
Conference on Disarmament

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English

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President: Mr. Mohsen Naziri Asl (Islamic Republic of Iran)

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The President: The 1289th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament is called to order.

Before we proceed, I would like to bid farewell to our colleague Ambassador Haeryong Kwon of the Republic of Korea, to whom I would like to wish success and satisfaction in his new assignment.

Allow me to start by expressing appreciation to all the delegations that contributed to our previous plenary discussion on the programme of work. We had a very valuable and constructive debate and exchange of views on the programme of work, both formally and informally, in which member States expressed their national positions as well as possible ways to overcome the problems of the programme of work. Since our previous plenary meeting, we have continued to hold informal bilateral consultations on the Conference's programme of work. During the consultations last week, we went through different approaches and noticed a tendency among delegations in favour of a pragmatic approach. I will continue my consultations to explore the best way of reaching agreement on the programme of work.

As I indicated at our last meeting, the topic for today's meeting is the revitalization of the Conference on Disarmament.

Let me put on my national hat for a while to express my country's views on revitalization while I have the floor. In our view, the Conference on Disarmament, as the sole international negotiating body in the field of disarmament, is one of the important elements of the disarmament machinery created at the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. The Conference is a well-known body in the sphere of multilateral disarmament diplomacy, with a noble record of major achievements in the area of legally binding disarmament instruments. Its unique agenda, composition and rules of procedure make it an exceptional body in the field of disarmament and international security negotiations. That first special session put into place the disarmament machinery. If there is a need to address challenges to that machinery's effectiveness, we have no choice other than to take the correct path, that is, to convene a fourth special session on disarmament. It is the stated position of the Non-Aligned States that a fourth special session should be held, but it has yet to be convened.

In the meantime, the international security environment has changed considerably in recent years. A flood of demands for greater progress in disarmament, especially nuclear disarmament, has been witnessed. First and utmost priority has been attributed by the members of international community to nuclear disarmament, and the Conference should pay due attention to this priority. The progressive and active role of civil society in security and disarmament issues is a reality, and the growing number and diversity of States that are taking an active interest in the different aspects of nuclear disarmament is an established fact. This places pressure on the Conference and raises expectations among the international community. The parallel tracks being taken to the Conference have the potential to undermine it as the sole negotiating body in the disarmament sphere. Thus it is of great importance that the Conference be strengthened and revitalized by resuming its substantive work, particularly in the area of nuclear disarmament.

In our view, the main problem of this body is not a procedural one but a matter of substance, rooted in the lack of political will to start negotiations on nuclear disarmament. Therefore, the revitalization of the Conference should not be focused on procedural reform but rather on creating momentum to increase political will for substantive work on nuclear disarmament.

I will now return to the item for discussion today. As you know, this meeting will give a chance to delegations to outline their views on an issue of high importance. In

this regard, I am very interested in hearing the position of delegations on the issue of revitalization of the Conference, which also includes examining ways and means to ensure the active participation of non-governmental organizations in the work of the Conference.

I now open the floor for delegations that wish to comment on this issue. I recognize the Ambassador of Zimbabwe on behalf of the Group of 21.

Mr. Manzou (Zimbabwe): Mr. President, I have the honour to deliver a general statement on behalf of the Group of 21. Before I do that, allow me again to express — on behalf of the Group of 21 — our deepest appreciation at the able and skilful manner in which you are conducting the affairs of the Conference.

The Group of 21 would like to stress once again that the Conference on Disarmament is the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum mandated by the first special session of the United Nations General Assembly devoted to disarmament, and to emphasize the importance of preserving it by strengthening the nature, role and purpose of this body. We must underscore the need to redouble our efforts in order to reinforce and revitalize the Conference and preserve its credibility through the resumption of substantive work including, *inter alia*, the negotiations on nuclear disarmament.

In the opinion of the overwhelming majority of both the international community and the membership of our Conference, the highest priority remains nuclear disarmament and the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. The Group of 21 reiterates its deep concern at the danger posed to the survival of humankind by the continued existence of nuclear weapons and their possible use or threat of use. The Group, stressing its strong commitment to nuclear disarmament, underscores the urgent need to commence negotiations on this issue in the Conference on Disarmament without further delay. As the highest priority, negotiations should start in the Conference on a phased programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, including a nuclear weapons convention prohibiting the possession, development, production, stockpiling, transfer and use of nuclear weapons, leading to the global, non-discriminatory and verifiable elimination of nuclear weapons with a specified framework of time.

The Group reaffirms the absolute validity of multilateral diplomacy in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation, and expresses its determination to promote multilateralism as the core principle of negotiations in these areas. The Group welcomes the convening of a high-level meeting of the United Nations General Assembly on nuclear disarmament that will be held in New York on 26 September 2013, as a concrete contribution to achieving the goal of nuclear disarmament. The Group encourages all States to actively participate in that important meeting at the highest level.

The Group of 21 reaffirms the importance of the multilateral disarmament machinery. It notes the ongoing work of the Open-Ended Working Group mandated by the General Assembly to develop proposals to take forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations for the achievement and maintenance of a world without nuclear weapons, and hopes that it will contribute towards nuclear disarmament or nuclear negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament.

The Group of 21 reaffirms that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. Pending the achievement of the complete elimination of such weapons, the Group reaffirms the urgent need for the conclusion of a universal, unconditional and legally binding instrument to effectively assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons as a matter of high priority. The Group expresses concern that

despite the commitment of the nuclear-weapon States and long-standing requests by the non-nuclear-weapon States to receive such legally binding assurances, no tangible progress has been achieved in this regard. It is a matter of more concern to the non-nuclear-weapon States which implicitly or explicitly have been subject to nuclear threats by some nuclear-weapon States, contrary to their obligations under the Charter of the United Nations.

The Group of 21 therefore expresses its disappointment that the Conference has not been able to undertake substantive work on its agenda. The Group takes note of various efforts to reach consensus on the Conference's programme of work, including the programme of work adopted on 29 May 2009 that was not implemented, and all subsequent efforts and proposals for a programme of work, including those tabled on 14 March 2012 and 11 February 2013 that were not adopted.

The Group reiterates the urgency of the Conference adopting and implementing a balanced and comprehensive programme of work on the basis of its agenda, while taking into account the security interests of all States and dealing with, *inter alia*, the core issues, including nuclear disarmament, in accordance with the rules of procedure.

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

While expressing its deep concern over the persistent lack of consensus on the implementation of the multilateral disarmament agenda in the United Nations disarmament machinery, particularly in fulfilling the commitments on nuclear disarmament as the highest priority, the Group reaffirms its support for the early convening of the fourth special session of the United Nations General Assembly devoted to disarmament and expresses its deep concern over the fact that the session has yet to be convened.

The Group of 21 reiterates the importance of the establishment in the Middle East of a zone free of nuclear and all other weapons of mass destruction and deeply regrets the delay of concrete action to that end.

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

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

The Group of 21 recognizes the ongoing need for the United Nations to have an independent, impartial and objective research capacity on issues related to disarmament, with priority given to nuclear disarmament. In this regard, we believe that the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) should realize its potential, especially given that it has its roots in the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. It is important to maintain the autonomy and impartiality of UNIDIR in fulfilling its role of providing in-depth and long-term research on disarmament issues.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Zimbabwe for his statement on behalf of the Group of 21. The next speaker on the list is Ambassador Schmid of Switzerland.

Mr. Schmid (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, as this is the first time that my delegation is taking the floor under your presidency, let me congratulate you on the assumption of your duties. You arrived in Geneva only recently and already find yourself presiding over the Conference on Disarmament and facing the difficult

task of getting its members to adopt a programme of work. This is a formidable challenge, but one that must be met for the future of the Conference.

Revitalizing the Conference is a matter of paramount importance. The Conference needs to be able to fulfil its mandate of negotiating multilateral instruments. However, the prolonged standstill in this body threatens its future and is cause for particular concern, as witnessed by the attention that both the United Nations General Assembly and the Secretary-General of the United Nations have been paying to this issue for a number of years now. We therefore thank you for deciding to devote this meeting to such a crucial issue.

As we have maintained on several occasions, the adoption of a programme of work would without a doubt be the best way to revitalize this forum. Therefore, I can only applaud the commitment that you have shown to this challenge, notably by dedicating last week's meeting to the programme of work.

Let me first say a few words about my country's position on this matter. Switzerland still believes that the Conference has the potential to play a decisive role in responding to pressing challenges involving international, national and human security. We would like to see the Conference begin negotiations, thus fulfilling its mandate and putting an end to the problems that have afflicted it for too long.

The adoption and implementation of a programme of work have become key challenges that members must face with the greatest commitment. My country's approach to this issue is one of pragmatism coupled with flexibility where necessary. Switzerland stands ready to take part in negotiations on all four core issues of the Conference's agenda, but it is also interested in addressing the broader question of how we should go about establishing a programme of work.

The content of the programme of work has been a central issue. The possibility of using a simplified programme has recently been put forward once again. This idea strikes us as interesting, so long as such a programme is aimed at bringing us closer to negotiations. The possibility of separating the adoption of a programme of work from the mandates for specific issues has also been raised on various occasions. These proposals deserve, in our opinion, to be examined in greater depth.

The decision-making process for the programme of work is another important matter that needs to be further explored. We should ask ourselves whether greater continuity in the implementation of a programme of work from one year to another would be possible and desirable and, if so, under what conditions. A discussion on the application of the consensus rule to procedural decisions, such as the adoption of the programme of work, also seems necessary. The consensus rule provides a clear guarantee that the legitimate security interests of States will be taken into account during negotiations. The fact that it is now systematically used to prevent the adoption of a programme of work is difficult for us to comprehend.

My delegation is convinced that the lack of progress in the Conference is not due exclusively to external factors and a lack of political will. Institutional deficiencies exist and addressing some of them could help us to reach the long-awaited consensus on a programme of work that is robust and, above all, implemented.

In my statement on 24 May, following the seminar organized by Indonesia and the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research on exploring avenues to address the stalemate in the Conference, I stressed how important it was for the Conference to address the issue of its working methods, since they are closely related to our ability to generate the political will to move forward. In other words, the Conference's working methods must facilitate and not inhibit political processes. Its procedures should make the effort to build consensus easier, not more difficult.

In my statement, I also expressed my conviction that the Conference on Disarmament needs to launch a structured, comprehensive review of its working methods with a view to improving how this body functions. Allow me to clarify my thoughts on this matter.

First of all, what is meant by a “structured review”? A number of possible approaches and options come to mind.

The exercise that culminated in the decision taken in 1990 by the Conference on its improved and effective functioning (CD/1036) was based on a step-by-step approach. It first involved the Conference establishing an informal group, composed of seven heads of delegation acting in a personal capacity, to study various aspects of the issue. Once the issue became ripe, open informal consultations led by the Ambassador of Pakistan were held.

Another possible approach would be to appoint a special coordinator to examine the working methods of the Conference and ways of improving them. Again, there are precedents. Special coordinators were appointed in 2001 and 2002 to examine the improved and effective functioning of the Conference and to review its agenda and look into the enlargement of its membership. These special coordinators conducted their work through bilateral consultations and open informal meetings.

A third possible approach would be to establish a subsidiary body to the Conference, as provided for in rule 23 of the rules of procedure, in the form of either a special subcommittee or a working group.

A structured review of the Conference’s working methods raises the crucial question of which topics to address. While it is clear that such a question should be posed once the review has been launched, I would like to make a few comments at this preliminary stage.

First of all, I would like to stress that such an exercise would not, from our perspective, be aimed at calling into question the consensus rule. This rule seems to be intimately tied to the Conference and to the especially sensitive issue of security, even if it often seems particularly constraining to many of us. Therefore, a review of the Conference’s working methods should not be aimed at questioning the consensus rule itself. The review could, however, try to determine how to promote some restraint in its use, particularly with respect to the adoption of a programme of work, as I mentioned earlier.

There are a number of topics concerning our working methods that deserve further discussion. The way we approach our programme of work and the various elements related to this issue that I alluded to earlier would figure prominently in a structured review. But other elements also come to mind.

The agenda and the items that appear on it likely merit further discussion. The fact that the Conference does not give equal attention to some core disarmament issues should be reflected upon.

The length of the President’s term of office and information on whether the current approach facilitates or further complicates the adoption of a programme of work also seem to require further examination.

Enlargement of the Conference and participation by civil society — which you also mentioned — should similarly be addressed in a structured review. Could enlarging the Conference change its dynamics while strengthening its legitimacy and credibility? Discussion should also be held on whether greater participation by civil society would help to revitalize the Conference by providing new impetus.

This list is by no means exhaustive and there are indeed other topics that warrant further discussion. Determining which elements to address, as well as the specific form that a structured review should take, requires an exchange that we would like to see. Launching such a review seems clearly appropriate and necessary at this time, given the stalemate in the Conference and the potential contribution of such a review to its revitalization. I therefore hope that these initiatives will find the necessary support.

Mr. President, addressing the issues that I just mentioned seems absolutely crucial to the future of this Conference and multilateralism in the field of disarmament. There are many of us who are ready to explore these issues in greater depth. In this regard, I wish to underscore that both the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Secretary-General of our Conference, Mr. Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, have appealed to the Conference on Disarmament to focus on revitalization, including by way of reforms that would be able to generate greater political will.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Switzerland for his statement and his kind words addressed to the Chair. The next speaker is the Ambassador of the Czech Republic, who will speak on behalf of the informal group of observer States to the Conference pursuant to rule 34 of the rules of procedure.

Ms. Sequensová (Czech Republic): Mr. President, I have the honour to speak on behalf of the informal group of observer States to the Conference on Disarmament, which represents 42 countries from every region of the world. Some of those countries were present at the founding of the Conference in 1979; some have been waiting more than 20 years to become full members. All the Group's countries are States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Chemical Weapons Convention, instruments negotiated by this honourable and respected forum and the disarmament negotiating forums that preceded the Conference on Disarmament. Most of the Group's countries are parties to other international disarmament treaties, such as the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. This proves the strong commitment of all the Group's countries to advancing global arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation efforts.

I would like to commend you, Mr. President, for scheduling the debate on the revitalization of the Conference at this very appropriate moment. We also appreciate your intention to further discuss the expansion of the Conference as well as the participation of civil society. The observer States would like to take this opportunity to offer their views.

We are deeply concerned by the long deadlock in the Conference and its ongoing inability to commence substantive work. We are disappointed by the fact that the membership is not in a position to take a first step to enable the Conference to walk again. All observer States agree that there is an urgent need for revitalization of the Conference, as it continues to be unable to perform its mandate, which is to negotiate multilateral disarmament treaties.

Revitalization of the Conference is a multidimensional process which requires strong political will, compromise and unceasing effort. One of the critical components of this process is the expansion of the Conference. We regret the fact that since 1999, when the last Conference enlargement took place, no further action has been taken on membership, even though the rules of procedure (rule 2) stipulate that the membership of the Conference will be reviewed at regular intervals. We also regret the fact that not a single informal or formal debate has been devoted to the topic of enlargement since 2002, when the last special coordinator, a Bulgarian colleague, Peter Kolarov, was appointed. Therefore, we reiterate our call to reflect on the enlargement of the Conference. For this purpose, the appointment of a special coordinator — or even a

coordinator under the responsibility of the President — and the initiation of a structural debate would bring benefits that would increase the Conference's chances of success. The observer States consider that developments in the global security environment should be duly reflected in the appropriate representation of States in the Conference. We would like to contribute to preventing the Conference from becoming a relic of the past and losing its relevance for all.

In our view, the Conference should seriously consider the remarks made to it by Secretary-General Tokayev in February 2012. The revitalization of the Conference also entails procedural reform and evaluation of the functioning of the current institutions. We are convinced that detailed and structured discussion of concrete proposals on revitalization, such as those put forward by our Swiss colleague, would enhance the legitimacy of this unique multilateral negotiating forum in these difficult times.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of the Czech Republic for her statement on behalf of the informal group of observer States to the Conference. The next speaker is the Ambassador of Ireland, who will speak on behalf of the European Union.

Mr. Kos (Ireland): I have the honour to take the floor on behalf of the European Union and its member States. The following countries align themselves with this declaration: Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Iceland, Serbia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine.

We strongly believe that a multilateral approach to security, disarmament and non-proliferation is the best means of maintaining international peace and security. We strongly support the United Nations and effective multilateralism. The existence of new threats to international security makes it more important than ever to have a properly functioning system. Since we all recognize that today's global security problems require cooperative and multilateral solutions, now is the time to reinforce and revitalize multilateral efforts.

We remain deeply troubled by the ongoing stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament. The Conference, in accordance with its mandate, has a crucial role to negotiate multilateral treaties. It is in the hands of all members to reinforce the Conference and restore the central role it plays in strengthening the non-proliferation regime and multilateral disarmament. Its revitalization is more urgent than ever.

I would like to reaffirm our strong commitment to the Conference on Disarmament as the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum of the international community. At the same time, we are aware that the adoption of a programme of work will require sustained political effort. If the current standstill continues, the debate will increasingly focus on other options to allow States to make progress in multilateral non-proliferation and disarmament. We acknowledge the security concerns of all States, but, at the same time, we firmly believe that the consensus rule must not be subject to abuse. We therefore appeal to all delegations to the Conference to show flexibility, which is needed by all of us if we want to overcome the long-standing stalemate.

For us, the immediate commencement of substantive work through the adoption and implementation of a balanced and comprehensive programme of work, building on document CD/1864, is the highest priority. The Conference needs to resume its work without delay. We urgently need multilateral progress on the crucial issues that have been on our agenda for such a long time, and for the Conference to do what it was created to do.

In relation to the statement just delivered by the Czech Ambassador on behalf of the informal group of observer States, we would like to reiterate our long-standing attachment to the enlargement of the Conference. We underline the importance of continuation of consultations on the expansion of the membership and strongly support appointing a special coordinator on the expansion of the Conference membership.

We also strongly value close and continuous coordination of the six presidencies, which could considerably contribute to our work.

Consistent with our engagement with civil society, we are also keen to explore ways to strengthen the voice of non-governmental organizations and to associate research institutions in the work of the Conference.

We take note of the statement just delivered by the Ambassador of Switzerland with proposals on a structured process aimed at reviewing the Conference's working methods. We are looking forward to hearing more on these ideas, or other ideas that the Conference members might have, as long as they do not become a substitute for the real work that the Conference should be doing.

The President: I thank the representative of Ireland for his statement on behalf of the European Union. The next speaker is the representative of France.

Ms. Tang (France) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, France fully aligns itself with the statement that was just made on behalf of the European Union. I would like to make a few comments on behalf of France.

France is committed to effective multilateral disarmament that creates conditions for a safer world by taking successive steps towards general and complete disarmament. All the institutions that make up the "disarmament machinery", namely, the Conference on Disarmament, which is the sole multilateral forum for negotiating legally binding agreements, the Disarmament Commission and the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly, should work towards this long-term objective. We can no longer ignore the stalemate besetting the Conference. This is not a healthy situation, and we share the frustration expressed by virtually all the delegations here about the time and resources that have been wasted.

This stalemate is primarily political in nature. There is a "consensus minus one" to launch the negotiation of a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons. We would of course like this negotiation to be conducted within the Conference, which was established for that purpose. For us, this is a ripe issue and an initiative that would make a genuine contribution to collective security. However, we should not bar ourselves from thinking about how to improve the functioning of our forum. It is a healthy thing that ideas should be submitted for consideration, such as those presented by our Secretary-General in February 2012 and by Switzerland today.

France believes that the consensus rule should be maintained, although its use has sometimes been misplaced. The rule serves as a guarantee that all those who hold an interest in disarmament will participate in negotiations, in the assurance that their legitimate security interests will be respected. It also ensures that negotiated agreements will be honoured by all those who have adopted them. The consensus rule is therefore, for us, a prerequisite for effective multilateralism.

Over the years, however, the consensus rule has been perverted by practice, and it has been turned into a means of hindering progress. Consensus for a decision should materialize on its own in the absence of any stated opposition, thus allowing work to advance. Consensus is also a state of mind, one that assumes that efforts will be made on both sides to accord mutual concessions. Unfortunately, practice in the Conference has gradually caused the idea of consensus to drift towards unanimity, which is a far

more formal and restrictive concept. Moreover, this requirement of unanimity is applied to all decisions — regardless of whether they are of a substantive or procedural nature — at every stage in the procedure and regardless of the issue's relative importance.

The role of the President should also be examined. There is no body that functions effectively under the consensus rule without a presidency that is able to proactively bridge positions and broker compromise. If we look at our history and the time — too long ago — when the Conference effectively negotiated treaties of vital importance, this role was initially played by the working group chairs. That is why the Conference, in plenary, could operate so smoothly with a presidency that rotated each month.

But nowadays we only work in plenary. It seems difficult for the President of the Conference, in just one month, to revive the body, and the system quickly shows its limits. Moreover, the prerogatives of the President have shrunk over the years because of ever narrower interpretations of the rules of procedure.

Some procedural issues are clearly quite important, such as the establishment of working groups. As a programme of work is aimed at establishing working groups and therefore determines the effective start of negotiations and even guides them to a certain extent by way of mandates, it is a sensitive document. I readily admit this.

But when the point is simply to organize the plenary's thematic debates under an agenda adopted at the beginning of the year, given that we obviously have an agenda, is it reasonable to have the same formalities and to seek explicit agreement in the Conference? Similarly, are such formalities really necessary when external experts are invited to give presentations, especially when such experts come from the United Nations family? The United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, for instance, should be able to speak at our meetings in a much more flexible manner.

All effective multilateral forums avail themselves, when necessary, of reports or information provided by an impartial secretariat: not only for issues relating to the logistics of organizing meetings, but particularly for matters of substance. The Security Council, for example, does not hesitate to ask the Secretariat to prepare reports on a variety of issues. Our secretariat should also be able to play a more significant, substantial role.

Lastly, we must respond to legitimate requests from many States that wish to join this forum. Naturally, France is particularly sensitive to requests from other European Union States, without prejudice to other regions of the world. We therefore support limited enlargement, provided we strike the right balance between the number of States to be welcomed and the improvement and effectiveness of this forum.

Mr. President, these are some avenues that we feel should be explored to improve the functioning of the Conference. That would be preferable to seeking to circumvent the Conference by establishing parallel structures, which would not serve the cause of disarmament.

If such a scenario were to come to pass, we would know clearly what we were losing, but not what we were gaining in return. We would lose the sole standing body mandated by the international community to conduct disarmament negotiations, the sole forum that includes all the States with key capabilities in the most sensitive areas, and lastly, a continuous presence of experts, here in Geneva, on both weapons of mass destruction and conventional weapons, expertise which does not exist in any other multilateral setting.

The President: I thank the representative of France for her statement. The next speaker is the representative of Ireland.

Mr. Jackson (Ireland): Ireland welcomes the opportunity to set out its views and to hear the views and ideas of other delegations on the topic of revitalization of the Conference on Disarmament. We align ourselves with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union.

Ireland has always believed that a strong and effective multilateral system is the most appropriate way to promote international peace and security. A strong and responsive rules-based system is to the benefit of all nations and their citizens. Ireland has long been, and will continue to be, an advocate for disarmament as a key contributor to peace and security.

Like many delegations, Ireland is troubled that this Conference, a core element of the multilateral disarmament machinery, has not been able to add to its impressive track record of achievements for over a decade.

As you noted in your opening address to the Conference on 28 May, Mr. President, the success of the Conference is a collective responsibility. This was further underlined last week by Ambassador Wibowo of Indonesia, who remarked that Conference members should contribute their share of work and responsibility.

The revitalization of the Conference was discussed during 2012, and a very large number of member States spoke. At the seminar organized by Indonesia with the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research on 15 May this year, there was very wide attendance. My delegation believes that there is significant interest in revitalizing this Conference so that it may get back to the work that has been entrusted to it by the international community: the negotiation of multilateral disarmament instruments.

During the discussion last year on revitalization, many delegations suggested that the best way for the Conference to revitalize itself would be to resume substantive work. My delegation fully agrees. At the same time, my delegation sees value in examining our methods of working to see if they are appropriate to the task we have been set.

A detailed reflection on the ways in which we have chosen to work may show us that there is room for improvement, for conducting our business more efficiently and more effectively. Our working methods should contribute to achieving results and not be, as is sometimes suggested, a reason for the lack of results.

My delegation does not expect that an examination of our working methods will provide a quick fix allowing us immediately to resume substantive work, but we do consider that it is time to start the exercise.

As initial contributions, my delegation would like to suggest that we pursue more active engagement with civil society and with academia. While the burden of negotiating international legal instruments falls upon us, States, the input of expertise from outside of diplomacy can be invaluable. Civil society and academia can provide us with technical expertise and information, and through their outreach activities they can help bring us to a closer understanding of the issues with which we are dealing.

Ireland has long maintained that the membership of this Conference should be open to all States who wish to join. We strongly believe that this would benefit the Conference and strengthen this element of the multilateral disarmament machinery. We consider that the appointment of a special coordinator on the expansion of membership of this body should happen as a matter of urgency.

Ireland remains firmly convinced that the multilateral system delivers results. As our Minister of State for trade and development noted last week in New York at the signature ceremony for the Arms Trade Treaty: “[This] is an important achievement

for the United Nations system and a vindication of our collective way of doing business. Those who doubt the United Nations' capacity to deliver on its core mandate of contributing to global peace and security have been given an answer. The United Nations label confers a unique and unrivalled legitimacy."

At the beginning of this year, the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, Mr. Tokayev, in reaffirming his commitment to the Conference, suggested that the Conference "should pursue avenues that can bring new momentum for meaningful movement". My delegation considers that a structured review of our working methods is one such avenue and one which we should explore.

The President: I thank the representative of Ireland for his statement. The next speaker is the representative of the Netherlands.

Mr. Verstedden (Netherlands): Let me start by aligning myself with the European Union statement delivered earlier.

For the Netherlands, revitalization of the Conference on Disarmament remains an important topic which we should continue to address in order to try to find a way out of the current deadlock in the disarmament machinery. This will not be easy. Last week we discussed in this chamber the prospects of a programme of work for the Conference. This debate underlined once again the difficulties we face regarding the adoption and implementation of such a programme. Much time has passed since the last time the Conference was indeed fulfilling its mandate — that is, negotiating disarmament treaties. Now, 15 years on with no results being produced, we see a Conference that is slowly eroding and losing its credibility.

It is not so much the stagnation in the Conference that we are frustrated about, but the lack of meaningful progress as to a multilateral approach to nuclear disarmament. The maintenance of the Conference should not be our primary objective: making real progress should be. Therefore, in our view it is not the attempts to start discussing disarmament in other forums that are to blame, but it is the status quo in the Conference on Disarmament itself that is responsible. We still believe that the Conference can play a role, but we are open to alternative approaches. In principle we are interested in all possibilities that can really take us forward. The forum in which such negotiations take place is, in our view, of lesser importance.

In the search for ways to get the disarmament machinery going again, we welcome today's opportunity to discuss the issue of revitalization of the Conference. At the 67th meeting of the First Committee, we — together with Switzerland and South Africa — tabled decision 67/519 to keep the revitalization of the Conference and multilateral disarmament negotiations on the agenda of the First Committee for this year.

We are open to discussing the ideas and suggestions put forward by Switzerland on examining and discussing the work methods of the Conference, including its procedures and operational principles that put heavy constraints on this body. We look favourably on ideas and suggestions that can help us to reach consensus in this forum more easily in order to be able to start substantive work as soon as possible.

We should discuss the way in which we approach the programme of work in the Conference. The Netherlands takes a pragmatic view. For us, agreement on a programme of work is not a goal in itself, but a means to start meaningful substantive work. A programme of work is a mere tool, an enabling instrument at best. The goal is to get to work in the Conference on the issue of nuclear disarmament. That means that we should start negotiations on meaningful instruments that will further that cause.

In this regard, I fully subscribe to the remark made last week by the Ambassador of Indonesia to the effect that the responsibility for securing the adoption and

implementation of a programme of work should not lie solely with the Conference presidency, but it should be a shared responsibility of all members of the Conference. It is only when we work together that we can make real progress towards the adoption and subsequent implementation of a programme of work.

We should also discuss our rules of procedure regarding the programme of work. If we reach consensus on a programme of work, our rules of procedure currently stipulate that such a programme would be valid for only one year. This means we would have to go through the same painful exercise again every year, with the risk that we might not agree again. We should therefore look into the possibility of lengthening the validity of the programme of work.

Another issue we could discuss is whether our work in the Conference might be helped by lengthening the duration of the presidency, as suggested by both Indonesia and Switzerland. I see advantages in a longer presidency in terms of preserving knowledge and having more time to negotiate a programme of work, but also disadvantages, for example when it comes to the burden that a longer presidency would impose on smaller delegations. Another idea we might discuss regarding the presidency is whether the Conference would benefit from an elected President.

An issue that also merits discussion is that of wider participation and enhanced engagement with civil society in the Conference. Can civil society play an active role within the Conference, as it does in the Open-Ended Working Group, for example?

The Netherlands looks forward to continued debate on the important topic of revitalization both in the Conference and in the General Assembly. We hope that this debate will take place in a transparent and inclusive manner and in an outcome-oriented spirit. We also hope that such debate will eventually remove the hurdles that now stand in the way of the start of real negotiations.

The President: I thank the representative of the Netherlands for his statement. The next speaker is the Ambassador of Bulgaria.

Mr. Piperkov (Bulgaria): As an addition to the statement delivered by the European Union, with which my delegation fully associates itself, I would like to outline several key issues deemed important by Bulgaria on how we can make the Conference on Disarmament a functional forum for negotiations again.

Despite the long-lasting stalemate in the Conference, Bulgaria remains firmly committed to the objectives of multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation. We continue to trust in multilateralism as the sole reliable mechanism for achieving long-term solutions to every State's security concerns. The last time that the Conference produced a substantive outcome was more than 15 years ago. The last time that the Conference membership discussed and adopted the Conference's rules of procedure was more than 20 years ago. A number of new security challenges have irreversibly changed the global security agenda since then.

The Conference and its rules of procedure have not changed. Is the Conference as created in 1979 still capable of debate and inspiring the necessary amount of trust to make delegations sit down together and negotiate? Are the Conference's rules of procedure and its membership still relevant to twenty-first-century realities and challenges? Judging by the outcomes of the Conference's work over the past 15 years, this might not be the case.

Mr. President, you have asked us to share our views on the issue of revitalization. According to the dictionary, the term "revitalization" means to make something that is fading or weak become strong and successful again. Does that mean that we consider this programme has failed completely? Bulgaria continues to attach great importance to the work of this body as the sole disarmament negotiating forum

of its kind. For that reason, we would prefer to discuss how we can make the Conference operational in accordance with its mandate, rather than discuss its revitalization.

One should perhaps reconsider the mechanisms that the Conference offers to its member States to effectively deal with disarmament and non-proliferation issues. The basis of those mechanisms are the rules of procedure; the driving force is the political will. Both should work in parallel and in the same direction. The global challenges and national concerns that lie ahead in our modern world require each and every State to be active but also to work together with everyone else. This implies making concessions and compromises. Concessions and compromises require political will. No substantial change has been made to the rules of procedure virtually since the first special session of the United Nations General Assembly on disarmament. The last time the Conference's rules of procedure were discussed and slightly updated was in the late 1980s, resulting in the decision contained in document CD/1036 in 1990. In this context, it is surprising that some Conference member States consider the existing rules of procedure to be fully fit for twenty-first-century realities and do not see them as part of the existing stalemate.

Bulgaria shares the view that we should focus attention on the Conference's internal procedures. For example, we might consider modifying the current practice of how the President of the Conference is selected. In our experience, as confirmed by many statements over the years, a one-month presidency does not give sufficient time for substantial work or for deepening study into problems and their possible solutions. We would like to echo the proposals of the Secretary-General of the Conference to consider options such as Conference presidencies for a longer duration and rotating presidencies among regional groups.

My delegation highly values the efforts of all the Conference's Presidents over the past 15 years and their commitment to hold broad rounds of consultations with members in an effort to identify middle ground and adopt a programme of work. Nevertheless, we think that the member States should be more directly involved in elaborating their programme of work. Why not try to change the current practice of drafting the Conference's programme of work outside this chamber? The responsibility for agreeing on a programme of work lies with the member States and should not be transferred to the President. The President's role is to facilitate the process but certainly not to bear all the responsibility for drafting the programme of work. Why do we negotiate annual reports in plenary but not elaborate a programme of work using the same procedure?

The political will of our predecessors when they founded the Conference was not to create a closed club. Expanding the membership was envisaged when creating this forum. It has happened several times and it must continue. The Conference should be relevant to twenty-first-century realities, and it should prove its legitimacy also through its membership. One can always ask whether it is fair to leave Member States of the United Nations outside the Conference when some of them probably have a better record in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation than do some Conference member States. Can we consider this legitimate? We think that the rules of procedure should be amended in a way that would allow the expansion of Conference membership following a more flexible procedure. The time for combining political will with an internal review of Conference procedures has come. Let us go beyond golden legacies and prove that multilateralism is still relevant.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Bulgaria for his statement. The next speaker is the Ambassador of Zimbabwe, who will deliver a second statement on behalf of the Group of 21.

Mr. Manzou (Zimbabwe): I have the honour to deliver this statement focusing on nuclear disarmament on behalf of the Group of 21.

The Group of 21 once again reiterates that the Conference on Disarmament is the sole multilateral negotiating body on disarmament, and in that context the Group stresses that for it the highest priority on the Conference agenda is nuclear disarmament.

The Group reiterates its deep concern at the danger posed to the survival of humankind by the continued existence of nuclear weapons and their possible use or threat of use. As long as nuclear weapons exist, the risk of their use and proliferation will remain.

The Group reiterates its position as conveyed in its previous statements to the Conference, and recalls the Final Document of the Tenth Special Session of the General Assembly (the first special session on disarmament), the 2012 Tehran Summit Declaration and the final document of the Non-Aligned Movement. We recall that, in this regard, the very first resolution of the United Nations General Assembly, resolution No. 1 of 1946, adopted unanimously, called for the elimination of nuclear weapons from national arsenals.

Furthermore, the International Court of Justice, in its advisory opinion of 1996, concluded that there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control.

The Millennium Declaration of the year 2000 also reaffirmed the commitment of Member States of the United Nations to strive for the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons.

The Group, while noting the steps taken by nuclear-weapon States for the reduction of their arsenals, reiterates its deep concern over the slow pace of progress towards nuclear disarmament and the lack of progress by the nuclear-weapon States towards accomplishing the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals. The Group stresses the importance of the effective implementation of concrete measures leading to a nuclear-weapon-free world. This requires renewed political will by the international community towards accelerated progress on nuclear disarmament. We hope that all States will seize all opportunities towards this end, including the upcoming high-level meeting on nuclear disarmament to be convened in September this year.

The Group, stressing its strong commitment to nuclear disarmament, underscores the urgent need to commence negotiations on this issue in the Conference on Disarmament without delay. In this context, the Group reaffirms its full readiness to start negotiations on a phased programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, including a nuclear weapons convention prohibiting the development, production, stockpiling and use of nuclear weapons and on their destruction, leading to the global, non-discriminatory and verifiable elimination of nuclear weapons with a specified framework of time.

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

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

The Group of 21 emphasizes that progress in nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation, in all its aspects, is essential to strengthening international peace and security. The Group reaffirms that efforts towards nuclear disarmament, global

and regional approaches and confidence-building measures complement each other and should, wherever possible, be pursued simultaneously to promote regional and international peace and security.

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

The Group expresses its concern about strategic defence doctrines of nuclear-weapon States and a group of States which set out rationales for the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, and in this regard there is therefore a genuine and urgent need to eliminate the role of nuclear weapons in strategic doctrines and security policies to minimize the risk that these weapons will ever be used again and to facilitate the process of their elimination. In this regard, the Group recalls its strong support of the objectives of United Nations General Assembly resolution 67/45 of 3 December 2012, entitled “Reducing nuclear danger”, as well as United Nations General Assembly resolution 67/46 of 3 December 2012, entitled “Decreasing the operational readiness of nuclear weapons systems”.

The Group of 21 stresses the significance of achieving universal adherence to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, including by all nuclear-weapon States, which, *inter alia*, should contribute to the process of nuclear disarmament. The Group reiterates that, if the objectives of the Treaty were to be fully realized, the continued commitment of all States, especially the nuclear-weapon States, to nuclear disarmament would be essential.

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

The Group of 21 States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) recalls the deliberations of the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2015 NPT Review Conference that took place between 22 April and 3 May 2013 in Geneva. The Group of 21 States parties to the Treaty call for the full implementation of the recommendations for follow-on actions adopted at the 2010 NPT Review Conference on all three pillars of the Treaty, including those related to the work of the Conference on Disarmament, as well as the Middle East, particularly the implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East. The Group of 21 States parties to the Treaty re-emphasizes the importance of the commitment of nuclear-weapon States to accelerate concrete progress on the steps leading to nuclear disarmament contained in the final document of the 2000 Review Conference and take note of the fact that nuclear-weapon States agreed to report on their undertakings related to nuclear disarmament to the 2014 session of the Preparatory Committee, and that the 2015 Review Conference would take stock and consider next steps for the full implementation of article VI of the Treaty.

The Group of 21 States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons expresses its serious concern over the long delay in the implementation of the 1995 resolution and urges the three co-sponsors of the resolution to take all necessary measures to fully implement it without any further delay. The Group of 21 States parties to the Treaty recalls the consensus decision contained in the final

document of the 2010 NPT Review Conference concerning the convening in 2012 of a conference on the establishment in the Middle East of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction, and expresses profound disappointment at the failure to convene the conference in 2012 as scheduled. They are of the view that the failure to convene the conference in 2012 is contrary to the letter and spirit of the collective agreement contained in the final document of the 2010 NPT Review Conference aimed at the full implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East. They strongly reject the alleged impediments cited by the conveners for not convening the conference on schedule and express their serious concern that the conference has not been convened yet. They urge the United Nations Secretary-General and the United States, the United Kingdom and the Russian Federation to convene the conference without further delay in order to avoid any negative repercussions for the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. The Group of 21 States parties to the Treaty also recalls in this context the reaffirmation at the NPT 2010 Review Conference of the urgency and the importance of accession by Israel to the Treaty and the placement of all its nuclear facilities under comprehensive safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

The Group reiterates its readiness to make constructive contributions to the work of the Conference, and in this regard wishes to recall the contents of documents CD/36/Rev.1, CD/116, CD/341, CD/819, CD/1388, CD/1462, CD/1570, CD/1571, CD/1923 and CD/1938, presented by the Group of 21 towards this end.

In view of the Group's strong commitment to nuclear disarmament and a world free of nuclear weapons, the Group of 21 reiterates the following concrete steps:

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

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Zimbabwe for his statement on behalf of the Group of 21. The next speaker on the list is the Ambassador of the United Kingdom.

Ms. Adamson (United Kingdom): The United Kingdom associates itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union.

Mr. President, revitalization of the United Nations disarmament machinery is our topic today, but I hope that you and colleagues will allow me to blend in some personal reflections as I complete four years in Geneva. I have been privileged to experience tremendous achievements in multilateral work — notably the Action Plan from the NPT Review Conference in 2010, and then the historic Arms Trade Treaty earlier this year. I was there at the beginning of the new consultation process among the five nuclear-weapon States in 2009, a process which I believe has the potential to

take us steadily along the path to “nuclear zero”. But I have also shared the frustrations of many, as the Conference on Disarmament has prevented the entire NPT membership from fulfilling all aspects of our 2010 Action Plan.

After many years of stalemate, it is tempting to give up hope and to seek new and seemingly easier paths to disarmament, paths which have the feel-good factor that comes from the company of the like-minded and control of the agenda. I understand and respect those who day in and day out show tremendous drive and energy in pursuit of nuclear disarmament. But my simple question is whether efforts outside the Conference on Disarmament, without the participation of those possessing nuclear weapons, will result in the practical dismantlement of nuclear weapons which we all seek. My predecessor, a wise man, used to tell me that “you cannot just legislate for security”. Saying that something is to be banned does not remove it from arsenals in one stroke.

Yet this difference of opinion does not mean that we cannot find common ground here in the Conference. We can at least do some of the homework which will be needed to assemble the building blocks which will underpin real and complete nuclear disarmament. We may disagree on the sequencing for some steps, such as on a nuclear weapons convention, but no one disputes that such a convention will be needed as a final step. If we are to do meaningful work here in the Conference in Geneva, then we must give ourselves permission to work differently.

Any meaningful discussion of revitalization should look at the links between different elements of the United Nations disarmament machinery. There were meant to be organic links between the United Nations Disarmament Commission, the First Committee and the Conference on Disarmament. Simply put, the Commission discusses, the First Committee mandates and the Conference negotiates. As I said in a statement last year, those links have been broken in recent years. But there is nothing to stop us beginning each Conference year with a review of the numerous resolutions which we have passed, debating, quickly, the reasons why we can or cannot begin to negotiate on the issue. I believe that such a process helped to produce document CD/1864 back in 2009. That document identified the one core issue on which we were all prepared to begin negotiations at the Conference. To those who seek to undermine the Conference’s recent history or to devalue document CD/1864, I say that everyone is entitled to their own opinion but not to their own facts. The fact is that document CD/1864 was adopted by consensus. It was adopted in this chamber. Subsequent events outside of the Conference made document CD/1864 less palatable for one member, but perhaps the best place to resolve those issues is also outside of the Conference.

Coming back to the present, my delegation believes that the *raison d’être* of the Conference is to negotiate. Not to discuss four or seven core issues *ad infinitum*, but to pick one which can enjoy consensus, as we did in document CD/1864, and to get started. The Arms Trade Treaty is testament to what can be achieved when we choose the protection of negotiations by consensus. Negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT) in the Conference would offer the same strategic protection. In the end, we had to take the Arms Trade Treaty back to the General Assembly of the United Nations, but let us not forget that the hard work and the late nights when we worked on the text were done under a consensus mandate. That mandate gave many exporter States the protection they needed to be part of the United Nations process. I know that that is an inconvenient truth, but it is the truth. So I do not accept the argument that consensus need always be a recipe for stagnation.

How we interact in the Conference is an area which deserves as much attention as the consensus rule, and I welcome the inputs we have had today from, among other delegations, Switzerland. It is unnecessary to continue with formulaic statements week

after week, rehearsing old positions. Perhaps that is what I am doing now. But I would happily debate with every one of you and with civil society in a more interactive manner. All we need is the permission to do so, with perhaps a volunteer to lead the session. As President John F. Kennedy said 50 years ago yesterday, if we cannot overcome our differences, let us at least make the world safe for diversity.

Everyone is entitled to make the case for a particular core issue. I would like here and now to reiterate the case for focusing on an FMCT. It is one of the building blocks that will underpin global zero. The five NPT nuclear-weapon States have repeatedly made clear that we are all ready to proceed to negotiation. None of the other core issues enjoys that complete support from all of the five. If we need to wait a little longer to start work on the FMCT in the Conference, then at least Canada has set in train a process which can do the groundwork. Many member States submitted their views on an FMCT to the United Nations in New York in the middle of last month. The United Nations is now compiling a report of all contributions and will be placing full copies of all submissions on its website. The submissions are aimed at setting the parameters for discussion in the Group of Governmental Experts. Many States included views on what an FMCT could look like. The response at the United Nations shows that the call for an FMCT has gone beyond rhetoric and theory.

Soon I will be back at university trying to make sense of it all. I have much to learn, but I have also learned a lot from being in this post. In the Arms Trade Treaty, I have learned that a good idea can spread like wildfire but that being popular is not enough. You must persuade people that the idea is practical, that it will not cut across their own interests, or at least that the benefits to them outweigh the risks.

Other things I have learned are that the disarmament community in Geneva is long-suffering and kind; they will point out nicely when you have misquoted the British position. That we have a very talented group from civil society who are good at putting together little videos to highlight the absurdity of multilateral life. That media work is not glamorous but involves being locked in a small cupboard staring into bright lights seeking enlightenment from afar. A bit like the Conference on Disarmament, I suppose.

Now let me end on a serious note. I have not given up on the Conference on Disarmament, because I think it is possible to find a way between an out-and-out ban on nuclear weapons, as some are seeking, and the stalemate we currently face. Step-by-step is not a dirty word, it is what took the United Kingdom from over 400 warheads in 1978 to fewer than 160 now; that is a reduction of 65 per cent. It is not enough, of course, but we are definitely moving in the right direction. Perhaps one small step for the Conference as we wait desperately to begin negotiations could be for us to identify together each of the steps or conditions that will be needed to underpin nuclear disarmament. We will probably disagree on the sequencing, but we could at least begin to rebuild some of the trust which has eroded inside the Conference and the international community. If you like the idea, but we cannot do it here, drop me a line at Harvard: I might even write a paper about it.

A huge "thank you" to you all: my colleagues, my friends, my sparring partners. I will miss you.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of the United Kingdom for her statement. The next speaker on the list is the representative of Ecuador.

Mr. Avilés (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, as this is the first time my delegation has taken the floor under your presidency, allow me to convey our congratulations on your assumption of this office. My delegation has faith in your great ability and experience to guide the work of the Conference on Disarmament and is certain that you will continue with the efforts and consultations needed to bring an

end to the Conference's stalemate and get it back to substantive work. We wish you every success in that endeavour and assure you of our support and cooperation on this difficult road to total and complete nuclear disarmament, which will guarantee a more peaceful coexistence and the survival of all humanity.

Ecuador also appreciates and recognizes the efforts, consultations and commitment of the Conference Presidents who preceded you — the Ambassadors of Hungary, India and Indonesia — towards making progress on the issues on the agenda.

The delegation of Ecuador fully aligns itself with the statements made by the Ambassador of Zimbabwe on behalf of the Group of 21.

As a country that loves and defends peace and promotes disarmament, Ecuador believes that we should spare no effort nor falter in the pursuit of diplomatic channels that might lead to greater dialogue and understanding between Governments and countries in order to strengthen their friendship and the mutual trust on which a more just, peaceful and safe world, free of nuclear weapons, could be built.

Since 1998, 15 years have passed during which the Conference on Disarmament has been in a deadlock and unable to adopt a programme of work acceptable to all. Greater flexibility and political will from some member States, primarily nuclear-weapon States, are required to break that impasse, which in no way serves the purposes of peace and the survival of our peoples. Ecuador is confident that an approach built on greater vision and pragmatism will bring this paralysis to an end, and we will be able to advance within the Conference on disarmament negotiations, which are important for world peace and security.

We cannot attribute the lack of progress or results to the Conference's rules of procedure. We must work on creating conditions that are conducive to greater transparency, flexibility, mutual trust and political will. The stalemate in the Conference is becoming increasingly untenable and unjustifiable. The time has come to begin substantive work and adopt a programme of work that is acceptable to all in order to ensure international peace and security. In doing so, we will strengthen the Conference as the sole multilateral negotiating forum on nuclear disarmament.

Ecuador noted with concern the three resolutions relating to the work of the Conference on Disarmament that were adopted by the United Nations General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session. We share the concern of the General Assembly over the paralysis in the Conference and call on all member States to show the flexibility and political will needed to clear the way, overcome obstacles and bridge differences, in order to advance the goal of adopting a programme of work that is balanced and acceptable to all.

We do not believe that issues which are fundamental to the entire international community, such as peace and universal disarmament, should be addressed through restrictive and limited forums. The contribution of the Conference to international peace and security has been key, as it has negotiated international treaties in this area, and we must strengthen the Conference as the sole multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament. We therefore support expanding the membership of the Conference and the participation of civil society.

We consider multilateralism a basic principle of nuclear disarmament and of non-proliferation negotiations aimed at strengthening international norms and broadening their scope. We are convinced that multilateralism and measures that have been agreed multilaterally, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, are the only sustainable means of addressing the issues of disarmament and international security: they strengthen the international security system itself as well as the foundations of the United Nations.

For Ecuador, which is part of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, progress on nuclear disarmament is a top priority, in accordance with article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the agreements reached at the 2000 and 2010 Review Conferences. We respect, and will continue to respect, nuclear non-proliferation commitments and encourage compliance with the provisions of article VI on nuclear disarmament, which still have not been implemented more than 40 years after the Treaty's entry into force.

The Constitution of Ecuador establishes universal peace and disarmament as principles of international law and defines the concept of collective well-being (*buen vivir*) and the rights of nature. These internal precepts, coupled with respect for its international obligations arising primarily from the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the Treaty of Tlatelolco, have led Ecuador to pursue a foreign policy that focuses on the promotion and protection of peace and human rights and prohibits and condemns nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. As long as nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction exist, their use remains a serious threat to the survival of humanity; we believe therefore that nuclear disarmament and the total and complete elimination of nuclear weapons are crucial and cannot be delayed.

We call for the adoption of a programme of work that includes the negotiation of legally binding instruments on the substantive issues on the Conference's agenda: nuclear disarmament, negative security assurances, the peaceful use of outer space and the prohibition of fissile material.

With regard to the issue of negative security assurances, Ecuador reaffirms that the only guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons is their total and complete elimination. However, in the meantime, it is ethical, urgent and of the utmost priority to begin negotiating and conclude an international instrument to effectively assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. These negative security assurances should be uniform, unconditional, universal and legally binding.

Ecuador expresses its concern that, despite the adoption of several resolutions by the United Nations General Assembly on the conclusion of an international treaty on the non-use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States and repeated requests by these States for legally binding assurances, no tangible progress has been achieved in this regard to date.

In closing, I would like to recall a few words from the final message of the Ecuadorian presidency of the Conference from a year ago: "If we want the Conference on Disarmament to remain the sole multilateral forum in this field, we must take significant steps, shorten distances and explore alternative options to the four issues on the agenda The Conference cannot be removed from reality, immobile or immutable. There is no need to fear change. But change must come from within, from those who know the shortcomings and stumbling blocks of the old machinery which, to survive, needs significant collective will to carry out its reform".

The President: I thank the representative of Ecuador for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. The next speaker on my list is the representative of Mexico.

Ms. Ramírez Valenzuela (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to begin, Mr. President, by assuring you of my delegation's full support in your functions. We take note that the issue of revitalization of the Conference on Disarmament is being addressed at plenary meetings; as we have stated before, we find it regrettable that this sort of debate is replacing implementation of a programme of work.

The lack of substantive work in this Conference is not due to external factors, such as an international balance of power that, in the view of some, is not conducive to its work. As we have stated on various occasions, Mexico does not subscribe to this point of view. If indeed this were the case, it would be paradoxical to discuss ways to revitalize the Conference. One cannot revitalize something that is alive. It is the same paradox that leads us to today's debate of this topic.

In simple terms, the only way to revitalize the Conference is for it to fulfil its mandate: that is, to adopt and implement its programme of work and negotiate multilateral agreements on disarmament.

International relations are a complex matter, and that is why we have international organizations. Multilateralism is based on the premise that international organizations should foster processes in which States can make sound decisions towards reaching agreement and solving common problems. We believe that such forums can have the merit of helping to create "political will". Sometimes the working methods of such bodies inhibit the decision-making process. In such cases, the bodies either undergo reform or perish.

The Conference's rules of procedure were intended to maintain balances of the past: they make little sense today. The monthly rotation of the presidency, the formation of regional groupings, the process of adopting and implementing the programme of work, the absence of civil society from debates, the consensus rule — these are no longer useful and, indeed, prevent the creation of political will.

As the Conference stands by in a state of lethargy, important negotiations have been undertaken on disarmament outside the Conference, for example in the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, the conventions on anti-personnel landmines and cluster munitions and the recent negotiation of the Arms Trade Treaty, bearing witness to the international community's interest in concluding multilateral agreements on disarmament.

We therefore reiterate the importance of achieving the total elimination of nuclear weapons through multilateral agreements.

The President: I thank the representative of Mexico for her statement. The next speaker on my list is the representative of Syria.

Ms. Issa (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to begin by associating myself with the two statements made by the Ambassador of Zimbabwe on behalf of the Group of 21. The long-lasting stalemate that has adversely affected the Conference calls for a greater degree of flexibility and for an understanding of the anxieties and concerns that all States feel about their security and national interests. We do not share the view that the stalemate besetting the Conference is attributable to its rules of procedure. The root cause is the lack of political will on the part of some States to tackle the issue of nuclear disarmament seriously. The rules of procedure have not prevented the Conference from recording important achievements in the past. The precept of consensus ensures that the national security of all States is protected on an equal footing, and it confers universality and effectiveness on any treaties concluded in that regard. We therefore underscore the need to respect the rules of procedure of the Conference in any action aimed at revitalizing its role. Moreover, any follow-up to the discussions concerning the revitalization of its role must be comprehensive, involve its member States and promote the role and work of the Conference as the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum mandated by the first special session of the United Nations General Assembly devoted to disarmament.

We do not believe that the issue of banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices is the only subject ripe for negotiation, as some States maintain. The fact that some parties persist in focusing selectively on that topic while ignoring the other main issues will not help the Conference to overcome the existing stalemate. We reaffirm that nuclear disarmament remains our absolute priority, given the enormous danger that it represents for humankind and civilization as a whole. We support the early launching of negotiations within the Conference on a phased programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons within a specified time frame, including negotiations on a convention prohibiting the possession, development, production, stockpiling, transfer and use of nuclear weapons. We do not believe that there is anything to prevent the four core issues on the agenda of the Conference from being addressed in an even-handed and balanced manner by adopting a comprehensive and balanced programme of work that takes into account the security concerns of all member States. We believe that the adoption of such a programme would constitute a means of revitalizing the role of the Conference.

The President: I thank the representative of Syria for her statement. The next speaker on the list is the representative of Pakistan.

Mr. Khan (Pakistan): Mr. President, we wish to thank you for arranging the discussions today on revitalization of the Conference on Disarmament. We have carefully listened to the statements and, with respect to certain points raised, would like to state our position.

The challenges confronting us in the field of disarmament pertain not just to the Conference on Disarmament but cover the entire disarmament machinery created at the first special session of the United Nations General Assembly devoted to disarmament, including the United Nations Disarmament Commission.

The overarching reason for the creation of the Conference at that special session was to negotiate nuclear disarmament. Seen in this light, it is unfortunate that no progress has been made towards nuclear disarmament for the last 32 years. The Group of 21, which is the largest group in the Conference, has also clearly stated that nuclear disarmament is a top priority in the Conference.

The Secretary-General of the United Nations in his seminal speech in October 2008 gave the highest priority to nuclear disarmament, and as a first step suggested that nuclear-weapon States fulfil their commitments given towards nuclear disarmament.

In order to assess the impasse in the Conference, it is important to acknowledge the following basic facts. The Conference's work is a reflection of the prevailing political realities since it does not operate in a vacuum. No treaty can be negotiated in the Conference which is contrary to the security interests of any member State. The lack of progress in the Conference cannot be attributed to its rules of procedure. The same rules of procedure made possible the successful negotiation of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. The lack of consensus exists, not only on one of the four core issues but on all four core issues, so there is no "consensus minus one".

From the perspective of Pakistan, the discriminatory policies relating to nuclear cooperation were creating insecurity and imbalance, and Pakistan was compelled to take a stand against nuclear exceptionalism.

An honest and objective approach to revitalizing the work of the Conference should take into account the following steps. All issues need to be treated in an equal and balanced manner. Lack of progress on one issue should not lead to an impasse, as

other issues should be taken up for consideration. Nuclear disarmament remains the longest-outstanding issue, and it needs to be taken up on a priority basis. We are convinced that a treaty on negative security assurances is imminently ripe for negotiation, because such a treaty would not undermine the security interests of any State and would promote our common security in a substantive way. The Conference should take into account the legitimate security interest of all States. Policies based on double standards, selectivity and discrimination should come to an end. We should convene a fourth special session to develop a comprehensive programme to revitalize the international disarmament machinery.

The agenda of the Conference consists of many issues, among which there are the so-called four core issues. There is no argument as to which particular issue is ripe or not ripe for negotiation. In the view of the largest group of States in the Conference, that is to say the Group of 21, nuclear disarmament is ripe for negotiation. If there is no progress on nuclear disarmament, then negotiations on negative security assurances and/or the prevention of an arms race in outer space can be taken up. The Conference's inability to undertake negotiations on any of these core issues is of course attributable to opposition from some members.

The President: I thank the representative of Pakistan for his statement. The next speaker on the list is the representative of Indonesia.

Mr. Wibowo (Indonesia): Mr. President, allow me to begin by saying that Indonesia shares your perception of the importance of bringing the issue of the revitalization of the Conference on Disarmament, including the involvement of civil society, into our discussions today. My delegation also associates itself with the statement made by the Ambassador of Zimbabwe on behalf of the Group of 21.

The issue of the revitalization of the Conference has become the focus of attention for many of us. On 24 September 2010, the United Nations Secretary-General convened a high-level meeting on the revitalization of the work of the Conference and taking forward multilateral disarmament negotiations.

A follow-up meeting to that high-level meeting was convened on 27 July 2011 by the United Nations General Assembly. On 14 February 2012, the Conference's Secretary-General delivered a message from the United Nations Secretary-General, emphasizing that serious decisions have to be taken with regard to the future of the Conference. Last year Ambassador Getahun of Ethiopia, as the President of the Conference, added the issue of revitalization of the Conference to the schedule of activities.

In 2011, Colombia circulated during its presidency a questionnaire among member States about how to revitalize the work of the Conference. Colombia also proposed the establishment of a working group on revitalization of the Conference to identify steps towards strengthening the Conference.

Revitalizing the Conference has been associated with concern relating to the rules of procedure, expansion of the Conference's membership, the attitude of the General Assembly of the United Nations towards the Conference, access to other forums outside the Conference and the participation of civil society in the Conference.

On the one hand, we continue to hear voices of frustration and despair at the inability of the Conference to resume its substantive work after 16 years of stalemate. On the other hand, there are also voices calling to preserve the Conference's existence as the only standing multilateral forum mandated to negotiate instruments in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation.

In the light of the challenges that seem to be impeding the Conference from making progress, we cannot deny that initiatives have been taken by members to allow

debate on disarmament and arms-control-related issues outside the Conference. The United Nations General Assembly last year adopted a resolution on the setting up of an open-ended working group on taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations and a group of governmental experts to discuss a fissile material cut-off treaty. We believe that such initiatives may not be the last, and possibly others will flourish if the Conference fails to demonstrate substantive progress in its work — for example, Switzerland's proposal of 24 May 2013. Nevertheless, the Conference still holds appeal: there is continuous interest from a number of States in becoming members of the Conference. Some members even support the appointment of a special coordinator on the expansion of the membership. This reflects the fact that the existence of the Conference is still relevant and recognized. To chart a way out of the existing impasse, special and continued efforts must be made to revitalize the Conference and strengthen its mechanisms.

One of the prominent issues relating to revitalizing the Conference is the participation of civil society. At the beginning of this year's session, the message from the United Nations Secretary-General clearly expressed strong encouragement to engage more closely with civil society, where there is strong support for nuclear disarmament.

The Conference on Disarmament is the only United Nations institution in which non-governmental organizations are not allowed to participate, while others, including the Human Rights Council, have effectively embraced civil society. In other disarmament-related forums, civil society organizations have made substantive contributions to discussion of the issues. Indeed, their presence in the meetings is regulated in the respective forums' rules of procedure. The humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons is a global concern gravely affecting socioeconomic development and the well-being of future generations. Let us be more open-minded and pragmatic so that we can tolerate a more inclusive process in the conduct of the Conference's activities, including by expanding the membership of the Conference and opening up possibilities for participation of civil society in the Conference.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Indonesia for his statement. The next speaker on the list is the representative of Turkey.

Ms. Kasnakli (Turkey): The views of Turkey with regard to the revitalization of the Conference on Disarmament have been expressed repeatedly in our previous statements. Needless to say, we hope to see tangible progress made in the Conference.

We have noted various views expressed today. As we have stated on earlier occasions, Turkey wishes to see an immediate resumption of substantive work in the Conference, with its present membership. We see an urgent need to come up with a consensual programme of work. That would pave the way towards the commencement of negotiations. It is our conviction that only then will the Conference be revitalized.

At this critical stage, where the challenge at hand is considerable, we should not lose any more time. We believe that our collective efforts should be geared towards maintaining the relevance of the Conference by having it fulfil its fundamental task.

Nevertheless, reaching the intended destination safely becomes all the more burdensome and difficult if one begins the journey from the wrong starting point and then continues along that path.

We would like to emphasize again that the problem faced by the Conference is not created by its procedures, membership or internal dynamics. We believe the consensus rule is important to protect the national interests of all members.

We must acknowledge that a certain malaise permeates the disarmament forums and machinery, at both the international and regional levels. The stalemate in the

Conference is a reflection of strategic bottlenecks at different but interrelated levels. We need to see the larger picture and not assess the work of the Conference in abstraction from the rest of disarmament efforts.

Certainly, the resumption of substantive work in the Conference with the consent of its members will contribute to the improvement of international efforts for nuclear disarmament. To this end, we should strive within the Conference to generate more mutual understanding and confidence, while not ignoring developments outside the Conference.

Finally, we would like to state that at this stage there is no consensus — regarding the enlargement of the Conference — on appointing a special coordinator on the expansion of the Conference's membership. We should not dilute our focus on the main substantive issues by introducing into our deliberations additional points of contention.

The President: I thank the representative of Turkey for her statement. The next speaker on the list is the Ambassador of Germany.

Mr. Hoffmann (Germany): I do not have a prepared statement. In fact, I did not intend to take the floor today. But maybe part of the problem of the Conference on Disarmament is that it is far too formal, with long prepared statements. In the light of what I have heard today, and in the interest of enhancing the interactive debate in this body, I would like to put a question to the representative of the Group of 21 and/or to other Group of 21 delegations.

Before I come to that, I would like to thank the Ambassadors of the Republic of Korea and the United Kingdom for their cooperation and friendship, and I wish them the best for their future. I especially wish Ambassador Adamson all the best in her effort, as she said, to make sense of it all when she goes to Harvard, and I would ask her to copy me in when, or rather if, she has found the sense of it all. It is going to be a difficult task, I think. I would like to thank her in particular also for her engagement in the Arms Trade Treaty. She was one of my favourite sparring parties on this issue, starting in 2009, and I congratulate her and the United Kingdom for the fact that the Treaty was in the end adopted by the General Assembly.

Let me now come to my question, which I would like to put to the representative of Zimbabwe speaking for the Group of 21.

I hope I have not missed anything among the many familiar points he has made about what needs to be done in the field of nuclear disarmament and the steps and so on. He said that, among other things, they call for the implementation of the NPT Action Plan of 2010. I missed one project which is particularly dear to us, and that is the project to ban the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons purposes. Of course, everyone is entitled to an opinion and to change that opinion, but I am genuinely puzzled about this, I must say, because we have two major documents which keep us busy. They are the famous document CD/1864, which was a programme of work actually adopted in this chamber in 2009, under the presidency of Algeria — a well-known member of the Group of 21 — and another programme of work which was tabled for adoption (but not adopted) by Egypt, which is also a noted member of the Group of 21.

One of these documents was not implemented, and the other was not adopted, as we know, because there was an objection raised to it. I think the gist of both these documents was that we would set for ourselves, as the operational task of this body, to work on or to negotiate a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons purposes. That is the gist of both documents, and I would encourage everyone in this room to read these documents again. This is the gist of the matter. We

would have discussions on all the other important issues, and I would be the last one to dispute these are important issues, but this was the gist of the matter. For some reason that escapes me, this somehow seems to have done the famous disappearing act in the Group of 21 statements now. Maybe I missed something, in which case please do correct me, but there is a long list of things which we have also meddled in which need to be done now, according to the Group of 21: the nuclear weapons convention and all the rest of it. This is in striking contrast, at least in my understanding, to what this body adopted in 2009, which was not implemented, or nearly adopted not so long ago under the Egyptian presidency — the first, again, was under the Algerian presidency: both Group of 21 members. This does not show up in the statements. I think the exception I heard was in the Syrian statement, where the point was made that fissile material is not the only item which is ripe. Yes, but just to make that point again, there are two documents on the table which actually gave us this task. In passing, I would like to make a general point here. I have never understood why the members of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty should have a problem with banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons purposes and working on a treaty to that effect. I have never understood it and I still do not understand it. We may have different views about what is more ripe or less ripe and so on, but I think the fact that it is ripe should be clear to any member of the Treaty.

So my question is whether I should infer from the statements which I have heard from the Group of 21 that they are basically backtracking on this point about negotiating a ban on the production of fissile material. Would they like to just go back to this issue of a nuclear weapons convention? I think it would be in the interest of everybody to know where we are. Otherwise, we will never agree on any programme of work if there is no basic understanding, let us say, about the fundamental approach we want to take with regard to this matter.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Germany for his statement. The next speaker on my list is Portugal and I invite him to speak under rule 34 of the rules of procedure.

Mr. Miranda Duarte (Portugal): Let me start by recognizing and wishing all the best to my good friend Ambassador Adamson of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. If there is anyone able to make sense of all of this, if I may say so, it is certainly Jo Adamson; she is the person, I am sure.

I did not plan to take the floor today, as the main views of this delegation were covered by the European Union and the other statements delivered earlier on. But in view of the Swiss intervention, and the set of proposals put forward by the Swiss Ambassador, we believe that it is worthwhile to launch an appeal to the membership to consider these proposals. Many of them are based on good common sense, I would say. We should consider these proposals in future discussions on this topic, as we believe they are relevant for the future of this Conference.

The President: I thank the representative of Portugal. The next speaker on the list is the representative of Cuba.

Mr. Romero Puentes (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Before I read out my statement, Mr. President, I would like first to respond very briefly to the comments and questions put forward by the Ambassador of Germany. It is obviously not up to Cuba to answer those questions, as we have not been mandated by the Group to do so, but we would like to make it very clear that the Group of 21 takes its statements very seriously. It takes them so seriously that it has delivered its first statement of the year at this plenary meeting — in other words, approximately six months after the beginning of the Conference's session this year. The Group has taken its statement very seriously, and what the Ambassador of Zimbabwe read on behalf of the Group is

what the Group believed should be said. Does this imply backtracking? In principle, we do not believe that this is a step forwards or backwards. The Group of 21 — and we can go through all the working papers that the Group has submitted — has always made nuclear disarmament a priority. The priority of the Group of 21 has never changed. Nuclear disarmament has been its top priority, even though the Group has shown flexibility when engaging in work and addressing the various programmes of work. We hope that other regional groups will also show flexibility and understand that nuclear disarmament is the Group's top priority. I will not elaborate any further, as I do not have the Group's authorization to do so. I will now deliver my statement.

Mr. President, Cuba reaffirms the importance of promoting multilateralism as a basic principle of disarmament negotiations. Solutions that have been agreed multilaterally, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, are the only sustainable means of addressing disarmament and international security issues. Within the disarmament machinery, the Conference plays an essential role in the negotiation of universally acceptable disarmament treaties; if the Conference did not exist, it would have to be established immediately.

We find it regrettable that the Conference has been unable to carry out substantive work for more than a decade. Some insist that this is due to its working methods and rules of procedure. Cuba does not share this view. It is no coincidence that for the twelfth year in a row the United Nations Disarmament Commission has once again concluded its work this year without agreeing on any substantive recommendations. Furthermore, every year the First Committee of the General Assembly continues to adopt dozens of resolutions that are simply not implemented, particularly those relating to nuclear disarmament.

Cuba supports the idea of improving the United Nations disarmament machinery, including this Conference, but we are convinced that the paralysis currently affecting a large part of the disarmament machinery is due primarily to a lack of political will among some States to achieve real progress, particularly in the field of nuclear disarmament. The Conference should adopt a broad and balanced programme of work that takes into account real priorities in the field of disarmament as soon as possible.

Cuba is prepared to negotiate in parallel at the Conference a treaty which eliminates and prohibits nuclear weapons, a treaty prohibiting the arms race in outer space, a treaty providing effective security assurances for States which, like Cuba, do not possess nuclear weapons, and a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

We believe that the Conference has the capacity to embark on such negotiations with one voice. The procedural changes that have been mentioned would be cosmetic and would not address all the security interests of the States parties. In the past, under the same rules of procedure, important international instruments were successfully negotiated and adopted, which supports our conclusion that the change of circumstances is behind the real lack of political will among the great Powers, especially nuclear Powers, which do not want the disarmament machinery, which obviously includes the Conference on Disarmament, to move forward.

The status quo is very comfortable for some, who hold others responsible for the stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament and who, while stating their intention to negotiate, hold on to their nuclear arsenals. That is the truth. Let us not fool ourselves.

The President: I thank the representative of Cuba for his statement. The next speaker on the list is the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Daryaei (Islamic Republic of Iran): Allow me to begin by associating myself with the statement of the Group of 21 delivered by the Ambassador of

Zimbabwe. We fully support the elements mentioned in both statements: the general statement and the statement focused on disarmament.

The Conference on Disarmament, like every other international body, needs regular evaluation and assessment. The first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament put disarmament machinery into place. There is a need to address challenges to its effectiveness. The best way for addressing these challenges is the convening of another special session and the overhauling of the whole machinery. Therefore we support the early convening of a fourth special session.

The Conference is an illustrious body in the field of multilateral disarmament diplomacy and it has a long record of achievement in the area of legally binding instruments that comprise both the cornerstone and the bulk of the international non-proliferation regime.

While the Conference's *raison d'être* is nuclear disarmament, it is an unfortunate fact that the contribution of this body to nuclear disarmament has been meagre and in no way meets the expectations of the international community. This problem does not originate from the institution itself: it is rooted in members' lack of political will to move towards nuclear disarmament. The Conference remains the sole multilateral negotiating body on disarmament, and I do not see any alternative body that has the potential to replace this body. The specific composition, wide agenda and special rules of procedure give the Conference a unique position. We support the strengthening of its credibility and its functioning. I believe that promoting the work of the Conference cannot be achieved by changing the format or the modality of the rules of procedure. Neither can it be achieved by changing our interpretation of these rules. It is worth remembering that not only all existing multilateral treaties were negotiated in the Conference under the same rules of procedure, including the rule of consensus, but also that the sensitive nature of issues related to the security of nations and disarmament obligate us to adopt similar rules in the negotiation of multilateral disarmament treaties in other forums.

As we have said in many meetings of the Conference, the crux of the problem of its inactivity over the past decade is the lack of political will to eliminate the common threat posed to the international community by nuclear weapons as well as inertia in moving from self-centred attitudes towards a noble approach of cooperative sustainable security. The persistent resistance to the active functioning of the Conference by starting negotiation on all core issues is owed mainly to this reason, but the Conference is not mandated to maintain the status quo. It was mandated to negotiate multilateral disarmament treaties, and thus to change the status quo. If the Conference had fulfilled its real mandate through negotiation of a comprehensive nuclear weapons convention, the status quo would have been changed, and those who have had the special privileges of being regarded as the "haves" would have lost their advantage. There is thus strong resistance to having the Conference fulfil its mandate, and as long as a mindset of recognizing value in nuclear weapons persists and the presumption of a cold war continues, we will not have any breakthrough in fulfilling the mandate of this body. Thus, this impasse is not a problem of form but one of substance; it does not relate to any procedural problem in the Conference but has a close link with the lack of political will and progress in the realm of disarmament. The Conference is not a single-issue venue, and lack of consensus on the scope of negotiations and some issues cannot prevent delegations from starting negotiations on the others. We believe the early commencement of negotiations within the Conference on a nuclear weapons convention that prohibits the possession, development, production, stockpiling, transfer and use of nuclear weapons leading to their ultimate destruction within a specified framework of time is the urgent need of the disarmament machinery today. If we start this negotiation in the Conference, we will

be in a position to comprehensively tackle all the core issues on the Conference's agenda in a balanced manner and to revitalize the Conference and the whole disarmament machinery.

In conclusion, I wish to once again emphasize that all member States should demonstrate strong political will and exercise the utmost flexibility in order to start substantive work in the Conference, to start discussion on the possibility of expansion of the Conference and to increase the Conference's interaction with impartial NGOs and civil society.

The radical proposal of negotiating a fissile material cut-off treaty outside the Conference is neither feasible nor acceptable.

The President: I thank the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran for his statement. The last speaker on the list is the representative of Egypt.

Mr. El-Atawy (Egypt): Thank you for the opportunity to speak again, Mr. President. I have spoken at the past three sessions, and that is not very usual. Allow me first to take the opportunity to bid farewell to the Ambassador of the United Kingdom. Her presence here truly added to our discussions, and I thank her for all her work and for her friendship and cooperation in so many matters, including the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, which is a cause that I know is very close to her heart. We hope that she will be following us from Harvard when we finally hold the conference that is supposed to be held sometime this year, hopefully.

I did not have the intention of speaking today, and I am by no means going to speak on behalf of the Group of 21. I do not think anyone should speak on behalf of the Group as its statements are very clear on what they say and what they do not say. However, just a couple of points of clarification. I do not see anything in the Group's statements that is a step back from anything that the Group of 21 countries committed to, whether within the Conference on Disarmament or within the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (for those that are parties to the Treaty) or in any other forum.

Egypt is a very strong supporter of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) process and the 2010 Action Plan, but also of the 2000 NPT Review Conference Final Document — especially its 13 practical steps — and the 1995 Extension and Review Conference. All of those processes came out with conclusions that we are committed to. In that context, the 13 practical steps — when referring to the launching of negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices — state that this treaty has to serve both nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. We hold that this mandate continues until now. So, any work we undertake to deal with fissile material in this forum, or in any other forum, has to deal with fissile material from the perspective of nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. For us, that means stocks, but this is a completely different argument.

Just another point on what was included in document CD/1933. Last year, we shared the presidency with Germany and worked in particular very closely with Ambassador Hoffmann. He will recall that in document CD/1933 we did not have a negotiating mandate on fissile material and a discussion mandate on the other three issues. As I recall, and we can go back to the document, the mandates we had were to deal with a treaty on fissile material and to deal with nuclear disarmament. Those were the mandates included in document CD/1933/Rev.1.

The President: I thank the representative of Egypt. It seems that Ambassador Hoffmann has been very successful in encouraging people to take part in an integral discussion. That is good.

The next speaker on my list is Zimbabwe.

Mr. Manzou (Zimbabwe): I have spoken enough, I think, for today in my two long statements on behalf of the Group of 21, but in the spirit of not disappointing our colleague, Ambassador Hoffmann, I wish to say just a few words. And I do mean just a few words, as my colleagues from Cuba and Egypt have already responded to his invitation for an interactive debate.

Let me come back to the point of the emphasis or the priorities that we intended to outline in the two statements. The emphasis of the Group, which really has been the emphasis of the Group since the time we started these negotiations, is on nuclear disarmament, and that came out quite clearly. I must say in the spirit of an interactive debate that I would have expected Ambassador Hoffmann to really pick on those points which I raised as far as nuclear disarmament is concerned. But I guess this will be a subject for another day. I will pass on the statements so that he will have enough time to look at them and be able to respond to the comments that I made on what we really consider as our priorities. Let me emphasize, however, that the position of the Group of 21 has not changed and it has been well articulated by the colleagues who spoke before me. Also, just to clarify for Ambassador Hoffmann that when I spoke on behalf of the Group of 21 when addressing the issue of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, I spoke on behalf of the Group of 21 States parties to the Treaty.

That is what I wanted to say for now, and I agree with what my colleagues from Cuba and Egypt said.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Zimbabwe for his statement. I now recognize the Ambassador of Germany.

Mr. Hoffmann (Germany): I apologize for taking the floor again, but let me just make two very brief points.

My first point is addressed to the intervention by the Ambassador of Zimbabwe just now. Sometimes statements are in a way more interesting for what they do not contain. In that sense, I found this sort of “missing” reference to the project of banning the production of fissile material very interesting.

My second point is addressed to the colleague from Egypt, and I can confirm that last year we had many discussions about this issue. We were both part of the session’s rotating presidency, and I did my best to assist in securing agreement on a programme of work. In the light of what he just said — and I always have my file with me, so I am just looking at document CD/1933/Rev.1 — I would only say this: if we could all agree on the basic approach of dealing with nuclear disarmament and establishing a working group to that effect, and secondly, as stated in document CD/1933/Rev.1, establishing a working group to deal with elements of a multilateral treaty banning the production of fissile material and so on, I would be delighted. If this could be confirmed here, I think we would have done the trick. That is really what puzzles me: we have, indeed, already agreed on this fundamental approach. I know not everybody was excited about that. But the thing is not that we need to be excited: the thing is that we need to agree on something. We do not need to be happy about it, we just need to agree on an approach that allows us to start to do our work. If we could agree on these two elements, conceptually, in terms of the architecture, we would have achieved that. That is why I am really puzzled when I listen to these long statements, because what we have discussed here for four years — I arrived just shortly after document CD/1864 was adopted — in fact, I delivered my maiden statement just over there and I thought that maybe we were close and now only needed to implement it. But it did not materialize. Now, all of a sudden, it seems to have disappeared into thin air.

That is all I wanted to bring out here.

The President: Thank you very much, Ambassador. We are all here to bridge these gaps, Ambassador, and we are here to discuss things. That is why we are here.

The next speaker on the list is the representative of Algeria.

Mr. Khelif (Algeria) (*spoke in Arabic*): The delegation of Algeria would like to begin by associating itself with the general and specific statements made by the Ambassador of Zimbabwe on behalf of the Group of 21 on the subject of nuclear disarmament. The Algerian delegation would also like to take this opportunity to warmly thank the Ambassador of the United Kingdom for her contributions, which have enriched the work of the Conference. We wish her every success in her private and professional life.

The delegation of Algeria, like the delegations of Germany and Egypt, did not prepare a statement on the subject of revitalization of the work of the Conference on Disarmament because Algeria expressed its views on the issue at length last year and on previous occasions. However, in the light of the other statements and of the proposals we have heard, we would simply like to raise a few issues that seem to be worthy of attention.

The process of reforming and revitalizing any institution or agency calls for careful scrutiny to identify the real reasons underlying its dysfunctionality. Such scrutiny, which may point the way towards solutions, must focus on two essential dimensions. The first is political: what political circumstances are preventing the institution from operating and fulfilling its role? The second is institutional or procedural: is the institution's dysfunctionality really attributable to procedural grounds? As Algeria has said before, we continue to believe that the real and fundamental reasons preventing us from making progress in the Conference are political. We do not believe that procedural reforms will help us to find solutions. They might help us to identify the facts, but when we seek to address the substantive issues we will run up against the same problems as before. Hence, any research on the Conference and any remedy must be viewed in the overall context of the impasse that is afflicting multilateral nuclear disarmament, and the Conference on Disarmament is part of that problem. If we wish to address this issue, we must do so within the Conference and we must address the factors that are preventing us from making progress in nuclear disarmament.

With regard to the proposals made by a number of delegations, particularly regarding the consensus rule, we maintain that there has been a major positive change in some delegations' perception of the rule of consensus, which should not be used to excess. I say this because I have participated in the work of the Conference, apart from a two-year break, since 2004, that is to say for about seven years. I have seen the majorities and minorities in the Conference, the proposals that have been made, and the delegations who opposed and supported them. The delegations who opposed the proposals invariably invoked the rule of consensus, arguing that it was a right of all States. We are happy to see that there has been some progress in delegations' view of the rule, and we hope that this positive spirit will be applied not just to this single issue but to all issues before the Conference.

Another question that has been raised is whether it might be preferable to choose or elect the President rather than having a rotating presidency, as is the current practice. On the basis of our own experience, we are not aware of any President of the Conference who was unable to perform his duties because his delegation was small. On the contrary, Presidents have all shown great dedication in performing their duties. In any case, the role of President of the Conference basically consists in coordinating the proceedings rather than effectively presiding over them. We therefore believe that the rotating presidency reflects the rule of equality of States in the United Nations

General Assembly and we hope that it will be maintained until all members of the Conference have had the opportunity to serve the international community in the area of disarmament.

With regard to the expansion of the membership of the Conference, we in the Group of 21 (I am not speaking on behalf of the Group of 21 but expressing the views of Algeria in the context of the Group) believe that the question must be addressed so that we can render this institution more democratic as part of the democratization of international institutions. In the meantime, observer States can participate in the work of the Conference, pending resolution of the issue, by presenting their views, submitting working papers and making statements on all issues. Their status as observers does not prevent them from participating in the work of the Conference in the same way as member States, pending resolution of the issue of expansion of the membership.

With regard to the participation of civil society and NGOs in the work of the Conference, we took part over the past few weeks in the proceedings of the Open-Ended Working Group mandated by the General Assembly to negotiate multilateral nuclear disarmament. It was a highly instructive experience, demonstrating the valuable commitment and involvement of civil society and NGOs. We fail to understand why the Conference cannot open its doors and windows so that we can listen to their contributions, which could provide us with insight and clearer alternative viewpoints on issues relating to nuclear disarmament. Civil society plays an important role in all international forums except the Conference on Disarmament, which lacks the momentum that drives other international institutions. We can, of course, expand the participation of civil society in the Conference by reflecting its role, which is different from that of Governments. The doors of the Conference can therefore be opened to NGOs.

Finally, we would like to thank the Ambassador of Germany for his statement which, as you noted, Mr. President, enlivened and stimulated our discussions. We would like to join the coordinator of the Group of 21 and my colleagues from Egypt and Cuba in pointing out that the statements of the Group of 21 are first and foremost consensual, reflecting a basic consensus among the members of the Group, while taking into account the nature of each State. Some States are parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and some are not. Hence, while the statements reflect a consensus within the Group of 21, they are in no way indicative of a derogation on the part of delegations of States members of the Group and parties to the Treaty from their obligations under the Treaty or under any other international treaty.

The President: I thank the representative of Algeria for his statement. Would any other delegation like to take the floor at this stage? That does not seem to be the case.

In this meeting, delegations had the opportunity to express their views and positions with regard to the important issue of revitalization of the Conference on Disarmament, as well as issues related to the Conference. We had a very useful discussion on this issue. Some delegations stressed that political will remains the key problem for the work of the Conference, while some other delegations stated that the procedural issue is one of the main difficulties. Several delegations expressed that since the Conference is part of the disarmament machinery established by the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, any effort for the revitalization of the Conference should be done through a subsequent (fourth) special session.

Several delegations expressed their views on the expansion of the membership of the Conference. The participation of civil society in the work of the Conference was also emphasized by the delegations.

Before concluding, I would like to inform you about my plan for the coming days. I will continue my intensive consultations with regional groups this week, and based on the results of such consultations all members will be informed accordingly. We will have a plenary meeting on the morning of Tuesday, 18 June 2013, at which the Conference will host a high-level delegation including the Foreign Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of India. There will also be an opportunity for other delegations to speak on issues related to the vote in the Conference on Disarmament.

We will reserve next Friday, 21 June 2013, for the last plenary meeting during the presidency of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the hope of considering a consensual argument or my briefing on the latest situation in the work of the Conference.

This concludes our business for today. The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held next Tuesday, 18 June 2013, at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 12.55 pm.