

# Conference on Disarmament

29 January 2013

English

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## Final record of the one thousand two hundred and seventy-fourth plenary meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 29 January 2013, at 10.15 a.m.

*President:* Mr. András Dékány ..... (Hungary)

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**The President:** I call to order the 1274th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. Before we proceed, however, I would like to invite you to consider a request from the States not members of the Conference that are participating in our work during this session. In addition to those we approved during the 1273rd plenary meeting last week, the secretariat has received requests from the following countries: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ghana, the Philippines and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. These requests are now before you in document CD/WP.575/Add.1, which includes all the requests that the secretariat received before 4 p.m. yesterday, 28 January 2013. All the requests from non-member States received after that date will be presented for your consideration and decision in the next plenary meetings.

Are there any comments on those requests? May I take it that the Conference decides to invite these States to participate in our work in accordance with the rules of procedure?

*It was so decided.*

**The President:** It is my pleasure now to update you at this stage on the status of consultations I have been conducting with a view to advancing our work.

By today, all delegations should have received, through their regional coordinators, an unofficial first draft of my proposal for a programme of work. Please keep in mind that the paper does not have official status yet, and indeed it is a work in progress in order to forge a document that can be adopted by consensus.

I also have to emphasize that the draft is the result of intensive consultations and represents my overall assessment at this stage of how we can move forward given the widely diverging views and positions of the Conference member States. It was carefully crafted in good faith, with the intent to find the best possible balance among member States' views.

The draft is an honest effort to break the deadlock we have been in for the last 16 years. As you can see, all four core issues would be taken up substantively. The novelty of the proposed approach comes from the merger of the issues of nuclear disarmament and a fissile material ban within one working group.

Let me explain our thinking behind this idea. First, nuclear disarmament and the ban on the production of fissionable material should not be seen as competing issues. This is in line with the founding document of the Conference, the final resolution of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, which, in the chapter on a programme of action, refers to nuclear disarmament as a process and, in paragraph 50, specifically mentions the ban on fissionable materials for weapons purposes as one of the necessary stages towards achieving the overall goal of nuclear disarmament.

Second, these two issues have traditionally been dealt with under the same agenda item of the Conference and its draft programmes of work. The two documents with the greatest impact of recent years, CD/1864 and CD/1933/Rev.1, intended to establish two working groups, on nuclear disarmament and on fissile materials, under agenda item 1. I thought it would be a logical step to merge the two working groups, given the fact that our agenda has not changed over the last decade. In our view, bringing our work on a fissionable material ban under the umbrella of nuclear disarmament clearly emphasizes the importance we all attach to the cessation of the nuclear arms race and the elimination of nuclear weapons, which, in our view, is a long and arduous process, but one we have to take forward continuously in appropriate stages.

While drafting the text, we have been trying to stick, to the extent possible, to previously agreed or accepted language. Document CD/1864, adopted at the time by consensus, undoubtedly served as a basis, while we have also taken into account elements

of document CD/1933/Rev.1. We also had to take into account developments in the First Committee of the General Assembly, while firmly sticking to our belief that the Conference on Disarmament is the appropriate forum for multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations.

I am fully aware that a programme of work needs to be accompanied by an agreed implementation plan. I have not forgotten the issue of selecting the chairs for the working groups and the allocation of time for the meetings of the working groups. These are important elements of the final package. However, first I have to see whether my proposed approach is a good enough basis to move forward by consensus. Should this be the case, I will present a proposal on the modalities of implementation. I can already indicate to you that I believe the merged working group, with two core issues to take up, needs twice as much time as the other two. I also believe that the chairs of the working groups should have the overall responsibility of arranging for the most efficient and balanced consideration of the issues in the respective working groups chaired by them.

Finally, I wish to reiterate that my door is open to all of you. Both I and my team are ready to consult further with any of you. I hope I can count on your cooperation, openness and, indeed, support with regard to my plans.

I have a list of speakers for this morning's meeting, and I would like to give the floor to the Ambassador of Argentina.

**Mr. d'Alotto** (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, allow me, first of all, to congratulate you on assuming the presidency of this forum and to wish you every success in the coming weeks, which look to be highly important in setting the tone for the Conference this year.

I had intended, on this occasion, to give a fairly general speech, but the informal distribution of your proposal for the programme of work prompts us to offer a preliminary reaction to the text.

In that regard, I can only thank the Hungarian presidency for the prompt distribution of a document during this early stage of our work, because, as the first President of the Conference on Disarmament used to say, it is a very important time to progress in the search for new consensus.

Mr. President, the flexibility of my delegation, which we have always maintained in this forum, will remain in respect of the various formulas that may arise, and we trust that your diagnosis, which is reflected in the informal document, can serve as a real basis for progress in the adoption of a programme of work. You can certainly count on the full cooperation and availability of my delegation.

Although we have already begun several meetings of the Conference on Disarmament by reiterating the need to act with a sense of urgency in order to save this forum from becoming irrelevant, in 2013 we are faced with a reality that has evolved outside this forum. The United Nations Member States have taken additional steps in an attempt to revive negotiations on disarmament, including the agenda items of the Conference.

Three resolutions that were recently adopted by the General Assembly show that we cannot afford to waste much more time, and my country will be committed to maintaining an active presence in all relevant bodies at all times; in the meantime, our priority is to make decisive progress towards nuclear disarmament.

It is important to consider alternatives that promote the work of the Conference on Disarmament, although parallel processes that try to replace it would merely shatter the balance and integrity of the current system, making it even harder to achieve substantive results.

In my speech last August I described my country's diagnosis of the causes that prevent this forum from progressing towards the commencement of negotiations. The different perceptions of security in the member States have an impact within the forum, impeding the emergence of a lowest common denominator that could be reflected in an agreed programme of work.

On this occasion, we also reiterate what we consider to be a measure that could be tested immediately to give greater flexibility to the format of the programme of work. A simple schedule of activities for each agenda item without specifying mandates could be a concrete step in the search for new consensus.

This would allow for some form of analysis to be conducted on the timeliness of starting negotiations on the items, and for the matter to be reflected in the final report of the Conference.

2013 will be the year for various forums for discussion and negotiation that will require our attention. That should not, however, be detrimental to the primacy that member States must give to this forum with a view to the prompt adoption of a programme of work.

We trust that all the efforts of the presidency can help us in the quest for that common element capable of preserving the national interests of member States without abandoning the ultimate objective of a world free from nuclear weapons.

**Mr. Schmid** (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, allow me first of all to convey my warm congratulations to you on assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. I would also like to assure you of my delegation's full support in the fulfilment of your role. Lastly, I would like to welcome the ambassadors and colleagues who have joined us for this new session of the Conference.

I would like to echo a number of those who spoke before me last week by underlining that we cannot approach the 2013 session of the Conference in the same way as previous years. In particular, it is difficult not to note that the environment in which the Conference takes place has changed. The impatience and frustration provoked by the Conference's long-standing inability to honour its mandate have led the General Assembly to make unprecedented decisions.

At its sixty-seventh session, the General Assembly adopted two resolutions establishing mechanisms responsible for addressing themes that have long been covered by the Conference. Whether in the context of nuclear disarmament or that of a treaty prohibiting the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons, new initiatives were launched.

These two resolutions, which were adopted by a large majority, have several implications. They underscore the particular importance that the General Assembly attaches to achieving progress towards nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Through their provisions, they also indicate that the General Assembly still believes that the Conference has a pivotal role to play with regard to such issues. That said, they also mean that the community of States is not prepared to stand by if the Conference remains unable to undertake its functions, nor is it willing to allow key topics in the promotion of international security to be left perpetually unaddressed.

My delegation remains convinced that, as a matter of principle, the Conference is still the framework that should be favoured in advancing these themes, particularly owing to the distinctive nature of its composition. Switzerland also remains convinced of the central importance of a fully functional conference for the effective operation of the United Nations disarmament machinery. Its revitalization, with the aim of turning it into a functional institution once more, should therefore remain a primary objective. That is why Switzerland, together with South Africa and the Netherlands, submitted a follow-up

decision to General Assembly resolution 66/66 during the sixty-seventh session. This decision, which was adopted by consensus, allows the issue of revitalizing the Conference's work to be kept on the agenda of the General Assembly.

The adoption and implementation of a programme of work are, as you yourself pointed out in your opening statement, the best means of revitalizing the Conference. We are thus particularly grateful to you for your efforts towards the adoption of a programme of work, and for having circulated a draft in that connection so swiftly. The approach adopted is certainly of interest, and we will not fail to study it in detail, while hoping that the document can help overcome the current deadlock. For our part, we are willing to show the necessary flexibility for such a plan to be made a reality, and are ready to progress in a decisive manner in respect of all the central themes on the Conference agenda.

Nevertheless, we feel that it is already important to bear in mind, at this stage, that if the Conference is unable to adopt and implement a programme of work, the question of revitalizing it and how to do so would inevitably arise. Switzerland would display an active commitment if such a scenario came to pass.

With regard to the two General Assembly resolutions to which I referred, Switzerland is convinced that they will assist the Conference in returning to work and help make progress in terms of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. It therefore supported their adoption last autumn.

We intend to participate fully in the application of the measures defined in these two resolutions. Regarding the one on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, Switzerland will not fail to respond to the Secretary-General's appeal for its views on such an instrument. As a non-nuclear-weapon State, we have repeatedly emphasized that such a treaty should have an impact on both nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament. We believe that it is particularly important for non-nuclear-weapon States to make their views on the subject known.

Regarding the much-discussed "Open-Ended Working Group" tasked with taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations, Switzerland plans to participate actively in its work and to strive for the fulfilment of the objective that it has been set, namely to develop proposals to take forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations for the achievement and maintenance of a world without nuclear weapons. We hope that the working group will be in a position to submit a substantive report at the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly, and that the report will also be of interest to the Conference and the United Nations Disarmament Commission.

While the Conference is at the centre of our attention at the start of 2013, it should be noted that this year will also be marked by other important events.

The high-level meeting of the General Assembly in September will offer an opportunity to discuss ways of responding to the challenges posed by nuclear disarmament, and to strengthen the political will required to perform that task. It will also provide the opportunity to reiterate, at a high level, the commitment to "the elimination of atomic weapons", which was at the heart of the first resolution adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1946.

Moreover, the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2015 Review Conference of Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) will be held in Geneva this spring. The event will make it possible to further evaluate the current status of implementation of the action plan adopted at the 2010 Review Conference. It will also help in continuing to lay the groundwork for the 2015 Review Conference and the measures to be adopted at that time.

Regarding the implementation of the action plan adopted in 2010, there is no doubt that numerous challenges remain in the implementation of measures related to nuclear disarmament. Several deadlines are also approaching, especially the report that the nuclear-weapon States will have to submit in 2014 under action No. 5, pursuant to which nuclear-weapon States commit to accelerating concrete progress on the steps leading to nuclear disarmament contained in the Final Document of the 2000 Review Conference. In that context, we welcome the announcement that a further meeting of the five permanent members of the Security Council will be held in Geneva next April, under the presidency of the Russian Federation.

The implementation of the measures agreed during the Review Conference raises other significant challenges. In particular, we would like to express our concern at the fact that the conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction could not be held as arranged before the end of 2012. We call on the States primarily concerned by this conference to do all in their power to ensure that it is held as soon as possible, and would like to reiterate once more our full support for the efforts of the facilitator.

The year 2013 will also provide an opportunity to make progress with a theme put forward at the 2010 NPT Review Conference, namely the humanitarian dimension of nuclear weapons and the ongoing risk to humanity posed by the possibility of such weapons being used again. We are encouraged by the growing attention that States, international organizations and non-governmental organizations are all paying to this issue. We would also like to applaud the conference organized by Norway on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons, held in Oslo at the beginning of March. Aspects linked to health, development and the environment had never before been brought to the forefront of discussions on nuclear disarmament. Focusing on the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of using nuclear weapons should allow for the terms of the debate to be modified, for progress to be made on the path to stripping these weapons of their legitimacy, and for a better understanding of the practical steps needed to meet those challenges effectively.

Lastly, and on a separate note, I would like to congratulate Ambassador Woolcott on his nomination as President-designate of the United Nations Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty, and wish him every success in the fulfilment of his role.

Mr. President, to conclude, allow me once again to reiterate my delegation's full support for your efforts to make the Conference on Disarmament functional. For my part, I can only hope that the Conference is able to provide a rapid response to the sceptics, in the same way as Galileo did to his opponents at the time, and that it will soon be in a position to state "E pur si muove", "And yet it moves".

**Mr. Khelif** (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, first of all, the delegation of Algeria expresses its warmest congratulations to you on assuming the presidency of the Conference, and wishes you success in your efforts. Rest assured of our full support for you and for the presidents succeeding you at this session.

Our sincere thanks also go to your predecessor, the Ambassador from Germany, for the efforts that he made during his term in the Chair of the Conference.

We would also like to convey our appreciation for the invaluable support we receive from Mr. Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, Secretary-General of the Conference and Personal Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General to the Conference, Mr. Jarmo Sareva, Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference, and all the members of the secretariat.

The delegation of Algeria would like to associate itself with all the colleagues who have spoken, and to reaffirm the commitment of Algeria to the Conference on Disarmament as the sole body for multilateral negotiations in the field of disarmament.

We welcome last week's unproblematic adoption of the agenda for the session. We hope that this year we will finally agree on a programme of work and thus give a positive response to the appeals made to us by the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session, requesting that, first and foremost, we make progress in nuclear disarmament.

The prolonged impasse in which the Conference finds itself for the sixteenth year is a real cause for concern in terms of its ability to provide adequate responses to the many threats that further weaken international peace and security. The delegation of Algeria commends the Secretary-General of the United Nations for his support for our Conference. It fully shares his opinion: the Conference could not afford another year of stalemate, and it was time for it to return to its primary task, which is that of negotiating instruments of disarmament.

Like many countries, particularly those belonging to the Non-Aligned Movement, we believe that the ultimate objective that we must reach is nuclear disarmament. It is a matter of saving humanity, in the knowledge that the threat these weapons pose to the survival of humanity remains intact.

In this context, we would like to stress that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons serves, in our eyes, as the legal basis and framework of reference for the complete elimination of these weapons. Its effective and comprehensive implementation at the universal level is necessary if we want to turn the dream of a world free from nuclear weapons into reality.

We are aware of the fact that steps have been taken in recent years to reduce nuclear arsenals and, in this regard, the START Treaty and the conclusions of the 2010 NPT Review Conference are particularly noteworthy.

That said, we, like many other countries, note with regret that the assessment of the situation so far shows that little progress has been made in that area, while nuclear warheads, of which there are 20,000, including 2,000 that are operationally ready according to certain estimates, are in the service of politicians in the nuclear Powers who are still focused on outdated doctrines of nuclear deterrence dating from the cold war. Although these measures are praiseworthy, they do not meet the requirements of what is, in our view, fundamental in calling into question these weapons and promoting nuclear disarmament.

The issue is, more specifically, the one that the Ambassador from Switzerland has just raised, namely the delegitimization of nuclear weapons as a fundamental step allowing us to truly put an end to that danger and rid humanity of those weapons. In the light of this observation, it must be acknowledged that the real obstacle to nuclear disarmament lies in doctrines of deterrence.

In the post-cold-war world, maintaining the status quo, which allows certain States to assume the right to rely on nuclear weapons to ensure their security and that of their allies, and which would, at the same time, pose a threat to international stability should other countries accede to it, is no longer viable, and even less viable is the frequent reference to the preservation of vital interests as the reason justifying those doctrines. It could even be dangerous for the nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime as a whole.

This is indeed the issue: so long as nuclear-weapon States and their allies rely on nuclear weapons and strive to modernize them as an expression of superiority and a means of safeguarding their interests, other States, for the same reasons and to protect themselves against nuclear attacks, could be tempted to acquire them.

In that connection, Algeria reiterates the appeal from the Group of 21 and the Non-Aligned Movement for negotiations as part of a phased programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons within a specified time frame, including a convention. In that context, concluding a verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons would make sense only if it guaranteed that the instrument would form part of a disarmament approach, which involves dealing appropriately with the issue of stocks of fissile material.

Nuclear disarmament can be achieved only if nuclear-weapon States shoulder their responsibility and truly commit to giving practical effect to the measures outlined in the action plan adopted by the 2010 NPT Review Conference, and we draw particular attention to the unequivocal commitment of the nuclear-weapon States to completely eliminate their nuclear arsenals with a view to nuclear disarmament, in accordance with article VI of the NPT. The fulfilment of the commitment made by the nuclear-weapon States to reduce the role of those weapons and their importance in nuclear security concepts, doctrines and policies is also particularly important.

The second session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2015 NPT Review Conference will take place in April, right here in Geneva, and we express the hope that the discussions held at that session will show us that progress is being made in the field of disarmament, pursuant to the commitments made.

We cannot mention nuclear disarmament without speaking about the treaties on nuclear-weapon-free zones, which are an important option on the path to nuclear disarmament. Some regions of the world have adopted such treaties, which we applaud.

In that connection, Algeria regrets that the Middle East region remains without such a treaty 17 years after the adoption of the decision on the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones in the Middle East region by the 1995 Review and Extension Conference.

The delegation of Algeria thanks the facilitator, Ambassador Laajava, for the efforts that he has made, and once again regrets the postponement of the international conference on the issue, which should have been held last December.

In that regard, Algeria emphasizes its commitment to the effective implementation of the 1995 resolution in order to rid the region of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction.

Pending the completion of nuclear disarmament, it is essential for States that have renounced the nuclear option to be given protection against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. In order for the measures to be effective and credible, they should be codified in a non-discriminatory, legally binding multilateral agreement. Such guarantees, which do not present a danger to any State, would no doubt help consolidate the non-proliferation regime and promote nuclear disarmament.

Outer space is a common space for humanity that should be preserved for peaceful uses, in keeping with the spirit of the Outer Space Treaty. In that connection, the draft treaty on the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space, put forward by the Russian Federation and China in 2008, and the code of conduct proposed by the European Union, are paths worth exploring.

Those are the key challenges to which we must provide collective responses within the Conference, in the context of a comprehensive and balanced programme of work. For the international community, it would be difficult to accept that, regarding issues so important to the survival of humanity, the Conference on Disarmament could be prevented from taking action.



We must absolutely show political will and shoulder our responsibilities to ensure that the Conference is restored to its calling in negotiating disarmament treaties, in order to create the conditions for collective security in which every State has its existence and security guaranteed, in conformity with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

In that context, the delegation of Algeria continues to believe that the collective effort that it made with the presidents of the 2009 session of the Conference, which resulted in the adoption by consensus of decision CD/1864, remains pertinent and could still serve as a basis for reaching agreement on the programme of work. We have never claimed that this important decision is perfect and fully addresses the concerns of all States. My own delegation, my own country, the one that proposed it, is not completely satisfied with it. However, as with any compromise document, it sought to launch a consultation process with a long-term view to conducting negotiations on all the issues.

The delegation of Algeria invites you, Mr. President, and your colleagues, the other presidents of the session, to pursue your consultations and to build on the achievements made so far in the context of decision CD/1864, with the aim of striking a balance that allows consensus to be reached, and, in that connection, we applaud the efforts that you have made so far and thank you for the unofficial paper that you have given us. I can assure you that consultations, discussions and a review are currently being held on the document in our capital, and that the delegation of Algeria remains at your disposal for any support required. In that regard, we would like to say that, in order to succeed, all initiatives must be based on the elements of balance established so far in the context of document CD/1864.

Moreover, should efforts to develop a programme of work fail, we encourage you to consider the possibility of exploring the simplified format of the programme of work that has just been elegantly evoked by the Ambassador of Argentina, and which has been highlighted by numerous countries. My delegation advocated this option last year, an option based on discussions in the plenary meeting on the main issues, without a specific mandate. The content of the debates should be reflected in the report of the session. This approach provides no guarantee that negotiations will be initiated, but it offers the advantage of maintaining the momentum of the Conference with regard to substantive issues. These deliberations would serve as the technical foundation to support the creation of the political and technical conditions required for future negotiations.

We hope that the prevailing spirit of dialogue in the Conference and the general desire that we all share to break the deadlock will enable us to find a solution that is acceptable to us all. We have no choice but to progress within the Conference on Disarmament. If not, if we continue to relinquish our mandate, it will be easy to understand the attitude of those who look for alternative options to address nuclear disarmament issues, which are the real victims of the impasse in which the Conference finds itself.

Algeria endorses the objectives of the resolutions adopted at the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly, which have established mechanisms to address subjects covered by our mandate. We believe, however, that these mechanisms risk harming the Conference on Disarmament and the United Nations disarmament machinery as a whole without providing effective solutions to the political problems that have prevented the Conference from working. The delegation of Algeria will certainly play an active role in these processes, in the hope that the efforts undertaken will give the Conference a positive boost.

Lastly, should it prove impossible to resolve the issue of the programme of work, we would recall the appeal launched by the members of the Non-Aligned Movement for the convening of a fourth special session devoted to disarmament to address the issue of multilateral disarmament in its entirety.

**Mr. Simon-Michel** (France) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, as I take the floor for the first time this year, allow me to begin by congratulating you on assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and warmly wishing you every success.

Naturally, France associates itself with the statement made by the European Union at the previous meeting.

At the start of this 2013 session, I would like to underline France's priorities.

More than ever before, the issue of conventional weapons and their proliferation must be at the heart of our concerns. At a time when my country is involved in a large-scale operation against armed terrorist groups in northern Mali, in support of the armed forces of the Republic of Mali and alongside States of the Community of West African States and Chad, the situation in the Sahel region unfortunately shows the risks associated with the proliferation of this kind of weaponry. It is a priority and a matter of urgency, which the international community can no longer put off until tomorrow.

The arms trade treaty should soon provide us with an effective tool. In March, we must reach an agreement on the text of this treaty, without upsetting the balances and compromises that we struck in July 2012. We all have an ideal agreement in mind. However, the truly ideal agreement is not necessarily the one that we all individually and abstractly imagined; it is the one that will make a real difference on the ground. I have every confidence in our Australian colleague, Peter Woolcott, to guide us in the coming weeks.

I would also like to underscore the importance that my country attaches to discussions in the context of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. The Convention is the natural, general instrument for responding to the challenges of humanitarian disarmament; it has the participation of most of the main military Powers; it brings together irreplaceable expertise; it is open to civil society. The States parties have honoured me in appointing me as Chair for the next meeting of States parties in November. Alongside my colleagues tasked with presiding over the Annual Conference of the High Contracting Parties to Amended Protocol II and Protocol V, we will spare no effort in fulfilling the mandate with which we have been entrusted, that of promoting the universalization of these essential instruments.

The challenges to security are growing: the proliferation of nuclear weapons and their means of delivery and the development of terrorism, to name but the main ones. My country has chosen to take on its responsibilities in these areas. Our aim is clearly to tackle genuine threats.

In respect of disarmament and non-proliferation, 2013 will be marked in particular by the Review Conference of the Chemical Weapons Convention. This Convention is a model in the field of disarmament. It constitutes one of the great successes of the Conference on Disarmament. The year will also be marked by the Preparatory Committee for the 2015 NPT Review Conference, to be held in Geneva in May.

With regard to nuclear disarmament, the key for us is to take substantive and progressive action, without straying in pursuit of objectives that are no doubt worthy but unrealistic. We have a road map. This road map is the NPT Action Plan, adopted by consensus in 2010. We must stick to it.

My country, along with the other nuclear-weapon States, is determined to implement this road map and is preparing for the 2015 deadline. In April, we will participate actively in the meeting of the five major nuclear Powers and permanent members of the Security Council tasked with monitoring the NPT Action Plan, which was announced last week by our colleague from the Russian Federation, and which will follow on from the meetings organized in previous years in London, Paris and Washington.

This 2010 NPT Action Plan sets us a priority, which is fully consistent with the programme of work adopted by the Conference on Disarmament in 2009, under the Algerian presidency, in other words document CD/1864, which is also the last programme of work adopted by the Conference on Disarmament. Moreover, this priority is mentioned very explicitly under action 15 of the action plan. It also features in United Nations Security Council resolution 1887 (2009). This priority is the immediate commencement by the Conference on Disarmament of negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons. It is the next logical step in nuclear disarmament.

That is why, at the last United Nations General Assembly, my country supported the adoption of the resolution submitted by Canada regarding the treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons, which provides, *inter alia*, for the establishment of a group of governmental experts in Geneva. My country supported this resolution because it is consistent with the 2010 NPT Action Plan, and because it respects certain fundamental principles, particularly the consensus rule and the competence of the Conference on Disarmament.

That is unfortunately not the case for all the resolutions submitted at the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly. France has explained its position regarding those regrettable initiatives at length in New York, in October and November of last year, and I will not labour the point. I would just like to warn our colleagues of the risk of a proliferation of disarmament forums. Not only are we afraid of wasting time and money on new forums that are pointless and redundant, but also, and above all, we fear that the road map adopted at the 2010 NPT Review Conference may be called into question.

Mr. President, you have the difficult task of preparing and putting before us a programme of work — and I quote General Assembly resolution 67/72 — “bearing in mind the decision on the programme of work adopted by the Conference on 29 May 2009”, CD/1864.

I understand how complex the exercise is, but General Assembly resolution 67/72 makes the task somewhat easier for us because it gives us clear guidance, and document 1864, the last programme of work adopted by the Conference, provides an indispensable reference.

More than ever, there is an urgent need for this Conference to initiate negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons.

I know, Mr. President, that you will spare no effort to arrive at a programme of work, and to enable this Conference to get out of the unfortunate situation in which it has found itself for too long.

I would like to express my total confidence in you, and assure you of my delegation’s full support.

**Ms. Battiloro** (Italy): Mr. President, at the outset let me congratulate you on the assumption of this important responsibility. I am speaking on behalf of Ambassador Risi, who is in Rome recovering from an injury and thus could not be here but fully supports this statement. We wish you all the best in carrying out your task, and we assure you of the full support of this delegation.

My delegation fully aligns itself with the statement delivered last week by Ireland on behalf of the European Union.

During the 2010 session, Vincenzo Scotti, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs at the time, presented to this distinguished assembly Italy’s expectations concerning disarmament and the role of the Conference on Disarmament.

Almost three years later it is sad to say that, although there has been some progress in the disarmament arena, this is not the case when it comes to the work of this Conference.

Nuclear disarmament is a priority for the international community and for Italy as well. We therefore welcome the success of the negotiations which led to the signing and entry into force in February 2011 of the New START treaty. We believe it is an important message to the world towards the eventual elimination of all nuclear weapons. We also welcome the positive outcome of the 2010 NPT Review Conference. But both these results belong to the past. Now it is time to look ahead. We acknowledge the engagement of the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council in carrying out the implementation of the final document of the 2010 NPT Review Conference, and we look forward to the results of the next round of consultations among those five States that is to take place here in Geneva. We are confident that the group's members will engage in their consultations in a constructive spirit and that the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons will one day — soon, we hope — become a reality.

At the same time, we deeply regret that the conference on a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction was postponed. While we do understand the frustration caused by the postponement, we must not let such frustration cloud our judgement. Indeed, we have never been closer than now to being able to convene such a conference, and for this we want express our support, also in the context of the European Union, to the work carried out by the facilitator. So we urge all actors to walk the extra mile and do their utmost to create the necessary conditions for the conference to be held without further delay.

In the multilateral arena, the role of the Conference on Disarmament is paramount, and, in line with the wisdom of the United Nations Secretary-General, we strongly believe that another year of stalemate is simply not acceptable. The Conference should resume its work, the sooner the better. In this framework, the adoption of a programme of work should be our main concern, and all of us should be deeply engaged in reaching this goal. We believe that the programme of work contained in document CD/1864 could still be viable and worth being implemented. We are nevertheless ready to explore other solutions, such as the one that you are working on.

The negotiation in the Conference on Disarmament of a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT) is long overdue. We are well aware that serious matters must be tackled during the negotiation of a successful FMCT, and that not least among them is the issue of stockpiles. We believe that this matter should be dealt with during negotiations rather than be a precondition for them. In that way any State would be free to raise questions it considers priority national security concerns. A valuable contribution to moving the process forward could come from General Assembly resolution 67/53 of 3 December 2012, which requests the Secretary-General to establish a group of governmental experts that will make recommendations on possible aspects that could contribute to such a treaty. As for the other three main topics on our agenda, we recognize their relevance and are ready to make our contribution to the debate.

**Mr. Strohal** (Austria): Mr. President, first of all, my congratulations on your assumption of the presidency, and our assurances of our full cooperation. We also appreciate your efforts to advance the Conference towards starting to work, and we thank you for your proposal for a programme of work, circulated yesterday, which we will examine carefully. We would also like to extend our special gratitude to Ambassador Hoffmann for his untiring efforts, in his capacity as last year's concluding President, to ensure that the report to the United Nations General Assembly was as significant as was possible under the circumstances. And, of course, we align ourselves with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union at our previous meeting.

The most recent session of the United Nations General Assembly was remarkable for the clear message expressed by the overwhelming majority of United Nations Member States that deadlock in multilateral disarmament negotiations is not acceptable and may no longer masquerade as a temporary crisis. This was echoed in the message of the United Nations Secretary-General to our Conference, delivered last week, in which he recalled Dag Hammarskjöld's statement that "in this field, as we well know, a standstill does not exist; if you do not go forward, you go backward".

Therefore we do hope that the Conference on Disarmament will respond to these expressions of urgency, and that the necessary political will to commence work will emerge without further delay and lead to the adoption of a programme of work and, more importantly, to its implementation.

At the same time, we expect that General Assembly resolutions 67/53 and 67/56 of 3 December 2012 aiming at promoting substantive work on key issues of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation agenda, as well as the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on nuclear disarmament to be convened in September of this year, will contribute to progress. Austria has been supporting all three resolutions, which in our view constitute serious attempts to bring back dynamism to multilateral disarmament negotiations.

As one of the initiators of resolution 67/56, we particularly welcome the establishing of an open-ended working group of the General Assembly to take forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations. In our view, this working group provides all States with a fresh opportunity to put forward their views, expectations and proposals. It also gives us the chance to work in a comprehensive mode with all United Nations Member States on an equal footing, as well as to benefit from stronger interaction with international organizations and civil society. We hope that all who say that they endorse those objectives will use the opportunity and contribute their views to the working group.

Austria prioritizes multilateralism as a key to international progress on disarmament and non-proliferation matters. This is why we have been contributing continuously to the debate with our ideas and proposals on how to turn disarmament commitments on the multilateral agenda into measurable progress. The worst, in our view, would be to continue on the current path of erosion of the disarmament regime and, for that matter, of the disarmament machinery. It remains our primary and collective responsibility to ensure substantive progress.

**The President:** I thank the distinguished Ambassador of Austria, and we have just heard the last speaker on my list. I thank the delegations for their statements and for their kind words addressed to the Chair. Would any other delegation like to take the floor? I see none.

Distinguished delegates, this concludes our business for today. The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on 5 February at 10 a.m.

*The meeting rose at 11.20 a.m.*