

Conference on Disarmament

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English

Final record of the one thousand two hundred and eighty-first plenary meeting

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President: Ms. Sujata Mehta (India)

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The President: I declare open the 1281st plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. As the first order of business today, and before we proceed further, I would like to extend a very warm welcome to Ambassador Anayansi Rodríguez Camejo of Cuba, who has assumed her responsibilities as representative of her Government to the Conference on Disarmament. On behalf of my own Government and on behalf of the Conference, Madam Ambassador, I would like to assure you of our full cooperation and support.

Delegations may recall that at our last plenary meeting, on 27 February, an announcement was made that this plenary meeting will be devoted to the subject of nuclear disarmament, one of the core issues for discussion in this body, to enable members of the Conference on Disarmament and other interested delegations to have the opportunity to share their views on this most vital subject. Needless to say, this is without limiting in any way the rights of delegations to address other topics as they may wish, as set out in the rules of procedure.

I will now call on those delegations that have indicated their wish to speak today.

The Ambassador of Cuba is our first speaker today.

Ms. Anayansi Rodríguez (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Madam President, as this is my first time that I have taken the floor, allow me to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of this august forum. We trust that your experience in diplomacy and personal attributes will allow significant progress to be made, even in moments as difficult as these.

I wish to thank you and the delegations for your kind words of welcome and to express my personal commitment to the work of this body, to which I am deeply attached. It provided me with my first experience in diplomacy more than 10 years ago when I was still second secretary. I only regret that the Conference on Disarmament is in the same deadlock as it was 10 years ago but I remain convinced that, with your invaluable experience, we will be able to find a way out of this unfortunate impasse.

I would also like to state that my country is prepared to spare no effort to make significant progress in the Conference on Disarmament. Cuba supports the optimization of the disarmament machinery of the United Nations as a whole, including that of the Conference on Disarmament as the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum. At the same time, we are convinced that the paralysis that is currently in evidence in a large part of this system can be attributed not to working methods but first and foremost to the lack of political will of a number of States to make real progress, particularly with regard to nuclear disarmament, which is the subject that we will discuss today in this plenary.

Cuba attaches great importance to the need to make real progress in the negotiations and deliberations concerning disarmament and the control of weapons. In particular, I would like to repeat that we attach the greatest importance to achieving nuclear disarmament.

We are concerned by the idea put forward by some of sidelining the Conference on Disarmament in favour of alternative forums and processes for negotiating disarmament treaties. To do so would be to take a dangerous step backwards. The solution to the problem does not lie in starting to disregard this forum or in diminishing its importance. On the contrary, today more than ever, we are all responsible for preserving and strengthening it. Cuba reaffirms the importance of multilateralism as the principle that underpins disarmament negotiations.

The Conference on Disarmament should adopt, as soon as possible, a broad and balanced programme of work that reflects real disarmament priorities. This body is ready to begin negotiating, immediately and in parallel, a treaty for the elimination and prohibition

of nuclear weapons, a treaty to prohibit an arms race in outer space, a treaty that provides effective security assurances for States which, like Cuba, do not possess nuclear weapons, and another treaty that prohibits the production of fissile material for making nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices.

My country is also in favour of commencing negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on a non-discriminatory, multilateral and effectively verifiable treaty that prohibits the production of fissile material for making nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices.

At the same time, we remain convinced that the negotiation of a treaty on fissile material would be a positive but inadequate measure, if the subsequent steps to achieving nuclear disarmament were not to be defined.

The United Nations Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty will take place in New York over the next few days. The arms trade is a complex issue on which opinion remains very much divided. For this reason, Cuba has once again called upon all States to act on the basis of reasonable and achievable objectives. Any criterion or parameter for the transfer of weapons that is included in the treaty must be precise, objective, transparent, predictable and consistently applicable. Cuba will not support any criterion that may be applied in a discriminatory or selective manner by certain States with the aim of introducing conditionality or bringing pressure to bear.

The future treaty will have to be fully consistent with the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, including non-interference in internal affairs, respect for sovereign equality, political independence and the territorial integrity of all States.

Similarly, it is essential that the future instrument should not affect or limit in any way the right to a legitimate defence, as enshrined in Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations.

As far as Cuba is concerned, the success of the next Conference lies in establishing an instrument that is the result of an inclusive and transparent process, duly reflects the positions and concerns of all States and is universally acceptable. This is the only way to draw up a treaty on the arms trade that is robust, balanced, universally acceptable and, therefore, effective.

International security is threatened by the existence of nuclear weapons and the survival of the human race depends on their total elimination. It is for this reason that moving towards the elimination and total prohibition of the global nuclear stockpile is a priority. Nuclear disarmament should be given priority in the Conference on Disarmament programme of work, whose objective should be to initiate urgent negotiations on a convention to prohibit the development, production, storage and use of nuclear weapons; provide for their destruction and lead to their total, non-discriminatory and verifiable elimination in keeping with a strict timetable.

At the suggestion of the members of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and, for the first time in its history, the General Assembly adopted a resolution last December calling a high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the subject of nuclear disarmament, which will take place on 26 September 2013.

Cuba hopes that this meeting will bring us a step closer to achieving nuclear disarmament and encourages all States to participate at the highest level possible in this encounter.

Lastly, I would like to reiterate my unconditional support to you and the willingness of the Cuban delegation to collaborate with you in the performance of your functions.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Cuba for her statement and for her kind words. I now give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador of Sri Lanka, Ambassador Ravinatha Pandukabhaya Ariyaratne.

Mr. Ariyaratne (Sri Lanka): Madam President, since this is the first time I am taking the floor under your presidency, I wish to congratulate you on the assumption of the presidency and appreciate the manner in which you are steering the discussion of the Conference of Disarmament, and the inclusive, open and transparent manner in which you have approached this mandate. While acknowledging your initiative of consulting member States in advancing the work of the Conference, the delegation of Sri Lanka assures you of its fullest support and cooperation in this challenging task, and reposes its confidence in your leadership. I want to also take this opportunity to welcome back home the distinguished Ambassador of Cuba.

Sri Lanka attaches great importance to the Conference on Disarmament, which is the sole multilateral negotiating forum. In this context, we express our disappointment that the Conference has once again failed to reach consensus on the programme of work. It is imperative that member States should continue to make concerted efforts to reach early agreement on the Conference's programme of work. It is my delegation's firm belief that the adoption of a programme of work could be possible only through confidence-building and equal respect for the security of all member States.

Nuclear disarmament remains the highest priority of Sri Lanka in the work of the Conference. My delegation continues to be concerned at the existence of nuclear weapons and their possible use or threat of use, as it poses a menace to humanity. Sri Lanka's commitment to the elimination of the threat posed by nuclear weapons is reflected in the international treaty obligations undertaken in the field of disarmament. It is my belief that the transparent, sustainable and credible plan for multilateral nuclear disarmament is required in order to achieve the ultimate goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. As a country committed to complete disarmament, Sri Lanka encourages member States to negotiate the comprehensive nuclear weapons convention.

Sri Lanka also supports the convening of the fourth special session of the United Nations General Assembly devoted to disarmament to discuss and consider issues pertaining to disarmament, and remains disappointed at the persistent lack of consensus on its convening. The importance of strengthening the nuclear disarmament mechanism is made evident by recent events which have violated United Nations Security Council resolution 1874 of 2009. Sri Lanka continuously encourages nuclear-weapon States to disarm their nuclear weapons as early as possible.

My delegation is of the view that there is an urgent need to reach early agreement on a universal, unconditional and legally binding instrument to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of nuclear weapons. In this regard, it is imperative to start negotiations for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons with a specific time frame. During the sixty-seventh General Assembly, it was decided to convene a high-level meeting on nuclear disarmament on 26 September 2013 in New York. My delegation believes that this will provide an opportunity for Member States to continue discussions on the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

I wish to reiterate that it is vital that the Conference begins its substantive work on the basis of a comprehensive and balanced programme of work. We are of the view that focused debates on all agenda items could help create a better understanding of our positions and help move forward.

I conclude, Madam President, by wishing you a successful term as President of the Conference on Disarmament and pledge Sri Lanka's fullest cooperation to you in executing your mandate.

The President: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of Sri Lanka for his statement and for his kind words. I now give the floor to the Representative of Ireland on behalf of the European Union, Mr. Andras Kos.

Mr. Kos (Ireland): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union.

The following countries align themselves with this declaration: Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Iceland, Serbia, Albania and the Republic of Moldova.

Madam President, first of all I would also like to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency, and we pledge full support to your activities. In our statement of 22 January 2013, we outlined the overall views of the European Union on the current situation at the Conference on Disarmament. We continue to be deeply troubled by the persisting impasse. We commend the efforts of you and your team to advance our work. We would also like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude for the efforts made by Ambassador Dékány of Hungary and his team in this regard. Let us stress again today that exchanging views on main issues is not a substitute for our main focus, which is the adoption and implementation of a programme of work leading to negotiations. We should not create the impression that the Conference on Disarmament is advancing while it is not.

Reverting to our topic of today, the European Union would like to reaffirm its commitment to the global efforts to seek a safer world for all and to creating the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons, in accordance with the objectives of the NPT. The EU continues to regard the NPT as the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime, the essential foundation of the pursuit of nuclear disarmament in accordance with article VI of the NPT and an important element in the further development of nuclear energy applications for peaceful purposes. We reaffirm our full and unconditional support of all three pillars of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. In view of current proliferation risks, we are convinced that today it is more vital than ever to preserve and strengthen its authority and its integrity.

We remain committed to the pursuit of nuclear disarmament. The European Union consistently underlines the need to continue the overall reduction of global stockpiles of nuclear weapons, especially by those States with the largest arsenals, taking into account the principles of irreversibility, verifiability and transparency to guide all measures in the field of nuclear disarmament and arms control as a contribution to establishing and upholding international peace, security and stability. We therefore welcome the increased transparency shown by some nuclear-weapon States, in particular the European Union member States, on the nuclear weapons they possess, and call on others to do likewise.

The first session of the Preparatory Committee of the NPT last year in Vienna paved the way for a smooth start of the new review cycle. We are hopeful that during the second session of the Preparatory Committee, to take place in Geneva in a few weeks' time, we will be able to see further progress in assessing the implementation of all elements of the action plan designed to strengthen the three pillars of the Treaty. The European Union remains engaged to assist the Chair-designate, Ambassador Feruta, in his efforts to achieve a successful outcome of this session.

We noted with regret the postponement of the conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction, which, in accordance with the decision of the 2010 Review Conference of the NPT, was scheduled to take place in 2012. The EU supports the ongoing preparations for a successful conference with the participation of all States of the region and the tireless efforts of Ambassador Laajava to lay the groundwork in this respect. We hope that the conference will be convened as soon as possible this year. The EU continues to be actively engaged in

supporting this process, notably through its non-proliferation consortium and a series of seminars on this topic, such as those organized in 2008, 2011 and November 2012.

The international community continues to be faced with major proliferation challenges, which must be addressed in a resolute way in order to maintain the credibility and effectiveness of the NPT regime. The recent nuclear test by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea was condemned by the international community: it represents a serious threat to regional and international peace and security and a serious affront to the principles set out in the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. The Council of the European Union, in its conclusions of 18 February 2013, condemned in the strongest terms the nuclear test, which clearly violates the international obligations under United Nations Security Council resolutions 1718, 1874 and 2087, and demanded that Pyongyang should abstain from further tests. In addition to those contained in United Nations Security Council resolution 2087, the EU decided to further strengthen sanctions against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea by adopting EU autonomous measures. The EU calls upon the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to abandon all its existing nuclear and ballistic missile programmes in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner and to re-engage constructively with the international community, and in particular the members of the Six-Party Talks, in order to work towards lasting peace and security on a nuclear-free Korean peninsula.

International concerns about the exclusively peaceful nature of the Iranian nuclear programme have increased, in the light of the latest IAEA Director General's reports. The EU's objective remains to achieve a comprehensive negotiated long-term settlement. The E3+3 — i.e., China, France, Germany, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States of America — led by the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign and Security Policy, remain firm, clear and united in seeking a swift diplomatic resolution of the international community's concerns on the exclusively peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear programme, based on the NPT, and the full implementation of United Nations Security Council and IAEA Board of Governors resolutions.

On 26 February in Almaty, Kazakhstan, the E3+3 tabled a balanced and fair revised proposal for a first confidence-building step. The offer addresses international concerns on the exclusively peaceful nature of the Iranian nuclear programme, but is also responsive to Iranian ideas. We regret that the Almaty meeting has not been the occasion for Iran to take concrete steps and make some substantial progress. We therefore urge Iran to engage seriously and to urgently take the necessary steps that would restore confidence.

Let me emphasize that for the European Union, the immediate commencement and early conclusion of negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on an FMCT, on the basis of document CD/1299 and the mandate contained therein, and subsequently reiterated in document CD/1864, remains a clear priority. Launching and concluding these negotiations are urgent and important as an essential step to seek a safer world for all and to create the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons, in accordance with the goals of the NPT.

All EU member States supported General Assembly resolution 67/53 on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. The mechanism established by the resolution represents a useful contribution to helping the Conference on Disarmament without undermining its authority and primary role in multilateral disarmament negotiations.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is of crucial importance to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation and a top priority for the European Union. The EU calls on all States that have not done so, in particular the remaining annex 2 States, to sign and ratify the Treaty at an early date. Pending the entry into force of the Treaty, the EU calls on

all States to uphold a moratorium on nuclear weapon test explosions or any other nuclear explosion, to refrain from any action that would defeat the object and purpose of the Treaty.

In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm our commitment to the Conference on Disarmament as the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum of the international community. It is clear that the adoption of a programme of work will require sustained political efforts from all of us. We regret that the Conference so far this year was unable to agree on a programme of work. We reaffirm our commitment to engage constructively, and we urge others to do the same.

The President: I thank the Representative of Ireland, speaking on behalf of the European Union, for his statement and for his kind words. I now give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador of the Russian Federation, His Excellency, Ambassador Alexey Borodavkin.

Mr. Borodavkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Madam President, since this is the first time that I have spoken at the Conference under your leadership, allow me to congratulate you on your assumption of this important post and express the hope that, under your guidance, the Conference will make progress in fulfilling its mandate.

The Russian Federation has repeatedly stated its willingness to discuss all matters linked to nuclear disarmament in the Conference on Disarmament.

Furthermore, we consider the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons to be the main instrument for achieving the goal of ridding the world of nuclear weapons. We take a responsible and comprehensive approach to meeting our obligations under all three components of the Treaty. As part of the review process, my country regularly submits national reports on the implementation of all of its provisions, including article VI.

We have fully implemented the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, which allowed us to eliminate an entire class of nuclear missiles. We believe that implementing the initiative to make the treaty global in nature would strengthen global and regional stability.

Our country has also fully met its obligations under the Treaty on the Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms of 1991, which opened a new chapter for coordinated, verifiable checks of the reduction in strategic offensive arms of the Russian Federation and the United States of America, and under the Moscow Treaty, concluded between the Russian Federation and the United States in 2002.

At the present stage, the priority for us in this sphere is the implementation of the Treaty between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms, which entered into force on 5 February 2011, and application of the norms, concepts and control measures it contains.

Alongside strategic nuclear arms, the Russian Federation has substantially reduced its number of non-strategic nuclear arms many times. At present, the non-strategic nuclear potential of the Russian Federation is less than 25 per cent of that possessed by the USSR in 1991. Furthermore, all non-strategic nuclear arms have been transferred to the non-deployed category, are found exclusively within the limits of national territory, and are concentrated at central storage sites where their safety is ensured.

We call on other countries with non-strategic nuclear arms to follow the example of the Russian Federation and recall those arms to their own territory, eliminate all foreign infrastructure providing for quick deployment and stop preparations for their use with the involvement of non-nuclear-weapon States. We are convinced that such steps would help to

strengthen international security and stability. They would also clear the way for further reductions and limitations of nuclear arsenals.

We view the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones as an important instrument for increasing regional and international security and strengthening the nuclear non-proliferation regime.

It is important to put into practice the idea of establishing zones free of nuclear weapons and other types of weapons of mass destruction and the means of their delivery in the Middle East in accordance with the resolutions of the NPT Review Conferences of 1995 and 2010. We are convinced that their speedy establishment would help to ensure a comprehensive resolution of the problems of non-proliferation and effectively support peace and stability in the region. In this connection, we deeply regret that, contrary to these resolutions, the Conference did not take place in 2012. Nonetheless, as one of the co-authors of the resolution on the Middle East of the NPT Review Conference of 1995, we are making active efforts, in close cooperation with other co-sponsors and special coordinator Mr. Laajava, to convene the conference in the near future.

We consider the geographical extension of nuclear-weapon-free zones significant in the context of resolving the problem of legally binding guarantees of security for non-nuclear States. We support the Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia and are prepared to work with both our partners in the P5 and States in the region on its legal formulation. We consider the conclusion of the international legal drafting of a text on a nuclear-weapon-free zone in South-East Asia to be a priority.

In terms of the next steps on nuclear disarmament, we view the 2010 NPT Review Conference Action Plan as the road map. I would like to inform you that here, in Geneva, in April this year, the Russian Federation will hold the next P5 Conference on the implementation of the final document of the 2010 NPT Review Conference. At the Conference we will consider, in particular, nuclear States' reporting of measures to fulfil their disarmament obligations under the treaty. At the same time, it is important to emphasize that we believe that comprehensive action should be taken to give effect to the stipulations of the Final Document of the 2010 NPT Review Conference in the framework of close cooperation. Responsibility for implementing the Action Plan lies with all States parties to NPT.

We are therefore concerned by the trend of moving away from the agreed Action Plan, attempts to reinterpret it or take a selective approach to its implementation, including the imposition of additional obligations, and delegitimization not only of the use but also of the very possession of nuclear weapons. It is interesting that the proponents of these ideas come from countries that belong to alliances guided by nuclear doctrines. We believe that these ideas draw attention away from the practical steps of creating the conditions for further reductions in nuclear arsenals. Based on the above considerations, the P5 States took the decision not to participate in the Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, which is currently taking place in Oslo.

We are convinced that discussion of the issues of nuclear disarmament should take place at the Conference on Disarmament, with the participation of all States with nuclear potential and on the basis of consensus, in order to protect the national security interests of each individual State. We share the concern expressed about the fact that the Conference has not managed to start negotiations over a period of more than 10 years. We also believe that the decision taken at the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly will actually lead to the unravelling of the Conference's agenda in various areas. This could result in fragmentation of multilateral disarmament and could, ultimately, lead to the collapse of all United Nations disarmament mechanisms. Furthermore, issues that touch on vital matters of the national security of States cannot and should not be decided upon by means of a simple

vote. While ignoring this fact may create the semblance of forward movement, it actually leads to further division and the exacerbation of international tension. Indeed, this was the reason why we did not support the establishment of a General Assembly open-ended working group on nuclear disarmament and will not participate in it.

We have repeatedly stated that we do not object to the commencement of negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material, although discussions on this topic — and moreover the negotiations themselves — should also take place in the Conference on Disarmament, if we genuinely wish to achieve a universal agreement that is in the interests of all States. Attempts to replace work involving all interested parties with the activities of a limited expert group will bring us no closer to a result. We therefore abstained from the part of the General Assembly resolution establishing a governmental expert group on a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT). We see no fundamental difference between discussions in the Conference on Disarmament and the discussion of this topic in the aforementioned group.

The Russian Federation is ready to move forwards along the path to verifiable and irreversible reductions in nuclear weapons. Furthermore, we believe that this objective will be met only in the context of a gradual global process and through progress towards “a treaty on general and complete disarmament”, as set out in article VI of NPT.

It should be clear that the process of nuclear — or any other type of — disarmament is only feasible in the right conditions and subject to fulfilment of fundamental principles, the most important of which are the maintenance of global strategic stability, the indivisibility of security, and avoidance of attempts to dominate through the use of military force or to strengthen one’s own security while harming the security of others. In order to create a safe world, a whole range of issues must be resolved. These include: preventing the placement of weapons in outer space, rejecting unilateral plans to create a global anti-ballistic missile system, ensuring the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, eliminating the quantitative and qualitative imbalance in conventional arms in Europe, and a step-by-step process whereby all States with military nuclear capabilities make concerted efforts to achieve nuclear disarmament.

Solving these major problems requires concerted efforts by the international community. The Russian Federation is ready to join in that endeavour.

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

I now give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador of United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Her Excellency, Ambassador Joanne Adamson.

Ms. Adamson (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland): The United Kingdom aligns itself with the intervention already delivered on behalf of the European Union.

Nuclear disarmament is a very important topic for the United Kingdom, and the Conference on Disarmament is the pre-eminent forum in which the international community addresses nuclear disarmament, so there is much to say. In the interests of time, I will circulate my entire speech but summarize key points. If I do not read something out, it is not because I value it any less, but it is to not abuse people’s patience.

The United Kingdom has long been committed to the goal of a world without nuclear weapons. We continue to play an active role in helping to build an international environment in which no State feels the need to possess nuclear weapons. Sadly, we are not there yet. There are still substantial nuclear arsenals, the number of nuclear-armed States has increased rather than decreased, and there is a significant risk of new nuclear-armed States emerging. Several countries that either have nuclear weapons or are trying to acquire

them are in regions that suffer from serious instability or are subject to regional tensions, so there is still the potential for a new nuclear threat to emerge despite the end of the cold war.

While there continue to be significant risks of further proliferation and while other States retain much larger nuclear weapons arsenals, we have been clear that the United Kingdom will retain a minimum credible nuclear deterrent as the ultimate guarantee of our security.

In 2007, the United Kingdom Parliament debated, and approved by a clear majority, a decision to continue with the programme to renew the United Kingdom's nuclear deterrent. My Government set out in the 2010 strategic defence and security review that the United Kingdom would maintain a continuous submarine-based deterrent and begin the work of replacing its existing submarines, which are due to leave service in the 2020s. This remains the United Kingdom Government's policy.

A study known as the Trident Alternatives Study is ongoing and is due to report to the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister in the first half of this year. It is too early to speculate about the conclusions of the Trident Alternatives Study. An unclassified document on that study will be published in due course, which I would be happy to share with the Conference.

This, then, is our policy on our nuclear deterrent. Let me speak now about disarmament. People sometimes ask the United Kingdom to take action to match our words. The record shows that we have already taken significant actions. We have moved from living in a world of tens of thousands of nuclear warheads, standing to fire at a moment's notice during the cold war, to a world in which the major nuclear-weapon States have significantly reduced their arsenals, have stopped targeting them at anyone and have reduced their operational readiness. Recently, in 2010, we saw the signing of the New START agreement between the United States and the Russian Federation, holders of the largest nuclear stockpiles by far. Under that treaty, both countries agreed to reduce the number of strategic nuclear missile launchers by half and to limit the number of deployed nuclear warheads to a figure nearly two-thirds lower than that agreed in 1991.

In the same year, we saw the agreement of the first ever Comprehensive Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty action plan, in which all 189 signatories reaffirmed their commitment to the Treaty and committed to making tangible progress towards our shared goal of a world without nuclear weapons. Under that plan, nuclear-weapon States all committed to making concrete progress on the steps leading to nuclear disarmament, including reducing the overall global stockpile and reducing further the role and significance of nuclear weapons in our military doctrines. Next year, at the third NPT Preparatory Committee in New York, we will set out publicly how we have made progress against this action plan.

The United Kingdom's own record on nuclear disarmament is strong.

We have greatly reduced the number of our nuclear weapons since the end of the cold war. For almost 20 years now, our nuclear weapons have been detargeted and placed on several days' notice to fire. We have built on that strong record, announcing in our 2010 strategic defence and security review that we are reducing our requirements for operationally available warheads from fewer than 160 to no more than 120, reducing our overall stockpile to no more than 180 and reducing the number of warheads on board our submarines from 48 to 40 and the number of operational missiles to no more than 8. Our policy is to have the minimum credible deterrent and that the United Kingdom would consider using nuclear weapons only in extreme circumstances of self-defence, including the defence of our NATO allies. Those are actions, not words.

Of course unilateral actions alone will not produce the results that the world expects and demands. It is only through moving forward together, through balanced and reciprocal disarmament, that we will achieve a world without nuclear weapons. We can only achieve this by building trust between States that will convince all of them that they can safely disarm.

That is why the United Kingdom instigated a dialogue among the P5 States in London in 2009, when we reaffirmed our unconditional support for the Non-Proliferation Treaty and engaged in meaningful dialogue — excuse me about the reference to the noble lord: I realize we are not in the House of Lords here — aimed at building the mutual understanding needed to help us take forward our shared disarmament commitments. Since then, we have held further dialogues, in Paris in 2011 and Washington last year, and met in between to discuss disarmament issues.

The P5 will hold a fourth conference, hosted by Russia, in April this year. In order to maximize the value of this ongoing dialogue, it will be important to maintain momentum at that next conference. We will need to be able to demonstrate progress across a range of issues, especially on our plans to report on the commitments we all made in the 2010 NPT action plan. It is an issue on which the international community is looking to the P5 to provide a lead, and the United Kingdom will be at the heart of efforts to achieve this.

Building confidence between nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States is equally important if we are to find a realistic route towards global disarmament. To that end, we have been conducting groundbreaking work with Norway on the verification of warhead dismantlement, which will be a crucial aspect of any future global disarmament regime. This initiative has been the first time that a nuclear-weapon State has engaged in such an open way with a non-nuclear-weapon State on such a sensitive issue.

Both we and Norway have learnt a huge amount through this initiative about how nuclear and non-nuclear-weapon States can work together effectively in pursuit of our shared goal. We have shared what we have learnt so far within the P5, and with a range of non-nuclear-weapon States, and at the briefing last year at the NPT Preparatory Committee in Vienna. We will continue to share developments as we move forward. Building on this first, we are in consultations with Brazil about establishing a disarmament-focused dialogue. We see such dialogues with non-nuclear-weapon States as a crucial part of our contribution towards building the right environment for multilateral disarmament. Actions together with words.

Today many countries are gathering in Oslo to discuss the humanitarian consequences of a nuclear detonation. The United Kingdom and the rest of the P5 are not attending, and I want to set out why.

As I have already said, the United Kingdom remains firmly committed to the goal of a world without nuclear weapons, and our decision on attendance this week does not change this at all.

The topic under discussion in Oslo is a serious one. We do understand the serious consequences of nuclear weapon use and will continue to give the highest priority to avoiding such contingencies.

It is in the interest of all nations to assure that nuclear war should never be fought, for there can be no winners in such a conflict.

We think that at this time all our efforts should be focused on getting the Conference on Disarmament back to work, so that we can adopt the comprehensive programme of work, which will allow us to move forward on nuclear disarmament. For the United Kingdom, the negotiation of a fissile material cut-off treaty is our top priority, but we have shown great flexibility in our response to Conference Presidents when they have asked us

to agree to something a little different from our preferred programme of work. We are not blocking multilateral nuclear disarmament.

We fully respect those who campaign against nuclear weapons, but we disagree on the issue of the legitimacy of nuclear weapons and that a ban on such weapons is the right way to move us closer to the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. We are concerned that the Oslo event will divert attention and discussion away from what has proven to be the most effective means of reducing nuclear dangers – a practical, step-by-step approach that includes all those who hold nuclear weapons. Only in this way could we realistically achieve a world without nuclear weapons.

As my Russian colleague has already mentioned, we also believe that all NPT members have a duty to focus on the implementation of the actions from the NPT action plan in 2010, on disarmament, on non-proliferation and on peaceful uses. We are halfway through the NPT's five-year cycle, but some already appear to have abandoned the action plan, convening alternative processes which will divide the international community. The most effective way to implement that NPT action plan would be to break the stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament.

One other very important outcome from the NPT Review Conference in 2010 was the decision on the Middle East.

I wish to refer to a statement by Foreign Office Minister Alastair Burt in November in which he said: "The British Government supports the objective of a weapons-of-mass-destruction-free zone in the Middle East. We regret that it will not be possible to convene a successful conference to be attended by all States of the region as planned in 2012. More preparation and direct engagement between States of the region will be necessary to secure arrangements that are satisfactory to all."

He continued: "We support the convening of a conference as soon as possible. We endorse fully the work of the Conference Facilitator, to build consensus on the next steps. We will continue to work with our fellow convenors (the United States, Russia, and the United Nations), with the Facilitator, and with countries of the region, to meet our undertakings to convene a conference on this important issue as soon as possible."

In that connection, the United Kingdom understands that Ambassador Laajava hopes to bring together States of the Middle East for consultations in order to prepare for the Conference itself. Those consultations could be a bridge to the conference and a bridge to bring together regional parties. They cannot be the final step; they must be the first step.

As well as improving collective trust and understanding, we need to continue our efforts to make it as difficult as possible to develop and produce nuclear weapons, particularly by those who pose a threat to global security. We have signed and ratified the CTBT and are vocal campaigners for the entry into force of that treaty. We are firm supporters, too, of nuclear-weapon-free zones, which literally shrink the geographical space within which nuclear weapons can exist.

The United Kingdom has signed and ratified the protocols to three nuclear-weapon-free zones, in South America and the Caribbean, in Africa and in the South Pacific, and is working hard with ASEAN and P5 partners to sign the protocol to the Treaty of Bangkok. We support the objective of a WMD-free zone in the Middle East, as I have already mentioned, and we continue to push for the convening of that conference.

The United Kingdom is also active in seeking to reduce the risk of proliferation from the civil nuclear sector, and strongly supports the universal safeguards system.

The risks of proliferation are all too real. The international community was reminded of this following the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's recent nuclear test, on which

the United Kingdom commented here last month. We, with our E3+3 partners, continue to pursue negotiations with Iran, and hope Iran will respond positively to the offer made in Almaty. Urgent, concrete steps need to be taken by Iran to allow progress.

The risk of new States acquiring nuclear weapons is grave – but so, too, is the risk of sensitive knowledge and materials falling into the hands of non-State actors. The United Kingdom played a key role at last year's Seoul nuclear security summit. Our G8 presidency this year will see us chair the Global Partnership against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction.

In conclusion, the United Kingdom strongly supports the goal of a world without nuclear weapons and is active in helping to build the international environment that we hope will deliver this. We have shown leadership in reducing our own nuclear-weapon capabilities and in offering reassurances about the very limited and discrete circumstances in which we may contemplate their use. We are working hard to build the trust needed between nuclear-weapon States to make progress multilaterally; we are engaging with non-nuclear-weapon States to try to take positive, concrete steps forward; and we are firmly committed to putting in place the practical building blocks that will support multilateral disarmament by making it as difficult as possible to develop and produce nuclear weapons. The CTBT, a fissile material cut-off treaty and the strengthening of non-proliferation and nuclear security regimes are all areas in which we work, in which we take action. Our contribution towards the goal of multilateral disarmament is and will continue to be strong.

I believe that commitment is shared by many in the world. I was struck by the remarks of the Ambassador of Cuba earlier about the Arms Trade Treaty. For me, the Arms Trade Treaty demonstrates that there is a great appetite still in the international community to conclude a treaty within the United Nations system. I hope that what we are doing in the Arms Trade Treaty process could build some confidence that we can bring back to the Conference on Disarmament. So I very much agree with her that we must work really hard later this month in New York to get the ATT done. In closing we, the United Kingdom, will take every opportunity to pursue our resolute commitment to a world without nuclear weapons.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland for her statement and I now give the floor to the Ambassador of the United States of America, Her Excellency, Ambassador Laura Kennedy.

Ms. Kennedy (United States of America): Thank you for the opportunity to address nuclear disarmament, which has long been a core issue on the Conference on Disarmament's agenda and is high on my own President's priorities.

It has been nearly four years since President Obama delivered a now famous speech in Prague stating the United States' commitment to seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons. This was no rhetorical flourish. It was a road map for the future of nuclear arms control – a step-by-step, measured strategy that takes into account the security landscape of the twenty-first century.

The United States has taken the first steps with our Russian partners, as Ambassador Borodavkin recently discussed. The New START Treaty is the most comprehensive arms control agreement in almost 20 years. When the Treaty is fully implemented, we will be at the lowest levels of deployed strategic nuclear warheads since the 1950s. Overall reductions reveal an 85 per cent decrease in the United States arsenal since its height during the cold war. The implementation of the Treaty is going very well, and its robust verification system is providing the predictability and mutual confidence that will be essential to future nuclear reduction plans. When President Obama signed New START in Prague in 2010, he stressed his intention to pursue further reductions in strategic, non-strategic, deployed and non-deployed nuclear weapons. We and the Russian Federation are engaged in a bilateral

dialogue to promote strategic stability and increase transparency on a reciprocal basis. Since the beginning of President Obama's second administration, there have been top-level communications between our Governments, including between Presidents and our new Secretary of State and his Russian counterpart. We look forward to a summit with the Russian Federation this year.

We are also breaking new ground through the P5 process, as several of my colleagues have already mentioned. This high-priority, regularized dialogue among the five Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty nuclear-weapon States regarding issues related to nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and the associated verification challenges contributes to our collective progress on the 2010 NPT action plan. The United States hosted the Washington P5 Conference this past June – the third in a series of such conferences inaugurated in London, as my United Kingdom colleague mentioned. We look forward to continuing our engagement at the next P5 conference, to be hosted by the Russian Federation in Geneva this April, as discussed by Ambassador Borodavkin. These conferences are contributing to political dialogue and new forms of cooperation on nuclear weapons issues to an unprecedented extent. In addition to providing a senior-level policy forum, this process has spawned a series of expert exchanges during the intersessional period. China is leading a P5 working group on nuclear definitions and terminology. The P5 are discussing our national approaches to NPT reporting, and we are also continuing exchanges on verification and transparency issues.

The United States has also demonstrated leadership through unilateral transparency measures. Examples include the United States release in 2010 of the United States nuclear weapons stockpile figures and articulation in the 2010 Nuclear Posture Review of the reduced role of nuclear weapons in the United States national strategy. On modernization, let me reiterate in the clearest terms; the Review made it clear that the United States will not develop new nuclear warheads and it will not support new military missions for nuclear weapons.

The United States is now conducting the follow-on analysis called for in the 2010 Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) to set goals for future nuclear reductions in line with strategic requirements. As part of the larger global architecture designed to reduce the dangers of nuclear weapons and nuclear terrorism, the United States has also taken a leadership role in international efforts to secure vulnerable nuclear materials. As a result of President Obama's initiative to secure all vulnerable nuclear materials around the world, two Nuclear Security Summits have already been held, with a third to take place in The Hague in March 2014.

With the second NPT Preparatory Committee in Geneva fast approaching, I would like to strongly reaffirm the United States commitment to the shared goal of nuclear disarmament. We continue to implement the 2010 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference action plan across all three pillars of the NPT – disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. The basic bargain of the NPT, in which nuclear-weapon States pursue disarmament, non-nuclear-weapon States abstain from the pursuit of nuclear weapons, and all countries are able to access the benefits of peaceful nuclear energy, sets an enduring standard that is as relevant today as it was at the Treaty's inception. There are pressing challenges. We continue to have grave concerns about those who have violated their NPT obligations and undermined confidence in the non-proliferation regime. These transgressions stand directly in the way of our shared goal, goals for a world free of nuclear weapons.

This Conference has had a central role to play in multilateral nuclear disarmament. Entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) remains a top priority for the United States. As we move forward with our ratification process, we encourage all other nations to do the same. We remain committed to launch negotiations on

a fissile material cut-off treaty, the next logical, multilateral step toward nuclear disarmament, which will provide an important foundation for future nuclear reductions. In many ways the FMCT is the test case for multilateral nuclear disarmament and the Conference on Disarmament as a negotiating forum. Since we will be discussing this topic at the next plenary, I will have further to say on this key topic on that occasion.

We understand that the Conference on Disarmament's failures have led States to look elsewhere. However, we do not support non-consensus-based efforts to develop nuclear disarmament proposals through the Open-Ended Working Group and do not see how this mechanism fits with the existing consensus framework of the NPT action plan that we adopted — most of us here, that is — in New York in 2010. After careful consideration, the United States has also decided not to attend the Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons taking place today in Norway — Norway, our good partner and ally. Our decision was not made lightly. It was made in consultation with our P5 partners, who have also decided not to attend. I will, of course, speak to our own thinking and let other nuclear-weapon States speak for themselves.

The United States is acutely aware of the consequences of nuclear weapon use and will continue to give the highest priority to avoiding any use by enhancing nuclear security worldwide while we steadily reduce nuclear arsenals, including by seeking to lock down fissile material worldwide. As President Obama stated at the Seoul Nuclear Security Summit, “nuclear terrorism is one of the most urgent and serious threats to global security”. As the 2010 Nuclear Posture Review made clear, it is in our interest as well as that of all nations that the now nearly 68-year record of non-use of nuclear weapons be extended forever. We must also address the challenges posed by non-compliance with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and other threats to international security. We know well that any use of nuclear weapons, whether by a State or by nuclear terrorists, “would fundamentally change our lives in ways that we cannot imagine”, as President Obama stated in Seoul last April.

We are focusing our efforts and energy on practical steps we and others are taking to reduce nuclear weapon arsenals while strengthening nuclear security and the non-proliferation regime. The practical, step-by-step approach to disarmament has proven to be the most effective means to increase stability, reduce nuclear weapon dangers and fulfil our commitments under the NPT. Reducing nuclear weapon arsenals entails much serious, painstaking work on destruction, verification and other aspects. Luckily, the excellent work that has been done and is being done by the Bilateral Consultative Commission established under the New START Treaty is pointing the way forward with solid achievement.

I know that many in this chamber, whether they be Member States, observers or our civil-society partners, will have divergent opinions. Let me underline our commitment to the vision of a world without nuclear weapons, even if we have a different road map of moving toward that goal. We value this partnership with committed States and our civil-society friends, and as always look forward to a robust sharing of information on our various endeavours here and in other venues.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of the United States of America for her statement and I now give the floor to the distinguished Representative of Switzerland, Mr. Laurent Masméjean.

Mr. Masméjean (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Madam President, as this is my first time taking the floor during a plenary over which you are presiding, the Swiss delegation would like to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency and to offer you its full support in the performance of your duties. We are also grateful to you for the transparency and openness with which you discharge your functions.

You invited the delegations to discuss the specific topic of nuclear disarmament during the plenary of the Conference on Disarmament. We therefore wish to take this opportunity to highlight a number of aspects relating to this topic.

Switzerland has already explained its position on nuclear disarmament on several occasions in the plenary: it is convinced that nuclear weapons do not contribute to international security but pose both a significant risk to the latter and a threat to the security of States and individuals. Nuclear disarmament must be treated as a priority on account of the threat that nuclear weapons pose to humanity. Nuclear disarmament is also essential since the continued possession of nuclear weapons by certain States will inevitably lead to their proliferation in the future.

Given the pressing need to make progress in nuclear disarmament, we are particularly concerned by the fact that there are still several thousand weapons in stockpiles today. We are also concerned by the fact that a significant number of those weapons are kept in facilities on high alert and can be launched in a matter of minutes. Moreover, certain nuclear States are increasing their stockpile and all of those States are in the process of modernizing their devices, which raises questions over the genuineness of their commitment to nuclear disarmament. More than 20 years after the end of the cold war, the logic of deterrence endures. The persistence of that outdated logic poses a serious threat to our security and does not offer any response to the security challenges that the international community is facing. In this context, the continued inability of the Conference on Disarmament to act decisively when it comes to nuclear disarmament can only be seen as a serious cause for concern.

Even if the Conference on Disarmament is to sink into the lethargy that has characterized it over the last few years for yet another year, 2013 will nevertheless be defined by several important events related to nuclear disarmament. The Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, which is currently taking place in Oslo and in which more than 100 delegations are participating, is certainly one of those events. That meeting is sure to raise the profile of this essential dimension of the debate on nuclear disarmament.

This aspect should indeed be at the centre of debates on this topic. Nuclear weapons are weapons with unprecedented destructive capacities that raise fundamental moral questions. If nuclear weapons were to be used again, whether intentionally or by accident, this would inevitably lead to catastrophic consequences for humanity. These weapons also raise serious questions regarding their compatibility with international humanitarian law on account of it being impossible to monitor their effects in time and space.

We welcome the fact that a growing number of States have been giving greater attention to this topic since it was placed on the agenda of the discussions following the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (2010 NPT Review Conference). The existence of this state of affairs is borne out by the prominence given to the Conference in Oslo, to which I have just referred. Furthermore, during the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (Preparatory Committee for the 2015 NPT Review Conference), 16 States delivered a joint statement on that topic. At the sixty-seventh session of the First Committee of the General Assembly, 34 Member States and one Observer State delivered a similar statement. The support for nuclear disarmament is sure to lead to new developments in the coming months.

The support for a debate on the humanitarian consequences associated with nuclear weapons based on objective information is easy to explain. Under article 6 of the NPT, both non-nuclear and nuclear States share the responsibility of taking the nuclear disarmament agenda forward. It is also legitimate to take this topic forward, given that the 2010 NPT

Review Conference recognized that any use of nuclear weapons would lead to catastrophic consequences for humanity. Thus, we hope that all States, whether or not they possess nuclear weapons, will take part in this debate. It is also important that the Conference on Disarmament should not remain impervious to these discussions.

The second session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2015 NPT Review Conference, which will take place in Geneva from 22 April next year, can also be considered a significant event in 2013. This event is important for several reasons. It will provide an opportunity to continue to review progress on the different actions set forth in the action plan that was agreed at the 2010 NPT Review Conference. While the adoption of the action plan in 2010 was considered a success, we will only really be in a position to pronounce a final verdict once the plan has been implemented. I would like to point out that a meeting organized for 19 March next year by the Geneva Centre for Security Policy and supported by Switzerland will provide an opportunity for three institutions to share their assessment of the implementation of the action plan. As far as Switzerland is concerned, everything suggests that, at this stage, many challenges still need to be overcome in order for the different actions to bear fruit.

We wish to stress that the Conference on Disarmament has a pivotal role to play in the implementation of the action plan. Several of the actions in the plan concern the Conference on Disarmament directly. Under actions 6, 7 and 15, the Conference on Disarmament is specifically requested to carry out measures related to nuclear disarmament, negative security assurances and a treaty prohibiting the production of fissile material for making nuclear weapons. There is an essential link between the Conference on Disarmament and the execution of the action plan. Due to the impasse reached in the work of the Conference on Disarmament, the actions adopted have not yet been implemented.

The resolutions on the creation of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East are also still pending. In this regard, we must express our concern that a conference on the establishment of such a zone did not take place before the end of 2012 as previously agreed. We call upon the States most directly concerned to take all the necessary measures to ensure that a conference takes place as soon as possible, and we reiterate our full support for the efforts of the facilitator in this regard.

Lastly, with regard to the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2015 NPT Review Conference, I should like to point out that this event will not only provide an opportunity to review the 2010 NPT action plan but also to begin preparations for the 2015 NPT Review Conference, including work on the action steps that need to be adopted in order to fulfil the objectives of the NPT.

The proceedings of the open-ended working group to develop proposals to take forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations, a body set up in accordance with General Assembly resolution 67/56, represent the third event that will define 2013 and on which I would like to dwell. The working group will provide a unique framework for exchanges to take place on an equal footing among all Member States of the United Nations, representatives of international organizations and civil society on the subject of nuclear disarmament. This inclusive context will encourage debates that are both involved and productive, and we have no doubt that this process could lead to constructive proposals on how to take the negotiations on nuclear disarmament forward. We can only hope that the activities of the working group will help to ensure that the Conference on Disarmament promptly resumes its work, whether through the example that the working group itself will set or through the recommendations that it will formulate.

The President: I thank the representative of Switzerland for his statement and I now give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador of France, His Excellency, Ambassador Jean-Hugues Simon-Michel.

Mr. Simon-Michel (France) (*spoke in French*): Madam President, France aligns itself with the statement delivered by the European Union. France is pleased to see the Conference on Disarmament begin substantive discussions today on one of the items on the agenda. Naturally, these discussions cannot replace negotiations but they are useful and even essential for reaching a consensus and are becoming increasingly important in the Conference on Disarmament, that is to say, in the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum.

The track record and commitment of France to nuclear disarmament are exemplary. France has never participated in a nuclear arms race and has no intention of doing so. It applies the principle of strict sufficiency: it maintains its stockpile at the lowest possible level compatible with its strategic context. French policy on nuclear deterrence, which applies only in extreme circumstances involving legitimate defence, a right enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, does not run counter to international law, as was recalled in the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice of 1996.

Since it joined to the NPT 20 years ago, France has completely dismantled the ground-to-ground component of its nuclear deterrents and has reduced the submarine component by a third. Following its announcement of 2008, it furthermore proceeded to reduce the aerial component by a third. In the space of only 15 years, France has reduced the number of its nuclear warheads by half, bringing the total number to less than 300.

France ended production, for the manufacture of nuclear weapons, of plutonium in 1992 and of highly enriched uranium in 1996. In an exemplary and unprecedented manner, France dismantled its facilities for producing fissile material to be used in the manufacture of nuclear weapons. This represents a major outlay – of €6 billion and counting. Pending the conclusion of a treaty prohibiting the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons, we call upon all the countries concerned to declare an immediate moratorium and to take similar irreversible measures.

Along with the United Kingdom, France was the first nuclear State to ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and to dismantle its test site, which was again an irreversible measure. We call upon all the States that have not yet done so to ratify this Treaty, of which the entry into force is long overdue and, in the meantime, to either declare or to maintain a moratorium.

The action plan agreed at the 2010 NPT Review Conference is our road map. It was adopted by consensus and facilitates a progressive and practical approach. This step-by-step approach is the only one that is possible and realistic. Today, this process is what works best in our country. This point is fundamental, and I would like to take the opportunity to remind all Member States of the risks posed to the NPT road map by certain recent initiatives. I am thinking of one particular resolution on which a consensus was not reached during the last session of the General Assembly and to which my country was opposed. That resolution provided for the establishment of an open-ended working group, which, by its very purpose, will only serve to reopen the debate on the way forward and call into question the 2010 NPT action plan. The initiative of a Member State to hold a conference on the consequences of using nuclear weapons in its capital today also comes to mind. Like our P5 partners and, as has been recalled with regard to the other members of the P5, France decided not to participate in the conference.

We are naturally aware of the grave consequences that could arise from the use of nuclear weapons. It is in the interests of all nations to ensure that this situation never comes to pass. It is for this reason that France refuses to see nuclear weapons as usable weapons; that its doctrine is underpinned by the notion of extreme circumstances involving legitimate defence; and that it will continue to do its utmost to create the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons, in accordance with the objectives of the NPT.

We fear that the conference will divert attention from the discussions on practical measures that will allow new progress in nuclear disarmament to be made. The practical, step-by-step approach that we are taking has proven to be the most effective in increasing international security and stability. In this regard, I would like to reiterate our commitment, in the framework of article 6 of the NPT and in view of the common goal of nuclear disarmament and the importance of working with all the States parties to the NPT, to the implementation of the action plan agreed at the 2010 NPT Review Conference and action on its three pillars: disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

In its capacity as a nuclear State, France will continue to work with its P5 partners to build mutual trust and to bolster efforts to achieve nuclear disarmament. These efforts will continue during the third conference to follow up on the NPT action plan, which will take place next April in Geneva and has been organized by the Russian Federation as a continuation of the conferences held in Paris in 2011 and in Washington in 2012, and during the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2015 NPT Review Conference to be held a few days later.

Above all else, disarmament relies on mutual trust among States and the general perception of security. No decision on disarmament can be taken without reference to the strategic context in which we live. In particular, an urgent solution is needed to the crises involving proliferation, without which disarmament cannot progress. The recent and unacceptable nuclear trial in North Korea has just reminded us of the burning issue that is proliferation. The Iranian nuclear programme also remains a major challenge and cause for concern for the international community. The last report of the Director-General of the International Atomic Energy Agency only exacerbated concerns over the Iranian nuclear programme. France regrets that, last week in Almaty, the Islamic Republic of Iran did not avail itself of the opportunity to take practical measures that would have allowed substantial progress to be made.

France is more committed than ever to building a more secure world for all and to creating the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons, in accordance with the objectives of the NPT and in a way that promotes international stability underpinned by the principle of undiminished security for all. The next stage involves the quantitative limitation of stockpiles through negotiation, at the Conference on Disarmament, of a treaty prohibiting the production of fissile material for the manufacture of nuclear weapons. That is the next logical step towards nuclear disarmament.

These negotiations are an imperative imposed upon us by Security Council resolution 1887 (2009), General Assembly resolution 67/53 and action 15 of the action plan agreed at the 2010 NPT Review Conference. The negotiations are central to document CD/1864, the last programme of work adopted by consensus by the Conference on Disarmament, thanks to the efforts of the Algerian presidency in 2009, and which, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 67/72, remains the blueprint for our future work.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of France for his statement and I now give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador of China, His Excellency, Ambassador Wu Haitao.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Madam President, this is the first time since you assumed the presidency of the Conference that the Chinese delegation has taken the floor in a plenary meeting. I would like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation for the efforts you have made in your capacity as President to advance the work of the Conference. The Chinese delegation will continue to fully support and cooperate with you in your work.

Madam President, the Chinese delegation supports your plan for the next phase of the Conference's work. China is of the view that, in the current circumstances, holding thematic discussions on the four core issues in plenary meetings of the Conference will help the parties to specifically address new developments and challenges in the relevant fields and promote a systematic and in-depth exchange of views on issues of common concern, with an exploration of viable options for advancing the multilateral disarmament process and of possibilities for the Conference to move ahead.

At the same time, we also support the idea that the President should continue to hold consultations with the parties on the issue of the Conference's programme of work and should continue to promote the adoption of a programme of work that is acceptable to all. In this regard, we hope that the parties will show full consideration for each other's concerns in a pragmatic and constructive spirit, further demonstrate flexibility, and jointly facilitate substantive progress in the work of the Conference.

In recent years, some new headway has been made in the international nuclear disarmament process. At the same time, there is still a long way to go towards achieving the goal of the complete prohibition and total elimination of nuclear weapons and the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free world. Views also differ within the international community about how to promote the nuclear disarmament process, and some States have proposed new initiatives. I would like to take this opportunity to emphasize the following points in connection with recent developments in the field of nuclear disarmament:

Firstly, we must remain committed to the goal of the complete prohibition and total elimination of nuclear weapons. Nuclear-weapon States should conscientiously fulfil their nuclear disarmament obligations and should publicly commit not to seek to hold on to their nuclear weapons indefinitely. The countries with the largest nuclear stockpiles should go a step further by making verifiable, irreversible, large-scale reductions in their nuclear arsenals. Once the conditions are right, the other nuclear-weapon States should also join the multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiation process. The international community should in due course draw up a practically feasible, phased, long-term programme that includes concluding a convention on the complete prohibition of nuclear weapons.

Secondly, we must remain committed to the principles of maintaining strategic balance and stability and undiminished security for all. Nuclear disarmament and the international strategic security situation go hand in hand. Global strategic stability is a vital prerequisite for making progress in nuclear disarmament. The States concerned should renounce the development of missile defence systems that would undermine the global strategic balance and stability, so as to create a favourable international strategic security environment that will help carry forward the nuclear disarmament process.

Thirdly, we must remain committed to a gradual, step-by-step approach. The action plan contained in the final document of the 2010 NPT Review Conference, which was adopted unanimously, sets out a detailed road map for carrying forward the international nuclear disarmament process. This invaluable consensus was reached following repeated negotiations with the parties. Our immediate priority is to implement the action plan in a comprehensive and balanced manner, so as to steadily advance the nuclear disarmament process.

Fourthly, we must remain committed to the existing multilateral disarmament mechanisms. Current mechanisms such as the Conference on Disarmament, the United Nations Disarmament Commission and the NPT review process provide an appropriate forum for the consideration and negotiation of nuclear disarmament issues. Starting from scratch with a new mechanism to address nuclear disarmament issues would only weaken the authority of the aforementioned mechanisms, divert valuable resources and throw the

international nuclear disarmament process into disarray, without effectively carrying forward the nuclear disarmament process.

As a nuclear-weapon State, China has never shied away from its responsibilities in the area of nuclear disarmament. It has consistently advocated and enthusiastically supported the complete prohibition and total elimination of nuclear weapons and has made a clear commitment not to be the first to use nuclear weapons at any time or under any circumstances and has unconditionally undertaken not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States or in nuclear-weapon-free zones. China has never deployed nuclear weapons in other countries, has never participated and will never participate in any form of nuclear arms race, and will always maintain its nuclear capabilities at the minimum level required for national security.

In recent years, China, together with the other nuclear-weapon States, has convened a series of meetings regarding implementation of the outcome of the NPT review process. China welcomes the decision by the Russian Federation to hold a new conference of the five NPT nuclear-weapon States in Geneva this April and will actively participate in the work of that conference. Last September in Beijing, at China's initiative, the five nuclear-weapon States' Working Group on the Glossary of Key Nuclear Terms, held its first meeting of experts and decided to intensify its efforts to prepare a glossary of nuclear terms. This will help to strengthen mutual understanding and communication and enhance mutual trust among the five nuclear-weapon States.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of China for his statement and I now give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador of Egypt, Her Excellency, Ambassador Wafaa Bassim.

Ms. Bassim (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): Madam President, at the outset, I should like to take this opportunity to express our sincere appreciation for your efforts during your presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. We assure you that we are fully ready to provide any assistance to advance the work of the Conference as the sole multilateral forum for negotiations on disarmament. We also welcome this opportunity to discuss the most important subject on the Conference's agenda — nuclear disarmament — as consultations continue on the formulation of a comprehensive and balanced programme of work that would allow negotiations to begin on legally binding instruments concerning disarmament, notably nuclear disarmament.

At the first meeting of the current session, I set out the position of Egypt on the priority issue of nuclear disarmament on the international disarmament agenda and on the need for intensified efforts to commence new negotiations with a view to the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free world. This is what is called for in the international consensus reflected in a number of resolutions, notably the first resolution to be adopted by the General Assembly in 1946 and the resolutions of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. It is also a priority for the vast majority of States that are members of the international community and are of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries. I shall, thus, confine my remarks to the following points. First, this year offers a genuine and unique opportunity to move the international nuclear disarmament agenda forward, as the decision has been taken to hold a number of international events relating to nuclear disarmament. For example, while we are meeting here today, colleagues of ours are taking part in a meeting in Oslo to discuss the disastrous humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons and to throw light on the inhumane nature of these weapons and the catastrophic effects of using them, which cannot be reconciled with international humanitarian law and the laws of war. In addition to the Oslo conference, this year there have been meetings of the open-ended working group established by the United Nations General Assembly to develop proposals to take forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations for the achievement of nuclear disarmament. We hope that all States will take part in the activities

of the working group and contribute effectively to the submission of practical proposals that will allow the working group to present its report to the Conference on Disarmament and make a tangible contribution to the Conference's discussions of this issue. At the past General Assembly session, it was agreed that a high-level meeting would be convened at the beginning of the General Assembly's next session on the subject of disarmament. This could also provide a powerful impetus and generate the strong political and moral commitment that is needed to trigger meaningful action to rid the world of nuclear weapons. A decision was also taken to establish a second preparatory committee for the review conference on non-proliferation to be held in Geneva next spring. Second, as stated at the first session this year, the goal is to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons and to bring about full nuclear disarmament. As for how this is to be done, there are various possible ways to achieve this, provided that the principles of transparency, verification and continuity are applied. For example, there is a proposal from the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries to commence negotiations on a nuclear weapons treaty with a specific time frame for achieving nuclear disarmament. Based on the 13 practical steps for achieving disarmament, as put forward by the New Agenda Coalition in 2000, successive steps could also be taken and negotiations could be conducted on international treaties that would complement one another and lead to the achievement of nuclear disarmament. I should like to reaffirm that these steps must be directed towards nuclear disarmament, not just non-proliferation, if they are to serve the nuclear disarmament agenda. Reliance could also be placed on the NPT, whereby nuclear States would meet their obligations under article VI of the Treaty and a start could be made to good faith negotiations on nuclear disarmament and the universalization of the Treaty. Third, the main challenge facing the international community in multilateral activities, particularly in relation to disarmament, is a lack of trust, notably concerning the commitment of States to honouring agreements on decisions and obligations. For as long as some States choose to be selective about meeting their obligations, trust will continue to be lacking and no verification system could be effective in achieving nuclear disarmament. Indeed, history has shown, time and again, that, so long as the nuclear programmes of certain States are ignored or certain States are allowed to possess nuclear weapons, in the absence of any genuine move to achievement full nuclear disarmament and a world free of nuclear weapons, other States will view this state of affairs as an incentive to develop their nuclear weapons. Thus, a selective approach to honouring obligations undermines the credibility of international non-proliferation and disarmament regimes and has grave consequences. Fourth, there is no such thing as a responsible nuclear arsenal and an irresponsible arsenal. The presence of nuclear weapons in any location or State undermines the international security of all States. In addition to the danger and severity of conflict generated by the arms race, particularly in hotspots, the presence of these weapons and the risk of nuclear accidents make the very possession of nuclear weapons a threat to international security. It is not enough to rely on the argument put forward by some that there has been no nuclear war to date, even though there have been a number of occasions when the world was on the brink of such a war. One nuclear explosion is enough to have a long-term impact on the world as a whole and to create food, environmental and social catastrophes that could have untold consequences. The international community is in fact facing numerous economic, social and environmental crises posing major challenges that will have to be addressed through major international efforts.

The first item on the Conference agenda is the cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament. This reflects the global consensus on the importance of this issue. We, therefore, urge the Conference to do what is needed to enable this august forum to engage in meaningful action on nuclear disarmament and to commence negotiations at the earliest juncture on binding legal instruments to bring about nuclear disarmament in the world.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Egypt for her statement and I now give the floor to the representative of Syria, Ms. Nadine Issa.

Ms. Issa (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): As this is the first time my country's delegation has taken the floor under your presidency of the Conference on Disarmament, I would like firstly to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency. We wish you success in your efforts and would like to express our deep appreciation for the transparent and open manner in which you have conducted the business of the Conference. We are confident that your experience will contribute positively to efforts to advance the work of the Conference, which is the sole multilateral negotiating forum for disarmament.

We reaffirm the commitment of the Syrian Arab Republic to the position of the Group of 21, which has stated repeatedly that its top priority is nuclear disarmament, since nuclear weapons constitute the gravest threat to world security and peace and to all humanity, especially given the persistence of military nuclear doctrines that entertain the possibility of using nuclear weapons. The elimination of nuclear weapons and non-proliferation go hand in hand, and we, therefore, insist on the urgent need to work on these two fronts in full transparency and on equal terms. Thus, any treaty on fissile material for the production of nuclear weapons must contribute effectively to disarmament and not just to non-proliferation. Thus, must therefore look at existing stockpiles of such material when negotiating a treaty rather than just prohibiting future production. This must be achieved by way of a comprehensive and balanced action plan that addresses the security concerns of all Member States and that does not prioritize any one of the four core issues on the Conference agenda to the detriment of the others. Given that the measures hitherto taken by the nuclear States to reduce their arsenals have been insufficient, there is a pressing need to commence negotiations on a phased programme towards the complete elimination of nuclear weapons that would result in a convention prohibiting the development, production, stockpiling and use of nuclear weapons leading to their complete and universal destruction, without discrimination and within a specific framework of time. We are of the view that the establishment of a subsidiary body in the framework of the Conference on Disarmament for this purpose could be a genuinely effective step on the path to nuclear disarmament, particularly as the continued stockpiling of nuclear weapons in the arsenals of a limited number of States will only fuel tension, spur on the arms race and perpetuate the threat of their use. This is especially true of the Middle East, where Israel benefits from special treatment, possesses an enormous nuclear weapons arsenal with which it threatens the entire region, and refuses to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons while pursuing dangerous policies of aggression, invasion and occupation, with the international community looking on in silence. My country deplores the postponement of the special conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear and all other weapons of mass destruction, which had been due to take place in Finland in 2012. The postponement of the conference constitutes a clear breach of the terms set forth in the outcome document of the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. It is a test for the international community's credibility and its commitment to ridding the Middle East of nuclear weapons and all weapons of mass destruction. My country categorically rejects the excuses presented for not holding the conference as planned, which are designed to allow Israel to evade its patent responsibility for causing the conference to fail, in disregard for the wishes of all States parties to the Treaty. This will have a negative impact on the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the review process and will pose a grave threat to the non-proliferation and disarmament regime as a whole.

The Syrian Arab Republic declared its willingness to participate in the conference and has supported the efforts of the meeting facilitator, as have all the States in the region except Israel. Israel has refused to attend, offering fabricated excuses that bear no relation to the subject of the conference. We call on the international community to bring pressure

to bear on Israel to join the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, eliminate its nuclear arsenal and their delivery systems, and thereafter place all its nuclear facilities under a comprehensive safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency. Security and stability in the Middle East will not be achieved as long as Israel possesses nuclear weapons.

In conclusion, Madame President, I assure you of my country's readiness to cooperate with you in your constructive efforts to achieve progress in our work.

The President: I thank the delegate of Syria for her statement and for her kind words. I now invite the distinguished Ambassador of Japan, His Excellency, Ambassador Mari Amano.

Mr. Amano (Japan): First of all I thank you, Ambassador Mehta, for preparing this occasion to have a debate on the issue of nuclear disarmament. To take advantage of this opportunity, I would like to briefly reiterate Japan's position on this issue.

Achieving a world without nuclear weapons is a goal that Japan strongly strives to create. In order for it to become a reality, it is necessary to consider the particular characteristics of nuclear weapons, such as their overwhelming destructive power, their possession by a limited number of States and the substantial dependence on them for the security of States. Given these characteristics, as well as the ongoing various challenges to the peace and security of the international community, Japan believes that practical and effective measures should be taken in a progressive manner. In this regard we are willing to participate with a longer perspective in discussions on how a multilateral nuclear disarmament framework or a nuclear weapons convention should appear in a final phase of nuclear disarmament. At the same time we recognize the FMCT as the next logical step to be accomplished on the path to the elimination of nuclear weapons. We therefore believe that for the Conference on Disarmament it is suitable to resume its substantive work by commencing negotiations on the FMCT in order to draw us closer to our shared ultimate destination. I hope that constructive and pragmatic discussions will take place in the forthcoming Open-Ended Working Group to that end.

I also need to emphasize the importance of the CTBT. Elevating this de facto international norm to legally binding status will contribute both to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Japan therefore calls upon all countries that have not yet ratified it, especially those listed in annex 2, to do so as soon as possible. Furthermore, we urge all the States possessing nuclear weapons to maintain existing moratoriums on testing and call upon all States to refrain from any tests pending the entry into force of the treaty.

Before ending my intervention, allow me to stress also the significance of the NPT. Its Second Preparatory Committee will take place here in Geneva from 22 April. As a member of the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative, Japan has always promoted the steady implementation of this Treaty and looks forward to finding progress in fulfilling the 2010 action plan as a huge pragmatic effort in this field.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Japan for his statement and for his kind words. I now invite the delegate of Kazakhstan, Mr. Murat Nurtileuov to take the floor.

Mr. Nurtileuov (Kazakhstan): I regret to inform you that due to some urgent issues Ambassador Tileuberdi is not able to attend today's plenary meeting, and in this regard he entrusted me to read out the following statement.

Madam President, since it is the first time I take the floor under your presidency, I extend sincere congratulations to you on your assumption of this high post. Let me assure you of the full support and cooperation of the delegation of Kazakhstan during your tenure.

Also, allow me to use this opportunity to thank the previous Conference on Disarmament President, Ambassador Mr. András Dékány, for his active endeavours. Despite our failure to adopt a programme of work earlier this year, the delegation of Kazakhstan stands ready to continue close interaction with all member States to bridge our differences and find a way out of the long-lasting stalemate. We do believe that the Conference on Disarmament simply has to be at the forefront of the nuclear disarmament process.

Madam President, in these days of globalization, against the background of unprecedented and complex developments in the world, it is impossible to overestimate the importance of taking more decisive actions for complete nuclear disarmament. Thus, we strongly support your proposal to hold a plenary meeting devoted to this core issue.

Today's measures on nuclear disarmament, such as a new START Treaty between the United States of America and Russia, the United Kingdom's unilateral nuclear weapons reduction initiative, represent a modest list of significant advancements. However, the above-mentioned measures seem to be not fully efficient, since we still remain under the pressure of thousands of nuclear warheads. The post-cold-war world has shown that a nuclear-weapon-free world cannot be achieved only through these kinds of undertakings in the absence of the objective to abolish nuclear arsenals themselves.

The international community's failure to seize the momentum in the field of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, violations of moratoriums on nuclear tests, again vividly demonstrated an urgent need for the Conference on Disarmament to get back on track to start its work.

Our calendar for 2013 includes a number of essential occasions: a conference on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons in Oslo, the second meeting of the Preparatory Committee of the 2015 NPT Review Conference in Geneva, the launching of the United Nations High-Level Meeting on Nuclear Disarmament in New York, the launching of the Open-Ended Working Group on taking forward multilateral nuclear negotiations. I do hope, despite some concerns, these events will be instrumental in enhancing our constructive dialogue and ensure our safer future. It is our understanding that their success to a great extent depends on the goodwill and participation of all key players.

We have stated many times in various panels that possession of nuclear weapons generates a threat of their proliferation or use by accident or deliberately. The existence of WMD is immoral and contradicts international humanitarian law. Here I can only add that the catastrophic humanitarian and environmental consequences from nuclear tests in Semipalatinsk and other nuclear test sites around the globe demonstrate that the aftermath of any use of nuclear weapons is uncontrollable in time and space.

Hence, Kazakhstan, as one of the countries which voluntarily relinquished its nuclear arsenal and shut down nuclear test sites in Semipalatinsk, remains a staunch supporter of the global process of nuclear threat reduction. A legal framework aimed at cementing our unequivocal undertaking for the total elimination of nuclear weapons is a primary task for my delegation.

From our national perspective, to overcome the present stagnation in the global disarmament process, with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons being its cornerstone, is extremely vital.

The time has come for unconditional implementation by the NPT States parties of their obligations, as embodied in the unity of the three basic elements: disarmament, non-proliferation and peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

Many countries and representatives of public society consistently criticize the NPT for various reasons. Nevertheless, we remain committed to full implementation and

strengthening of the Treaty. In this respect Kazakhstan calls upon nuclear Powers which pledged that they would make sincere efforts for the elimination of nuclear weapons in accordance with article VI of the NPT to take practical steps and effective measures in this field. Here I also recall the importance of action 5 of the Final Document of the 2010 NPT Review Conference, which stipulates acceleration of concrete progress on the steps leading to nuclear disarmament and reporting their undertakings by the 2014 Preparatory Committee. Yet the NPT was not successful in limiting the number of nuclear-weapon States outside its frame. We must rectify this course of events and in a step-by-step manner elaborate a forward-looking multilateral effective and transparent universal agreement in the field of nuclear disarmament. Meanwhile, particular attention would be attached to the following steps, with no limits for their further extension. First, to maintain existing moratoriums against nuclear tests and actively seek the earliest ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, particularly by the annex 2 States, to halt any production or modernization of nuclear weapons, to declare a moratorium against production of fissile material used for military purposes, and our final goal should remain the total elimination of all weapons-grade fissile material. To reduce the role of nuclear weapons in the security doctrines of nuclear States, to establish guidelines that prohibit investment of public funds in enterprises engaged directly or indirectly in manufacturing nuclear weapons or their delivery means. To encourage the establishment of regional nuclear-weapon-free zones as appropriate, including the Central Asian one and the zone in the Middle East. To intensify multilateral efforts to prevent an arms race in outer space, to commence meaningful work on a nuclear weapons convention or package of agreements, as suggested by the United Nations Secretary-General in his Five-Point Plan on Nuclear Disarmament. In this context, I would like to note that Kazakhstan's initiative to draft a universal declaration within the United Nations is considered as one of the means to facilitate our advancement and early adoption of a convention.

Concluding my remarks, I take the opportunity to stress that the International Conference "From a Nuclear Test Ban to a Nuclear-Weapon-Free World", held last August in Astana, is yet another step towards keeping on high alert the problem of nuclear disarmament. As we have mentioned before, participants in this Conference, organized by the Government of Kazakhstan and Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament, adopted the Astana Declaration, calling on heads of State, Governments and parliaments to take resolute action for the total elimination of nuclear weapons and advancement of non-proliferation efforts.

The ATOM Project launched during this forum actively continues its campaign and makes gradual progress in collecting signatures for a nuclear weapons test ban petition. Eventually this document will be forwarded to the heads of States possessing nuclear weapons, as well as the countries which have not yet joined the CTBT or NPT. I believe the ATOM Project also enjoys the full support of the august audience presiding in this historic hall.

The President: I thank the representative of Kazakhstan for his statement and for the kind words he conveyed on behalf of Ambassador Tileuberdi. I now give the floor to the representative of India, Mr. Amandeep Singh Gill.

Mr. Singh Gill (India): Thank you, Madam President, for this opportunity to contribute to our discussions today on nuclear disarmament. My delegation may return to this important theme in subsequent meetings. For India, the foremost priority issue in the Conference on Disarmament has been and continues to be nuclear disarmament. This is a priority we share with other members of the Non-Aligned Movement and here in Geneva with the Group of 21. More than two decades after the end of the cold war, and despite a radically reconfigured political and security landscape, we are not any closer to beginning negotiations on global nuclear disarmament within a time-bound framework than we were

in 1978 when SSOD-I enshrined nuclear disarmament as the primary mandate of this Conference.

We are conscious that global nuclear disarmament lies at the end of a long and arduous process, but a beginning can be made in this forum if a subsidiary body would start consultations on specific measures that have the potential to command consensus, leading we hope to a mandate on negotiations, such as the one proposed by the G21 in document CD/1571. India is convinced that the goal of nuclear disarmament can be achieved through a step-by-step process underwritten by a universal commitment and an agreed multilateral framework that is global and non-discriminatory. There is a need for a meaningful dialogue among all States possessing nuclear weapons to build trust and confidence, and for reducing the salience of nuclear weapons in international affairs and security doctrines.

In the current international climate there is greater support for progressive steps for the delegitimization of nuclear weapons. Measures to reduce nuclear danger arising from the accidental or unauthorized use of nuclear weapons, increasing restraints on the use of nuclear weapons and de-alerting of nuclear weapons are pertinent in this regard. India's resolutions in the First Committee gave expression to some of these ideas and have found support from a large number of States. Our working paper CD/1816, tabled in the Conference on Disarmament in 2007, which was developed in the spirit of the 1988 Rajiv Gandhi action plan, also suggested specific measures, including a Global No First Use Agreement and a Convention on the Prohibition of Use of Nuclear Weapons. As part of the G21 and the Non-Aligned Movement, India has supported the conclusion of a universal, unconditional and legally binding instrument on security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States as a matter of priority. The negotiation of such an instrument in the Conference on Disarmament will complement other measures to reduce the salience of nuclear weapons in security doctrines and improve the international climate for promoting nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation in all its aspects. For India, the concept of delegitimization is not a magic wand that could make nuclear weapons disappear instantly. It is a potentially powerful process — and the operative word is process — that can help ease the Conference on Disarmament onto the path to achieve a Global Zero.

To conclude, we are grateful for this opportunity to share with colleagues briefly India's position on nuclear disarmament. We hope that the Conference on Disarmament will continue to make its contribution to progress on disarmament issues, in particular nuclear disarmament. We are conscious that no forum can have an exclusive right to discuss an issue as important as nuclear disarmament. Indeed, nuclear disarmament is always on the agenda of both the United Nations Disarmament Commission and the United Nations General Assembly, and now an Open-Ended Working Group has been mooted to consider proposals to take forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations for the achievement and maintenance of a world without nuclear weapons. At the same time we need to remember that if our goal is indeed the global, non-discriminatory and verifiable elimination of all nuclear weapons through negotiations, our discussions need to link with and lead to concrete negotiating proposals in the Conference on Disarmament as the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum.

The President: I thank the representative of India for his statement. With that we have concluded the speakers' list registered. I now give the floor to the representative of Algeria.

Mr. Khelif (Algeria) (*spoke in Arabic*): The delegation of Algeria was not intending to make a statement today, as it has already stated its position and our views on the importance of nuclear disarmament, both at the outset of this session and over the past years. Today, however, we should like to give our impression, in real time, of the discussions that have taken place and of the statements delivered by the delegations of the

States parties, particularly those States that possess nuclear weapons or that follow a nuclear deterrence policy.

We have seen that all the delegations — most of them — attach importance to the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the NPT Review Conference and consider this process an important one for strengthening the non-proliferation regime. In this connection, we should like to say that the importance of any security system or any disarmament or non-proliferation regime stems from its strength and credibility, from its capacity to provide security to all the participating States in the process. Today, therefore, we have the impression that the steps taken and achievements scored in the nuclear disarmament process are inadequate and late in coming. We hope that these shortcomings will be addressed in the future.

The first subject that we must discuss at the Conference on Disarmament or in other relevant United Nations frameworks is nuclear disarmament. In the statement delivered by the representative of the United Kingdom, mention was made of the dangers that existing nuclear arsenals continue to pose. In this connection, we should like to say that, until such time as the deadlock at the Conference on Disarmament is broken, we must all agree on a subject that concerns us all and on the dangers that we must address. In our view, the special session on disarmament that was held in 1978 provided us with a road map. The first of these issues is disarmament. The Charter of the United Nations also provides us with the building blocks for our joint work in the context of the Conference on Disarmament and the United Nations. We do not believe that the principle of the legitimate right of self-defence is an absolute principle. There are also principles established in international humanitarian law, human rights law and international criminal law that define crimes against humanity, war crimes and crimes of genocide. Thus, the right of self-defence must not be applied in a manner that oversteps these red lines that have been laid down by the international community.

An Algerian delegation is taking part in the Oslo meeting, because we believe that the first step that must be taken in nuclear disarmament is to delegitimize these weapons, so long as there are arguments that support the possession of these weapons on the pretext of self-defence or the defence of vital interests. We do not believe that we will achieve tangible progress in this area. In this connection, we consider the Oslo meeting to have a special symbolic significance; it is, perhaps for the first time in many years, the first occasion on which non-nuclear-weapon States, or States that theoretically are not supposed to possess nuclear weapons, have come together to express their views on nuclear disarmament. We hope that the international community will recognize the extreme importance of this meeting and of its outcome, as this is a matter that speaks to the credibility of the non-proliferation regime.

The President: I thank the representative of Algeria for his statement and for taking the initiative to respond to statements made in the Conference on Disarmament earlier today. Are there any other delegations that wish to take the floor at this stage? The representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has the floor.

Mr. Ri Jang Gon (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Madam President, to begin with, the delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea would like to highly commend your excellent manner that you are now conducting for the advancement of our work. We take this opportunity to express our welcome to the Ambassador of Cuba back to Geneva with a high post of Permanent Representative. We wish her every success in her future responsible task.

My delegation has taken the floor to comment on statements made by some delegations during our discussions today. My delegation holds that nuclear disarmament is the highest priority. It is the only absolute solution to the issue of nuclear proliferation

which stemmed from the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons by certain nuclear-weapon States. Those countries that give priority to non-proliferation have an ulterior motive for freezing the status quo characterized by a monopoly of nuclear weapons by certain nuclear-weapon States and for degrading non-nuclear-weapon States to inferiority and subordination.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea has set jointly with the countries of the Non-Aligned Movement and the member States of the G21 nuclear disarmament as the fundamental issue related to world peace and security, and remains steadfast on giving the highest priority to nuclear disarmament.

Nuclear disarmament should arrange towards the complete and total elimination of nuclear weapons, participation of nuclear-weapon States in implementing their disarmament obligations. For example, the piecemeal reduction of nuclear weapons and commitment to conditional security assurances would be regarded as a mockery of non-nuclear-weapon States and it would only deepen mutual distrust. Complete and total nuclear disarmament, namely, the commitment of nuclear-weapon States to negative security assurances, withdrawal of nuclear weapons deployed outside their territories and total elimination of nuclear weapon arsenals would satisfy the expectations of the international community for fulfilment of disarmament obligations.

The main obstacle to durable peace and security on the Korean peninsula is the United States' hostile policy towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. It has deep historical roots. However, some countries misunderstand that the United States is hostile to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea because of the nuclear issue. In fact the United States hostile policy gave rise to the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula. Long before the rise of the nuclear issue, the United States defined the Democratic People's Republic of Korea as an enemy and refused to recognize its sovereignty. Institutional and legal mechanisms against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea have been in place, military attacks and nuclear threats aimed at eliminating the ideology and system of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea have been openly committed, economic sanctions and international pressure for isolating and suffocating the Democratic People's Republic of Korea have been persistent. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea opted for a position of nuclear deterrent because it had to counteract the moves of the United States aimed at eliminating the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea aspires to durable peace more than anybody else, but it would never beg for peace at the expense of its sovereignty and national dignity. Confronted by the extreme nuclear threats from the United States, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea responded with its own nuclear deterrent. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea nuclear deterrent not only serves as a popular means of safeguarding its sovereignty but also provides a mighty guarantee for concentrating on economic construction and improvement of the living standard of the people.

My delegation takes this opportunity to say a word to the EU, which seriously provoked the Democratic People's Republic of Korea during our discussion today. If the EU wants a true resolution of the current situation on the Korean peninsula, it will have to tell the United States first, the United States above all, to terminate the hostile acts against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea before talking about the strong self-defensive counteractions of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The EU should bear in mind that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will take the strongest steps in succession for defending the sovereignty, dignity and vital rights of the country.

The President: I thank the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea for his statement. The distinguished delegate of Mexico has requested the floor. Ms. Ramírez Valenzuela.

Ms. Ramírez Valenzuela (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Madam President, as this is my first time taking the floor, I would like to thank you for your efforts as president of the Conference on Disarmament and to offer you the support of this delegation in the performance of your functions.

Moreover, my delegation would like to point out that, while the exchange of views may be interesting, these are deliberations and not negotiations. As other delegations have mentioned, these discussions do not obviate the need to adopt a programme of work, which leads us to wonder whether taking up the time of the Conference on Disarmament with this type of discussion does not keep it from initiating the negotiations in question.

The President: I thank the distinguished delegate of Mexico for her statement and her comments and for her kind words. I should, for my part, respond to the last point that she flagged in a moment.

Are there any other delegations that wish to take the floor at this stage? The distinguished representative of the Republic of Korea has the floor.

Mr. Park Young-hyo (Republic of Korea): Madam President, my delegation would like to draw your attention to United Nations Security Council resolutions 1718, 1874 and 2087, as well as the final document of the 2010 NPT Review Conference and the numerous IAEA resolutions on issues related to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The NPT final document clearly states that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea must fulfil its commitments under the 2005 joint statement of the Six-Party Talks as well as its obligations under United Nations Security Council resolutions which called for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to abandon all nuclear weapons and the existing nuclear programmes in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner.

While the international community is making efforts for nuclear disarmament today, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is running counter to such efforts by conducting nuclear tests repeatedly. My delegation would like to urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to stop its continued pursuit of nuclear weapons and to join the international community's endeavour to realize the shared ultimate goal of a world without nuclear weapons. My delegation already made clear many times the Republic of Korea's security policy on the Korean peninsula in this chamber. Therefore, I don't want to take more time out of your valuable work on constructive discussions on nuclear disarmament.

The President: I thank the representative of the Republic of Korea, Counsellor Park, and welcome him to his new position here at the Conference on Disarmament.

Are there any other? I give the floor to the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Mr. Ri Jang Gon (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Since the South Korean delegation provoked us again at today's meeting, my delegation would also like to say a few words to the South Korean delegation again.

The nuclear threat that South Korea is talking about every time is nothing but sophisms to cover up the scenario made in collusion with its master to ignite a nuclear war against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. With the United States, South Korea is very busy nowadays staging joint military drills against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The joint military exercises under way are a dangerous provocative racket seeking a pre-emptive nuclear strike against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. In the face of this hard fact the fair public, at home and abroad, clearly sees who is the true

criminal posing nuclear threats to the peninsula. South Korea had better bear in mind that the warnings of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea are by no means empty talk and the South Korean delegation is well advised not to perpetrate its despicable act in this forum, in this place any longer. South Korea is well aware that this forum is not a place for the confrontation between North and South of Korea.

The President: I thank the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and I now give the floor to Her Excellency, the Ambassador of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Ambassador Joanne Adamson.

Ms. Adamson (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland): I am sorry to take the floor again today. I took much of people's time earlier today. I would just like to make an appeal that we do not allow threatening language or talk of threats in the chamber. I think you reminded us before that we need to stay in a much more respectful tone and show courtesy to each other. I do not think the language being used sometimes here is conducive to trying to promote peace and security. In fact one could say it has the opposite effect, so I would really just appeal through you to delegates to desist from this kind of language. There are other ways to talk to each other, and I think we should use more constructive approaches.

The President: I thank Ambassador Adamson for her very welcome remarks and I, for my part, I am very happy to endorse her comments and her suggestions.

Are there any other delegations that wish to take the floor at this time? I see none.

I do not intend to attempt a comprehensive summary of the rich and nuanced debate on nuclear disarmament today. There was much said today in the course of these statements that merits very serious reflection. However, for me there were two key points: firstly, nuclear disarmament continues to be the highest priority in disarmament and non-proliferation, and there is an expectation that the Conference on Disarmament, as the sole multilateral disarmament negotiation forum, would play its due role. Secondly, we heard of the two approaches mentioned with regard to pursuing nuclear disarmament: a step-by-step pragmatic approach and a more comprehensive or principled approach leading to or embedded in a nuclear weapons convention. We have also heard that in the view of some delegations it may be possible to bridge these two approaches through a universal binding commitment to pursue nuclear disarmament and an agreed multilateral framework.

I thank you for your attention in permitting me to make these comments.

I should like to inform delegations that we would devote our next plenary meeting on 12 March to the topic of a fissile material cut-off treaty, which is among the four core issues discussed in the Conference. Again, this is without limiting in any way the right of delegations to address other topics as they may wish, as set out in the rules of procedure.

In reference to the question raised earlier by the delegation of Mexico, I would like to recall that I had mentioned earlier that such discussions are being scheduled without prejudice to any efforts to prepare a programme of work, or indeed to enable the Conference on Disarmament to fulfil its mandate to negotiate disarmament treaties. I should also like to inform delegations that a request has been received from the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom to speak in the plenary on the occasion of International Women's Day, as has been customary in recent years. It has been indicated that the WILPF would wish to do so in the next plenary meeting on 12 March.

I understand the secretariat has an announcement to make.

Mr. Fung (Secretary of the Conference): As is customary every year, the secretariat is starting the process of updating the "Yellow book" that contains the composition of all delegations accredited to the Conference on Disarmament, their addresses and telephone

numbers. In this regard, we would like to invite all delegations, especially those that have had changes, to kindly forward to the secretariat notes verbales indicating those changes.

The President: I thank the Secretary for his contribution. If there is no other wish to take the floor this meeting is adjourned.

The meeting rose at 12.40 p.m.