

Conference on Disarmament

25 June 2013

English

Final record of the one thousand two hundred ninety-second plenary meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 25 June 2013, at 10.35 a.m.

President: Mr. Mohammad Sabir Ismail(Iraq)

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The President: The 1292nd plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament is called to order.

It is a great honour for me and my country to assume the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. Iraq takes this task seriously out of its commitment as a member State and on the basis of its foreign policy principles of international peace, security and cooperation.

The Conference on Disarmament, the body which was mandated by the entire membership of the United Nations to serve as a single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, has, indeed, produced significant results.

We realize the major responsibility towards the Conference in this critical period the forum is going through.

Despite the deadlock that has prevented us from reaching a comprehensive and balanced programme of work over 16 years, we are committed to moving forward in order to explore all available options and alternatives leading to solutions acceptable to all member States, enabling the Conference to resume its mandated work and vital role.

Today, as announced last week, we are receiving the Minister for Foreign Affairs of my country, on the occasion of the commencement of Iraq's presidency of the Conference on Disarmament.

Please allow me to suspend the session to accompany the Minister to the Council chamber.

The meeting was suspended at 10.40 a.m. and resumed at 10.41 a.m.

The President: I would like to extend a warm welcome to our distinguished guest, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Iraq, Mr. Hushyar Zebari, for his presence to address the Conference.

His presence here today clearly demonstrates the importance that he himself and the Government of Iraq attach to the Conference on Disarmament, and their commitment to advance its work. I would like to thank His Excellency for being here with us.

I have the honour and pleasure to invite the Minister Hushyar Zebari to address the Conference.

Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq (*spoke in Arabic*): Mr. Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament; Ms. Angela Kane, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs; Excellencies; distinguished Permanent Representatives;

I would like to thank you most sincerely for your kind words of welcome. It is a great pleasure for me to be here with you at the Conference on Disarmament and I am honoured to be speaking in this international multilateral forum today in my capacity not only as the first Iraqi Minister for Foreign Affairs to address the Conference on Disarmament since my country became a member of the Conference in 1997 but also as the representative of a country that is committed to the ideals of multilateralism which enhance the credibility of the international community's collective responsibility to strengthen the international disarmament regime and ensure the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Iraq is endeavouring to act as a stabilizing factor in its regional and international environment without in any way increasing tension and instability anywhere in the world. I would like to take this opportunity to assure you that the Government of Iraq is respecting its obligations under the international treaties and conventions concerning

disarmament and non-proliferation in accordance with the provisions of the Permanent Constitution of the Republic of Iraq.

Mr. President, the Government of Iraq attaches great importance to the question of general and comprehensive disarmament since it is aware that an arms race, far from being conducive to peace and security, is a principal cause of tension and instability. The Iraqi Government's commitment to the disarmament and non-proliferation treaties and conventions is attributable to its belief that universal accession to, and non-discriminatory compliance with, international instruments concerning the complete elimination of weapons of mass destruction are fundamental prerequisites not only to give the international community a real assurance against the use or threatened use of such weapons but also to ensure international peace and security by reaching joint and practical solutions, through multilateral negotiations, for the conclusion of common agreements. Accordingly, Iraq has acceded to all the main disarmament treaties and has affirmed its full commitment to comply with all their provisions and requirements and, in particular, those of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty and the Biological and Chemical Weapons Conventions. Iraq acceded to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in 1969 and is a party to the International Atomic Agency's Additional Model Protocol for the Application of Safeguards, the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material, the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism, the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, the Convention on Cluster Munitions, the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects, and the Arms Trade Treaty. Iraq is also respecting the other arrangements and measures pertaining to the international disarmament and non-proliferation regime.

Mr. President, Iraq attaches special importance to the Conference on Disarmament, the sole multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament, which, in spite of its record of previous successes, has unfortunately reached a decisive turning point during an extremely difficult period due to the growing number of regional crises and terrorist threats, the increasingly grave danger of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the deadlock in the field of disarmament. All these factors are jeopardizing international stability since, for the last 17 years or so, the Conference has been unable to play the role assigned to it in the negotiation of disarmament treaties due to its failure to reach agreement on a programme of work. We must therefore intensify our endeavours to draw up a comprehensive and balanced programme of work that responds to the concerns of all member States in a manner consistent with the rules of procedure and the need to make progress on the issues on the Conference's agenda. During its presidency of this Conference, Iraq will work with the member States to reach agreement on a programme of work designed to meet the goals that they are pursuing in the field of disarmament, and especially nuclear disarmament, in the interests of international peace and security.

Mr. President, Iraq shares the views of numerous States concerning the need to keep nuclear disarmament as the Conference's top priority in conformity with the special status accorded to it in the final document of the First Special Session of the General Assembly devoted to Disarmament (1978) and with the advisory opinion issued by the International Court of Justice in 1996 which stipulated that: "The threat or use of nuclear weapons would generally be contrary to the rules of international law applicable in armed conflict. 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." Accordingly, it should be re-emphasized that complete nuclear disarmament must be our main priority since, given the destructive nature of these weapons, their total and definitive elimination is essential for the survival of mankind as a whole insofar as their continued existence poses a threat to international peace and security. In this regard, however, I would like to affirm the inalienable right of all countries, and especially developing countries, to

develop, produce and use nuclear technology for peaceful purposes in order to achieve economic growth, without any discrimination or impediment, provided that their activities are subject to control by the International Atomic Energy Agency and meet the requirements of the non-proliferation regime.

Mr. President, please allow me to state our position in regard to the basic issues on the Conference's agenda and, in particular, the four issues relating to the programme of work.

Firstly, with regard to nuclear disarmament, although positive steps in this field have recently been taken at the international level, the ongoing retention of the greater part of the nuclear arsenals and the development of new types of these weapons and their delivery systems continue to give cause for concern. Technological advances in this field will unquestionably increase the dangers inherent in the continued stockpiling of such weapons and this issue will remain among the Conference's main priorities. Iraq will therefore encourage any endeavours or negotiations undertaken among the States possessing such weapons with a view to achieving a significant reduction in nuclear weaponry. The establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones would be highly instrumental in the furtherance of nuclear disarmament.

Secondly, as far as negative security assurances are concerned, there is a need to reach agreement on a legally binding international instrument under which the nuclear-weapon States would provide the non-nuclear-weapon States with unconditional assurances that they would not use, or threaten to use, nuclear weapons against the latter. In particular, the means by which progress could be made towards the achievement of this goal would need to be specified. Negative security assurances, being a fair and legitimate demand on the part of the non-nuclear-weapon States which have voluntarily renounced any nuclear military options by acceding to the Treaty, are a major factor and constitute an important step to this end even though they cannot be viewed as an alternative to the goal of complete nuclear disarmament. We therefore urge the Conference to once again intensify its endeavours to formulate a legally binding framework under which the non-nuclear-weapon States would be provided with such assurances.

Thirdly, with regard to the production of fissile material, the ongoing production of this material poses a threat to the achievement of the goal of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Consequently, Iraq supports the idea of establishing a negotiating mandate for the formulation of a non-discriminatory, multilateral, internationally verifiable and effective treaty banning the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices.

Fourthly, with regard to outer space, we regard it as a common human heritage which should be explored solely for peaceful purposes since its militarization would lead to a costly and devastating arms race which must be prevented. The Conference on Disarmament should therefore consider adopting an international instrument to prevent the weaponization of outer space. I would like to take this opportunity to say that we would welcome any draft conducive to the prevention of the deployment of weapons in outer space. Such a draft would constitute a constructive initiative for the furtherance of substantive discussions to ensure the non-militarization of outer space in the same way as other confidence-building initiatives relating to space activities and designed to prevent an arms race in outer space.

Mr. President, Iraq wishes to reaffirm its support for the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones as an important step towards the elimination of such weapons. We urge you to call upon the international community not only to implement the resolution on the Middle East adopted at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference, in accordance with the plan of action set forth in the final document of the 2010 NPT Review Conference

as a basic means to that end, but also to implement Security Council resolution 487 (1981) since security and stability in the Middle East region depend on the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction, and especially nuclear weapons, in pursuance of the goal specified in paragraph 14 of Security Council resolution 687 (1991), in the relevant General Assembly resolutions that are adopted by consensus every year and in the resolutions of the General Conferences of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

The failure of the international endeavours to convene a conference on the Middle East, which was due to be held in Helsinki in December 2012 with a view to the establishment of a zone free of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, is tantamount to a disavowal of the commitments made in the final document of the 2010 Review Conference and will detract from the credibility of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. It will also have an adverse impact on the NPT review process and the nuclear non-proliferation regime as a whole. The responsibility for the postponement of the conference sine die on unacceptable pretexts must be borne by the United Nations and the States sponsoring and organizing the conference in their capacity as the NPT depositary States.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to express our deep appreciation for the endeavours made by the six co-chairs to reinvigorate the Conference on Disarmament so that it can play a positive role in addressing issues relating to disarmament and non-proliferation. I wish you and your co-chairs every success in your task. Thank you very much.

The President: I thank the distinguished Minister of Foreign Affairs of Iraq for his statement that urges us to continue our effort in order to overcome the difficulties we are currently facing, and that is the task we intend to embark upon.

Please allow me to suspend the meeting for a few minutes to escort the Minister from the chamber and to reconvene shortly.

The meeting was suspended at 11.01 a.m. and resumed at 11.03 a.m.

Ms. Kane (High Representative for Disarmament Affairs): I very much welcome this opportunity to address the Conference on Disarmament. My own memories of the work of the Conference date back many years, before my appointment as the United Nations High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, when I worked in the former Department for Disarmament Affairs. Although the times have certainly changed — the Soviet Union still existed then and the cold war was in its last years — the institution of the Conference on Disarmament remains as important as ever.

We who work at the United Nations continue to respect the vitally important role the Conference plays in the negotiation of multilateral legal obligations in the field of disarmament. When one hears of strengthening the “rule of law” in disarmament, it is hard not to think of this institution.

Making laws in this difficult field of disarmament is, not surprisingly, a very time-consuming process, sometimes agonizingly so. Yet this is a simple reality that is not much different in other legislative arenas. International law tends to develop incrementally in response to events, and its very permanence and obligatory character quite naturally leads States to be careful in adopting new legal norms, which often entail a long diplomatic process. And in the words of former United States Under-Secretary of State, Thomas Pickering, who was also the Permanent Representative to the United Nations, he said “diplomacy isn’t instant coffee”.

While recognizing this unavoidable fact of diplomatic life, the public and many member States both of this institution and throughout the United Nations are justified in voicing their frustration over the failure of the Conference to fulfil its mandate as the

world's "single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum". These frustrations have given rise to real doubts about whether the Conference is still capable of performing this function, given the stalemate that it has been unable to break due to chronic differences over priorities and over the scope of application of its consensus rule. This impasse, year after year, has led many to propose the establishment of alternative negotiating areas. And the longer the stalemate exists, the greater will be the temptation to pursue those options.

Personally, I would not welcome such a development, because I value very highly both the multilateral dimensions of disarmament norms, as well as the goal of ensuring that these norms are fully universal in scope. Treaties agreed by coalitions of States can achieve marvellous things – they can contribute both to international and to regional security, no doubt about that. But where they fall short is in producing universal consent, and this is a vital element of any arrangement or treaty that seeks to achieve a true disarmament goal. When we talk of the elimination of a certain class of weaponry, we have to be talking about eliminating it everywhere, not just somewhere. There really can be no other meaning of the term.

It would follow that consent and consensus are not mere inconveniences, but essential elements in forging a disarmament norm that is truly universal in scope. Yet what we are seeing today goes far beyond the issue of achieving consensus on universal norms. We are seeing this great institution — the Conference on Disarmament — functionally immobilized by what might be called a "my-priorities-first" approach to diplomacy that, if not altered, will jeopardize its very existence as a vital component of the United Nations disarmament machinery. Where flexibility and compromise are necessary, we are seeing intransigence and the transformation of national negotiating positions into immovable objects. And I am not here addressing any particular member State, since the dispute over priorities has now become almost endemic to the Conference.

Every member of the Conference is unquestionably committed to pursuing global nuclear disarmament and many other shared multilateral disarmament goals. Yet the common ground shared by all members has not yet produced the progress that is most urgently needed in commencing negotiations. The net result of the current impasse is a de facto ratification of the status quo, which most of the world views as simply unacceptable.

Some might say that real progress in disarmament must first await the resolution of political disputes between key States, in particular those with the largest arsenals. Such a view, however, ignores the many contributions that progress in disarmament can make in building mutual trust and confidence between States. We all know that disarmament is not done out of philanthropy alone — it is widely recognized as a highly effective and reliable means to enhance national security and to strengthen international peace and security overall.

Disarmament is a security policy. Real insecurity follows from the lack of disarmament. And the lack of negotiations on disarmament is also most regrettable, because it signifies the lack of will even to explore ways of confronting and overcoming disarmament's many challenges.

I would therefore like today to implore all members of the Conference to heed the advice you have received repeatedly in person from Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to resume the productive work of this distinguished institution. There is history to be made in acting, and the time to act is now.

The President: I thank Ms. Kane for her statement and for the nice words addressed to the President. Also I have the honour to give the floor to Ms. Anita Friedt, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Nuclear and Strategic Policy in the Bureau of Arms Control, Verification and Compliance of the United States of America.

Ms. Friedt (United States of America): First let me congratulate Iraq on its assumption of the Conference on Disarmament presidency and also extend an especially warm welcome to Foreign Minister Zebari. The United States fully supports your efforts.

The United States stands with those who seek real and rapid progress on arms control and disarmament. For as President Obama declared at the Brandenburg Gate on 19 June, "Peace with justice means pursuing the security of a world without nuclear weapons, no matter how distant that dream may be."

In his address to the people of Berlin, the President announced additional steps to align United States nuclear policies to the twenty-first-century security environment. The new guidance he has given to the Department of Defence will result in a further reduction in the role of nuclear weapons in the United States' national security strategy.

After a comprehensive review of our nuclear forces, the President has determined that we can ensure the security of the United States and our allies and partners and maintain a strong and credible strategic deterrent while safely pursuing up to a one-third reduction in deployed strategic nuclear weapons from the level established in the New START Treaty. The United States' intent is to seek negotiated cuts with the Russian Federation so that we can continue to move beyond cold war nuclear postures.

For more details on the President's new nuclear weapons guidance, I refer colleagues to the White House's fact sheet of 19 June, "Nuclear weapons employment strategy of the United States", and request that this document be circulated as an official document of the Conference.

In Berlin, the President also highlighted additional concrete steps the United States will take toward our ultimate disarmament goals and identified concrete steps leading in that direction. He committed the United States to working with our NATO allies to seek bold reductions in United States and Russian Federation tactical nuclear weapons in Europe. The President announced that we will host a summit in 2016 to continue our efforts to secure nuclear materials around the world, reaffirmed the Administration's commitment to work to build support in the United States to ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, and called on all nations to begin negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty.

Further, the President emphasized our recent strengthened efforts to stop the spread of nuclear weapons and reduce the number and role of United States nuclear weapons. Because of the New START Treaty, we are on track to cut United States and Russian deployed nuclear warheads to their lowest levels since the 1950s.

The ambitious endeavours announced in Berlin are the latest in a series of concrete steps the President has made to advance his 2009 Prague agenda. We take these actions in recognition of our responsibilities and the interest we all share in reinforcing the international non-proliferation regime.

Our work here in Geneva is another important component of our efforts to uphold our shared responsibilities and strengthen the non-proliferation regime. We can make substantial contributions to these efforts through the hard work in the Conference on Disarmament, but that requires not more talking for its own sake but focused and concerted action to move us forward.

Indeed, from its inception, the Conference was designed to be a negotiating body. It has fulfilled that role in the past, but unfortunately, it has failed consistently in recent years to live up to its promise.

It is disappointing that, for the better part of a generation now, this Conference has failed to produce any concrete multilateral arms control agreement of any kind. In

particular, the Conference continues to fall short of its clear mandate to begin immediate negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty.

We have yet to take even the key first step to adopt a substantive programme of work for the Conference that would allow us to make concrete progress on a fissile material cut-off treaty, as opposed to more talk without action.

This is not what the broader international community expects of us, or what we should expect of ourselves.

Though the Conference has fallen short to date, the United States remains committed to achieving the shared long-term goal of nuclear disarmament, and we remain focused on achieving concrete progress through practical steps. As President Obama said in Berlin, a key step to achieving that goal starts here in Geneva with negotiation of a fissile material cut-off treaty. This treaty is long overdue and necessary to set the foundation for further actions along the long road to disarmament.

The United States delegation is prepared to roll up our sleeves and start working now with each of you to ensure a strong, relevant and robust Conference on Disarmament that is fulfilling its mandate and building on its legacy as the pre-eminent multilateral disarmament forum.

The President: I thank Ms. Anita Friedt for her statement and for the nice words addressed to my Minister as well as to the President.

Before we proceed any further I would like to bid farewell to our most distinguished colleagues: first Ambassador Oyarce of Chile, Ambassador Hoffmann of Germany, Ambassador Mehta of India, Ambassador van den IJssel of Netherlands. Over the years your contribution to the work of this body has been invaluable. It is truly unfortunate that you are all departing at the same time. On behalf of the Conference and on behalf of my own Government, I wish you success and satisfaction in your new assignments.

As this is my first plenary meeting as President of the Conference, I would like to make a few remarks.

First of all, let me extend my sincere thanks to my colleagues and predecessors for their valued efforts seeking solutions to restore the substantive work of the Conference throughout submitted draft programme of work.

It is regrettable that the Conference on Disarmament has not succeeded in adopting a programme of work, which would enable the Conference on Disarmament to perform its role and substantive work in accordance with its mandate. The fact that the Conference on Disarmament has not made progress for many years sends a negative message when assessing the Conference on Disarmament and its work. Meanwhile the international community is expecting tangible results and adoption of the programme of work, which would contribute to international peace and security.

After a quick review of the core issues of the Conference on Disarmament in the light of the different positions of the Conference on Disarmament member States, we have come to an equivocal conclusion. All parties concerned are seeking and willing a comprehensive and balanced programme of work on the one hand. On the other hand, each party has its own interpretation on how to reach such a programme. We must therefore show creativity to converge different views on the core issue of disarmament. In this context, I would like to confirm that there is, as described by United Nations resolutions, an increased political attention to disarmament issues and that the international political climate is more conducive to promote multilateral disarmament, and we will not spare any efforts to invest this momentum.

In my capacity as President of the Conference, I shall try, as mentioned before, to facilitate the deliberations by holding consultations with delegations and regional groups to take and make notes of various perspectives from the outcome of the consultations. The core issues of disarmament will be built upon the initiatives taken by my predecessors, taking into account the impediments and obstructions they have faced.

I urge all member States to show flexibility to allow the Conference to end its deadlock once and for all.

The adoption of a programme of work is a collective responsibility of the member States, which means that any agreement on a programme of work that will open the way to the effective functioning of the Conference will depend on the Conference itself – in other words it depends on all its member States.

After failing several times to adopt a programme of work during the 2013 session, we should think seriously about obstacles and differences that have prevented the Conference from reaching a programme of work. Consequently, we must discuss different elements and positions in order to converge the views.

I will conduct open consultations with member States and regional groups to discuss different positions and challenges as we have just referred to.

Finally, it is also my intention to discuss during the consultations with the delegations the proposals that were presented by Mr. Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, Secretary-General of the Conference, on 18 June 2013. Depending on the outcome of these consultations we will consider whether we will devote a plenary session to a discussion of these proposals.

I shall also ensure that I will conduct my work in a spirit of dialogue, understanding and openness.

On that note and without further ado, I hereby open the floor for any delegations that wish to express their views on these matters. The Ambassador of Chile is asking for the floor. Sorry, the first speaker will be the Ambassador of Germany, because on my list the first one is Germany, and then the second will be the Ambassador of Chile. I am sorry for that.

Mr. Hoffmann (Germany): Mr. President, I wish to congratulate you on assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and to assure you of the full support of the German delegation.

I am pleased to see the United Nations High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Ms. Angela Kane, in our midst today and I would like to thank her for her very thoughtful statement.

As you noted, Mr. President, this will be my last plenary, since I will be leaving Geneva in a few weeks' time, and I wish to thank you for the kind words you addressed to me as belonging to the group of departing heads of delegation.

On the occasion of my departure I would like to share some personal reflections with you and colleagues. Can I say on a lighter note, so to speak, that I feel a bit like the representative of one of our regional groups who has to read out one of their habitually long statements? So I would ask you to regard me as a group of one today, because there are a few things I would like to put on record in my valedictory encyclical, so to say, what looks like the end of my professional occupation with disarmament.

When I delivered my initial statement in early August 2009, hopes were running high that the Conference was just about to overcome its long running deadlock. A programme of work with meaningful, substantive and very sensible taskings had just been

adopted by consensus under the presidency of Algeria, and the expectation was that the Conference was back on track at long last to do what it is meant to do, that is, to work out new treaties in disarmament and non-proliferation.

I very much looked forward to that task because, ever since I got interested in security policy and disarmament issues as a young student, I was convinced that the existence of nuclear weapons poses a formidable danger for mankind and that every effort must be made to make progress towards a world free of the menace of these weapons. Having grown up in a country which lived in its then two States literally along the borderline of the nuclear confrontation of the cold war, it appeared only natural to me to develop a keen interest in these matters, and as a student of history it was clear to me that any use of nuclear weapons has catastrophic humanitarian consequences. In his Berlin speech President Obama has summed up the challenge succinctly: “So long as nuclear weapons exist, we are not truly safe.”

In trying to grapple with the profound challenge posed by the advent of nuclear weapons I always felt that intellectual honesty would demand not making things too easy for oneself by simply denouncing States who seek or possess nuclear weapons as essentially behaving just plain irrationally. The real challenge, I always felt, was to try to understand why States see a need to ensure their security by relying on nuclear deterrence, and to develop in the light of such a deeper understanding what it would take to create an environment in which States would feel secure enough to renounce the nuclear option.

My own conclusion was that determined disarmament efforts and equally determined efforts to overcome deep-seated political antagonisms and conflicts by tackling their root causes would have to go hand in hand for a nuclear-weapons-free world to become a reality. And I think we must not have any illusions: if we want to be successful in disarmament, effective non-proliferation must be the other side of the coin, because it is crystal clear that the readiness to even only contemplate moving towards zero will itself drop instantly to zero if there is only a remote possibility that a case of nuclear proliferation might be on the horizon. This being evidently so, I find it difficult to understand why there is still hesitation among some non-nuclear-weapons States to sign up to the International Atomic Energy Agency Additional Protocol.

It is certainly true that considerable progress has been made in nuclear disarmament in terms of agreements concluded and weapons arsenals and weapons-grade material reduced. This must not be underestimated.

At the same time it is fair to say that after the end of the cold war there were widespread expectations of much more rapid progress in downsizing arsenals and reducing the role of nuclear weapons in security doctrines. One reason for this expectation was, I believe, also the insight that the absurd numerical levels nuclear arsenals had reached at the peak of the cold war — namely altogether the absolutely staggering number of some 70,000 nuclear weapons — had devoured resources on a colossal scale, which had hugely negative effects on the economic well-being of States, which in turn could literally undermine the very existence of States, as we could all observe. One can only hope that we have all learnt from that experience, so that security is no longer seen rather simplistically in terms of making mechanistic comparisons between the sheer sizes of military arsenals, but in a much wider framework and perspective. The observation of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, that “the world is overarmed and peace is underfunded” hits the nail on its head.

Data for 2012 from the SIPRI Arms Transfers Database list nine States possessing a total of 19,000 nuclear weapons, out of which approximately 18,000 were held by the Russian Federation and the United States. Two thousand nuclear weapons are kept in a state of high operational alert worldwide. I believe these numbers need no further comment,

particularly when one tries to answer for oneself the question of what planners actually think they could or should concretely do with all these weapons in critical situations. Surprisingly high are also the figures for expenditure on the nuclear weapons complexes planned for the next decade. And what strikes me as particularly worrying is the fact that while in the cold war region as we came to know it, the nuclear weapons competition has clearly abated in the last 25 years or so, other regions have emerged in the meantime where either open or opaque nuclear weapons competition was set in motion which is accelerating in terms of a build-up of arsenals and a concomitant theorizing about scenarios of limited or tactical nuclear war. One would really have hoped that such would have been relegated to history books of military strategy by now.

It is against this background that one can only warmly welcome President Obama's recent announced plan to reduce United States deployed strategic nuclear weapons by up to a third, to seek negotiated cuts with the Russian Federation to move beyond cold war nuclear postures and to seek bold reductions in United States and Russian Federation tactical nuclear weapons in Europe. As you know, the latter is a goal particularly important to Germany. We feel of course honoured that President Obama would choose Berlin and the Brandenburg Gate for such policy announcements, and I would like to thank the acting Assistant Secretary of State, Ms. Anita Friedt, for coming here today to inform us about further details.

One can only hope that we can move in this direction as soon as possible and that we are not taken back into cold war thinking by letting the military once again dominate the debate with sterile comparative exercises of adding numbers of the nuclear arsenals of different actors. The 2010 NPT action plan clearly stipulates the need "to reduce and eliminate all types of ... nuclear weapons" and "encourages, in particular, those States with the largest nuclear arsenals ... in this regard" (action 2 (ii)).

Responding to President Obama's announcements, the German Foreign Minister, Mr. Westerwelle, noted: "A nuclear-weapons-free world is a vision, but not an illusion."

Why do I make such lengthy observations when I am expected to speak about the work of the Conference on Disarmament? The answer is simple: all of this constitutes the background to our work, which, in my own experience, we are in danger of losing sight of in our fixation on our daily bread of the "programme of work", the "four core issues", the "rules of procedure" and whatever other items are under discussion in the Conference.

Our task in the Conference is to work out global legal regimes for disarmament and non-proliferation.

It needs to be stressed that our purview is not restricted to nuclear issues, because there are also other issues on the agenda of the Conference, a fact which does not seem to be very present really. I for one continue to feel, for example, that it would be very worthwhile indeed to seek a treaty in the Conference banning the weaponization of space, even if this is not a prospect which needs to worry us today or tomorrow.

Unfortunately, we have not managed in 18 years to work continuously on a new treaty on any of the items on our decades-old agenda. While I understand that States have different wish lists, I fail to understand why it should be so difficult to agree to tackle a subject which all of us who profess to seek a nuclear-weapons-free world should embrace as an important building block on the road to a nuclear-weapons-free world – namely banning the production of the fuel to build nuclear weapons.

Such a treaty would have at least two very significant benefits. It would clearly signal the determination of the international community to put an end to the quantitative nuclear arms race, and, secondly, it would establish an international verification system,

which would serve as a most valuable test run for a future verification system of a nuclear-weapons-free world.

I do not understand why those who want us to go directly to the goal, so to speak, by urging us to negotiate a nuclear weapons convention right away appear to have reservations in supporting this important intermediate step. While I do not see why one cannot be in favour of both projects at the same time, I certainly see the danger of betting the whole farm on a — as we all know perfectly well — very ambitious long-term project and neglecting what is a concrete, practical and doable next step, which would be beneficial for disarmament and non-proliferation at the same time. And to those who argue that a treaty banning the production of fuel for nuclear weapons is problematic because it would indirectly legitimize once again the division between the haves and the have-nots, I would say this: why should a provision describing such a treaty as a further building block towards a nuclear-weapons-free world not be achievable? Would that not exactly be the “building block” approach they have been advocating recently?

We were very close indeed to beginning this important work. In the four years I spent in this chamber, attempts to get this project going — and thus to get the entire Conference on Disarmament going after well over a decade of deadlock — were blocked repeatedly by only one and the same member State. I am not aware of any other draft programme of work presenting a fundamentally different approach which would have got even remotely as close to consensus, but I always wondered whether enough was actually being done to persuade the dissenting member.

Which brings me to the issue of the consensus rule, a much debated point in the Conference. The impression I gained is that too many act as if consensus means that one must always insist on one's own preferred outcome, rather than to accept in the interest of moving forward collectively what one can live with. In practice this means that the bar for any work mandate is set very high by some. But the crucial question put to us by the President is not whether we can “support” a given proposal, but only whether we object to it — and there is a very significant difference between these two questions!

Furthermore, it has to be said that when States single-handedly block the mere beginning of a treaty negotiation, and do so repeatedly over years, they take upon themselves a great responsibility, because they not only prevent the international community from developing new international legal norms, but also set an example others can follow, which over time can make multilateralism grind to a halt. Such behaviour is all the more perplexing when all actors are protected in their vital security interests by the consensus rule — and if at the end one does not like a draft treaty coming out of such an exercise, one is not forced to become a party to it, as enough examples have shown.

But I have to say that the longer I watched what was going on the more an impression grew inside me that the name of the game is not so much to actually achieve a breakthrough, but rather to make sure that one is not seen when blocking a breakthrough.

The work methods of the Conference on Disarmament make this quite easy, because delegations need not make their reservations known to the member States at all, but simply tell the four-weeks president behind closed doors what they do not like. And if a president does come up with a proposal which one would actually have thought was quite sensible, one can bet that there are always some who claim to have some sophisticated theological problem with it and who talk it down, again mostly behind closed doors. No wonder the public has no clue as to what is actually going on in the Conference.

The often made point that it is only a “lack of political will” which prevents progress I found always somewhat empty, because it is of course the political will of those who are on the other side of an argument which is always lacking, never one's own!

Do I have the recipe after four years for what the Conference on Disarmament should do to get out of its predicament? I am afraid I have to say that I do not have the magic wand either.

However, in looking at the situation of multilateral nuclear disarmament efforts as a whole, I still believe that the international community should continue to pursue with determination an internationally verifiable and non-discriminatory treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons as an important building block on the road to a nuclear-weapons-free world. I do not see why this should not be achievable, provided determined and genuine efforts are made by all. Whether making references to time-honoured documents is of real help in this endeavour, or rather only helps to disguise the real reasons for the stalemate, has been a question going more and more through my mind. Everybody knows that proper verification of such a treaty will require transparency of all relevant nuclear materials, which are of course nothing else than the result of “past production”. Now if that is true, why cannot we then, for example, agree that the negotiations will deal with all questions relevant for the achievement of the purpose of the treaty? I believe if we are all really serious about wanting to achieve such a treaty, no one should have a problem to meet on the basis of a commitment along such or similar lines.

As things stand one has to be doubtful whether the Conference will arrive at a substantive mandate soon, which can only be a mandate to work on a treaty and not just to discuss our agenda items. The glimmer of hope I still have is that the sheer existence of the United Nations General Assembly Open-Ended Working Group will help make people realize that some real substantive flexibility is definitely required now if the Conference on Disarmament as an institution is not to be seriously damaged.

In any event the time may have come for the Conference to make yet another effort in taking a serious look at the entire range of its work methods, including the questions of expansion and the contribution civil society could and indeed should make. The Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Tokayev, made very thoughtful observations and practical suggestions in this regard in plenary recently. I pick out only one element, which is the creation of a working group to produce a programme of work. It is indeed high time that member States start to negotiate the programme of work among themselves directly, also because this would create a much greater degree of transparency, which would be a desirable goal in itself. The fact that no one seems to have bothered to do that so far is very curious indeed.

One nearly always leaves with mixed feelings. The standstill in the Conference has certainly created a sense of frustration in me, because it is no fun really to have to invest energy into something the realization of which runs into — at least on the face of it — hard-to-understand objections by some all the time. I often thought of the joke in which a traveller who is completely lost in the middle of nowhere asks a farmer: “What is the way to Geneva?”, whereupon the farmer responds after quite a while of reflection: “Sir, you can’t get there from here!” This is actually meant to be a joke, but I suppose that most people find the reality so hard in the Conference on Disarmament that, you know, they find it difficult to find it funny, but it is a joke!

But I have to say that this frustration did not prevent me from enjoying my time in Geneva greatly. I am delighted that I could make a contribution, also as a president of the Conference, trying to create a more realistic picture of the actual situation of this body. And of course, there were many other things to do which kept one busy all the time.

A key reason why I enjoyed my time greatly was the collegial and friendly relations among colleagues, nearly always irrespective of whether one was in agreement or not. As someone who always enjoys engaging in debate and who likes to challenge received wisdom and self-serving political correctness — and I have always known very well that

not everybody finds that so good — I really appreciated this positive spirit. I want to thank everybody for that.

A special word of thanks to all those who help us do our work, the Secretary-General of the Conference, the Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference and the staff of the secretariat, the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, the interpreters, the Geneva Forum and the writers of *Reaching Critical Will* and *News & Media*.

Finally, my thanks to my own team, who have supported and endured me over the years with great dedication.

Mr. President, dear colleagues, I bid you farewell and wish you good luck in your endeavours.

The President: I thank very much Ambassador Hoffmann for his statement and his nice and kind words addressed to the President and the others. Thank you very much.

On my list the second speaker will be the Ambassador of Chile.

Mr. Oyarce (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, first of all, I would like to congratulate you on assuming the presidency of this Conference. My country has already performed this role, and I must say it is a complex task. I would also like to thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs for the thoughts he has shared with us this morning. And, as a member of the G-21, I would like to express appreciation for the work and the efforts carried out by the Islamic Republic of Iran during its presidency, and for the thoughts and messages shared by the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Ms. Angela Kane.

I will soon be leaving the Permanent Mission of Chile to the international organizations in Geneva and to this Conference in order to take on a new role in the field of multilateralism within my country's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I would like to say that the background information shared by the Ambassador of Germany — and for this reason I am glad that he has spoken first, because he is always analytical and provides good ideas — helps to paint a clearer picture of the historical, political and technical contexts that must, I repeat, must be taken into consideration in the work of this Conference.

It has been a privilege for me to work in the disarmament community. I do not believe it is appropriate to talk about a disarmament elite, but I do believe that States need to cultivate expertise in the field of disarmament, not only to defend their own interests, but also so that they can contribute to the general cause of international peace and security. This is the essence of our collective responsibility and the purpose of the multilateral system. Regrettably, it has not been possible to achieve the degree of flexibility needed to adopt a programme of work that would enable the Conference on Disarmament to engage in the collective action required of an inclusive and functional multilateral body — and I use the term “inclusive” because its scope is broad. The Conference should have the ability to develop universal standards that reinforce and complement bilateral efforts to promote non-proliferation and disarmament.

I feel it would be pretentious of me at this stage to go into a lengthy analysis of the issues and difficulties that have arisen. I cannot resist the temptation, because the part of me that is not a diplomat is an academic. I will try to be very precise and touch on some of the challenges that have arisen with regard to what those in the legal field refer to as customary practice that has developed in recent years. It would be imprudent for me to go on at length, so with the utmost modesty I would just like to raise four points, because we continue to believe that it is necessary to keep building universal and functional multilateralism, and to do so right here in this Conference.

Firstly, this body is still going through a critical juncture. We can make all the formulaic speeches we like here and in the General Assembly, but the juncture is still

critical and the deadlock is still real. Faced with this serious situation, we need to reflect on its causes and search for viable alternatives that may well lead to an unavoidable, more thorough reform of this body. The Conference on Disarmament currently lacks inclusiveness and productivity, both of which are fundamental concepts, and this is harming its legitimacy and credibility.

Should we force substantive change to achieve nuclear disarmament, or would it be better to seek a step-by-step approach? Chile has supported the adoption of practical measures, or building blocks, that are aimed at decreasing the operational readiness of nuclear weapons and increasing transparency regarding nuclear weapons inventories. If we consider the global reality, a fissile material cut-off treaty needs to be included in those measures.

Secondly, this situation leads us to a second point, which the Ambassador of Germany has raised, and which is not new in United Nations constitutional law: the need to reflect on the concept of negotiation and consensus. All of us working in this Conference have an obligation to negotiate. It is the prerogative of sovereign States, however, to decide whether or not to become a party to any agreement arising from a negotiation, in accordance with their legitimate national interests. At the last meeting chaired by the Islamic Republic of Iran, we heard some delegations insist on changing the rule of consensus. Those of us who have worked in the United Nations system for many decades are well aware of the advantages and disadvantages of this rule. I suggest reading the explanations of United Nations constitutional law written by a great Mexican diplomat, Castañeda, in order to understand the mechanics of the procedures involved. It is important, because it affects not only procedural norms but also policy. The global environment has changed, and so too have multilateral institutions. This Conference also faces the challenge of adapting to prevailing international realities in an effort to accommodate the security interests of all States. We must agree on a way of working that ensures inclusiveness and transparency. We are facing a problem pertaining not just to this particular forum but also to global political and strategic realities that must not be left out of this reflection. The world has changed, and a modern and updated approach is essential if we are to move beyond the cold war reality and focus on the ultimate goal of human security. This is the prevailing interest of all of humanity and is what is sought by the global citizenry. In the light of this, we must act responsibly.

Thirdly, it is necessary and obligatory, as a matter of governance, to seek out an appropriate method that will allow us to analyse civil society's contributions to the Conference. This method should be inclusive of and compatible with the negotiating work of this forum. In this regard, the practice of other United Nations bodies and intergovernmental forums should be considered. We believe that the reality of the current multilateral system — which is participatory and democratic — requires an active contribution from civil society. This is the world we live in.

Fourthly, during the presidency of Chile we explored formulas that were sufficiently flexible to allow for a general mandate encompassing four working groups. A formula embodying constructive ambiguity has advantages in this and other forums and is frequently used in multilateral processes. Efforts along these lines have continued, as we have seen during recent presidencies and in the work of the P6. The key issue, however, is where the limits are drawn. Is there or is there not a red line that, if crossed, will allow us to take a different path?

We must bear firmly in mind the recent experience in New York with the Arms Trade Treaty, which demonstrated that a difficult negotiation that is focused more on human security and less on State-centred logic can lead to a different result. This is an interesting lesson!

The Secretary-General, Mr. Tokayev, has also set out a series of approaches or ideas that I believe we should work on. There are those who say that the secretariat should not make proposals. I have been in the United Nations system for 40 years, and I can tell you that it is everyone's responsibility. It is up to governments to take political decisions, but let us hope that the disarmament community, including the secretariat, civil society organizations and disarmament institutions, can help to get this forum moving.

Chile, like the majority of nations, and I would venture to say the most important of them, needs functional multilateralism, a multilateralism that works and international institutions that work, because this contributes to our own security, the security of our own countries, but even more importantly, the security of humanity. This is the purpose of multilateralism. This is why the United Nations was founded. We have continuously contributed to the disarmament and non-proliferation machinery through our ideas and participation, modest though they may be, but above all through our constructive attitude as a country that is open to the world, and for which international standards and systems are vital to its existence. I also believe that they are vital to humanity's existence.

I have greatly appreciated the friendship and interaction I have shared with all colleagues, not just with the ambassadors. I would like to take this opportunity to thank in particular the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Tokayev, who has shown an unwavering commitment to the need to move this Conference into action and has continuously delivered messages and ideas from the Secretary-General to the international community. I would also like to express my appreciation to Jarmo Sareva and to the staff members, because you — and I say this because I have worked in the United Nations as a staff member in the legal division — because you are always able to contribute ideas, good practices and political experience. I thank the representatives of civil society for the perspective they bring on giving priority to the issues of disarmament and security within the international system, and the interpreters, for the wonderful possibility they provide to better understand each other despite our diversity. I would like to conclude by saying that Chile is a small country, we are a small delegation, and I would like to say a heartfelt “thank you” to my alternate representative (we only have one person to deal with all disarmament issues) for helping me to better represent my country in the interest of protecting humanity and to mobilize the Conference on Disarmament and the entire disarmament machinery.

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

The next speaker is the Ambassador of India.

Ms. Mehta (India): Mr. President, I am happy to have this opportunity to convey my delegation's felicitations to you on taking over as President of the Conference on Disarmament and to express full support for your efforts in discharging your responsibilities and good wishes for the endeavours that you and other colleagues will make in the weeks ahead, including in the intersessional period.

This will be, I believe, the last time I take the floor in the Conference on Disarmament, and I would like to take this opportunity to convey my deep appreciation to colleagues here for the excellent cooperation that we have all shared.

This year in particular has been an interesting one as I have had the privilege of being among the P-6. This experience gives the delegations who preside over the Conference on Disarmament successively in turn a particular and a very valuable perspective on the dynamic of the Conference. Since this is an opportunity that comes only after 10 years, to each one of us to be in this position at the time is a stroke of luck.

My time in Geneva as India's Permanent Representative to the Conference on Disarmament has been a busy and active one, contrary to the expectations that this forum is inert and nothing of value happens here. It has been a valuable professional experience and for that I have to thank colleagues — all across this room — in delegations and in the secretariat led by Mr. Tokayev and by Mr. Sareva, and most particularly in my own delegation.

As a professional diplomat I have a bias in the sense that I start with the belief that all diplomats are first-rate professionals. That being acknowledged, I do believe that the diplomatic skills and experience that are available in the Conference on Disarmament are indeed of a very high order of excellence. They are worth maintaining and preserving and these attributes will surely be the base for future progress in this field in the Conference on Disarmament. This is a forum that is indispensable, and my delegation continues to see undeniable value in it. The diplomacy of disarmament is a highly evolved, even if slightly arcane field, which at first sight may appear somewhat daunting. I have to say that I received a warm welcome from the many insightful experts in this chamber, and from those around us and above us in the galleries who offer perspectives and critics on our positions. The time spent here has been both a learning and a rewarding experience. For this I thank you all.

The President: I thank the Ambassador for her statement and kind words to the President as well as to support the Chair.

On my list the next one is the Ambassador of the Netherlands.

Mr. van den IJssel (Netherlands): Like the colleague who spoke before me, this is the last time that I will have the opportunity to speak in the Conference on Disarmament, and therefore it is also the last time that I welcome a new President, wish him luck and assure him of the support of my delegation, and of course I also thank him for the kind words he addressed to me as one of the departing Ambassadors.

When I arrived almost four years ago, the ink of document CD/1864 was barely dry and I came with the hope, like all of us, that unlike many of my predecessors I would see the Conference on Disarmament really working again. But as we all know now, that hope turned out to be ill-founded. 1864, 1933, 1948, for others perhaps important years in history, for me names of well-meant attempts to get us back to work that all failed. In the last four years I have expressed often — here in this hall — my country's frustration about this stagnation. I will not repeat those words now.

We regularly had discussions in this hall about the cause of this stagnation. Is it mainly the way we work and have organized ourselves, or is it only the lack of political will? Those who advocate the latter position always point out that the Conference on Disarmament has produced results while applying the rules of procedure and organizational arrangements still in force. But the last result the Conference on Disarmament produced dates from 17 years ago, and I think that it is hard to imagine an organization, let alone a company, that in such a situation, if it would still exist that is, would not have looked extremely critically at the way it is organized and would have made some changes.

But it is also true that there is a lack of political will and courage to make the bold and often painful moves necessary to achieve real progress. When looking back at the last four years it is not, however, the stagnation of the Conference on Disarmament that dominates my memory. As disarmament Ambassador I have represented my country at many meetings, conferences and negotiations. I will not name them all, but I will especially remember the Review Conference of the Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention and the Arms Trade Treaty negotiations. I remember them with joy and with gratefulness. Both showed that multilateral disarmament can work. I will also dearly miss our annual trip — “school trip” as named by some — to New York to the First Committee.

Multilateralism means that you have to deal with those you disagree with, that you have to find common ground with States that have a different assessment, different interests, different opinions, and I think that is done most effectively in a collegial and transparent atmosphere. And looking back at the last four years, I think that the Conference on Disarmament has lived up to this aspect of multilateralism. I have immensely appreciated the contact with all colleagues and delegations. I have appreciated the collegial atmosphere both in Geneva and in New York. We were all in the same boat, and although the Conference on Disarmament boat was sinking deeper and deeper in the mud, it was a pleasure and a privilege to be part of the crew, and I thank you all for that.

I would also like to thank our Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Tokayev, and his deputy Mr. Sareva, for consistently trying to help us to get out of this mess. Thanks too to all staff members and interpreters for all your hard work. I had wished we could have made you work harder with a Conference on Disarmament in full swing, but you did a great job. Thanks of course to the NGOs, civil society, for showing critical interest, for being our mirror that sometimes does not show us the face we would like to see. And not in the least for being an excellent chronicler and an archivist. And of course I thank the members of my own team.

As a final word to all of you who stay behind in Geneva in the Conference on Disarmament, it is my belief that multilateral work almost inevitably is a story of 999 steps backwards and 1,000 steps forward. Multilateral work is about trying the same things over and over again in the hope that there will be a time when they finally work. It is a story of finding the right mixture of ambition and realism. Ambition to determine the direction, realism dictates the pace, ambitious realism.

Dear colleagues, dear President, rapid success is not the most striking feature of multilateral work, and most certainly not of multilateral disarmament, but please keep on trying. I wish you all the best of luck.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of the Netherlands for his statement and kind words addressed to the President. Are there any requests for the floor? I see the representative of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Vasiliev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): At the outset I would like to make it clear that this is not my farewell statement, and I'm afraid I am not going to delight you with wise quotations and vivid reminiscences. I would like to draw attention to several issues which we have considered today.

But first of all I would like to thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq, Mr. Zebari, for his statement to the Conference on Disarmament. We are also very grateful to the Secretary-General's High Representative on disarmament, Ms. Angela Kane, for participating in today's meeting.

Mr. President, we welcome you to the Chair of our forum. We hope that the intention you spoke of today to continue the search for compromise on the programme of work will bring us closer to the start of substantive work in this forum. Equally, I would like to thank the former President of the Conference on Disarmament, Ambassador Mohsen Naziri of Iran, for his efforts to organize discussions aimed at finding compromise on the programme of work of the Conference on Disarmament.

Certainly I would like to associate myself with the warm words addressed to the colleagues who are leaving us, and to wish them success and productive work – perhaps more productive than during the years they have spent here. Nevertheless, I am sure that they will fondly remember these years and the experience they have acquired in multilateral diplomacy.

I would like, as I said, to focus on two issues. First, we are very grateful to the delegation of the United States of America and the Acting Assistant Secretary of State Anita Friedt, who drew our attention to Barack Obama's speech in Berlin. The new initiative certainly deserves the most careful examination and consideration, which Moscow will certainly give it, and at a future stage we will respond to our American colleagues.

It is now clear that the proposed new levels for strategic nuclear weapons, like the proposals for the review of issues related to tactical nuclear weapons, anticipate the fact that the process of nuclear disarmament is shifting from a bilateral Russian-American dialogue to a multilateral format.

Certainly, here there is a role for other States, and not only States which possess nuclear weapons, since it is quite obvious that the process of nuclear disarmament can move forward only if there is no creation of offsetting capabilities in high-precision weapons, no imbalances in conventional weapons and no transfer of the arms race to other areas, including outer space. I repeat once again that we will carefully study all these proposals, and we will be ready to conduct a dialogue on all the issues that have been raised.

Part two: I would like to express appreciation once again to Ms. Angela Kane for participating in today's plenary meeting, and naturally to benefit from her participation in our meeting in order to raise a number of issues which, I believe, concern many of us, if not all of us, here in Geneva.

Our colleagues in New York have sent us the draft budget for 2014-2015, which is to be examined in the United Nations Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions. I reiterate that, in my view, certain issues are of a political rather than an administrative nature.

In particular, we would like to clarify the reason for the change in the name of the Department for Disarmament unit in Geneva. It is currently called the "Conference on Disarmament Secretariat and Conference Support Branch". The proposal is that it will be called "Geneva Branch". But in bureaucratic language, at least in my diplomatic service, this means that the Department for Disarmament has actually agreed that the Conference on Disarmament no longer exists. I would like to know what this means in United Nations language.

The second aspect which is greatly disturbing us is the question of the redistribution of tasks within the Department for Disarmament. We have learned that there is specifically a plan to transfer issues related to biological weapons to New York, whereas we know that in Geneva there is the Biological Weapons Convention Implementation Support Unit and, accordingly, all activities connected with that Convention take place here in Geneva. I don't know how much of this is true.

A decision was also taken previously to transfer the space dossier from New York to Geneva, in view of the fact that one of the items on the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament is the prevention of an arms race in outer space. Now, as far as we understand, this post is to be eliminated.

Of course, in a context of cuts and the redistribution of these functions, a Strategic Planning Unit is being created in the Department, with a staff of three. This is certainly a very important and interesting undertaking, and we certainly support all strategic planning. However, in our view, strategic planning is primarily the task of Member States of the United Nations, which, by adopting resolutions in the General Assembly and, in particular, I hope, the decisions which we will adopt in this room, indicate the direction in which we should move.

Once again, Mr. President, thank you for today's meeting.

The President: I thank the representative of the Russian Federation for his statement and kind words addressed to the Chair. Is there any delegation requesting the floor? India, you have the floor.

Mr. Gill (India): Mr. President, allow me to first add my own voice to my Ambassador's words of appreciation for your efforts and my congratulations to you on assuming the presidency of the Conference.

I want to speak very briefly to the point raised by our distinguished colleague from Russia with regard to the budgetary proposals of the Office of Disarmament Affairs, which some of our colleagues have been discussing in New York last week, and which would continue to be discussed in the Committee for Programme and Coordination later this week and subsequently. We share the concerns that have been expressed by Russia with regard to some of the proposals in the budgetary suggestions that have come from the secretariat, and we hope that our concerns, the concerns of member States, would be taken into account in further consideration of those proposals. We acknowledge that many of those suggestions belong to the area of competence of the secretariat, but there are many areas where the prerogative for the initiative lies with member States, and we would hope that this important distinction is preserved as we go ahead.

The President: I thank the representative of India for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the President. The floor is to Madam Angela Kane.

Ms. Kane (High Representative for Disarmament Affairs): I must admit I was not prepared for this statement, but on the other hand I am very happy to have that opportunity to actually give some additional information about the changes that we have proposed, and if the Conference on Disarmament or some member States would like to discuss it further with me I in fact would welcome that opportunity.

I appeared before the Committee for Programme and Coordination twice last week, there today in the last session. We have already been through the session in the ACABQ, and of course the Fifth Committee will take up the matter in the fall.

Now first of all it is not a financial issue. It is not at all a budget proposal, because it is not a financial implication. It is simply in the context of the budget proposal I am making some proposals that I would hope find favour with the member States, and unfortunately only two have spoken who do not find favour with it, but on the other hand there are many other member States who do.

Now why am I making these changes? First of all, I have been in the job for 15 months now, and when I look at the universe of the staff and I look at the universe of the tasks and the mandates that you have given to us, I found out that it could do with some what I would call, rebalancing. And the rebalancing, and first of all I come to the name change. What happened is that this long name that here exists only refers to the function that the branch has for servicing the Conference on Disarmament, a very important function indeed. But on the other hand, there are other issues that the branch deals with. And so we felt that it would be better to reflect a better view of what the branch does, namely it has as you also mentioned the Biological Weapons Convention Implementation Support Unit, it has the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons Implementation Support Unit, it services some other bodies that are mandated by member States, so by simply declaring it the UNODA Geneva branch, it would give a better impression. We in New York are Office for Disarmament Affairs, we service the First Committee, we service the Disarmament Commission, we service other bodies, yet we are Office for Disarmament Affairs. So we simply felt that this was a better reflection, and it was also a simplification. It sounds like this branch here is like the DGACM, it's like the Conference management branch. And it's not; it is a substantive branch, and I would hope that it would be seen as such. Although,

and that is true, one of the main functions is the servicing of the Conference on Disarmament — very important — but other issues are also being dealt with.

When it comes to the biological weapons, I think that there is a misunderstanding simply because in New York there is a branch that is called Weapons of Mass Destruction; that is, all weapons of mass destruction, nuclear, biological, chemical. So that is basically a much larger issue that is traditionally always dealt with in New York, but it does not deal with the BWC ISU here. That is a separate function. So we cannot simply detach it from the weapons of mass destruction branch and put it somewhere else and have it totally self-standing. So it just is a continuation of what has always happened.

Now, when it comes to the SPU, what I found also is that there are many issues that are cross-cutting, and maybe “strategic planning unit” was a name that we simply picked because it exists in several other departments. Many departments already have strategic planning units, and it is an accepted nomenclature in the United Nations, and so we adopted it. But if you look at the issues that we deal with, many of them are not weapons of mass destruction, they are not conventional, but they kind of fall in the universe that’s beyond that. And so we always had an issue in terms of how do we deal with that, how do we actually handle these issues. And so we would give them willy-nilly to one branch or the other, but it didn’t really fit, and so that’s why we decided to take staff from these existing staff members we already have and then bring them into a unit that we chose to call a strategic planning unit because it is a nomenclature that’s already accepted. We could have called it a cross-cutting unit, but it is a bit of an odd name, so that’s basically why we called this a strategic planning unit.

We also made some other proposals, and let me just share with you what they are because you didn’t mention that, you mentioned one of the group of governmental experts. We have the Group of Governmental Experts, and we also have what has traditionally been handled from Geneva for some years, and we have other programmes that are handled in New York. Let me just explain to you.

The Group of Governmental Experts, of course – what happens is that you member States decide on them and then it depends on where they are being handled. For example, the fissile material cut-off treaty one is going to be handled in Geneva because as there is a very close link with the Conference on Disarmament we felt that that would be good to be handled here, so we maintained that link very closely. There are other ones like the group of outer space; what happens is that PAROS is being done in Geneva, so we felt that it would be better to be handled in Geneva. It’s a way of thinking about it logically, how do all the pieces fit together.

Now the other issue is the fellowship programme, and the fellowship programme used to be handled in New York, and then for some reason it was moved to Geneva. And I’d suggested that it would be brought back to New York for two reasons. The first reason is that fellows spend the largest amount of their time in New York. But when it comes to the programme, nothing changes. There is no financial implication, there is no programme implication, nothing changes. The only thing that changes is that the staff member who handles it will be sitting in New York rather than in Geneva. In return, what I did in order to balance the workload is I proposed to bring the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters here to Geneva. Why? Because the Advisory Board for Disarmament Matters is the trustee for UNIDIR. UNIDIR is in Geneva, and we’ve always felt, and UNIDIR has felt, that there’s a bit of, let’s say, disconnect if it’s being handled from New York and not from Geneva. Also because there is one member or two members who are sitting here in Geneva, so there would be an immediate linkage. To me it makes all the sense to do it that way. Is there any financial implication? No. Is there any staffing implication? No. So whatever I am proposing has no financial and no staffing implication, it is simply a way of looking at it and making it more coherent in terms of how the Office for Disarmament operates.

Now let me share with you another factor. How many people do we have overall in five offices? New York, Geneva, three centres in Lomé, Lima and Kathmandu. We have 59 people, including support staff. It is an extremely small office. So what I am trying to do is to make it work more effectively, more efficiently and to sort of gain, let's say, the efficiencies that can be gained from the system. And so that's basically why I am proposing this. But again with the underlying argument that there is no financial implication and there is no programmatic implication, because the programme does not change.

Thank you for giving me that opportunity to explain it.

Mr. Grinevich (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. President, as our delegation is taking the floor for the first time during your term of office, we would like to congratulate you on taking up the post of head of our negotiating body. You can always count on our delegation's support in your endeavours.

I would like to associate myself with the concerns expressed by the delegations of the Russian Federation and India concerning the content of document A/68/6, section 4. We thank Ms. Angela Kane for the clarification she has provided. However, further to the concerns voiced by the delegations of the Russian Federation and India, we would like to focus the attention of all delegations on the fact that any redistribution of tasks between the offices in Geneva and New York, in particular any attempt to transfer specific issues in the area of biological weapons and conventional weapons, will lead to a need to expand or redistribute functional duties between countries' diplomatic missions in Geneva and New York. At the current stage the existing structure suits us perfectly, since the core issues in the area of biological weapons and conventional weapons are examined here in Geneva. We also believe that on the whole, the functions it is proposed to entrust to the new Strategic Planning Unit intersect in a variety of ways with those currently performed by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research.

The President: I thank the representative of Belarus for his statement and kind words addressed to the Chair and his support. I give the floor to the Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Naziri Asl (Islamic Republic of Iran): Mr. President, first of all allow me to congratulate you on the assumption of the post of the presidency. It is an honour for us to see that a brother like Iraq is taking the presidency of the Conference, and I assure you of the full support of my delegation in your presidency.

I thank the distinguished High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Ms. Angela Kane, for her statement. I have been informed by my colleague that this issue is of high importance due to the political implication that such a decision is going to have. Therefore we echo the sentiment which has been expressed by our distinguished colleagues, Russia, India and Belarus. I hope that there will be an opportunity in New York that we have a deep analysis about the whole issue and then we come to a decision which would minimize any implication for the whole Conference on Disarmament and the activities which are going in Geneva; I mean about the ISU in particular. So that is the whole thing. Thank you for your clarification provided, but I just wanted to support what has been said by our distinguished colleagues.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. Is there any delegation requesting the floor? That does not seem to be the case.

This concludes our business for today. The next plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament will be held on Tuesday, 30 July 2013 at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 12.35 p.m.