eventually to producing framework conventions, to which substantive protocols could be subsequently added.

We fully agree that we should use our discussions under the schedule of activities to explore what common ground can be found on the core items. This requires that we try to move beyond our initial, often politically motivated, positions to see if we can move forward on the technical issues. We believe this in itself is a worthwhile exercise.

On the second half of the proposal, we would first have to see what we mean exactly by framework conventions. We think movement can be possible on a technical level, but agreement on what would be a political framework might prove to be more difficult. We are, however, open to continuing discussions on this possibility, which has been used in other forums and which can be used for this forum as well.

On the second proposal, on exploring issues for which voluntary, politically binding regimes may be negotiated, we would like to have some clarifications. First, as the job of the Conference is to negotiate legally binding treaties, would politically binding treaties not move us further away from the Conference's original mandate? Secondly, what do we exactly mean by politically binding regimes? A political discussion is useful, but in our opinion such a discussion should be results-oriented. In practice, we should link our discussions to future negotiations.

We fully support the third suggestion — to have focused discussions on a review of the Conference's working methods through a subsidiary body. Reviewing our working methods may not help us to overcome the lack of political will to start negotiations, but it has another value. There is a need for reviewing working methods in order to improve and facilitate the way we do business in the Conference. Many of the methods used here are long overdue for change.

Finally, we strongly support the suggestion to hold an informal Conference on Disarmament/civil society forum. In doing this we should aim for broad participation of experts and of civil society, and also consider inviting non-governmental organizations that may not be represented here in Geneva. We firmly believe that all States can benefit from a dialogue with experts and civil society. The United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) has been mentioned in this framework; it can give input to this discussion, as was done last week. Such a dialogue is also important in order to show that members of this body are serious about their task and role and are ready to discuss with experts and civil society. Too often, members of this body have created the image that they are capable only of saying no to each other in a closed shop or forum. An informal meeting can strengthen our participation in and outreach to a wider group. Such an event can be a first exchange which is informal by nature and therefore does not distract from the principal responsibility we all have towards the Governments we represent here. An informal civil society forum could be held, as has already been suggested by several delegations, after the schedule of activities discussions in mid-August.

**The President:** I thank Ambassador Van der Kwast for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Germany, Mr. Böhm.

**Mr. Böhm (Germany):** Mr. President, at this point, since I am taking the floor for the first time in this context, let me also congratulate you on the assumption of this very important task and let me assure you of the full cooperation of the German delegation.

Let me also add that we have full respect for the history of your country in the field of disarmament, and we are glad to cooperate with you further in this context. Let me join my colleagues in addressing a few of the proposals made by the Acting Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, Mr. Møller.

With reference to the first proposal, on the production of a framework convention and subsequently negotiated protocols, we are still not entirely convinced that this suggestion will bring us closer to the goal of negotiations, since contentious questions remain unanswered. From our point of view, the principal debate risks not being addressed as such. However, we are very much open to further discussions in this context and suggest further concretization of the proposal itself.

Negotiations on voluntary, politically binding regimes — the second proposal — could also be an interesting approach. However, it should in our view not detract from the Conference's main task, namely to become again the central multilateral negotiating forum for legally binding treaties, such as, and I repeat this, a fissile material cut-off treaty. At the same time, more consideration may need to be given to

the question of what disarmament issues could be addressed in such a voluntary, politically binding form.

The third issue — creating a subsidiary body for scrutinizing the working methods of the Conference — is appreciated by our delegation. We support the idea of a Conference which is open to the accession of new member States and also advocate the participation of civil society. In addition, we would recommend a more flexible approach in the application of the rule of consensus in procedural matters and where issues of national security are not directly affected.

Finally, on the holding of a civil society forum before the end of 2014, we support this proposal due to the possibility of creating thereby added value for our debate. Moreover, this could be a first step towards overcoming member State concerns regarding the participation of civil society actors. We would like to suggest that the Conference convene one or two sessions with the inclusion of civil society actors when considering the topics in the schedule of activities.

**The President:** I thank the representative of Germany for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Belarus, Mr. Grinevich.

**Mr. Grinevich** (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): Since this is the first time that our delegation has taken the floor under your presidency, we would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on assuming the leadership of our negotiating forum. We are pleased to see that the role of President of the Conference on Disarmament has been taken on by an ambassador and representative of a country with which we have close ties. Obviously, you can be assured of the full support of our delegation while carrying out your mandate.

Mr. President, we would like to share with you our preliminary observations regarding the proposals introduced by the Acting Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, Mr. Møller, in his address to the Conference on 20 May. Firstly, as we have already stated in informal discussions on the topic of nuclear disarmament, our delegation is very flexible. We stand ready to support the idea of agreeing on a framework convention on one of the issues relating to the agenda of the Conference, but the main precondition for implementing this initiative is that there be political will and, obviously, a consensus. I will now continue in English.

(*spoke in English*)

Secondly, concerning the idea of negotiation in the Conference of non-legally binding instruments, the Belarusian delegation made a proposal to discuss this idea two years ago, and at the last session we repeated this proposal. We introduced this as a kind of plan B. The proposal was made taking into account that there are a number of groups of governmental experts working in fields that in reality are fields of the Conference's activity. For example, right now we have a group of governmental experts on fissile material and a group of governmental experts on cybersecurity: these issues can be discussed within the Conference and the Conference can produce guidance in the form of reports to the Secretary-General, for instance. We could also thus save some money in the United Nations budget, especially during a financial crisis and budget crisis, because many delegations are thinking about how to reduce the cost of the overall United Nations machinery. If, at the end of this Conference session, it is evident that there is no possibility of starting negotiations during the next year, this issue could be discussed in the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly and the Conference could receive a mandate to discuss and produce some kind of guidelines or policy document. The main prerequisite for this, however, is consensus among States parties, including good coordination among the delegations participating in the work of the First Committee in New York.

Thirdly, concerning the improvement of working methods, we have had a number of discussions during previous Conference sessions about this topic. It is our idea that we should be very cautious. The main task for us is to find consensus and to find items on which it is possible to start negotiations. To this end, we have to do everything possible to preserve the current structure of the Conference until such time as negotiations become possible.

Concerning the proposals to extend the term of office of the Conference's President, our opinion is that the current system of rotation is the most democratic one. We also accept the existing arrangement of the informal group of each session's six Presidents. I would like to remind you that this arrangement was introduced in 2006 under the presidency of Poland; before that, we had a troika: the previous President, the current President and the incoming President. The present system allows for six delegations to be involved in the managing of all Conference activities during each session. It might thus not be a good idea to consider extending the term of office.

During a presidential consultation some time ago, I witnessed a very peculiar situation. The President's term was coming to an end and he was complaining that he had not had enough time: the term of office was so short that it was not possible to do anything within three weeks. His colleague replied that he could allow the President to continue performing his functions during the colleague's term of office, but only with the promise that within those three weeks he would produce a programme of work with a negotiating mandate. The reply to that proposal was silence. Secondly, we should not forget that, when negotiation becomes possible, the main power will be entrusted to the Chairs of working groups, who will lead all the negotiating process — the President of the Conference will have less authority. We should all therefore do our best to preserve the existing structure until negotiations are possible.

**The President:** I thank the representative of Belarus for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of the United States of America, Mr. Buck.

**Mr. Buck** (United States of America): Mr. President, as this is the first time I am taking the floor during your presidency, allow me to begin by congratulating you on your assumption of the important duties of the President of the Conference on Disarmament, to thank you for your very able leadership of this body and to assure you of my delegation's full support for your efforts. I am also pleased to join the French Ambassador in expressing our appreciation for the 6 May ceremony in which we joined Kazakhstan in signing the protocol to the Central Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone — a very important step in our work together in this field.

Mr. President, in response to your invitation to delegations to address the 20 May proposals of the Acting Secretary-General, Mr. Møller, my delegation would like to offer the following preliminary comments, while underlining our appreciation for the many efforts of the Acting Secretary-General to assist member States in developing productive ways forward for the work of the Conference.

First, as regards the proposal that the Conference should consider negotiating general framework conventions, my delegation believes that in reviewing this proposal it would be useful to have a better understanding as to what specifically would be envisioned and how the proposal would impact our work at the Conference in terms of process and substance. Our preliminary reaction, based on the current description of the idea, is that it is not evident to us that this approach would help to break the Conference's current impasse.

Moreover, as regards the issue of nuclear disarmament, I would note that the United States believes that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

and action plan already provide the necessary context and objectives for the next steps on disarmament and achieving a nuclear-weapon-free world.

History has shown that progress begets further progress, as each successful negotiation has laid the foundation for further negotiations. The United States has made it clear that we are ready to pursue further reductions in all categories of nuclear weapons in negotiations with Russia. And, of course, we are ready to start talks on a fissile material cut-off treaty here in the Conference. Logically, it makes the most sense to tackle immediate next steps first, before attempting to deal with final-stage issues. Since it is impossible to predict the nature and sequence of future disarmament steps, it is difficult to envision how such a framework would be structured.

Regarding the proposal that the Conference consider negotiating political commitments in some cases, we find this an interesting idea and one that we believe merits further review and discussion. The United States is prepared to consider such proposals on a case-by-case basis. However, it is not clear to us that this is a path towards consensus. In this context, I would note that the United States believes that it is important to preserve the Conference's foundational role as the single standing multilateral forum for negotiating legally binding treaties.

As regards the proposal to establish a subsidiary body to examine the Conference's working methods, my delegation would note that addressing the Conference's working methods has long been on the Conference agenda. While the United States strongly supports the consensus rule and does not believe that the impasse in the Conference is a result of its rules of procedure, we would be open to exploring improvements in the Conference's working methods in a subsidiary body during the current session if other member States wish to do so.

Finally, regarding the proposal to hold a forum this year for Conference members to meet informally with civil society, I would note that the United States is open to pursuing this idea further on the basis that the organization of such a meeting would be conducted without prejudice to the Conference's rules of procedure and that invited participation be broadly representative.

Mr. President, with these preliminary comments, I would only add that the United States delegation looks forward to working closer with you, with this session's six Presidents as a group, with other delegations and with the secretariat in examining these proposals.

**The President:** I thank the representative of the United States of America for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. Now I give the floor to the representative of the Russian Federation.

**Mr. Deyneko** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Allow me to begin, Mr. President, by congratulating you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and to wish you success in this role. You may count on the support of the Russian delegation in all your efforts so that we may achieve our common aims.

I am in full agreement with those who have spoken before me about the successful signing of the protocol to the Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia. In this regard, I would like to mention that my delegation has asked the secretariat to circulate as an official document of the Conference the Russian representative's statement delivered at the signing ceremony for the protocol.

The proposals made by the Acting Secretary-General, Mr. Møller, merit our closest attention and support. Above all, they display a constructive attitude and a sincere desire to help the Conference to overcome the prolonged impasse in its work. I think that such an attitude on the part of the Acting Secretary-General towards

fulfilling his obligations is highly commendable and should be welcomed by all who are present here.

As to the specific proposals, including on framework conventions, we believe that this type of international instrument is only one of many that are available to us in our work. Given that the Conference is mandated to negotiate legally binding international instruments, we see nothing untoward in considering this possibility. Ultimately, it all depends on whether or not the Conference will take up its substantive work. We welcome the Acting Secretary-General's approach to the issue of politically binding instruments. Here again, it is about negotiating — it is impossible to move forward without that. In both cases, the crucial element for delegations, their positions and, ultimately, the outcome we will achieve together will be the content of these legally binding or politically binding agreements. The key question here is whether delegations will be capable of reaching a compromise. This is not about the Secretary-General, nor the President of the Conference. This is about the delegations themselves. And, ultimately, it is up to us to resolve this.

With regard to the working methods, I agree with the numerous colleagues who feel that the problem with the Conference lies not in its procedures but elsewhere. Nevertheless, if a change in working methods will help us to reach a consensus on the programme of work, we are prepared to consider this option based on the current agenda of core Conference issues. We are also prepared to consider the question of civil society participation. What interests us here, however, is which issues we will discuss with civil society. Will there be an open agenda? Or will there be a specific topic for discussion to ensure a focus on the real problems we face. We can spend a long time now discussing whether or not it is worth changing the format of the Conference's work in the current context, but we can only come to a conclusion after we hold such a pilot event and establish our position based on its results. If such an event does take place, it should not be immediately set as a precedent for the future.

In conclusion, I would like to say that there is obviously room for improvement in every proposal. It would probably be much more useful and practical for the Conference in its work, and more specifically when resuming its work, if the proposals announced in this room were met not with criticism or comments but with concrete proposals or alternative proposals that would allow us to achieve a common result. I would thus like to draw your attention to the proposal of the Russian Federation for a simplified or negotiable programme of work on all four items on the agenda; during our work, we could perhaps determine which of the issues is ripest for reaching a compromise. For us, that issue is the matter of outer space, and there are good reasons for this, which we will explain during thematic discussions.

**The President:** I thank the representative of the Russian Federation for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to Ambassador Akram of Pakistan.

**Mr. Akram (Pakistan):** Mr. President, I would like to begin of course by welcoming you and by congratulating you on assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. We look forward to working with you and we assure you of our full cooperation and support.

We have listened very carefully this morning to the comments that have been made by our distinguished colleagues, and I would like to also add our voice to this discussion.

We appreciate deeply the proposals that have been made by the Acting Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, Mr. Møller, and we appreciate also the spirit in which he has made these comments and suggestions. We see them as a very constructive contribution to help the Conference move towards its substantive work

beyond where we have been for the last few years, where we have engaged in discussions on the various issues on our agenda. I think the proposals that the Acting Secretary-General has made will take us beyond mere discussions towards some more substantive work. We feel that these suggestions deserve to be seriously contemplated and discussed. I would like to speak about each of them in turn.

The idea that we look at common ground with a view to eventually producing a framework convention, to which substantive protocols could be subsequently added, is in our view a useful suggestion that should be further explored. We should not approach this as a proposal which substitutes for negotiations in the Conference, but as one that actually supplements and complements eventual negotiations in the Conference. So, our approach should be from that perspective, and we should not reject them out of hand as not being within the competence of the Conference. I think this proposal is something worth considering, and we should do that.

The second proposal is for voluntary, politically binding regimes to be negotiated. Once again, there are precedents; there are areas where some countries have declared a national voluntary moratorium, for instance on fissile materials. Perhaps they could begin by converting this national voluntary moratorium into a multilateral voluntary moratorium on their part, which other nuclear-weapon States, or States capable of producing fissile material, could voluntarily join if they wished to do so. So, this again is a useful approach.

As regards the idea of having a focused discussion on the review of working methods, my delegation is ready to have such a focused discussion. We do however feel, and we have said this before, that the problem here in the Conference is not procedure but substance. The same procedures, including the rule of consensus, have enabled us to negotiate the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, and are not and should not be seen as hurdles to negotiations. What is required, of course, is the necessary environment, globally, on the ground, where negotiations on an issue become possible, and that ultimately relates to the security of States, or the view of their own security. Once those conditions are met, then negotiations become possible. So, I do not think it is very much an issue of procedure. I have heard today attempts to describe what consensus is. I have not heard in the past any such description of "consensus minus one". Consensus is consensus. It is like being pregnant: either you are pregnant or you are not. So, you either have consensus or you do not have consensus. At least that is my understanding of the English language, which is probably very limited, but that is what I understand.

Finally, the idea of having civil society involved more actively is a proposal that my delegation wholeheartedly and fully supports. We think that civil society can make a major contribution to the way we look at how we are conducting our work. They can bring in a lot of fresh thinking and they can certainly help us in looking at situations from a new perspective. So I think that the proposal regarding the involvement of civil society is something that we can fully support.

**The President:** I thank Ambassador Akram for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to Ambassador Varma of India.

**Mr. Varma (India):** Mr. President, it gives us great pleasure to convey to you our very warm congratulations on the assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. Our pleasure is doubled by the fact that we see you as a representative of a very friendly country chairing this Conference.

We have requested the floor to convey some additional views on the proposals made by the Acting Secretary-General of the Conference. On the day that these proposals were made, we had occasion to convey to the Acting Secretary-General our

appreciation for these proposals and our readiness to look at them, as well as others that would improve and strengthen the effectiveness of this Conference. The view of India is that we are willing to look at these proposals as long as the essential character of this Conference — as a consensus-based negotiating forum of member States, as established by the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament — is maintained and preserved.

We have heard with interest the comments made by several delegations today. Some have spoken in favour, some have said that there is need for more clarity, and India could associate itself with a number of comments that have been made for further consideration of the Acting Secretary-General's proposals. To take our work forward, Mr. President, I suggest now a proposal for your consideration: to organize an informal plenary of the Conference that would facilitate a more in-depth as well as an interactive discussion among member States to see how we can concretize the Acting Secretary-General's proposals into something that can be activated at some later stage in the future.

I would stress that this is an issue that is to be decided by the member States themselves, though of course we remain deeply appreciative of the fact that the Acting Secretary-General has devoted considerable time and effort in bringing these ideas to us, which are now on the table and are under the active consideration of the Conference. An informal plenary would, in our view, facilitate a more in-depth and interactive discussion. We leave it to your judgement when you would wish to organize such a meeting, but advance notice for member States would be helpful in preparing for such a meeting.

**The President:** I thank Ambassador Varma for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to Ambassador Motta Pinto Coelho of Brazil.

**Mr. Motta Pinto Coelho (Brazil):** Mr. President, allow me to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. Let me also assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation as you lead the work of the Conference.

Two weeks ago, still under the presidency of Japan, the Acting Secretary-General, Mr. Møller, delivered a statement expressing his views on how we could advance multilateral disarmament negotiations and revitalize the work of the Conference. We took note of the proposals, and we hope they can provide the right momentum to our efforts aimed at overcoming the long-lasting deadlock in this body.

We are aware that some delegations, including from our regional group, the Group of 21, requested additional time to consult their capitals, and we understand that because the proposals are very complex and touch on key aspects of the work of the Conference. Therefore, without prejudice to the internal consultations now taking place within the Group of 21, I would like to make some very preliminary comments along the lines that I had occasion to make when these proposals were made by the Acting Secretary-General.

Firstly, Brazil welcomes the proposal to hold an informal Conference on Disarmament/civil society forum. We strongly believe that participation by civil society in both formal and informal meetings would greatly contribute to raising public awareness about the issues discussed in the Conference. Formal interaction of civil society with members of the Conference would result in richer and broader discussions and could only help us move forward. In this regard, I would like to mention that enlargement of the Conference membership would also, in our view, contribute to making this body more representative.

Secondly, Brazil would certainly join a consensus emerging among members of the Conference with regard to improvement of our working methods. However, we hold the view that the problems faced by the Conference are not related to institutional or procedural issues. The criticism of the rules of procedure, in particular the consensus rule, is not in our view consistent. We are convinced that the prolonged impasse faced by the Conference results from a lack of political will. Critics who denounce the abuse of the rule of consensus with respect to negotiations on a fissile material treaty would certainly not accept majority decisions in issues related to nuclear disarmament.

Thirdly, even though we see some merit in identifying areas of agreement and common ground among members of the Conference, we continue to believe that, for the purpose of negotiations, we cannot pick and choose from among the core issues. A balanced programme of work must encompass the simultaneous establishment of four subsidiary bodies, namely on nuclear disarmament, which is our highest priority, on a fissile material treaty, on the prevention of an arms race in outer space and on negative security assurances. These four core issues cannot be evaded.

Finally, we discourage initiatives that try to partially amend the operation of the Conference based on a limited goal and restricted only to one issue, such as, for example, fissile material. We believe that any reform effort should consider the United Nations disarmament machinery as a whole and not only the Conference on Disarmament. That is why we support the convening of a fourth special session of the General Assembly on disarmament, which would provide an opportunity for a comprehensive and inclusive debate on all aspects of disarmament.

We understand also that the idea of a framework convention could be a very positive one, in the sense that — and we have in the past made specific suggestions along those lines — it opens the path for initial movement on a conceptual basis in preparation for specific negotiations on protocols related to all the issues that we have referred to here.

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

That concludes the list of speakers. Would any other delegation like to take the floor? That does not seem to be the case.

The next plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament will be held next Tuesday, 10 June 2014, at 10 a.m.

*The meeting rose at 11.45 a.m.*