

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/PV.969
27 January 2005

ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE NINE HUNDRED AND SIXTY-NINTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 27 January 2005, at 10.15 a.m.

President: Mr. Chris SANDERS (Netherlands)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 969th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament and the first part of its 2005 session.

A month ago, two massive earthquakes followed by a series of aftershocks occurred in the Indian Ocean and triggered a tsunami, provoking an unprecedented natural disaster. According to the data made available at the special United Nations General Assembly plenary meeting on the tsunami disaster, held on 18 January 2005, the total toll stands at more than 160,000. But the figure of those who perished in this tragedy is still likely to rise. Tens of thousands are still missing; hundreds of thousands have lost all their possessions and been rendered homeless. More than one million have been displaced.

Beyond the horrific loss of human lives, the tsunami in the Indian Ocean has impacted heavily on the national economies of the affected countries in South Asia and caused thousands of millions of United States dollars in losses. Land transportation links, roads, bridges, schools and hospitals have either been destroyed by the earthquakes or swept away by the massive wave. The coastal environment has also been extensively damaged.

Such an unprecedented global catastrophe has required a global response, and indeed, in the days and weeks which have followed the tsunami, we have all witnessed and participated in an unprecedented worldwide response. The world community, governments, the general public, the private sector have joined forces, contributed spontaneously, and still continue to support generously all appropriate responses to the emerging needs, as well as the long-term challenges caused by this natural disaster, thus setting a new high standard for humanity.

On behalf of the Conference on Disarmament and on my own behalf, I would like to express my most sincere condolences and deepest sympathy to the peoples and governments of all the affected countries. May I now invite you to join me in a minute of silence in commemoration of the victims of the tsunami disaster.

* * *

The PRESIDENT: As we begin the session of the Conference on Disarmament, I would like to bid a belated farewell to those colleagues who have left the Conference since we adjourned in September, namely, Ambassador Alfredo Vicente Chiaradia of Argentina, Ambassador Sverre Bergh Johansen of Norway, Ambassador Habib Mansour of Tunisia and Ambassador Blancanieve Portocarrero of Venezuela. I am confident that you will join me in requesting their delegations to convey to them our deep appreciation for their many valuable contributions to our endeavours during their tenures, as well as our sincere wishes for their success and satisfaction in their new assignments.

Allow me also to extend a cordial welcome to new colleagues who have assumed their responsibilities as representatives of their governments to the Conference, namely, Ambassador Idriss Jazaïry of Algeria, Ambassador Makarim Wibisono of Indonesia, Ambassador Baha Hussain Al-Shibib of Iraq, Ambassador Kairat Abusseitov of Kazakhstan,

(The President)

Ambassador Dato Hsu King Been of Malaysia, Ambassador Wegger Strømme of Norway, Ambassador Elizabeth Astete Rodríguez of Peru, Ambassador Bashar Ja'afari of the Syrian Arab Republic, Ambassador Blaise Godet of Switzerland, Ambassador Samir Laidi of Tunisia and Ambassador John Freeman of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. I would like to take this opportunity to assure them of our cooperation and support in their new assignments. With so many new colleagues we must be successful.

I am supposed to make an opening statement at this moment, and I will make a brief statement only, because after I have spoken, we will listen to the message of the Secretary-General, and that is a message that I, of course, fully share. The wisdom of the Secretary-General is to be our primary guidance. I will refrain in my opening statement from giving you a detailed analysis of the situation in which the CD finds itself. I will not talk at length about the importance of the CD, but I would just like to say that if the present problems in which the CD finds itself persists, the Conference might well in that case lose its relevance and follow in the footsteps of the UNDC. I would like delegations to think deeply about whose interest would be served, and whose interest would be damaged, by such a process.

In the meantime - those of you who have worked with me know this - I would want to be pragmatic and I would like to make my ultimate effort to get the CD back to work, real work. So far I have consulted, when many of you were still on holiday, with 52 members of the CD. And as I said yesterday, I will continue to consult with the remaining members of the CD next week. My time simply has been too limited to talk with 65 members in a very short time frame. I cannot talk to everybody at the same time, so I had to make some choices, and I will finalize my consultations with every individual member of this Conference next week.

In the meantime, I felt I could not delay my initial preliminary findings from those consultations, and therefore I decided to circulate by last week a non-paper which is only my factual summary of what I felt and understood was the case, according to the delegations, and I felt that the groups should have an opportunity to have an early look at my findings, in order to get a feedback, in order not to lose precious time.

Next Tuesday I hope to discuss with you the substantive part of that non-paper, and anybody who wishes to rectify things that according to that delegation are not correct is welcome to do so at that time, and of course, individually directly through me as well.

Today we will concentrate on two issues that have to be decided. You have been informed through your Group Coordinators about those issues, which are the agenda and the observers.

So, in summary, I will use these four weeks that are available to the utmost, and I will try to see whether there is any chance of overcoming existing differences in the interest of you and in the interest of those who feel that the CD is of importance to them. That is the fundamental question that we should all face.

(The President)

With that, I would now like to turn to the Secretary-General of our Conference, Mr. Sergei Ordzhonikidze, to deliver a message addressed to the Conference by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan.

Mr. ORDZHONIKIDZE (Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations): It gives me great pleasure to deliver the message of the Secretary-General, which is the usual and regular procedure at the opening of our session. The message of the Secretary-General goes like this, and I will read that message:

“It gives me pleasure to send greetings to the Conference on Disarmament as it opens its 2005 session.

“The Conference on Disarmament opens its current session with renewed hopes of overcoming the impasse that has impeded its work for so long. After many years of debate on its programme of work, the Conference engaged itself, albeit informally, in a substantive discussion of the issues on its agenda. You also addressed other issues relevant to the current international security environment, including ways to strengthen compliance with arms control and disarmament agreements, and the threat of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery falling into the hands of terrorists. The latter issue in particular also received close attention from the Security Council in its resolution 1540, adopted last April.

“I have also been encouraged to see the strong political support given to the Conference by the foreign ministers who addressed your session last year. Such high-level statements can create political impetus towards reinvigorating the Conference, and I urge you to continue this practice. The Conference might also benefit from establishing closer contacts with other international arms control and disarmament agencies and organizations, and from inviting the heads of such bodies to speak on issues of mutual interest.

“But the Conference still faces the demanding task of finding ways to move forward. Disarmament is critical for conflict prevention, peace-building and the realization of the Millennium Development Goals. Disarmament matters also figured prominently in the report of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, and will be a major part of discussions among Member States in the months ahead leading up to September’s summit-level review of the Millennium Declaration. I call upon the members of this important forum to seriously consider the Panel’s recommendations.

“With so much at stake, I urge you to do your utmost to enable this forum for arms control and disarmament negotiations to play its envisaged role, and to place its accumulated knowledge and experience fully at the service of the world’s people.

“Please accept my best wishes for a productive session.”

The PRESIDENT: Thank you, Mr. Ordzhonikidze, for delivering the message from Mr. Kofi Annan. I would like to ask our Secretary-General to convey to the Secretary-General of the United Nations our appreciation for his personal support to the Conference and for the importance he attaches to our work.

I shall now give the floor to the Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Enrique Román-Morey, to inform the members of the Conference about the organizational aspects of the 2005 session, as well as the resources allocated to the Conference.

Mr. ROMAN-MOREY (Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference): I would like to make a few remarks on the resources available to the Conference on Disarmament at its 2005 session.

As in previous years, the Conference has at its disposal, during the entire session, 10 meetings per week. This means that the Conference can hold up to two meetings daily, with full services, including interpretation in all official languages of the United Nations.

With regard to meeting facilities, the Conference will have at its disposal the Council Chamber, room I and room C-108 right next to the Chamber. If required, an additional conference room may also be provided upon request. In such cases, reservations should be made in advance through the secretariat.

I would like to inform you that the secretariat of the Conference on Disarmament has been notified by the Chief of the Central Planning and Coordination Service of the United Nations Office at Geneva that the recently adopted budget of the United Nations will place a number of new constraints and restrictions on the capacity of Conference Services to deliver services as it did in the past. In particular, unscheduled meetings, ad hoc informal consultations, meetings beyond regular hours, meetings on non-working days and extended meetings or sessions will most likely not be serviced. Also, documents submitted late will not, as a matter of course, be processed ahead of the ones submitted in accordance with the 10-week rule.

Accordingly, delegations are requested to strictly observe measures on the rational and economical use of documentation. In particular, all documents that are to be issued as official documents of the Conference should be submitted to the secretariat, together with their electronic versions, well in advance. Any duplication of documentation should be avoided. Furthermore, in order to avoid the translation of the same document twice, delegations are requested to inform the secretariat if any document to be issued in the Conference on Disarmament has already been submitted for issue in any United Nations body, and specifically in New York. I would also like to emphasize that United Nations regulations do not permit the publication of statements delivered by delegations at plenary meetings as separate documents of the Conference. Such statements are always reproduced in the verbatim records and are, ipso facto, part of the official documentation of the Conference on Disarmament. I am sure that I can count on your full cooperation in this regard.

(Mr. Román-Morey, Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference)

As in previous years, in order to reduce operating costs, only documents containing draft proposals which require action at the meetings will be circulated in meeting rooms. Pre-session and reference documents will continue to be supplied to the Permanent Missions of member States and observer States. Therefore, delegations are requested to keep the copies they receive throughout the annual session and use them during the meetings. Only a limited number of copies will be available from the documents distribution counter in room C-129, which is located opposite the Council Chamber.

I would like to encourage delegations to use more frequently documents of the Conference in their electronic versions, which are available on the web site of the Conference on Disarmament, the address of which is: <http://disarmament.un.org/cd/>.

I would like to remind delegations to send the secretariat of the Conference their letters of accreditation as soon as possible, in order to expedite the publication of the list of participants. For security reasons, delegations are requested to carry with them their identification badges provided by the United Nations Office at Geneva.

Last but not least, I would like to inform delegations that, at the beginning of the year, the offices of the secretariat of the Conference on Disarmament, as well as all other secretariats which are part and parcel of the Geneva branch of the Department of Disarmament Affairs, were moved to a new location, just across from the Council Chamber. However, all the telephone numbers and e-mail addresses remain the same.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Mr. Román-Morey for that information, and I now give the floor to our Secretary-General.

Mr. ORDZHONIKIDZE (Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations): I just want to add that the information that the Deputy Secretary-General read to you is based on the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly that were adopted during the session of the General Assembly by the Member States. It is not what the secretariat has in mind to make the work more efficient, though we all of course support these resolutions. But you have to be aware that these are the United Nations decisions, decisions that you have to respect, all of you, and we hope that it will help you in your work.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you, Mr. Ordzhonikidze, for that addition, which is important. I have the following speakers for today's plenary meeting: the Russian Federation, Peru, Kenya, France, Poland and Germany. First, I would like to turn to the distinguished representative of the Russian Federation, Ambassador Leonid Skotnikov.

Mr. SKOTNIKOV (Russian Federation) (translated from Russian): Mr. President, first of all I would like to associate myself with the words of condolence that you expressed concerning the victims of the tsunami and the affected countries. The tsunami in the Indian Ocean was a horrible tragedy, in response to which the international community has

(Mr. Skotnikov, Russian Federation)

displayed solidarity. I think that the same sort of solidarity and interaction are required in resolving the other problems facing mankind, including the problems related to ensuring security and bringing about disarmament.

Mr. President, I would like to welcome you to the Chair, wish you success and assure you of our support and cooperation on the part of the delegation of the Russian Federation.

We are happy to be starting the 2005 CD session with good news on the disarmament front, although it is not directly related to the work of the Conference. We would like to inform the Conference that on 7 December 2004 the President of the Russian Federation signed a bill on ratification of amended Protocol II to the Inhumane Weapons Convention. Thus Russia has shown its readiness to solve the landmine problem. Ratification of amended Protocol II turned out to be quite a long process, owing mainly to our responsible approach to the obligations we were assuming and the consequent need for complicated coordination efforts.

Russia regards this protocol as an effective mechanism which has struck a balance between military interests and humanitarian concerns with respect to various types of landmines. We believe that the protocol offers the best possible solution to the landmine problem and is realistic from the viewpoint of effective implementation. It unites both supporters of an immediate ban on anti-personnel landmines and advocates a step-by-step approach to this objective. We consider that the protocol did not lose its independent value after the signing of the Ottawa Convention on a comprehensive ban on anti-personnel landmines, but remains an important instrument which regulates relations between States and non-State actors in relation not only to anti-personnel landmines but also to other types of mines, particularly anti-vehicle mines.

Russia is interested in ensuring that full use is made of the Protocol's potential. The extensive opportunities it offers must be converted into practical measures. Much remains to be done in this respect. One of the major tasks facing the international community is to take additional steps to universalize the Protocol. A large number of States which are now facing complicated political and military situations remain non-parties to amended Protocol II. We advocate cooperation with those States.

I would like to point out that Russia was already fully complying with all provisions of amended Protocol II. We were observing a moratorium on exports of mines that did not meet the protocol's requirements. For more than nine years blast mines, a particularly dangerous type of anti-personnel mine, have not been developed, produced or supplied to our armed forces. Over seven million anti-personnel mines have been destroyed in Russia, and this work continues. New technologies for seeking, detecting, marking and registering mines as well as for mine clearance, including neutralization and destruction, are being intensively developed in the Russian Federation. Annually more than 100,000 explosive devices of different types are disarmed in Russia, including mines left over from the Second World War. A course on the requirements of amended Protocol II is taught in Russian military academies, and officers are instructed on the rules for the safe use of mines in full compliance with these provisions. The

(Mr. Skotnikov, Russian Federation)

armed forces have worked out and introduced special regulations on the laying of minefields in conformity with the Protocol's provisions. Every year training is organized for engineer officers to study the provisions of international humanitarian law and the requirements of the Protocol. A special comprehensive inter-agency programme of organizational and technical measures for the detection and destruction of explosive devices has been adopted in Russia. We have built up considerable experience in combating improvised explosive devices which are intensively used by terrorists. We are ready to cooperate with all interested countries and organizations in this context.

The Russian Federation shares the concern of the international community over the irresponsible use of anti-personnel mines, as our ratification of amended Protocol II proves. A mine-free world remains our overall goal. We support in principle the idea of acceding to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. But this can be done only when we are confident that we can properly fulfil our obligations. As we have repeatedly pointed out, progress towards a mine-free world should be realistic, phased and based on maintenance of the required level of stability. Amended Protocol II plays an important role in this endeavour. This is why we support its further strengthening and universalization.

In conclusion, Mr. President, I would like to say a few words on the occasion of the opening of the Conference on Disarmament session. We have listened carefully to your statement and the message from the Secretary-General of the United Nations addressed to the Conference. We share the view of the Secretary-General as to the role of disarmament in averting conflicts, building peace and resolving problems relating to development and ensuring international security. In fact last year we were able somewhat to revitalize the atmosphere in the Conference by holding informal plenary meetings on all questions on the agenda. However, we must concede that the main goal - that of launching the substantive work of the Conference - was not resolved. We remain ready to make our contribution to finding a compromise on the programme of work of the Conference as soon as possible, so that we can finally get the CD moving and operating at last in accordance with its mandate. In our view there is a good basis for compromise - the five Ambassadors' proposal, which is open to further elaboration and improvement. We appeal to all States members of the CD to display political will and the necessary flexibility so that a solution can be found.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of the Russian Federation for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I turn to the next speaker on my list, the distinguished Ambassador of Peru, Ambassador Elizabeth Astete Rodríguez.

Ms. ASTETE RODRIGUEZ (Peru) (translated from Spanish): Mr. President, at the outset I would like to thank you for your warm words of welcome. As this is indeed the first time it has been my privilege to take part in this important forum, I would first of all like to congratulate you on taking the Chair of this Conference and express my support and the support of my delegation for your efforts directed at the adoption of a programme of work which will be satisfactory for all members. This is a goal we will achieve only if all States members participate in a constructive - I emphasize, constructive - manner.

(Ms. Astete Rodríguez, Peru)

I listened particularly attentively to the message from the Secretary-General and his call to strengthen efforts to ensure that the Conference on Disarmament can resume its substantive work and contribute effectively to peace and global security. I would therefore like to place on record my country's concern at our inability to reach an agreement on a programme of work over the last eight years. We need to find a formula which will enable all member States to feel that their concerns have been taken into account and will be duly dealt with at the appropriate time. This does not mean, of course, that the key to success lies in the possibility that all the priorities and concerns of all the members will be reflected in a document which would enable the process to proceed. Negotiation is the foundation of the Conference on Disarmament, and like any negotiation it requires that all those involved show goodwill and flexibility. In other words, we all have to give a little to achieve the goal which I am sure we all desire, which is to relaunch the substantive work of the Conference, the sole multilateral negotiating forum on issues of arms control and disarmament.

It is important to bear in mind that according to some United Nations estimates, military expenditure in the world totalled more than \$839 billion in 2002. It is also estimated that in order to provide basic social services for the whole planet, a mere \$40 billion over 10 years would be required - in other words, less than half of what is spent annually on military expenditure.

Peru, a developing country, fully supports all the regional and global disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation instruments - not just as a way of strengthening international peace and security but as a way of more effectively combating poverty, which afflicts many people in many of the members of this Conference. I would therefore like to make use of this first statement to refer to some of the initiatives that my country has been undertaking at the regional level in order to strengthen peace and promote development in our countries.

Peru was one of the first promoters of the negotiation and subsequent adoption of the Treaty of Tlatelolco for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean. Currently, Peru is one of the five members of the Council of the treaty body, OPANAL. Similarly, and in relation to one of the most important agreements reached in the framework of this Conference, it was the first Latin American country to ratify the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty, and we are actively working for its entry into force.

In regional and multilateral forums we support initiatives which enable us to progress towards the main goal of the Non-Proliferation Treaty - a world free of nuclear weapons. Unfortunately, over the last few years we have noted with concern that voting on resolutions adopted in the United Nations General Assembly reveals or appears to reveal a declining commitment to the 13 practical steps towards disarmament laid down in the framework of the work of the NPT Review Conference in 2000.

There is a need to strengthen international commitments on disarmament in order to prevent the proliferation of technologies which allow the manufacture of nuclear weapons and of highly radioactive material which facilitates the production of "dirty bombs", principally by

(Ms. Astete Rodríguez, Peru)

terrorist groups. Negotiating and adopting a fissile material treaty represents an important step in this direction, as long as the concerns of the international community with regard to the transfer of technology for peaceful purposes are taken into account.

At the regional level, mention should be made of the decision taken in July 2004 by the Presidents of the five member countries of the Andean Community - Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela - to set up a zone of peace in the Andean community as an area free of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons in which conditions are to be created to enable conflicts of whatever nature and their causes to be resolved in a peaceful manner through agreement. Peru, as current President of the Andean community, is promoting this issue.

It is also important to point out that, together with two of our neighbours, Ecuador and Chile, we have launched a process for the adoption of methodologies which will enable us to standardize military expenditure. This new generation of confidence-building measures falls within a broader goal of consolidating a regional low-tension environment. This concept of non-offensive external defence seeks to avoid the risks of an arms race that would be contrary to the priority goals of our countries, which are to achieve sustainable development and combat poverty.

We are a party to the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives and Other Related Materials. In the United Nations we have played an active role in the working group negotiating an international instrument to label and trace illicit small arms and light weapons. Peru considers it important to intensify international cooperation to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in weapons of this type, which cause enormous harm to lives and economies everywhere, but particularly in the developing countries. Implementing the 2001 plan of action is an essential goal to further strengthen international security.

My country is aware that the international system has changed significantly since this Conference was founded. However, the traditional issues on the agenda are still extremely significant for collective security and must continue to be addressed. Nevertheless, we are also convinced that the Conference on Disarmament should have the ability to adapt to deal with other current issues of priority interest to the international community. In that regard, my country believes that the Conference must be able to find a balance in its treatment of all the issues, in order to meet the security concerns of the members of the Conference and the international community as a whole, which must feel itself represented by us, the privileged countries which are members of the Conference on Disarmament, but which at the same time have the responsibility for finding a way to move matters forward.

Mr. President, before concluding allow me once again to reiterate my delegation's support for you, and all the Presidents who will follow you in the course of the year, in seeking a compromise which will enable us to make progress on substantive matters on the basis of a balanced programme of work after so many years of "enforced rest". The Conference on

(Ms. Astete Rodríguez, Peru)

Disarmament must follow the example of the First Committee and begin a process which will enable it to improve its working methods, in order to recover its importance in the area of disarmament and international security.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of Peru for her statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I turn to the next speaker on my list, the Deputy Permanent Representative of Kenya, Mr. Philip Owade.

Mr. OWADE (Kenya): Mr. President, I wish to join you, on behalf of the Government and people of Kenya, in conveying our deepest sympathy and condolences to the Governments and people of the countries that were affected by the tragic tsunami disaster in December.

I wish to make a statement on behalf of Ambassador Amina Mohamed, who had hoped to be here to deliver her statement personally, but due to circumstances beyond our control, it would appear that she is not able to make it, and she has asked me to make the statement on her behalf, which I will proceed to read.

It is a great pleasure to address this august body, the Conference on Disarmament (CD), as we embark on a new year, 2005. At the outset, allow me to congratulate you on the assumption of the presidency of the Conference at the beginning of our session.

Having had the occasion and privilege to work with you on many disarmament issues within and outside the framework of the CD, I have every confidence in your abilities to steer the work of the Conference. Your vast experience, your foresight and your relentless quest for practical solutions to problems leave me in no doubt that the Conference will make commendable progress during your presidency. May I also congratulate your predecessor, Ambassador Mya Than of Myanmar, who ably presided over the Conference during the last session of the year 2004, for the very invaluable efforts and resourcefulness that he invested in the work of the Conference. You can be assured of the full support and cooperation of the Kenya delegation in carrying out your arduous task.

I have taken the floor to make a few remarks on the Nairobi Summit on a Mine-free World, which we had the honour and privilege to host in Nairobi from 29 November to 3 December 2004.

I am particularly grateful to all my colleagues who attended the Conference. I hope you all enjoyed our hospitality and the humble facilities that the Government and people of Kenya put at your disposal. I am particularly grateful to Ambassador Wolfgang Petritsch, President of the Summit, and his Bureau for the tireless efforts they made to ensure that the Conference was a resounding success. The Nairobi Summit will no doubt go down in the annals of history as a landmark Conference on the path towards the total elimination of the menace of landmines and unparalleled assistance to mine victims.

(Mr. Owade, Kenya)

For the first time since 1997, the international community gathered at a high political level to examine the humanitarian problems caused by anti-personnel mines and the steps being taken to address them. The Summit was attended by 5 heads of State and/or government, 6 Vice-Presidents or deputy heads of government and 20 ministers. In all, 135 States participated in the Summit, of which there were 110 States parties and 22 observer States.

The Summit featured the largest ever gathering of representatives of non-governmental organizations with an interest in the global landmine problem. Over 350 representatives of non-governmental organizations from dozens of countries participated in the Summit.

The Summit made a significant step in the direction of universalization. On the first day of the Summit, Ethiopia announced that it had ratified the Convention, thus becoming the 144th State to join the Convention. I take this opportunity to congratulate the Government and people of Ethiopia for that noble decision.

Positive signs of the growing acceptance of the Convention came from other States that are still outside the Convention, including China, Indonesia and Somalia. Allow me in this regard to quote from the statement made by the leader of the delegation of China at the Summit:

“Both China and States parties to the Ottawa Convention share the same objective. China closely follows the Ottawa process and has been enhancing exchanges and cooperation with the States parties to the Convention ... We stand ready to further expand our cooperation with the States parties to the Convention, in order to contribute to the early elimination of landmine problems.”

We welcome these positive gestures and encourage China and other non-States parties to take concrete steps to join the Convention so that we can achieve the objective of universality.

It is noteworthy that the Review Conference adopted the Nairobi Plan of Action 2005-2009 aimed at ending the suffering caused by anti-personnel mines, where the States parties made the following commitments, among others. They committed themselves to:

- The pursuit of universal adherence to the Convention, which will remain an important object of cooperation among States parties;
- To ensure the expeditious and timely destruction of all stockpiled anti-personnel mines under their jurisdiction or control;
- To successfully meet deadlines for clearing mined areas. This will be the most significant challenge to be addressed during this period, and will require intensive efforts by mine-affected States parties and those in a position to assist them;
- Consistent with the Convention’s vital promise to mine victims, the States parties will enhance care, rehabilitation and reintegration efforts;

(Mr. Owade, Kenya)

- They underscored that fulfilling their obligations will require substantial political, financial and material commitments;
- They also emphasized that transparency and effective information exchange will be crucial to fulfilling their obligations;
- To continue to be guided by the knowledge that individually and collectively they are responsible for ensuring compliance with the Convention;
- Finally, that the implementation mechanisms will remain important, particularly as key means to implement the Nairobi Action Plan.

The Conference also adopted the Nairobi 2004 Plan of Action, “towards a Mine-free World”, containing renewed commitment by States to achieving a mine-free world in which there will be no new victims.

The Summit sent a strong and resolute message to those who are still outside the treaty that the international community can no longer tolerate these weapons which kill and maim innocent civilians. The Summit pledged to do more in the areas of victim assistance to ensure that they realize improvement in their lives through medical care, physical rehabilitation and socio-economic integration.

I wish to take this opportunity to congratulate the Government of Croatia for offering to host the next meeting of States parties from 28 November to 2 December 2005. It is my hope that the momentum of Nairobi will be maintained as we move towards Croatia. In conclusion, allow me to recall the words of Kenya’s Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Ali Mwakwere, in his closing remarks at the Conference on 3 December 2004: “It is our collective responsibility to walk the road map from Nairobi steadily by putting the Nairobi Plan of Action into practice. Let us speak less and act more in the days ahead.” I hope we shall all live up to this challenge.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of Kenya for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair, and from my personal experience in Nairobi, I can fully agree with him on what he said about the great success of the Mine Ban Summit. I turn to the next speaker on my list, the distinguished Ambassador of France, Ambassador François Rivasseau.

Mr. RIVASSEAU (France) (translated from French): Mr. President, Dear Chris: at this time when the Netherlands is taking over the presidency of our Conference I would like to wish you all the success that you deserve in the work that you are engaged in. Your determination, your experience in the Conference on Disarmament and also other disarmament forums, come at just the right time. At the very moment when we are starting a new year, we know that it will be studded with important events for our collective security.

(Mr. Rivasseau, France)

During 2004 we took the modest first steps in a process of reviving our Conference. This process, as we see more clearly each day, is indispensable in order that we should no longer be left out of the comprehensive effort of thinking about modernizing the tools of international security. You will all remember that at the beginning of the session last year, we raised with a group of pioneer delegations a matter which, seeking to be as neutral as possible, we described as a new issue. We asked at that time, in addition to the traditional issues that have been engaging us for many years, that our forum should look at relevant subjects related to the international situation in today's world in the area of security, non-proliferation and disarmament. Together with others, this delegation called on the Conference on Disarmament, leaving preconceptions aside for a moment, to reflect on threats which the world is facing today. How can we respond to these expectations today? In the same spirit, it was also your wish for a greater sense of relevance to be injected into this forum.

One year later, where do we stand? First of all, there have been positive developments. Indeed, they have been mentioned once more this morning - in particular the launching of informal sessions, including one devoted exclusively to our agenda, and another devoted exclusively to new and additional issues related to our agenda. Then there was the adoption of the Conference's 2004 report, in which, by consensus, we recognized the importance of the new relevant subjects in the new security environment. Lastly, in the First Committee, there was the adoption, again by consensus, of a resolution welcoming the substantive discussions undertaken in the Conference on the current situation in the area of international security.

We resume our work today with the ambition of doing more tangible work than last year. As usual - I don't know if this is a good custom or not - the first step we are invited to take is that we agree on an agenda. Everyone agrees that this agenda does not prevent us from taking up all the subjects we might want to study, but it embodies a formulation of the priorities of this Conference, whose essential elements go back 25 years, and it does not incorporate the thinking on which we saw progress last year.

For eight years the Conference on Disarmament has agreed on this agenda, but its discussions have subsequently been totally deadlocked. Last year, we suggested a short break, to think things over, to reflect on the meaning of this agenda, and some hesitated, believing that this might delay the adoption of our programme of work. Yet we did take that break. Does that mean that we delayed agreement on the negotiating mandates which we have tried to secure for eight years? Of course not. Quite the opposite - we injected fresh momentum into the Conference's discussions. Should we not this year, as last year, take time to think about this agenda, in an attempt to move forward a little?

As everyone knows, it is not a question of whether we will agree to this agenda, but it requires further thought, as is shown by all the discussions in informal sessions last year, which showed how out of date our agenda is in certain respects. It is in this spirit that the French delegation would like, before any decision is taken, a debate which would help us to review the

(Mr. Rivasseau, France)

content of our agenda. At the very least, our agenda deserves to be updated along the lines of consensus agreed in 2004. Why, for example, could we not quite simply add a new item entitled “New and additional issues”, to use a wording which has been agreed upon by all of you, dear colleagues?

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the Ambassador of France very much for his statement and for his kind words addressed to me. I now turn to the next country which is going to make a statement. Ambassador Rapacki of Poland has the floor.

Mr. RAPACKI (Poland): Mr. President, since I am taking the floor at the first plenary meeting under your presidency, let me congratulate you on the assumption of this high office and let me wish you all success in fulfilling your responsibilities as President of the Conference on Disarmament. Let me also express my hope that our common efforts will bring tangible results in the work of the CD in this session.

Today we are commemorating the 60th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp. More than 40 heads of State, government and parliament, and those who survived the Gehenna of the death camps, have gathered today in Oświęcim to mark that anniversary. There are also young people among them - those who should transmit the message to future generations about what happened in the concentration camp, gas chambers and crematoria in Auschwitz-Birkenau.

Though it was only one death camp among many, Auschwitz has become for the world a symbol of terror, genocide and the Holocaust. It was established by the Nazis in 1940, in the suburbs of the city of Oświęcim, which, like other parts of Poland, was occupied by Nazi Germany during the Second World War. The occupants changed the name of the city of Oświęcim to Auschwitz, which became the name of the camp as well. Auschwitz was a complex consisting of a concentration, extermination and forced-labour camp and 39 subcamps.

Over the following years, the camp expanded. At first, only Poles were imprisoned and killed there. They were joined by Soviet prisoners of war, Roma, and almost 30 other nationalities: Czechs, Slovaks, Belgians, Danes, French, Greeks and Dutch, and also German political prisoners, to name just a few of the nations who suffered in the camp. As of 1942, the camp became the site of one of the greatest mass murders in the history of humanity, perpetrated against the European Jews as part of Hitler’s plan for the complete destruction of that people - the Holocaust. The majority of the Jewish men, women and children deported to Auschwitz were sent to death in the Birkenau gas chambers immediately after arrival. At the end of the war, in an effort to remove the traces of the crimes they had committed, the Nazis began dismantling and razing the gas chambers, crematoria and other buildings, and forced prisoners capable of marching deep into the German interior, in so-called “death marches”, in which thousands died. Those left behind in the camp were liberated by Red Army soldiers exactly 60 years ago, on 27 January 1945.

(Mr. Rapacki, Poland)

It is estimated that among the 1.6 million people brought to Auschwitz, there were at least 1,100,000 Jews from all the countries of occupied Europe, over 140,000 Poles (mostly intellectuals and political prisoners, but also people caught in random manhunts in the streets of Polish towns), approximately 20,000 Roma from several European countries, over 15,000 Soviet prisoners of war, and thousands of prisoners of other nationalities. Approximately 1.5 million people died in Auschwitz.

Today in Oświęcim we hear the voice of political leaders - as well as those who survived Auschwitz and other camps in Europe occupied by the Nazis - "let us never forget, let future generations never forget about the genocide that occurred 60 years ago". During the United Nations General Assembly special session organized to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the Nazi death camps, which was held on Monday in New York, the United Nations Secretary-General said: "Such an evil must never be allowed to happen again." We should all remember that message.

As we commence this year's session of the Conference on Disarmament, it is worth remembering what happened 60 years ago. This year we will also be commemorating the 60th anniversary of the end of the Second World War, the war which started at dawn on 1 September 1939, when Nazi troops invaded my country. Today we are living in a different world. Nations which were fighting each other 60 years ago are cooperating now and together confronting new challenges. Let me say that whatever the new threats to humanity, we must learn the lesson of Auschwitz and be brave enough to act.

Let us keep in mind the words of Robert Cecil which we can see on the wall every time we enter the Council Chamber: "Here is a great work for peace in which all can participate", "The nations must disarm or perish" and also "Be just and fear not". Let us not fear to undertake the task of making the world a more secure place for future generations.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of Poland for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. The next speaker on my list, who will also speak on this same issue, is the distinguished Ambassador of Germany, Ambassador Volker Heinzberg.

Mr. HEINSBERG (Germany): Mr. President, in joining my esteemed and distinguished friend and colleague from Poland, I would also like to make some remarks on the occasion of the commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi concentration camps.

The liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau (Oświęcim) on 27 January 1945, 60 years ago to the day, and all the many other concentration and extermination camps, gives me reason to commemorate the millions of victims - innocent men, women and children - of the Nazi genocide against Jews first and foremost, but also Sinti and Roma, homosexuals, the handicapped, prisoners of war, dissidents and many others from all across Europe. We pay humble tribute to all victims of the National Socialist regime of terror and we bow our heads in deep mourning. Auschwitz will forever be engraved in the history of humanity as a symbol of

(Mr. Heinsberg, Germany)

utter contempt for humanity and of genocide. Auschwitz was the most horrific expression of a system blinded by racial insanity which brought untold suffering upon the people. Even today, 60 years after the cataclysm, it is difficult to find words for the suffering, the pain and the humiliation of the victims.

This barbaric crime will always be part of German history. For my country, it signifies an absolute moral abomination, a denial of all things civilized without precedent or parallel. The new, democratic Germany has drawn its conclusions. The historic and moral responsibility for Auschwitz has left an indelible mark on us.

We consider it our responsibility to combat dangers threatening our countries, our peoples, our children with the utmost determination. We consider it our responsibility to promote peaceful cooperation and confidence-building with the perspective of a new world order to prevent genocide and other dangers for mankind. Without any doubt this includes the fight against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, foresighted conflict prevention, the protection of human rights. Effective multilateralism is the safest way to reach this goal.

Disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation can contribute to prevent conflicts, to create stability and to reduce the risk of the spread and possible use of weapons of mass destruction, thereby making our world safer. The Conference on Disarmament has been given an important mandate by the United Nations in this framework. Therefore, I strongly appeal to all of us to undertake renewed efforts to fulfil our responsibility.

Let me conclude, Mr. President, by expressing my best feelings in seeing you in the Chair and pledging my full support for your work.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of Germany for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair.

This week, as was clear from the statements that have been made by Poland and Germany, we mark the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz and the many other camps that fell to the Allied forces in the winter and spring of 1945. As you are well aware, the United Nations was created to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war and to ensure that the horrors of these camps would never recur.

In this connection, I would like to emphasize that disarmament is crucial to our ongoing efforts to build confidence and eventually significantly improve relations among States in order to honour these commitments of the United Nations founding fathers. We owe it to them and to our successors to take this responsibility seriously.

I would now like to turn to the next speaker on my list, the distinguished Ambassador of Algeria, Ambassador Idriss Jazaïry.

Mr. JAZAIRY (Algeria) (translated from French): Mr. President, allow me first of all to congratulate you on taking the Chair of the Conference on Disarmament. Your professional qualities and your experience are assets which will undoubtedly enable you to guide our proceedings well. This is the moment for me to assure you of the complete readiness and full cooperation of the delegation of Algeria in helping you to fulfil the task entrusted to you. I thank the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Sergei Ordzhonikidze, and Ambassador Enrique Román-Morey, the Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference, as well as all the secretariat staff for the work they have done and the support they give us. I thank you for your words of welcome.

I would also like, on behalf of the delegation of Algeria, to express our hope for the speedy adoption of our agenda, as the rules of procedure require. This time, I hope, we will succeed in adopting a programme of work which will encompass all the items on the agenda. Otherwise, how will we be able to put an end to a deadlock from which the Conference has been suffering since 1996?

Today we begin the work of the 2005 session at a time when the international circumstances offer little ground for optimism. The international community is facing a number of threats: an increase in stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, the risk of proliferation of such weapons, the militarization of outer space, and international terrorism. To this we can add the increase in military expenditure and the erosion of multilateralism in the conduct of international affairs. All these elements, together with the new military doctrines which grant pride of place to nuclear weapons, combined with the concept of preventive war and the first use of nuclear weapons, go beyond the traditional concept of deterrence, which was the justification formerly invoked by the nuclear Powers. Never has the international community been faced with such pressing and serious threats. They destabilize our collective security. We have a duty to react in a multilateral framework to provide appropriate and lasting solutions to this sad state of affairs. We are firmly convinced that only multilateral agreements based on the Final Document of the tenth United Nations General Assembly on disarmament in 1978 would enable humanity to eliminate these threats.

The first priority to which we have to react is still, of course, nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. The 1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty is the cornerstone. We must maintain the integrity and authority of the Treaty and ensure its universality. Because of their destructive power, nuclear weapons in themselves represent a threat to international peace and security. Their existence jeopardizes the existence of mankind as a whole, particularly as the risks of nuclear confrontation and the accidental use of nuclear weapons have not been ruled out. Indeed, that is why the Decalogue set nuclear disarmament in the context of general and complete disarmament as the first priority to be addressed by the international community. My country, which has been the site of nuclear tests, whose effects on the local population and environment persist to this day, is well aware of the devastating effects of this sort of weapon.

(Mr. Jazairi, Algeria)

True, it was agreed in 1968 that the five nuclear countries should retain their status for reasons of strategic balance at that time. The situation today in no way justifies the dichotomy between nuclear States and non-nuclear States. The risk of East-West confrontation has faded away with the disappearance of the Eastern bloc. Consequently, the nuclear status of States should not be considered an unrestricted right over time. Besides, the non-nuclear States accepted non-proliferation in the context of an ultimate complete ban on nuclear weapons. In this regard, the nuclear States have specific obligations and bear primary responsibility in the sphere of nuclear disarmament. This was confirmed by the International Court of Justice in its advisory opinion of July 1996. The opinion states that the nuclear States have an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control.

In fact, this is a matter of respecting obligations entered into under article VI of the NPT and commitments made in the context of the 2000 Review Conference. During that conference the nuclear-weapon States committed themselves in particular to take 13 practical steps. These countries are, among other things, meant to take irreversible measures to reduce nuclear arsenals with a view to general and complete disarmament. They must ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty and de-alert their weapons. They have a responsibility in the CD to promote an international instrument on the prohibition of the manufacture of fissile material in accordance with the Shannon mandate and to see to it that the role of nuclear weapons in security policies and doctrines is downgraded. It is regrettable to note that the 13 steps have remained a dead letter up to now and no progress has been recorded in this area. One can therefore easily understand the reasons which lead the General Assembly of the United Nations each year to request the Conference to begin negotiations on the elimination of nuclear weapons and nuclear disarmament and in the meantime to reduce the threat posed by such weapons. We hope that the seventh NPT Review Conference, which is scheduled for this year, will be an occasion to reaffirm and consolidate the measures taken for the balanced and comprehensive implementation of the NPT. Consequently, we can only regret the failure of the preparatory process for the Conference as regards the adoption of the agenda. We also note that draft documents for the Conference have been blocked as a result of opposition by certain nuclear States to nuclear disarmament. These are hardly encouraging signs.

The risk of nuclear proliferation, and particularly that of seeing terrorist groups gain access to such weapons, is also a matter of grave concern. Hence the need to strengthen multilateral verification standards in IAEA. It was with that in view that Algeria supported Security Council resolution 1540 and has expressed its intention to sign the Additional Protocol to the Comprehensive IAEA safeguards agreements. That having been said, nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation are two inseparable dimensions of the NPT. Each strengthens and weakens the other. Failure by the nuclear States to respect their commitments, particularly the 13 practical steps I mentioned earlier, affects the authority and integrity of the NPT. It therefore constitutes an element which weakens the non-proliferation regime, as was recognized by the High-level Panel in its report on threats, challenges and change.

(Mr. Jazairy, Algeria)

The regional approach to nuclear disarmament is an important intermediate phase in the process of general and complete disarmament. We welcome the fact that certain regions of the planet have endowed themselves with regional denuclearization instruments of this type. However, the Middle East region has no such treaty because of Israel's refusal to accede to the NPT and subject its nuclear facilities to IAEA inspection. It is incomprehensible that this State should benefit from a kind of law of silence or exemption clause while pressure is exerted on other countries in this region and outside this region on the basis of a mere assumption that there has been a violation of the non-proliferation regime. We welcome the mobilization of international efforts to combat proliferation. However, it should be pointed out that any steps in this direction would have greater value and credibility if they were addressed to all countries, without omitting any and without any exception whatsoever.

When the non-nuclear-weapon States extended the NPT for an unlimited period at the 1995 Review Conference, they renounced the nuclear option as a means of war in a considered and deliberate manner. It is paradoxical that the non-nuclear States should be asked to respect non-proliferation to the letter whereas they are denied the assurances from the nuclear States which would protect them against the use or the threat of the use of such weapons. It is legitimate and logical that these countries should demand such guarantees. We continue to call for the immediate opening of negotiations in the CD to give substance to such guarantees.

As far as fissile material is concerned, stockpiles far exceed the threshold necessary for deterrence. That is why it is necessary to conclude a binding and non-discriminatory international legal instrument prohibiting the production of such material. This instrument would be effective only if it forms part of a two-dimensional approach covering both future production and existing stockpiles. By providing a multilateral verification mechanism for this instrument, a climate of trust and transparency could be created among States parties with regard to compliance with the obligations undertaken. Having such a treaty without verification measures would mean laying down a prohibition without having the means to enforce it. This could only increase suspicion and distrust.

The issue of the militarization of outer space is another source of considerable concern. The militarization of outer space, combined with the latest developments in space technology, jeopardizes international peace and stability. That is why my delegation calls for outer space - the common heritage of mankind - to be reserved for peaceful uses alone. In that regard, we urge the need to set up a subsidiary body in our conference to conduct discussions leading to a multilateral instrument of an appropriate nature. All these issues require multilateral responses, which alone are able to provide solutions which take into account the concerns of all parties and the security needs of the international community as a whole. It is only thus that we can reach solutions which are negotiated and therefore accepted by all, incorporating and reconciling the interests and needs of all parties. Proceeding on the basis of the same propositions, the United Nations General Assembly has repeatedly stressed this issue over the last few years. In resolution 59/69 of 10 December 2004 on the promotion of multilateralism in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation, it reaffirmed in particular that multilateralism

(Mr. Jazairy, Algeria)

is the core principle in negotiations in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation, with a view to maintaining and strengthening universal norms and enlarging their scope. The General Assembly also reaffirmed multilateralism as the core principle in resolving disarmament and non-proliferation concerns.

The CD is the only multilateral negotiating forum in the field of disarmament. It is thus the natural framework in which all the issues I have raised should find a solution. Our mandate is to negotiate instruments which can strengthen international peace and security. We owe it to the international community to act in a spirit of compromise and consolidation and to move beyond narrow national views and interests. It is a great pity that our forum has been reduced to inaction over the last few years, not because there have been no initiatives or no will to make progress, but because no consensus has emerged within it with regard to the programme of work.

The latest of these proposals is the five Ambassadors' initiative, formalized and classified under the number 1693/Rev.1, which has the support of the majority of delegations. As the representative of Russia has just pointed out, it provides the best basis for reaching consensus on the programme of work because it establishes a certain balance among the concerns of all parties. Apart from its interregional origins it provides for the setting up of four ad hoc committees with four appropriate mandates on the main issues of concern to the various parties. These are in this case nuclear disarmament, negative security assurances, the prohibition of the production of fissile material (FMCT) and the demilitarization of outer space (PAROS). As has often been said in this room, the five Ambassadors' proposal remains open to all suggestions or amendments. Hence progress might be made at different rates in the four working groups on the understanding that the agreements reached would be confirmed once the other elements in the package had also been agreed. My delegation still supports the five Ambassadors' proposal and considers that it forms a good basis for relaunching the work of the CD.

I hope that the consultations you will be holding in the course of your term of office, Mr. President, will be focused on the search for consensus on that basis, since rule 30 of our rules of procedure allows any delegation to raise new issues related to the subject area of the CD, as the Ambassador of France wishes.

Disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation are not an end in themselves. The ultimate goal is the preservation of human civilization and the prosperity of humanity as a whole. Therefore collective security cannot be assured through security measures alone, but also by addressing economic development and fighting against injustice. Because ultimately the most serious threat to collective security is the persistence of extreme poverty and the marginalization of the worst-off. The efforts of the international community should be directed more resolutely towards the creation of a more just and therefore more stable world.

Allow me once again, Mr. President, to wish you good luck and assure you of our wholehearted readiness to cooperate.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of Algeria for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I turn to the next delegation that has asked for the floor, the distinguished Ambassador of Sri Lanka.

Ms. FERNANDO (Sri Lanka): Mr. President, may I extend my congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of the CD and assure you of the fullest cooperation of my delegation in your endeavours in your usual energetic manner to get the CD back to work?

I have asked for the floor, Mr. President, to thank you and the members of the CD for the condolences extended to countries such as Sri Lanka, which experienced the devastating effects of the tsunami almost exactly one month ago. As an island nation, Sri Lanka's civilization, culture and heritage and the economy have always been closely bound up with the sea. This is the first time in our recorded history of over 2,500 years that we have experienced the sea as a veritable weapon of mass destruction. The sympathy, solidarity and assistance extended to Sri Lanka at this time from governments, the United Nations and international organizations, civil, private-sector organizations and the general public all over the world have been of immense support to us and saw the realization that at this time of unprecedented crisis, we were not alone.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of Sri Lanka for her statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I turn to the next country on my list, the distinguished representative of India.

Mr. PANDEY (India): We would also like to express our gratitude to the international community, and in particular to the Conference on Disarmament for the solidarity that it has expressed to the victims of the tsunami earthquake. A number of Indians died and we are grateful to the international community for the support that was extended to us.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of India for his statement, and I now turn to the distinguished representative of Indonesia.

Mr. WIRENJURIT (Indonesia): My delegation does not intend to make a substantive statement at this stage. Instead, I should first apologize and inform the meeting that due to unavoidable circumstances, Ambassador Makarim Wibisono is unable to attend this meeting, which marks the opening of the first part of the Conference on Disarmament in 2005. However, in his absence, while reserving the right of Ambassador Wibisono to congratulate you upon assuming the presidency and to respond to the warm words of welcome extended to him at a later stage, permit me, on behalf of the Government and people of the Republic of Indonesia, to thank you, Mr. President, as well as the members and observers of the Conference most sincerely for all the kind messages of condolence and sympathy we received after the terrible tsunami disaster, which brought death and devastation to so many in our country, and also for having

(Mr. Wirenjurit, Indonesia)

held a minute of silence earlier this morning in this particular meeting. These expressions of friendship and solidarity have been of great comfort to us in this appalling tragedy, and that will be conveyed to my Government.

As for innumerable governments, humanitarian organizations, relief agencies, NGOs and individual volunteers that are participating so generously and tirelessly in the massive reconstruction effort which is currently under way, words fail to express adequately the extent of our appreciation and gratitude for their overwhelming show of support. Their unstinting efforts are invaluable in enabling our Government to undertake the massive rebuilding which is needed to restore economic and community life in the affected zone. We are very much indebted to them for their solidarity, and wish to convey here our deepest and most heartfelt thanks.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of Indonesia for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair.

This concludes my list of speakers for today. Does any delegation wish to take the floor at this stage? That does not seem to be the case, and therefore I now intend to suspend the plenary meeting and to invite the Conference to consider in an informal meeting, which will follow immediately, the requests received from States not members of the Conference to participate in our work during this session, as contained in document CD/WP.537. I think we can deal with that fairly quickly and take that decision today, and then next Tuesday, we will have an informal meeting on the agenda. Also, because it is my feeling that it would not be possible at this stage to reach consensus on that issue today.

So I now adjourn the formal plenary and I ask delegates to reconvene in the informal session within three minutes.

The formal plenary meeting was suspended at 11.50 a.m. and resumed at 11.55 a.m.

The PRESIDENT: The 969th plenary is resumed.

I would now like to invite you to take a decision on the requests for participation in our work from States not members of the Conference. These requests are contained in document CD/WP.537, and were received from the following States: Azerbaijan, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Holy See, Iceland, Jordan, Kuwait, Latvia, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malta, Oman, Philippines, Portugal, Qatar, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Serbia and Montenegro, Singapore, Slovenia, Thailand, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Uruguay.

May I take it that the Conference decides to invite these States to participate in its work in accordance with its rules of procedure?

I give the floor to the distinguished representative of Turkey.

Mr. ESENLİ (Turkey): Mr. President, at the outset allow me to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and express my delegation's full confidence in your diplomatic skills, wise guidance, resolute approach and sincere spirit. Please be assured of the full support of the Turkish delegation for your efforts to fulfil the difficult task entrusted to you. Under your able leadership we hope that 2005 will be a turning point in the efforts to overcome an impasse that has prevented the CD for seven consecutive years from launching substantive work.

Regarding the list of observers, I wish to inform the Conference that Turkey accepts the list contained in document CD/WP.537 with the understanding emphasized in and circulated with documents CD/1438 and CD/1738.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of Turkey for his statement and for his kind words addressed to the Chair. I am sure the meeting takes note of that statement. With that statement being made, may I take it that the Conference decides to invite these States to participate in our work in accordance with its rules of procedure? That seems to be the case.

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: Next week, on Tuesday, we will have our next plenary meeting at 10 a.m. in this room. It will be followed by an informal plenary meeting on the Conference's agenda and other issues related to its work, and I will have the full day available for you at that time. Once again, I apologize for not having the time available at this session to start addressing the issue of the agenda, but I think it is also useful that there are a few days left for informal diplomacy to try to see whether various views can be brought together.

If there is no delegate at this stage wishing to take the floor, I think our business for today has been concluded, and I adjourn the meeting.

The meeting rose at 12.05 p.m.