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Conference on Disarmament

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English

Final record of the one thousand two hundred and ninety-third plenary meeting
Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 30 July 2013, at 10.15 a.m.

President: Mr. Mohammad Sabir Ismail . . . . . (Iraq)

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The President: I declare open the 1293rd plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

Before we proceed I would like to extend a warm welcome to the new colleagues who have assumed responsibilities as representatives of their Governments to the Conference: Ambassador José Luis Balmaceda of Chile; Ambassador Michael Biontino of Germany; Ambassador Yoo of the Republic of Korea; Ambassador Matthew Rowland of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

On behalf of my own Government and on behalf of the Conference, I assure you of our full cooperation and support.

I would like to start this meeting by telling you that I have been consulting with the member States on a draft programme of work. Everybody is aware that this task is very difficult, but it is not impossible. It is not impossible to reach a programme of work that reflects the concerns of all member States. It is reachable if you all compromise and work hard to take this forum out of the current impasse. Achieving success is a collective effort: one cannot achieve anything without the consensus of all member States. If this effort succeeds in adopting a programme of work, you will send a positive message to the international community that the Conference is working actively, and it will help remove the concerns surrounding its work and effectiveness. I would like to inform you that I have received through my consultations positive signs and confirmation for achieving a shared goal, which is that of reaching a balanced programme of work containing common language and reflecting member States' concerns, and we are working towards that.

I would like to take this opportunity to convey my sincere thanks to States that showed remarkable flexibility and political willingness to achieve our common goal. I will continue my consultations with the interested members and will brief you on the result of my consultations in a fully transparent manner. At the same time, as conveyed to you on my behalf by the secretariat, it is my intention to devote the plenary meeting of today to a discussion of the first of the proposals presented on 18 June 2013 by the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, namely the establishment of an informal working group with a mandate to produce a programme of work that would be robust in substance and progressive over time in implementation.

It is my intention today to suspend the formal plenary meeting and to move to an informal meeting in order to allow for an informal and interactive exchange of views on the issue. However, prior to suspending the formal plenary, I will give the floor to the States that have inscribed themselves on the list of speakers, as I assume that they wish to make their statements publicly. Following the informal discussion, I will resume the formal plenary before adjourning the meeting in order to give delegations another opportunity to speak on the record, if they so wish. One delegation has already indicated its intention to speak towards the end of the meeting in a formal setting on another issue.

I will now turn to the list of speakers for today. In order to structure the debate, I would like to first call on those States which would like to make statements of a general nature. I will then turn to delegations wishing to make statements on Mr. Tokayev's proposals in a formal setting. Every delegation, of course, can raise any issue it wishes to raise at any time.

I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Germany, Mr. Michael Biontino.

Mr. Biontino (Germany): Mr. President, I would like to come back to the topic of today's discussion later on, but wish to take this opportunity now to introduce myself. Thank you again for giving me the floor and for your warm words of

welcome. As this is the first time that I am addressing the Conference on Disarmament, I would like to seize this opportunity to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency and assure you of our full support.

At the same time, I would like to extend my regards to the Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Jarmo Sareva, to whom, in the absence of the Secretary-General of the Conference and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, I was able to hand over my letter of nomination yesterday. I would also like to thank my colleagues for their warm welcome. I recognize many faces from previous lives.

It is an honour and gives me great pleasure to join the Conference. Having worked for many years in the field of arms control, disarmament and security policy in my capital and abroad, I feel privileged to be able to join this esteemed forum.

For my country, nuclear disarmament is a foreign policy priority. Given the current situation, the focus of German foreign policy will be on building bridges to further foster nuclear disarmament.

There are still around 17,000 nuclear warheads around the world. If this figure can be reduced, the world will be a safer place. To achieve this, bold steps forward are required for peace and security.

As the German Federal Foreign Minister, Mr. Westerwelle, said in his reaction to President Obama's speech in Berlin on 19 June, "a world without nuclear weapons is a vision, not an illusion". Of course, this will not come about overnight. We will need political will, astute diplomacy and, above all, perseverance. The world will become a safer and better place. Fewer nuclear weapons and effective global rules on nuclear non-proliferation are decisive steps towards "global zero" – a world without nuclear weapons.

Concerning the Conference on Disarmament, Germany actively contributes to United Nations forums on disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation. Regarding nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, Germany attaches fundamental importance to the early commencement of negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material. Germany considers negotiations on such a treaty to be not only the next logical step but also a sensible building block towards nuclear disarmament and a world without nuclear weapons. Germany also considers such a treaty to be an important non-proliferation instrument.

While regretting the persistent stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament, which has prevented it from taking up negotiations on such a treaty for well over a decade, Germany strongly believes that initial steps for its revitalization should be urgently supported. We therefore are fully committed to revitalizing and enhancing the United Nations disarmament machinery as called for by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, that is to say, the Conference on Disarmament, the United Nations Disarmament Commission and the First Committee of the General Assembly of the United Nations.

I would also like to seize the opportunity to underline the importance of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC). We strongly support the Chairperson designate, Mrs. Judit Körömi, with her intention to "bring in more voices" to the BWC process. The issue of biological weapons and the increasing threat emanating from biological materials used as weapons poses new challenges, and the BWC should be used as an instrument to react.

In 2016, it will be 20 years since the Conference on Disarmament actively and successfully conducted and concluded disarmament negotiations. Despite this sad anniversary drawing nearer, I would like to conclude on an optimistic note: I am

confident that during the time of my tour of duty here in Geneva, we will jointly succeed in overcoming the present stalemate and make the Conference on Disarmament again the multilateral disarmament forum of the international community.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Germany for his statement and his kind words addressed to the Chair and the secretariat, as well as for his support and contribution. I give the floor to the Ambassador of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Mr. Matthew Rowland.

Mr. Rowland (United Kingdom): Mr. President, this is my first intervention as Ambassador of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the first time that I am taking the floor under your presidency. Let me congratulate you on assuming the role and assure you and your team of my delegation's full support in seeking the effective functioning of this Conference.

I would like to say a few words before addressing the issues of today's agenda. I promise I will be brief.

Let me start by saying that a change in ambassador does not signal any change in the policy of the United Kingdom. The United Kingdom remains committed to a step-by-step approach to achieving a world free of nuclear weapons, and to following up on the 2010 Non-Proliferation Treaty Action Plan.

We take seriously our disarmament obligations, towards which we have made considerable and concrete progress. We do not see replacing our minimum deterrent as being inconsistent with these obligations. In this forum, we remain committed to engaging on all four of the Conference's core issues, placing highest priority on the negotiation of a verifiable fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT).

Next, I know I have a lot to learn from colleagues. Many of you have served here for several years or more. But two observations have struck me as I have prepared for this position.

First, for all the frustrations of this forum, it is difficult to envisage an alternative that would be better fitted for the purpose of negotiating global disarmament.

Nuclear weapons are so intimately tied up with the security perceptions of so many States, whether they possess nuclear weapons or not, that any forum for negotiating measures to advance global disarmament must be multilateral and must take decisions by consensus.

This is not to say that other forums with different configurations and procedures cannot make positive contributions where they complement the work of this Conference, such as the technical contribution that we hope the Group of Governmental Experts on the FMCT will make.

But we must recognize that we need a forum such as this one, and we should do all we can to ensure it regains its relevancy.

My second observation is the importance of timing.

There is some way to go before we achieve an international environment where no State feels the need to possess nuclear weapons, and many of the steps towards achieving that environment will necessarily be taken outside of this forum.

But this forum must do what it can. It has been close to consensus on beginning negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty, and we should seize upon this.

And we should act while we can.

These are relatively benign times. But we cannot rule out deterioration in the international environment for disarmament due to changes in global security dynamics, technological developments, particularly in the conventional field of further proliferation.

I am sure that I am not alone in hoping that in 10 years' time those of us in this room will not be judged to have wasted an opportunity to take a step towards our shared goal of a world without nuclear weapons.

Mr. President, turning to the issues before us today, we are very grateful to you for your efforts to draft a programme of work that can find consensus.

Even at this late stage in the annual cycle, agreement on a programme would send a positive signal to those in the disarmament community beyond this Conference, many of whom we will sit with in the First Committee and who will hold us to account.

The United Kingdom recognizes the challenges in securing a programme of work, and will continue to engage constructively and be open to reforms that improve the Conference's effectiveness.

We would support the establishment of a working group to examine the elements needed for a consensus programme of work, and we would also welcome the establishment of a working group to look at the working methods of the Conference on Disarmament, including its membership.

My thanks to you, Mr. President, and to all of you who have given me such a warm welcome. I look forward to working with you all.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of the United Kingdom for his kind words addressed to the Chair and his support. The next speaker is the United States of America.

Ms. Pelz (United States of America): Mr. President, the United States of America would like to express its deep appreciation for your efforts to move the Conference on Disarmament out of deadlock and back to work. We have been very impressed with your dedication and determination to move the process forward.

First and foremost, we share the desire of many in the Conference to get down to substantive work and, in particular, negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty, as reaffirmed by President Obama in his 19 June address in Berlin. In that context, I note that document CD/1864 is still the one programme of work that commanded consensus, and for the United States remains — as Ambassador Kennedy emphasized in her farewell remarks — the touchstone for a balanced and comprehensive approach. At the same time, we have welcomed efforts to craft a new programme of work that would command consensus, and encourage you in your efforts, Mr. President. Should such a programme of work be identified and adopted, we hope that it could carry us forward into 2014.

We also welcome the opportunity to address Secretary-General Tokayev's proposal on the establishment of an informal working group to produce a programme of work. Though our priority remains the adoption of an actual programme of work, we consider this could be a useful intermediary step should a programme of work continue to prove elusive.

The United States would support the establishment of an informal working group with a mandate to produce a programme of work. We agree with Secretary-General Tokayev's suggestion that an overly detailed mandate could easily complicate the mandate's adoption. He suggested a working group "to produce a programme of work that would be robust in substance and progressive over time in implementation". We

interpret that to mean a programme of work that provides for negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT), and for continuity in such negotiations once initiated.

We believe that the duration of any informal working group should be limited to the 2013 session of the Conference on Disarmament, but hope that, if we were able to develop an acceptable programme of work during this session, that programme of work will also be acceptable at the outset of the 2014 session of the Conference. In this regard, we would note that rule 28 of the rules of procedure would not preclude submission in January 2014 of a programme of work approved now for revalidation. The United States would also consider including appropriate language in the Conference's annual report to the United Nations that looks forward to continuing such a working group, if a programme of work is not agreed in the interim. We also note the informal practice by outgoing and incoming Conference Presidents of conducting consultations during the intersessional period that could pave the way for a successful start to the next session of the Conference, a practice we support.

We agree with the presidency that in selecting the chair for the informal working group we should have in mind someone who can lead the working group to obtain a broad base of support, and we are open to your suggestions.

Mr. President, the United States would again like to express our appreciation for your efforts during this recess to move us forward in our work.

The President: I thank the representative of the United States for her statement and support and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. The last speaker on the list is the Ambassador of Australia, Mr. Peter Woolcott.

Mr. Woolcott (Australia): Mr. President, allow me to start by congratulating you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. We are joining others in thanking you for the energy and consultative approach you are bringing to your role. You have the support of Australia.

Mr. President, Australia welcomes your efforts to continue seeking and encouraging a programme of work which will allow the Conference to return to substantive work. Australia has taken the floor a number of times during the current session to underline the importance we attach to implementation of the elements of the 2010 Non-Proliferation Treaty Action Plan relating to the Conference and to ensuring that the Conference is doing real work. We hold no illusions about the complexity of your task. The Conference has already had three attempts at a programme of work during the current session, and we believe that if it is clear that no consensus is emerging at this time, there may be benefits in pausing to reflect rather than pushing ahead. In this context, we consider there may also be merit in your pursuit of a parallel track: the establishment of an informal working group on producing a programme of work on the basis of Secretary-General Tokayev's proposal to the Conference on 18 June. We consider that refreshing the manner in which the Conference works towards a programme of work, but still within the rules of procedure, could help the Conference. We would also agree that any such informal working group should be mandated beyond the current Conference session in order to provide the necessary time for exchange and reflection. We again wish you well and look forward to working with you and your delegation during your presidency.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Australia, Mr. Peter Woolcott, for his statement and his support as well as for the kind words addressed to the President.

Would any other delegation like to take the floor? I recognize the representative of Switzerland.

Mr. Schmid (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, as this is the first time that I am taking the floor at the Conference on Disarmament under your

leadership, allow me to begin by congratulating you on your assumption of the presidency of this body and assuring you of my delegation's full support in the performance of your duties. I also wish to thank you for the determined efforts you are making towards adopting a programme of work and for the collegial and transparent manner in which you have been discharging your functions. As I have already mentioned, the adoption of a programme of work would be the best way to revitalize the Conference.

In that connection, I welcome your decision to devote this meeting to considering the proposal made by the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, in his statement on 18 June, namely that an informal working group be established to prepare a programme of work. In a previous statement, I had the opportunity to thank the Secretary-General for the constructive proposals he had made and also to state that we should examine them in greater depth. The paper that you submitted to us in anticipation of today's discussion is a sound first step in that direction.

I would like to make the following remarks concerning the proposal.

We feel that setting up an informal working group to prepare a programme of work is a good idea for a number of reasons. Given that the Conference has been at an impasse for over 15 years, it must explore new approaches if it is to overcome the obstacles in its path. Moreover, the current approach whereby the serving President holds sole responsibility for preparing the programme of work is, in our view, far from optimal: the short duration of each presidency precludes long-term efforts from being undertaken and the approach suffers from an inherent lack of transparency. As the Permanent Representative of Germany observed in his farewell statement on 25 June, the current situation in which the President alone is responsible for preparing the programme of work and relies mainly on bilateral consultations to do so not only does not allow existing obstacles to be overcome but could perhaps be a contributing factor to such obstacles. An informal working group would allow for transparent and interactive discussion on a consensus programme of work.

As suggested in the paper that was circulated, we share the view that such a working group should have a mandate that is clear and simple. In our opinion, the mandate proposed by the Secretary-General, namely to produce a programme of work robust in substance and progressive over time, provides a suitable working basis. We assume that the working group would also be mandated to submit the outcome of its work to the serving President of the Conference and to invite him or her to act on that basis.

We also agree with the suggestion put forth in the paper that the working group's mandate should extend beyond the close of the current session of the Conference. There is no doubt that such a working group would need to hold several meetings and that it will need to assume a longer-term commitment if it is to yield tangible results. A mandate providing for the continuation of the group's work in 2014, or at least into January 2014, would send a strong message that the Conference is resolved to find a way out of the deadlock. It would in addition serve to launch a sustainable process and lay the groundwork for the opening of the Conference's next session.

Given the current time frames, an informal working group to prepare a programme of work would only have a few weeks to begin its work. The Chair of the working group could perhaps present an interim report at the Conference's last formal meeting in 2013. We feel it would be very desirable to hold meetings and informal consultations during the intersessional period.

Mr. President, I would like to make one last point before I conclude. Although preparing a programme of work and setting up a working group for that purpose are

our most pressing priorities now, there are other considerations that also deserve our attention. As the Secretary-General of the Conference mentioned in his statement on 18 June, we should also examine the Conference's working methods, including possibly the creation of a subsidiary body devoted to that task. The fact that hurdles continue to exist when the political landscape has changed so much since 1997 points up the need for us to revisit our working methods thoroughly as part of a structured exercise.

The President: I thank the representative of Switzerland for his statement and his kind words addressed to the Chair. The next speaker on the list is the Ambassador of Indonesia.

Mr. Wibowo (Indonesia): Mr. President, allow me to begin by welcoming the Ambassador of Chile, the Ambassador of the Republic of Korea, the Ambassador of Germany and the Ambassador of the United Kingdom to the Conference on Disarmament. They may rest assured of my delegation's support and cooperation in discharging their duties. Mr. President, I wish to commend all the efforts you have made in conducting intensive consultations with member States since the beginning of your presidency and during the Conference's recess period. I welcome your approach for the Conference, that is, to try first to come up with a programme of work; if that is not feasible, then the Conference will consider the proposal made by Mr. Tokayev on 18 June concerning the establishment of an informal working group to produce a programme of work.

I have read carefully your suggestions regarding Mr. Tokayev's proposals. In principle, Indonesia could go along with the content of your papers, which I consider valid and pragmatic. In that regard, allow me to make the following comments. First, Indonesia underlines the importance of the Conference's member States having a shared responsibility in formulating a text on a programme of work. As I once stated in the plenary Conference, the responsibility for devising a programme of work should no longer be entrusted solely to the President of the Conference. All members of the Conference should actively engage in that process.

Second, if the informal working group is to be established, then it should not be restricted to the 2013 Conference timetable, which usually ends before the First Committee begins. The President's proposal to consider having informal working group meetings in November and December is also sensible. We should also allow the possibility of extending its mandate beyond 2013 if we so wish, or if there is a need to do so.

Third, the mandate of an informal working group to formulate a programme of work is determined by the Conference as stipulated in rule 23 of the rules of procedure. As in any other multilateral body or forum, the chairperson of this informal group would consult and report to the President of the Conference regularly on the progress of the formulation of a programme of work. In this context, the respective mandates of the chairperson of an informal working group and the President of the Conference are not conflicting. In fact, the chairperson of an informal working group is assisting the President of the Conference in discharging the duty mandated in rule 29.

It is our fervent hope that the Conference can get back to its substantive work. We also hope that in this current session we will be able to do something to resolve the impasse of the Conference on Disarmament.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Indonesia for his statement and his kind words addressed to the Chair. The next speaker on the list is Ambassador Yoo of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Yoo Yeonchul (Republic of Korea): Thank you, Mr. President, for giving me the floor and for the warm welcome. As this is my first intervention as well, I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself very briefly.

As the President said, my family name is Yoo, and I would like to speak on behalf of "Yoo", hopefully after listening carefully to what "you" are saying. I would like, first, to listen to you and, later on, to discuss and take positions on Conference on Disarmament issues. What I can say now is that I am fully ready to support the work of the President and the Secretary-General, and I will do everything possible on my part to achieve the goal of the Conference.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of the Republic of Korea for his statement and his support, as well as his nice words towards the Chair.

I now give the floor to Mr. Victor Vasiliev of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Vasiliev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Allow me to begin, Mr. President, by echoing the words of welcome extended to our new colleagues as they take up their tasks. I wish them all — those with whom we have already worked before and those who are new to our number — every success in their work. In particular, I hope that Ambassador Yoo, when he one day takes the floor to bid us farewell at the end of his tour of duty, will not have to express regret that we have still been unable to make progress, but rather will be able to acknowledge substantial headway made in the work of our forum. In order for that to happen, however, we will need to engage in a significant effort now to agree on a programme of work.

Although you have not circulated a draft programme of work, Mr. President, I welcome your efforts to find a compromise programme of work for the Conference. We firmly believe that this is the only way to restore the credibility of, and indeed ensure the survival of, this forum. We regret that consensus could not be achieved on the proposals submitted by previous Presidents, which my delegation would have been prepared to support. As you know, Russia has informally circulated its own proposal for a programme of work. Given the current critical situation, we feel that the approach of adopting a simplified version as an interim measure is the best way forward. We hope that those delegations on whom a compromise depends will act responsibly in taking a decision. We of course stand ready to discuss any and all other approaches that could lead to the launching of substantive work in the Conference.

We welcome the efforts of the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Tokayev, to break the deadlock and relaunch the work of this forum. We agree with him that the Conference needs to be "rescued" through a joint effort. His idea of establishing an informal working group to prepare a programme of work is especially timely. The main task of that group, as we see it, would be to reach agreement on a programme of work: working methods and other procedural issues are of secondary importance. We support the Secretary-General's proposal that the mandate of the group should be formulated in very general terms. As for the work of the group after 2013, one possible way of consolidating the understandings achieved here — with regard to the work of the group and, possibly, to the programme of work — would be to include appropriate text in the draft resolution on the Conference's report that will be submitted to the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session.

The President: I thank Mr. Victor Vasiliev, the representative of the Russian Federation, for his statement and nice words toward the Chair. The next speaker is the Ambassador of China.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Mr. President, allow me to begin by expressing our appreciation for the engaged effort you have made since assuming the presidency to secure the adoption of a programme of work for the Conference on

Disarmament. You may be assured of our support as you continue to hold broad consultations to bridge differences and seek consensus in an open and transparent manner. We also wish to acknowledge the efforts of the previous President, the Ambassador of Iran, to move us forward towards the adoption of a programme of work for the Conference. I would like to take this opportunity as well to welcome our new colleagues who have recently taken up their posts.

Over the past few years, members have put forward a number of proposals for revitalizing the work of the Conference. China fully understands members' keen interest in finding more effective, innovative ways of advancing the work of the Conference and attaches special value to the thoughts shared by Secretary-General Tokayev on various occasions regarding ways to enhance the work of the Conference and thus strengthen the multilateral disarmament machinery. As for the establishment of an informal working group with a mandate to produce a programme of work, my delegation's preliminary view is that we support all efforts that would contribute to the adoption of a programme of work, as this is an urgent priority for the Conference. These efforts should respect the rule of consensus, which is a cornerstone of the Conference's rules of procedure and is crucial to defending and safeguarding the security interests of all member States on an equal footing. Broad consultations should be held so that the opinions of all member States may be heard, and an attempt should be made to find a practical solution that is acceptable to all.

China takes note of the ideas put forward by the secretariat concerning the working group's mandate, the selection of its chairperson and its duration; these ideas provided an excellent basis for today's discussion. The Chinese delegation is prepared to participate in this discussion with an open mind. In this regard, a number of issues will need to be considered carefully during the discussion, such as the eventual relationship between the mandate of the Chair of the working group and that of the President of the Conference. The overall objective should be to ensure that member States can interact in a positive way and work together to secure prompt adoption of a comprehensive and balanced programme of work and the start of substantive work in the Conference as soon as possible. At all events, China attaches great importance to Secretary-General Tokayev's recommendations on how to improve the work of the Conference, and we stand ready to collaborate with all partners to seek an appropriate and reasonable solution.

China supports the multilateral disarmament machinery, which includes the Conference on Disarmament, and hopes that this machinery will succeed in making progress towards disarmament and non-proliferation and in safeguarding international and regional peace and security. In this connection, we need to bear in mind that most member States are of the opinion that political and security factors lie at the root of the Conference's deadlock. Therefore, as we pursue our efforts within the Conference to explore ways of improving its work, we cannot ignore the importance of improving the political and security environment outside the Conference. We call on all parties to show political will, take positive steps and give due consideration to each other's concerns in order to create favourable conditions for breaking the deadlock in the Conference and resuming substantive work as soon as possible.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of China for his statement and his kind words towards the Chair and his support. The next speaker on the list is the representative of Malaysia.

Mr. Onn (Malaysia): Mr. President, as this is the first time my delegation is taking the floor this session, allow me to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. My delegation deeply appreciates the efforts and consultations that you, as well as the previous Presidents of the

Conference, have undertaken thus far. I wish to assure you of our full cooperation and support in our efforts to move the Conference forward.

We would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere appreciation to you for sharing your thoughts and suggestions on how the Conference could best move forward from here, taking into account the proposals put forth by the Secretary-General, Mr. Tokayev, on 18 June. On this note, we would like to thank the Secretary-General for his proposal, which we have studied carefully and feel merits further deliberation in the Conference.

Our delegation is of the view that the unfortunate continuing impasse in the Conference on Disarmament reflects a lack of serious commitment to achieving the goal of the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. The Conference has to reconquer its relevance as the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum of the international community. In this regard, we welcome the proposal by the Secretary-General on the establishment of an informal working group with a mandate to produce a programme of work.

However, any effort to produce a programme of work will be futile if there is a lack of commitment and sincerity among member States in agreeing to such a document. We appreciate the tremendous efforts made by previous Presidents in producing draft programmes of work, which sadly could not be agreed upon by all delegations. This informal working group would bear the same fate if there is no flexibility shown by delegations in ensuring substantive progress in the Conference. We feel that the red lines are already clear in the Conference. The challenge is how we can manoeuvre the Conference out of this predicament bearing in mind those red lines.

My delegation is optimistic on this proposal. We feel that in these difficult times we need to be optimistic. Even if the informal working group could not agree on a specific programme of work, it would be beneficial if it could deliberate on the factors that prevent the Conference from agreeing on a programme of work and suggest ways to overcome these stumbling blocks.

Regarding the timetable of work, we feel that the November–December period suggested for the meetings of the working group is acceptable. As you rightly pointed out, there are a number of disarmament-related meetings during this period and the scheduling of the working group meetings has to take these meeting dates into consideration so as to avoid any overlap. We also feel that it is important that the work of the informal working group be clearly outlined for a report to be submitted during the early part of the 2014 session of the Conference.

It goes without saying that an agreed programme of work is the utmost priority in the Conference on Disarmament, and member States should take the opportunity to start working on a programme of work at the earliest possible opportunity, including working beyond the normal session of the Conference in trying to resolve the current stalemate.

Malaysia also welcomes the proposal to establish a subsidiary body in accordance with rule 23 of the rules of procedure to examine and make proposals on improving the Conference's working methods. It is our understanding that your focus will be to conduct consultations with member States on a draft programme of work and to consider the establishment of an informal working group to produce such a document. In this regard, we would like to know your views on when you foresee a decision can be taken on the establishment of the subsidiary body and the modalities of its work. We would appreciate your views on this matter as we feel that the establishment of such a subsidiary body could be useful to examine whether the Conference's current working methods are hampering our progress.

Finally, we note that the Secretary-General has also proposed the designation of a special coordinator to examine and make proposals on the expansion of membership of the Conference and on the possible role that civil society may play in its work. As Malaysia has pointed out in the past, we see value in exploring the possibility of expansion of the membership of the Conference. We also recognize the positive contributions made by civil society to the work of this Conference. My delegation has certainly benefited from the active involvement of civil society in other disarmament forums and feels that the Conference on Disarmament could benefit tremendously through similar engagements. Therefore, we would like to seek your views on how the Conference can move forward with this proposal.

My delegation remains ready to work with you and other member States towards achieving a positive and successful outcome during your presidency. We welcome every opportunity to advance the work of the Conference on Disarmament, and the proposals put forth by the Secretary-General have the possibility of leading us in that direction.

The President: I thank the representative of Malaysia for his statement and his support as well as the nice words addressed to the Chair. The Netherlands is next on the list. Mr. Mark Versteden, you have the floor.

Mr. Versteden (Netherlands): Mr. President, as Ambassador van den IJssel has left Geneva and the new Dutch disarmament Ambassador, Mr. Hendrik van der Kwast, will arrive only in two weeks' time, allow me to congratulate you on assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. I can assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation. I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome all newly arrived Ambassadors to the Conference on Disarmament. My delegation looks forward to working with them.

Mr. President, you have asked us today to discuss the proposal that was put forward by Mr. Tokayev regarding the establishment of an informal working group with the task of producing a programme of work. We think that the establishment of an informal working group may indeed be worth exploring as a possible way forward to take us out of the current deadlock. Such a working group would make us all responsible for a programme of work, and not only the current Conference presidency. It is our firm belief that only when we work together can we make real progress towards the adoption and subsequent implementation of a programme of work. We have expressed many times that we believe the issue of fissile material is the topic for which there is the most support to start negotiations. We therefore think that a fissile material cut-off treaty or fissile material should be addressed in the work programme.

The President: I thank the representative of the Netherlands for his support and his statement, as well as the kind words towards the Chair. I give the floor to the representative of France.

Ms. Tang (France) (*spoke in French*): As this is the first time that France is taking the floor under your presidency, I wish to congratulate you, Mr. President, on the assumption of your responsibilities. We presided over the Conference at this time last year and therefore know how complex and difficult the summer presidency is. I take this opportunity to welcome the new Permanent Representatives of Germany, the United Kingdom, Chile and the Republic of Korea.

You have asked us today to discuss the proposals that were made by Mr. Tokayev. I wish to reiterate the position expressed by the Permanent Representative of France on two previous occasions, namely that we support the proposal to set up an informal working group to prepare a programme of work for the Conference.

For my country, the priority is now to negotiate a treaty to halt the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons. The proposed working group would provide a good opportunity to negotiate a programme of work that will allow a genuine consensus to be reached within this body.

The President: I thank the representative of France for her statement and her kind words addressed to the Chair. The next speaker will be the Ambassador of Germany again.

Mr. Biontino (Germany): I apologize for taking the floor again. Germany very much appreciates the proposal presented by Secretary-General Tokayev to the plenary on 18 June. We very much support your decision, Mr. President, to devote this plenary session to the discussion of one of the proposals for the establishment of an informal working group. Germany supports the establishment of an informal working group. Furthermore, after years of stalemate, the time is right for the Conference to review its methods and procedures and to pursue new avenues towards a programme of work. We deem practical the proposal to establish an informal working group furnished with a mandate to produce a programme of work, and we would like to underline that the discussion concerning the mandate, its duration and precise content should not be an impediment to the establishment of a working group itself and should not take too long. We furthermore believe that the creation or the work of a working group will allow member States to engage in interactive debate and create a programme of work that is up to the task of contributing to the Conference's work. We furthermore believe that the working group would provide a higher degree of transparency, which is a direct desirable goal in itself.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Germany for his statement and his support. The next speaker is India.

Mr. Gill (India): Mr. President, I would like to join the colleagues who have spoken before me in congratulating you on the assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and thank you for organizing this debate today. I would also like to welcome our new colleagues from Chile, the Republic of Korea, Germany and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. My delegation extends all our cooperation to them in our collective endeavours.

We would like to thank the Secretary-General, Mr. Tokayev, for his interest in promoting the substantive work of the Conference. His speech of 18 June contains ample food for thought and some specific proposals. I am sure that today's informal debate, which you have so kindly arranged, will give us more material for reflection. My delegation's touchstone for examining proposals aimed at revitalizing the Conference is whether these proposals take us closer to negotiating multilateral legally binding instruments or not, in keeping with the nature of this forum. In particular, we would like to judge whether such proposals bring us closer to negotiations on nuclear disarmament and a fissile material cut-off treaty, which are seen as part of the internationally agreed priorities on disarmament issues. We are ready to look at any or all proposals from that perspective.

In our view, the programme of work adopted in May 2009 was substantive and reflected international priorities. As our Algerian colleagues have often pointed out, it was not only substantive but it was also progressive over time in implementation. We would certainly like to believe that this is so with regard to nuclear disarmament, our highest priority. We agree, therefore, with the Secretary-General that we urgently need a programme of work that leads to negotiations, and that programme of work should be both robust in substance and progressive over time in implementation, as was the case with document CD/1864.

Now, with regard to the idea of an informal working group with a mandate to produce a programme of work, my delegation feels that this specific instrumentality needs to be examined from the perspective of the Conference's rules of procedure, in particular rule 29, which clearly delineates the Conference President's responsibility to produce a programme of work. We would not wish a situation where a diffused collectivity takes over this responsibility and prevents the Conference President from exercising his prerogative to table a draft programme of work.

Finally, with regard to the specific issues of continuity and inclusiveness which many delegations have referred to today: on continuity, we have noted the suggestion of the Secretary-General and some delegations today that the Conference's work needs to be carried over. In this regard, we wish to underline that the rules of procedure of the Conference, in particular rules 27 and 28, provide the specific possibility of ensuring such continuity through a specific reference to the decisions of the Conference, which, when we return to deciding the agenda and the programme of work of the Conference at the beginning of the year, we are obliged to take into account. The same applies to the issue of inclusiveness. The Conference's rules of procedure, in particular the rule of consensus, provide for the involvement of all member States in the work of the Conference. To conclude, Mr. President, my delegation believes that the best way to revitalize the Conference is to allow it to recommence substantive work. My delegation assures you and all incoming Presidents that we will spare no effort towards that end.

The President: I thank the representative of India for his statement and his support. The next speaker will be the representative of Cuba.

Mr. Quintanilla (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to begin, Mr. President, by congratulating you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and by recognizing your efforts to hold consultations aimed at achieving consensus on a programme of work for the Conference. On behalf of my Government, I would also like to welcome the new representatives of various countries who are joining us today. We assure you of the full cooperation of Cuba in the work of this body.

As to our discussion today, we thank you for having convened a plenary session to discuss this matter. The thoughts and ideas that we are hearing today will undoubtedly help all of us to continue reflecting on the Secretary-General's proposal to set up an informal working group. We are giving the proposal careful consideration. We believe, however, that more time is needed and that no decisions should be taken at this early stage. Moreover, we need to bear in mind that it is the summer and many ambassadors, including the Ambassador of Cuba, are not in Geneva; this slows down somewhat the process of taking decisions and positions on critical issues such as the one that we are discussing today. We shall thus continue to examine this proposal and, hopefully, in a couple of weeks' time, we will be able to return with some defined positions concerning the working group.

Lastly, we wish to associate ourselves with the observations made by several delegations on the importance of the rule of consensus. While we feel that there is a need for the Conference to return to substantive work, we remain convinced that the rule of consensus must be preserved and respected in all matters considered by the Conference on Disarmament.

Mr. Guerreiro (Brazil): Mr. President, first of all, let me congratulate you on your assumption of the office of President of the Conference on Disarmament and on the manner in which you have been conducting the presidency of the Conference. We very much appreciate your openness and your inclusiveness. We take this opportunity also to welcome the new Ambassadors who have spoken today.

We listened very carefully to the proposal made by the Secretary-General, Mr. Tokayev, for the establishment of an informal working group to discuss and, if possible, agree on a programme of work for this Conference. This proposal might have two advantages. They have been mentioned here before. One of them is continuity. If I am not mistaken, the representative of Algeria here at the Conference more than once has made an appeal for the Presidents not to forget what their predecessors have done. I feel that this is a very wise suggestion, because the way in which we are proceeding, whereby each President practically starts from scratch without moving forward with what his or her predecessors have done, is not conducive to bringing us closer to an agreement. As for an informal procedure, I recognize there are procedural hurdles which would have to be overcome – I think that the representative of India mentioned one of them, but I think that can be overcome. We believe that this is a good proposal. It will ensure not only continuity, but also transparency. It is important for each and every member of the Conference to know what the sticking points are, what exactly is preventing an agreement. Sometimes we can imagine what the problem is, but sometimes it is quite a difficult task to really understand the full complexity of what the problem is that is keeping us from being able to agree on a programme of work. So, I believe that your proposal building on the idea put forward by the Secretary-General is a good one. We will have to look very carefully at the ways in which we will have to, as they say, surmount some procedural problems. But I think that it is a right approach, and I thank you for that, Mr. President.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Brazil for his statement and support and for his kind words addressed to the Chair. Is there any delegate who would like to take the floor? I recognize Iran.

Mr. Daryaei (Islamic Republic of Iran): Mr. President, as this is the first time that I am taking the floor during your presidency, allow me to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. We are very pleased that a fellow member of the Group of 21 is presiding over the meeting so efficiently. As one of the Presidents for this session, we are absolutely aware and appreciative of all your diligent efforts in conducting consultations with Conference members on the issues related to the Conference. Allow me also to welcome all the new Ambassadors to the Conference and wish all of them success in discharging their very important Conference-related tasks. We, too, appreciate the proposal made by Mr. Tokayev, which is aimed at revitalization of the Conference. As we have said in many meetings, we attach great importance to the Conference as the sole negotiating body on disarmament. Thus, we support all efforts aimed at the start of substantive work in this august body, where for us the top priority is nuclear disarmament. We welcome constructive proposals that enhance the credibility and effective functioning of the Conference based on the rules of procedure.

Mr. President, we have received your non-paper outlining the different aspects of Mr. Tokayev's proposal on establishing a working group to produce a programme of work. We have transmitted this proposal to our capital and are waiting for final instructions. However, we believe that this is a very complicated issue and needs in-depth analysis; and I think we have to give delegations enough time to analyse the different aspects of this proposal. At this stage, the main question is: how can we fit this proposal in with the rules of procedure? Based on rule 29, the adoption of the programme of work is the main task of the President of the Conference. Establishing a subsidiary body or working group on the programme of work, with a different Chair other than the President of the Conference, may create conflicting responsibility. This rule will require the President to relinquish or delegate the majority of his or her responsibility, thus it will not fit well in the rules of procedure. With regard to inclusiveness, which is one of the purposes of this proposal, we also believe that the rule of consensus in the Conference provides enough assurances for all members to be

fully involved in any decision regarding the adoption of the programme of work. On the issue of continuity, we have the well-established mechanism of coordination among the six Presidents with regard to different proposals, which I think we might also be able to strengthen. In any event, we are open to examining this proposal further and the different consequences with regard to the rules of procedure.

The President: I thank the representative of Iran for his statement and his kind words addressed to the President. Does any other delegate wish to take the floor? That does not seem to be the case.

I would now like to suspend this plenary meeting for five minutes and start an informal interactive exchange of views on the first proposal presented by the Secretary-General, Mr. Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, on 18 June 2013 regarding the establishment of an informal working group with a mandate to produce a programme of work that would be robust in substance and progressive over time in implementation.

The meeting was suspended at 11.29 a.m. and resumed at 11.31 a.m.

The President: I now resume the plenary meeting for informal discussions. Would any delegate like to take the floor? That does not seem to be the case.

In that case, I will return back to the formal plenary meeting. Is there any delegate who would like the floor? Yes, Mr. Victor Vasiliev, the Chairman of the Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-Building Measures in Outer Space Activities.

Mr. Vasiliev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. President, I indeed would like to take the floor in my capacity as Chair of the Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-Building Measures in Outer Space Activities. I am pleased to report that the Group of Governmental Experts established by the Secretary-General of the United Nations in 2012 pursuant to General Assembly resolution 65/68 to conduct a study on transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities concluded its work on 12 July, in New York. The study, which was adopted by consensus, will be presented at the upcoming sixty-eighth session of the Assembly.

The report contains practical recommendations for consideration at the national, regional and international levels concerning voluntary measures to promote security in space activities and build confidence in this area with a view to promoting the peaceful use of outer space and preventing an arms race in outer space.

The report noted, inter alia, the work of the Conference on Disarmament in this area, in particular the number of documents that were submitted by the member States.

An important element of the report is the recommendation to strengthen coordination among the key players: States, national space agencies and relevant international organizations, in particular agencies of the United Nations.

We expect that the First Committee will adopt a resolution on the Group's findings at the upcoming sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly. We hope that Member States will take note of the report, will consider the recommendations contained therein and, if consistent with their national interests, will take — on a voluntary basis — practical measures for transparency and confidence-building in outer space activities.

The Conference, too, has a role to play in promoting transparency and confidence-building measures, as a number of the recommendations refer to the military and political aspects of space security. One of the report's recommendations is to refer the report to the Conference on Disarmament for consideration. If the

Conference adopts a programme of work, even if only with a mandate for discussion, we will have an opportunity to consider the proposed measures in a multilateral setting.

In conclusion, I would like to thank those colleagues and delegations who showed interest in the work of the Group, expressed their views and presented specific documents which were taken into account in the Group's work.

The President: I thank Mr. Victor Vasiliev for his statement. Would any other delegation like to take the floor? That does not seem to be the case.

Before I conclude this session, I would like to take this opportunity to share the fruitful ideas and proposals regarding the establishment of an informal working group. We will consider all the comments, statements and remarks made, and they will be taken into account when we consult with the member States on this important issue.

I now give the floor to the Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament to answer and comment on the questions which were raised by some members.

Mr. Sareva (Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament): Mr. President, on behalf of the secretariat I would also like to commend you on the work that you have been carrying out since late June and the consultations that you have been conducting very transparently and resolutely over these past several weeks during which the Conference on Disarmament was having its intersessional break. I commend you and your team for that.

Basically, the one thing that I would like to share with members of the Conference regarding the debate that we have had today — primarily on the first of Mr. Tokayev's proposals — has to do with the applicability of the rules of procedure of the Conference. This is basically the advice that the secretariat always gives in similar situations and similar debates, be that the debate in the General Assembly, in the Economic and Social Council, in the Security Council, in the Conference on Disarmament or in any other body that has its own rules of procedure and is essentially not subsidiary to a parent body.

As you know, the Conference on Disarmament reports to the General Assembly and the Assembly approves funding for the Conference, but the Conference on Disarmament is an independent body and it has its own rules of procedure. I now come to the advice which secretariats, be it a substantive department such as the Office for Disarmament Affairs or the Office for Legal Affairs, give under similar circumstances. When asked for advice, that advice universally is that the body or organ concerned is master of its own procedure. When not subsidiary to a higher authority, the body is master of its own procedure.

What that means is, essentially, that if there is agreement, then, of course, the Conference will have to work by consensus, as that is one of the cornerstones of its rules of procedure. As long as there is agreement, as long as something is politically possible, the Conference is master of its procedure and of its own fate. This means that if something were seen as contrary to the letter — or even to the spirit — of the rules of procedure, the organ, in this case the Conference, can take its fate, its procedures, in its own hands.

That is the key message, the key piece of advice that I want to share with you, but ultimately it is up to the member States to decide by consensus. But if there is agreement, I want to re-stress, if there is agreement by all, then the Conference can take its fate into its own hands and essentially amend or improvise on its rules of procedure. I am not saying that you should, but this is the advice that the secretariat is obliged to give.

The President: Does any other delegate want to make a comment? That does not seem to be the case.

This concludes our business for today. The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held next Tuesday, 6 August 2013, at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 11.50 a.m.