
Conference on Disarmament

20 August 2013

English

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

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 20 August 2013, at 10.15 a.m.

Chairperson: Mr. Gerard Corr. (Ireland)



The President: I call to order the 1297th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. I would like to extend a warm welcome to our distinguished guest today, His Excellency Mr. Valentin Rybakov, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Belarus. Your Excellency, you have the floor.

Mr. Rybakov (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. President, allow me to thank the Secretary-General of the Conference, Kassym-Jomart Kemelevich Tokayev, and also the previous President, Ambassador András Dékány of Hungary, for inviting me to participate in the work of the 2013 session of the Conference on Disarmament.

International security, arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament have always been among the main foreign policy priorities of Belarus.

Since independence, Belarus has always striven to contribute what it could to disarmament and the building of a nuclear-free world.

Twenty years ago, the Republic of Belarus signed the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons as a non-nuclear State. At the end of 1996, we completed the removal of all nuclear weapons from our territory, and we have fully discharged all our obligations under the treaties on the elimination of intermediate-range and shorter-range missiles and on the limitation and reduction of strategic offensive arms.

Our country has signed almost all international treaties and conventions in the field of arms control and disarmament, and we are working hard for their implementation.

We have supported international disarmament processes in view of the fact that the national security of our State can be assured only by strengthening regional and international security and stability. A peace-loving foreign policy and the strengthening of the system of international relations based on the primacy of international legal norms are the key principles of the national security blueprint of the Republic of Belarus.

Regrettably, at the beginning of the twenty-first century approaches aimed at building a unipolar world prevailed. It is well known that the attempt to create a unipolar model for the world system was not crowned with success. At the same time, the system of international relations based on the primacy of the principles of international law was badly thrown off balance. The past decade has to a large extent been a “lost” period in the field of disarmament. An atmosphere of mistrust and suspicion has arisen, and has become a source of crisis in many disarmament forums, including the Conference on Disarmament.

In our view, the Conference is failing to perform its negotiating role as a result of imbalance in the interests of States and the fact that they have different views of the paths to assuring national and regional security.

We consider that it is not the rules of procedure of the Conference which are hindering the resumption of negotiations in the Conference. The main source of the current deadlock is the international climate of mistrust and suspicion.

Belarus continues to regard the Conference on Disarmament as the sole multilateral negotiating body in the field of disarmament and arms control which, in our view, is of global significance. In this regard, we have a major interest in efforts by the Conference to fulfil its intended role and resume the negotiating process as soon as possible. We have no new recipes for addressing this task. They have been known for a long time. The main precondition for achieving this goal is political will on the part of all countries, big and small.

We hope that the high-level meeting on nuclear disarmament which is to be held on 26 September 2013 during the sixty-eighth session of the United Nations General Assembly will help to bring the Conference out of its crisis situation.

Other auxiliary measures are helpful, in our view, if they are aimed at securing a concrete result and enjoy the consensus support of as many key world stakeholders as possible.

We do not welcome steps to form any kind of new structures or processes to replace the Conference on Disarmament.

We consider that parallel actions in the field of disarmament must not split the international community. Setting up any parallel processes to develop new international agreements on nuclear disarmament without the participation of all the members of the nuclear P5 is an option which will lead to a blind alley. What is more, we believe that dispersing the human and financial resources of the member countries of the United Nations at a time of global economic crisis is counterproductive.

In general, rectifying the situation in the Conference and seeking international consensus requires time and substantial effort, first and foremost on the part of the permanent members of the Security Council.

The history of substantive work in the Conference shows that the starting of negotiations in the Conference has been preceded by bilateral and multilateral agreement among the heads of the key States of the world concerning the desirability of working on particular treaties or conventions in the Conference.

Belarus maintains a flexible position concerning the adoption of a programme of work for the Conference and its implementation. Our delegation was ready to support each of the draft programmes of work which have been submitted during the current session of the Conference, including the versions providing for the approval of a "discussion mandate".

Last week the Conference managed to achieve agreement on the setting up of an informal working group on the programme of work of the Conference. This shows that the Conference can take decisions on the basis of consensus and has the potential required for conducting negotiations. We express the hope that this step will foster a resumption of substantive work in the Conference, and will also make it possible to resolve the question of expansion of the membership of the Conference, to include full participation in its meetings by the Geneva negotiating forum of representatives of research institutes and civil society.

Belarus has no preconditions as to how the negotiating process in the Conference might be organized. We are ready to support either a comprehensive approach aimed at reaching agreement on a convention banning nuclear weapons, or a step-by-step strategy involving a speedy start to negotiations on a treaty to ban the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

At the same time, we attach great importance to the issue of preventing an arms race in outer space. The position of Belarus in this regard is fairly clear. In view of the fact that there are gaps in current space law, additional guarantees that space will be used peacefully are needed. Our State has its own national space programme, as part of which a remote sensing satellite was launched into orbit around the Earth last year. In this regard, we welcome the draft Treaty on Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space submitted to the Conference for consideration by Russia and China. As advocates of the preventive approach, we consider that the international community must take all possible steps to develop the proposed Treaty before the presence of weapons in space around the Earth becomes a reality.

We support the provision of legally binding, unconditional security assurances to the non-nuclear countries concerning the non-use of nuclear weapons and prevention of the threat of their use by the nuclear Powers.

Another of the important items on the agenda of the Conference is “New types of weapons of mass destruction and new systems of such weapons; radiological weapons”.

The resolution on this subject which has been adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on the initiative of Belarus since 1996 calls on the Conference to continue to address this issue with a view to making recommendations on undertaking negotiations on identified types of such weapons. We initiated the adoption of this resolution in view of the need to prevent the emergence of new types of weapons of mass destruction whose strike capacity is comparable to that of existing weapons. We are convinced that the Conference is the most appropriate forum for further consideration of this topic.

The Republic of Belarus considers that there is no alternative to universal multilateral agreements in the field of disarmament which can provide a single set of practical rules for all States without exception.

The Republic of Belarus, which has demonstrated many times its adherence to a policy of comprehensive disarmament, intends to continue to be an active participant in this process. We are ready for fruitful work in this direction, aimed at securing concrete results, and also for active cooperation with all States participating in the Conference on Disarmament.

The President: I thank His Excellency Mr. Rybakov for his important and wide-ranging statement and also for his kind words addressed to the President.

Allow me now to suspend the meeting for a short moment in order to escort the Deputy Foreign Minister from the chamber.

The meeting was briefly suspended.

The President: The plenary meeting is resumed. Before we proceed, I would like to bid farewell to our colleagues Ambassador Cosimo Risi of Italy and Ambassador Mari Amano of Japan, who will soon be relinquishing their posts as Ambassadors to the Conference on Disarmament. On behalf of the Conference, and on behalf of my own Government, I wish them success in their new assignments.

Please allow me also to welcome the Youth Communicators for a World without Nuclear Weapons. We very much appreciate your presence in the Conference today.

Before moving on with our business, I wish to inform you that the Division of Conference Management of the United Nations Office at Geneva has prepared a survey for our meeting. Delegates will be invited to fill in the questionnaire concerning the quality of conference services of the meeting. The survey is available online as of today and until the conclusion of our meeting in September. I have been informed that conference room officers will be circulating in the room seeking your input to the survey, and that they are equipped with iPads in order to assist delegates in accessing the survey and filling it in. Delegates are also able to access the survey using the displayed Quick Response (QR) codes on their smartphones or tablet devices. Your feedback on the quality of conference servicing at meetings is important to the Division of Conference Management in their efforts to provide more efficient and effective meetings, and I would therefore like to encourage all delegates to participate in the survey as it only takes a few minutes.

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

It is an honour for Ireland to assume the sixth presidency of the Conference on Disarmament in 2013. This is only the second time that Ireland has assumed the presidency since we became a member in 1999.

As the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of Ireland noted in his address to the Conference on 27 February this year, over several decades this Conference has played a central role in promoting the rule of law in disarmament. That sentiment was echoed by each of the high-level speakers who addressed this Conference during our 2013 session. At the same time, he and a significant majority of those high-level speakers and delegations referred to the ongoing impasse in this body.

In its resolution 67/72 last year, the General Assembly called on the Conference to further intensify consultations and explore possibilities for overcoming its ongoing deadlock. I would like to pay tribute to Ambassador Naziri Asl of Iran, Ambassador Wibowo of Indonesia, Ambassador Mehta of India and Ambassador Dékány of Hungary for responding to that call with skill, dedication and enthusiasm.

To my immediate predecessor, Ambassador Ismail of Iraq, and his colleagues, I would also like to express my appreciation and admiration for the way in which they tackled the task of President. The adoption of a decision by the Conference last Friday based on document CD/1956/Rev.1 offers the Conference a significant opportunity which I hope we can collectively use to get the Conference back to negotiation of multilateral legally binding instruments in the field of disarmament.

The informal working group which the Conference has decided to establish, with a mandate to produce a programme of work that is robust in substance and progressive over time in implementation, owes a great deal to Secretary-General Tokayev for planting an idea and to Ambassador Ismail for nurturing that idea to reality.

The responsibility for drafting and presenting a programme of work for the consideration of the Conference naturally remains with the President, in accordance with rule 29 of our rules of procedure. My delegation considers that the informal working group will provide invaluable assistance to the President in preparing a draft programme of work for consideration by the Conference. I will contact Ambassador Gallegos of Ecuador, as Co-Chair of the group and will meet with him and the Vice-Co-Chair, Ambassador Woolcott of Australia, as early as possible this week. I shall brief you on our consultations at the earliest opportunity. The decision to establish the informal working group states that the Co-Chair, Ambassador Gallegos of Ecuador, shall establish the group's timetable, in consultation with the President, and I hope that it will be possible to start work in the coming days.

In addition to the responsibility to seek consensus on a programme of work, one of the responsibilities also entrusted to Ireland as final President of the Conference in 2013 is the drafting of the annual report, with the assistance of the secretariat, for consideration by the membership.

Before commencing work on the report and before the informal working group commences its work, my delegation felt that it might be worth reflecting on some ways in which the Conference, in the future, might wish to examine how it works. Yesterday the secretariat circulated an informal paper prepared by Ireland in which we set out some questions on which we believe that it would be worthwhile to reflect. Accordingly, I have suggested for today's plenary meeting that we look at wider landscape issues regarding the work of the Conference and its structures. The Conference has proved, through the decision to establish the informal working group, that it is prepared to think outside the box. As we approach the final weeks of the Conference's 2013 session, it may also be timely to reflect on wider issues in terms of

the revitalization of the Conference on Disarmament, and how the Conference may fulfil the mandate entrusted to it.

This Conference is at a critical juncture. It is clear to all of us — certainly it is clear to the United Nations system and the wider international community — that the Conference, the world's multilateral disarmament negotiation forum, has been for many years paralysed and has failed to meet its responsibilities. We have had successive Presidents this year consult on or propose possible draft programmes of work. The failure to agree on any of these draft programmes of work means our problem really goes far beyond this chamber. The establishment of an informal working group to produce a programme of work that is robust in substance and progressive over time in implementation offers us a new opportunity to work collectively to achieve our common goals. It is an opportunity that we cannot afford to waste.

The informal paper circulated asks some questions on how we might move forward. The starting point surely has to be that it is important to the United Nations and the international community that a central disarmament negotiating body should exist and that it should function effectively.

The failure of this body to work over many years is not a neutral fact: it has meant that work to advance the multilateral disarmament topics set out in our agenda is either not being done or, increasingly, the focus of work on them has moved elsewhere. And this reality is a substantial challenge to this Conference. We need, therefore, to look imaginatively and creatively at why we have failed to negotiate treaties in this Conference — that is what we are here for — and what we, and our capitals, can do to reverse what has been, honestly, a process of stagnation and paralysis. We all know this. We have to decide what to do about it. The decision contained in document CD/1956/Rev.1 is a good and new step forward. It is up to us how to proceed.

I would now like to outline briefly my approach to preparing the draft of the Conference's annual report. With the assistance of the Secretary-General, I have prepared a draft report, as required by rule 44, for the consideration of the membership. In preparing the report, I was guided by the report that the Conference agreed in 2012, being the most recent report we agreed as a Conference, and also by previous annual reports. I have also been guided by rule 45 of the rules of procedure, which sets out elements of what a draft report should contain. I hope that delegations will conclude that the draft reflects the requirement set out in rule 45 that the report shall be factual and reflect the negotiation and work of the Conference. At the end of today's meeting, I will outline the schedule for consideration of the draft annual report.

So, as President over the coming four weeks I look forward to working with and serving all delegations. We have work to do, and I believe we can do this work effectively and in ways that take account of the views of all members of the Conference.

Following the adoption of the decision contained in document CD/1956/Rev.1 on 16 August 2013, and in the light of the revitalization debates that have taken place in the Conference this year, I would, as I have stated, therefore like to solicit some reflection on wider landscape issues related to the Conference work. It is my intention to devote part of today's plenary to the informal paper that has been circulated.

I will now turn to the list of speakers for today. I now give the floor to the representative of Italy, Ambassador Cosimo Risi.

Mr. Risi (Italy) (*spoke in French*): As I am the first speaker to take the floor after the Deputy Minister, I would like to wish you good luck in your task, Mr. President. We have known each other for some time now, ever since Brussels. We were neighbours, or near neighbours, in Geneva. You have a heavy task before you, and I wish you the best of luck.

The decision taken last week to set up a working group is a step in the right direction and one that I hope will enable the Conference on Disarmament to move beyond its long-standing impasse.

Although I am indeed leaving Geneva, I will not be moving far as I have been transferred to the Swiss capital, Bern. My Government has appointed me to the post of Ambassador of Italy to Switzerland following the tragic death, in June, of my colleague in Bern. Switzerland holds special importance for Italy as its neighbour. We could not leave our embassy in Bern without a head of mission. I was selected for the post and am happy to take up the assignment. This is a very sudden development and I will not have the time to take leave of all of you. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Tokayev, who is not here with us today, the Deputy Secretary-General, Mr. Sareva, who is present today, and all the members of the secretariat, including Ms. Mercogliano, for obvious reasons.

I wish to assure the presidency that the delegation of Italy will continue to cooperate fully after my departure. The Deputy Permanent Representative, Ms. Simona Battiloro, will be responsible for disarmament issues and will travel to New York to take part in the work of the First Committee. I would, therefore, like to thank everyone, my colleagues and the staff, and yet again to wish the President luck with his work.

The President: I thank the representative of Italy for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the President, and wish him on behalf of the Conference and all delegations every success and happiness in his new assignment.

I now give the floor to the representative of Japan, Ambassador Mari Amano.

Mr. Amano (Japan): Thank you very much, Mr. President, for your warm words. I would like to begin by congratulating you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. I assure you of my delegation's full support throughout your term and in making a fair and objective report to the United Nations General Assembly. I wish also to commend Ambassador Ismail and his team for the vigorous efforts they have put into establishing an informal working group on the programme of work.

Mr. President, as I indicated two weeks ago, I have asked for the floor today to introduce to you and to all the distinguished colleagues the Youth Communicators for a World without Nuclear Weapons, who are present in this chamber with us. They are all high-school students from across Japan who have volunteered to join this new initiative, which was launched by the Japanese Foreign Minister, Fumio Kishida, in June. These young students, together with the direct sufferers of the atomic bombings, strive to provide a clear understanding of the consequences of the use of nuclear weapons. Their role is to preserve and pass on the facts and stories of suffering and survival of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Achieving a world without nuclear weapons is not an easy task. Therefore, continuing efforts based on strong will and the support of citizens worldwide is indispensable. To this end, I am proud to see these teenagers playing a role in our endeavour towards eliminating nuclear weapons. They are the sixteenth generation of Nagasaki Peace Messengers, and in that capacity they are delivering petitions to the United Nations Office at Geneva calling for a world without nuclear weapons. This is

a special year: thanks to their continued efforts of gathering signatures, they have collected over 1 million signatures in total since 2000. This is no small feat, and I sincerely thank them for their commendable efforts.

This is the last plenary meeting of the Conference that I will be attending, as my assignment is ending as the Permanent Representative of Japan to this distinguished body. Despite all the efforts by every one of us here, it is regrettable to leave without seeing the Conference agree on a programme of work that would enable us to start negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty. Nevertheless, I recognize that various attempts are being made, such as the Group of Governmental Experts on a fissile material cut-off treaty, the open-ended working group to take forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations and, more recently, an agreement on establishing an informal working group on the programme of work. When we look ahead with a longer perspective, as we can see today, a new generation is arriving to carry on our mission towards a world without nuclear weapons. There is no reason to be overly pessimistic. Rather, I hope that many of our Governments will reaffirm the importance of education in their nuclear disarmament endeavours.

I would like to end my statement by thanking you, Mr. President, as well as all the Ambassadors and other colleagues, Secretary-General Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, Deputy Secretary-General Jarmo Sareva and other members of the secretariat, members of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, civil society and all other United Nations staff who support this Conference. I have thoroughly enjoyed working with all of you and hope that you will kindly extend the same support and friendship to my successor, Ambassador Toshio Sano, whom I believe you are very familiar with. I also thank my own team, which has always supported me throughout these two years. I wish you all good luck.

The President: I thank the representative of Japan, Ambassador Amano, for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the President. I thank him also for introducing the Youth Communicators for a World without Nuclear Weapons, who are very welcome today. On behalf of the Conference, I wish you, Ambassador, every success in the future.

I now give the floor to the next speaker on the list: the representative of Spain.

Mr. Cartagena Núñez (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): Speaking both on behalf of Ambassador Gil Catalina and in my personal capacity, I would like to begin by conveying to Ambassadors Risi and Amano, who have just taken the floor to say farewell to the Conference, appreciation and best wishes in their personal and professional endeavours.

Mr. President, I am taking the floor briefly to thank you for the informal paper entitled “Work of the Conference on Disarmament: challenges and future direction” that you circulated yesterday. That paper marks a promising start for a presidency born under the sign of the consensus reached on Friday, 16 August 2013, on the setting up of an informal group with a mandate to produce a programme of work.

A number of the delegations present today feel that the importance of that agreement should not be exaggerated insofar as the corresponding decision was belated, it is unclear how it will be implemented and it does not pursue the purpose for which the Conference on Disarmament was established. Although, to a certain extent, it can share that view, this delegation believes that the decision reached undoubtedly has a symbolic value. The fact that such a consensus has been achieved on a procedural matter would suggest that further agreement on substantive issues may be possible. I wish to congratulate the delegation of Iraq on its achievement and to pay tribute to the dedication and energy with which it accomplished that task.

Mr. President, you asked us to provide comments on the paper you circulated. I fear that, particularly at this time of year, our administrative machinery is not capable of dealing with that request on such short notice. However, I would like to make one comment, with the aforementioned reservations, that is to say, very preliminary observations that are not necessarily representative of any conclusions that might be reached following a more lengthy period of contemplation.

At first glance, we see that this document is full of questions and is an almost existential reflection on the nature, functions, duties and approach of the Conference. It is not the first time we have raised these or similar questions in recent years, but it continues to be appropriate to do so, firstly, because, in his statement of 18 June 2013, Secretary-General Tokayev invited us to do so and, secondly, because, the setting up of an informal group to draw up a programme of work will necessarily lead us to try to find some of the answers. Consequently, we understand this as a brave attempt to provide a framework for the upcoming discussions.

Inevitably, the paper focuses heavily on the rules of procedure. This is a debate which centres largely, although not exclusively, on the consensus rule, or rather the interpretation of that rule which has been developed within the Conference over the years. Many delegations have stated that, in this Conference, where the highest security interests of its member States are at stake, the rule is a feature which cannot be relinquished. It has also been pointed out that the consensus formula which is currently being called so much into question has, in the past, led to significant agreements that have strengthened the disarmament and non-proliferation regime.

Although valid, those observations neither explain nor resolve the problem of the impasse affecting the Conference. Certain commentators, going a step further, have studied the issue of updating the rules of procedure to reflect the current situation of the Conference and it is here that a certain incongruity may be detected. To put it another way, these rules of procedure, designed for and by the smaller bodies which preceded the current Conference, some of whose members were subject to more or less explicit group discipline, suited that situation well. However, nowadays, applied to different circumstances, they can constitute an obstacle.

The consensus formula, which should be seen as both a practice and an outcome, has, in this body, been interpreted as a kind of procedural straitjacket, which — while perhaps not the main reason for the deadlock — dramatically slows the pace of any kind of progress. The boundary between the concepts of consensus and unanimity is being blurred within this forum. Consequently, we believe that any observations involving reconsideration of the value, meaning and purpose of the rules of procedure and, in particular, the consensus rule, are useful, though they should not necessarily lead us to amend their wording.

Another aspect of procedure raised is that of the presidential terms of the Conference. In our view, it would make sense to consolidate them by extending their length and thus reducing their number. The current brief mandates may well be undermining efforts to fully explore the scope of proposals. However, that has not prevented this year's Presidents from making good use of the time available to them, as shown by the large number of proposals made on the programme of work.

It is also suggested in your paper that, in embarking on the drafting of a programme of work, the Conference should consider the potential of adopting language which allows for elasticity. We wish to advise a degree of caution in that regard. We believe that the desire to achieve consensus is wholly legitimate; however, when pushed to its limits, constructive ambiguity can lead to agreements which are unclear or too general in nature and which only postpone the need for more concrete accords. We cannot lose sight of the fact that the Conference is a forum for

negotiations and, when negotiating, sooner or later you have to deal with the essentials. To do otherwise could induce a false impression of progress that does nothing either for the forum or for its members.

In conclusion, Mr. President, we thank you very much for having circulated this preliminary paper. We believe it provides food for thought, and we promise more thoroughgoing comments at a later stage. We share with you the spirit in which we believe this contribution was made — the refusal to consider that the current situation is fine, the belief that it cannot be improved and that no other solution exists. As de Tocqueville once said: “What we call necessary institutions are often no more than institutions to which we have grown accustomed.”

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

I now give the floor to the representative of the Netherlands.

Mr. Verstedden (Netherlands): Mr. President, let me first congratulate you on assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and assure you of the full support of my delegation. Let me also thank the Ambassadors of Italy and Japan, who are leaving us. I wish them all the best.

As you know, together with Switzerland and South Africa, the Netherlands was one of the initiators of resolution 66/66 of the General Assembly of the United Nations, which was aimed at the revitalization of the disarmament machinery and in particular the Conference on Disarmament.

Against this background we welcome all three proposals by Mr. Tokayev, which are aimed at the revitalization of the Conference, and we thank you for bringing them to our attention again.

We welcome the adoption of the decision contained in document CD/1956/Rev.1 and look forward to the start of the informal working group. We stand ready to actively contribute to its work and sincerely hope that this working group can indeed produce a programme of work which will enable us to start negotiations — which is our real work — here in the Conference on Disarmament.

We think it is also high time to review our work methods. Some will say that our work methods have served us well in the past to negotiate treaties. Although that is true, even a well-functioning factory should every now and again review if it can improve its work methods with a view to enhance efficiency. For this factory, it is high time to look at its work processes, as its reputation has been damaged by the very limited production and output for the past 15 years.

Mr. President, in your paper you have put forward some interesting and pragmatic ideas on the work methods, which in our view should be seriously considered by the Conference.

We support further exploration of your proposals regarding lengthening the Conference's presidencies and taking the resolutions of the General Assembly into account in the programme of work. We also agree that we should take a good look at what we mean exactly by consensus and address the question of whether we need the consensus rule for everything we do. We furthermore support the nomination of a coordinator for addressing the expansion of the Conference's membership, and we also think that the Conference may indeed profit from a larger role of civil society in our deliberations.

Finally, Mr. President, you put to us a range of questions on several aspects of our work methods. We are still studying these carefully and will come back with our views on them in due course.

The President: I thank the representative of the Netherlands for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the President. I now give the floor to the next speaker on my list, the representative of Switzerland.

Mr. Masmejean (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, allow me to join the delegations that preceded me in congratulating you on your appointment to the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. Rest assured that you can depend on the unfailing support and cooperation of my delegation as you go about your work.

We also wish to thank the outgoing Iraqi presidency for its ceaseless efforts to secure the adoption of a programme of work and to congratulate it, yet again, on the setting up of an informal working group to produce a programme of work. The adoption of document CD/1956/Rev.1 is a positive development in our view. Although the informal working group will face clear and considerable challenges, its establishment is an encouraging sign of the willingness of the members of the Conference to explore new avenues in order to overcome the long-standing impasse affecting this body.

The informal working group will enable us to explore a new approach to the drafting of a programme of work. We should not, however, allow this development to distract us from the need to address more systematic shortcomings affecting the working of the Conference. The fact that obstacles have been perpetuated over time and continue to arise, despite the dramatic changes that have affected the political context since 1997, lead us to conclude that we also need to examine the issue of improving the working of this body. The suggestion made by our Secretary-General, Mr. Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, in his statement of 18 June 2013, that a subsidiary body should be established to examine and make proposals on the Conference's working methods seems to us to be particularly timely.

Against that background, we welcome the Irish presidency's suggestion that wider issues regarding the Conference's work should be examined during the current plenary meeting. We are particularly grateful to the presidency for having submitted an informal paper on the challenges facing the Conference and its future direction as a basis for discussions.

Mr. President, the informal paper you have submitted to the Conference raises some particularly relevant questions. Allow me to make some preliminary remarks in that regard.

We firmly believe that any lasting revitalization of the Conference requires the availability of working methods that will facilitate, rather than inhibit, political processes. The Conference's procedures should help to make it easier, not harder, to achieve consensus.

That observation applies, first of all, to the way in which we address the programme of work. In particular, paragraph 21 of the paper refers to a number of elements related to this issue. The question of whether we are currently handling the establishment of the programme of work in the best possible manner is a legitimate one. Other solutions, simpler and more progressive over time, may be envisaged. In this way, the programme of work could take the form of a simple schedule of activities, with periods of time being allocated to the various agenda items. The advantage of such an approach would be to separate the adoption of the programme of work from the mandates for specific issues. It would offer the possibility of examining the substance of each issue individually and in depth in plenary meetings and, then, if progress made allowed and demanded it, further studying them in a subsidiary body established during the course of the year to carry out negotiations on an instrument. It would enable us to determine case by case whether progress is possible and a

negotiating mandate is appropriate, and avoid a situation where progress on one issue proves impossible because of links made with advances in other areas.

Such an approach to the programme of work could allow us to provide a response to the current problem which is preventing us from starting work on any issues of substance. It would also allow us to take a more dynamic and flexible approach to its work over time. An essentially similar approach employed by the Conference during the 1990s was particularly productive, and its efforts met with success.

Another important issue raised in the presidency's informal paper is that of the elements that should be taken into account by the Conference when drawing up its agenda and programme of work. The views and proposals put forward by the members of the Conference certainly have a significant role to play in this regard. However, we should also not ignore the fact that, although, under the mandate assigned to it, the Conference has a universal responsibility, participation in this body is limited. Consequently, it seems to us particularly timely and necessary for the Conference to pay more heed to the considerations expressed by the General Assembly when drawing up its agenda and its programme of work. As has been suggested on several occasions by the delegation of the United Kingdom and in the informal paper itself, the Conference should adopt a more systematic approach in order to better take the General Assembly's views into account.

As has also been shown by our discussions over the past few weeks, we are faced with the issue of whether the drafting of the programme of work should essentially be dealt with by the current President or on a collective basis. In that regard, we wish to point out that, according to the rules of procedure, the Conference is to establish its programme of work (para. 28) and the programme of work is to be drawn up by the President (para. 29). This seems to us to provide the basis for an approach to the programme of work that is more collective in nature than the existing one and is in keeping with the fact that all the member States of the Conference have a responsibility to seek a way out of the current impasse.

With regard to the rotating presidency of the Conference, it is certain that extending the presidential terms could help to ensure continuity, and potentially a more effective Conference on Disarmament.

Turning to the role of civil society, referred to in paragraphs 17 and 18 of the paper, we fully support those who urge the Conference to think seriously about ways in which it could enhance relations in this regard. Civil society has long sought to enhance its contribution to the work of the Conference. Because the Conference has restricted it to a solely marginal role to date, it has not been able to offer its expertise fully in support of our activities. Here, the Conference on Disarmament could follow the example of other bodies.

Concerning the consensus rule, we have already made our position clear on a number of occasions. A review of the Conference's working methods would not, in our view, be aimed at calling the rule into question. It is closely linked to this Conference, even if, for many of us, it often seems to be highly restrictive. Consequently, while the Conference's working methods could be examined in order to see how to encourage a degree of restraint in the use of this rule, the aim should not be to call into question the rule itself.

Mr. President, the paper you circulated raises a number of extremely important issues, which deserve to be systematically studied in depth.

As pointed out by the Secretary-General of the Conference, various paths must be explored in order to ensure that the Conference is restored as a functioning body.

The establishment of an informal working group responsible for producing a programme of work constitutes a first step in that direction. Further steps will have to be taken if we are to reach our destination. The launching of a structured process consisting of a review of the working methods of the Conference and efforts to make it more efficient are necessarily at the centre of any such undertaking.

Our response to the question contained in paragraph 23 of the informal paper distributed by the Irish presidency continues to be positive. We remain convinced that a functioning Conference on Disarmament is essential if the international community is to meet the challenges of international security and disarmament. We also remain wholly convinced that it is vital to preserve the Geneva-based disarmament community that has developed around the Conference on Disarmament. Consequently, for us the revitalization of this body continues to be a central concern.

Before concluding, on behalf of the delegation of Switzerland, I wish to take this opportunity to thank the Ambassadors of Japan and Italy for their significant contributions to our work and to convey to them our best wishes for their future careers.

The President: I thank the representative of Switzerland for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the President.

I now give the floor to the representative of New Zealand.

Mr. Ballard (New Zealand): Mr. President, New Zealand congratulates you and your country, Ireland, our fellow member of the New Agenda Coalition, on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. We are indeed heartened to have you presiding over our work at the time when we begin to follow through on the decision taken last week to establish an informal working group to elaborate a programme of work. We thank your predecessor, the Ambassador of Iraq, and his team for his leadership and the hard work that led to the adoption of the decision contained in document CD/1956/Rev.1. Allow me also to take this opportunity to offer my delegation's best wishes to the Ambassadors of Italy and Japan as they leave Geneva.

Mr. President, your task of course also involves shepherding the Conference to the finalization of its report to the General Assembly. This is no easy task, and my delegation offers you our fullest support and confidence as you carry out your responsibilities.

Mr. President, we would also like to thank you for the informal paper that you provided us yesterday. We agree that it raises a number of important issues which do indeed need to be considered if we are to strengthen the effectiveness of the Conference and facilitate its return to meaningful work. New Zealand has made its views known on many of these questions, including on the Conference's methods of work, use of the rule of consensus, expansion of the Conference's membership and the need for greater inclusion of civil society on a number of occasions. I will not repeat those views here again today, but I would wish to reinforce, above all, the paper's assertion that "something has got to give" if the status quo is to be changed and the Conference's long paralysis resolved.

As the paper points out, that will need to be a change either in the substance of what is blocking progress or in the way the Conference carries out its work. If we are serious about preserving the Conference on Disarmament, then work must continue on both fronts. We very much welcome your efforts to guide the Conference in that direction.

The President: I thank the representative of New Zealand for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the President.

I now give the floor to the representative of Canada, Ambassador Goldberg.

Ms. Golberg (Canada): Mr. President, as this is the first time I am taking the floor under your tenure, let me welcome you to your duties and assure you of the positive cooperation and support of Canada in your presidency.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to the delegation of Iraq for their considerable work as President of the Conference.

Mr. President, further to your informal non-paper, let me offer the following preliminary Canadian perspectives for your consideration.

Despite the best efforts of the vast majority of its members, the Conference on Disarmament has regrettably failed again to overcome its 17-year paralysis and fulfil its role as a forum for multilateral disarmament negotiation. We therefore welcome the informal paper you have circulated with a view to revitalizing its important work. While the ideas in the paper are not new, they are presented in a coherent framework and pose some important questions with regard to the future functioning of this Conference.

Canada welcomes the creation of the informal working group established by the decision contained in document CD/1956/Rev.1 to produce a programme of work that is robust in substance and progressive over time in implementation. We thank the Iraqi Ambassador for his tireless work in this regard. We trust that delegations will come to the informal working group with a spirit of cooperation, ready to speak openly and move beyond the repetitive debates heard in Conference plenaries. We, as a Conference, have agreed that we share the burden of developing a programme of work with our President, and Canada stands ready to support our Co-Chair and Vice-Co-Chair in this important task.

The creation of the informal working group has demonstrated that the members of the Conference have the capacity to take decisions to seek to move the Conference forward. We must now ensure that we have the appropriate rules of procedure to allow any resulting programme of work to be implemented. As such, Canada strongly supports the proposal made by Secretary-General Tokayev to create a subsidiary body to examine and make proposals on the working methods of the Conference.

This Conference needs rules to govern its work and assure all members that their interests will be protected. However, these rules must adapt to modern realities. Indeed, while the global political context has changed drastically since this Conference was first mandated, its procedures have not evolved. We need to examine past and current practice to determine if, and which, changes could facilitate the resumption of substantive work. One issue States must examine is the rule of consensus. Use of the consensus rule in the Conference on Disarmament has increasingly drifted from its original intent, which was to protect a State's national security interests. If we continue to apply consensus not only to substantive but also procedural matters, this body will never operate effectively, even if the informal working group is able to develop a programme of work.

(spoke in French)

The members of the Conference must also seriously examine the role of the rotating presidency. We agree that one month is not enough time for the President to carry out the necessary consultations, build up the requisite relationships and provide the Conference with direction. We should seek to determine whether extending the duration of the presidential terms or altering the presidential selection process might be beneficial to the Conference. In addition to the duration of the presidency, we also need to take into account the incumbents. Canada believes that the Conference loses some of its credibility when its presidency is occupied by the very persons considered

by the United Nations Security Council to be in contravention of their non-proliferation obligations. Finally, as we enter this new phase marked by the creation of the informal working group, we must seriously reflect on the way in which we have, over the past two decades, sought to draw up and adopt a programme of work. The aim of the programme of work is to support the substantive work of the Conference. But some members now make use of it to prevent any real work from being carried out. It is necessary, we think, to consider how, in accordance with rule 27 of the rules of procedure, the Conference can better take into account the work of the United Nations General Assembly when drawing up its programme of work. We must reflect on how work could be carried out in plenary and on how subsidiary bodies, particularly those with a negotiating mandate, could be set up independently of a decision on the programme of work.

In conclusion, we cannot resolve all the problems affecting the Conference simply by addressing procedural issues. If substantive negotiations are to begin again within the Conference on Disarmament, then we will need to display flexibility and a willingness to seriously take into account not only limited national concerns but also the best interests and the expectations of the international community. An examination of the extent to which our existing tools meet our needs could lead to an improved environment in which adaptability and the spirit of compromise are encouraged, thereby revitalizing the Conference and helping it to assert its relevance.

The President: I thank the representative of Canada for her statement and for the kind words addressed to the President.

I now give the floor to the representative of Pakistan, Ambassador Zamir Akram.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): Mr. President, first of all I would like to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency and assure you of our fullest cooperation, especially in the task of writing the report of the Conference on Disarmament, as well as taking forward the work that we have started in terms of the informal working group.

I would also like to take this opportunity to bid farewell to our friends the Ambassadors of Japan and Italy, and we wish them all success in their future.

Mr. President, we have carefully studied your informal paper, and I would like to take this opportunity to respond to some of the issues that you have raised in that paper. In my last brief statement at the time when we adopted document CD/1956, I had said that we must proceed on the basis of realism and pragmatism. We need to be pragmatic and we need to be realistic is the message that I want to underscore this morning.

It is absolutely clear to all of us that the Conference on Disarmament does not operate in a vacuum. It operates in the real world, and the positions that delegations take, that States pursue, in the Conference are consistent with their interests in the real world.

It is also a truism that no State will enter into any negotiations or agreements which undermine or challenge its security interests. In fact, it is for this reason that the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament recognized that it had to pursue its objectives on the basis of the security of all States.

It is clear that there is, as of now, no consensus on negotiating any of the four core issues on the Conference agenda. We have set up this informal group to take us forward and to look for ways on how we can make progress towards the objectives for which the Conference was created.

My submission is that it would be a mistake to go and cover ground that has already been covered. In specific terms, I wish to convey that if the intention is to try and find or revive a basis of work as articulated in document CD/1864, then I am sorry, but this will not take us forward. This does not mean from our perspective in any way to diminish the contribution of my great friend the former Ambassador of Algeria, who was the architect of document CD/1864, but it was the pursuit of discriminatory policies and double standards of exceptionalism in the nuclear arena which led to the demise of that document. It would thus be inconsistent and unrealistic to consider document CD/1864 as the benchmark. I would argue that the benchmark should be the Final Document of the first special session: that is the real benchmark. From that benchmark we will need to begin by recognizing that it is the security interests of all States which will be the guiding force, the guiding line, the basis on which we can agree on a programme of work.

I would also like to say that from our perspective the Conference's rules of procedure are not a problem. We have negotiated the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty with the same rules of procedure. The fact of the matter is that these negotiations took place and these treaties were concluded because all the parties, all the States represented in this forum, were ready to negotiate and conclude treaties on these issues. As I have said, on the four core issues before us on our agenda, there is no consensus on negotiating and concluding a treaty on any of these four core issues.

So, we have to look for ways in which we can still do substantive work and make progress, ultimately, eventually, towards the goal of negotiating and concluding treaties. This will be a time-consuming process. If you look at the record, negotiations on chemical weapons did not start for years, in fact decades; but during that period substantive discussions did take place and eventually these substantive discussions were extremely helpful in concluding a treaty on chemical weapons when we were all ready to do that. So, I do not think that we should dwell too much on the issue of how we need to change the rules of procedure, because that is really not the problem. We would simply be tinkering with an issue that really does not lead us anywhere.

Similarly, if we are ready to look at the issue of consensus, my delegation is ready to participate in discussions to do that. But we should remember that the rule of consensus is a double-edged sword: it can cut both ways. If some delegations think that by changing the rule of consensus they can make forward movement on a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT), then by the same token we can make progress and take forward negotiations on nuclear disarmament. You cannot have your cake and eat it, too. That is the issue. If we want to change the rule of consensus — by all means, but then remember that it will work in both directions.

Finally, let me say a few words about the concerns that have been expressed about outside processes undermining the Conference on Disarmament. If, again, we go back to the history of this forum, we see that in the past, during long periods when no negotiations were taking place in the Conference, substantive work was still being done through ad hoc committees and other forums. No one at that point talked about taking issues outside, no one talked about any threat to the Conference, no one talked about cutting off funding. I do not understand why the present situation is causing so much discomfort. In any event, if it is causing discomfort, of course we are ready to go outside the Conference but only on issues that are of interest to Pakistan. We feel that if there is a group of governmental experts on an FMCT, then there should also be a group of governmental experts on negative security assurances, an issue that we feel is very important. There is already an open-ended working group on nuclear disarmament, in which we are participating, and that is all to the good. What we do not understand is that some delegations, while welcoming the creation of a group of

governmental experts on an FMCT, and are ready to participate in that group, have serious reservations against the open-ended working group on nuclear disarmament and refuse to participate in it. Again it is a case of double standards which eventually will be a failure, and it will be a collective failure if these kinds of processes lead to the destruction or irrelevance of the Conference on Disarmament.

In conclusion, Mr. President, I support what you are doing and I support your colleagues with whom you will be working, the Ambassadors who will be the Vice-Chairs. Again, as I said before, you may continue to count on our support to move towards a more realistic and pragmatic approach in addressing these issues.

The President: I thank the representative of Pakistan for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the President.

I now give the floor to the representative of Sweden, Mr. Lindell.

Mr. Lindell (Sweden): Allow me to begin by joining others in extending thanks and best wishes to the Ambassadors of Japan and Italy.

Mr. President, we wish you the best of luck as you assume the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament at this interesting juncture. You know that you can count on this delegation's support. We hope that early agreement can be reached on the Conference's report to the General Assembly.

It was a welcome development that the Conference last week took the decision to establish an informal working group to develop proposals for a programme of work. We hope that this novel approach will produce the outcome that has been eluding us for so long. The fact remains, of course, that the only real measure of success is the start of substantive negotiations, and the value of this decision must therefore ultimately be assessed on the basis of its tangible results. We look forward to taking an active part in the work of the informal working group under the very able leadership of its Co-Chair and Vice-Co-Chair. We commend the Iraqi President and his team for their work that resulted in the establishment of the informal working group. Much credit also belongs to the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Tokayev. We should not forget that the Secretary-General in his 18 June address also presented other proposals aiming at revitalizing the Conference. We believe that these merit attention and further consideration.

Mr. President, we thank you for the informal paper you circulated yesterday. The points made in the paper are certainly interesting, and we welcome a discussion on them. Given the very long-standing impasse in the Conference, we need to be open to fresh ideas. We agree that continued reflection on the working methods in a broad sense, including the duration of the presidencies, membership issues and civil society participation, should be part of the intensified efforts to create an environment conducive to negotiations.

The President: I thank the representative of Sweden for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the President.

I now give the floor to the next speaker on my list, the representative of Turkey.

Ms. Kasnakli (Turkey): Mr. President, we would like to congratulate you on the assumption of the presidency and assure you of our support. We also would like to take this opportunity to extend our best wishes to the Ambassadors of Italy and Japan.

I wish to thank you for the informal paper on the work of the Conference on Disarmament which was circulated yesterday. I would like to share our preliminary views on some of the questions raised in it.

The views of Turkey with regard to the work of the Conference have time and again been covered in our various statements. Since we were asked to address some of the questions raised in the informal paper at today's plenary, I would like to set out some of our views.

Turkey wishes to see the immediate resumption of the substantive work in the Conference with its present membership. We see the need to urgently come up with a consensual programme of work. Such a development will pave the way towards the commencement of negotiations. It is our conviction that only then will the Conference on Disarmament be revitalized. We believe the challenge at hand is a considerable one and we should therefore not lose any more time. The ongoing priority is to recommence substantive work. We believe that our collective efforts should be geared towards maintaining the relevance of the Conference by fulfilling its fundamental task, that is, negotiating multilateral legally binding instruments.

We would like to emphasize again that the problems faced by the Conference are not created by its procedures, its membership or its internal dynamics. The stalemate in the Conference is a reflection of strategy-related bottlenecks at different but interrelated levels. There is a certain malaise throughout the disarmament forums and machinery at both the international and regional levels. We need to see the larger picture and not assess the work of the Conference in abstraction from the rest of disarmament efforts. A resumption of substantive work by the Conference with the consent of all its members will contribute to the improvement of international efforts for nuclear disarmament. To this end, we should strive within the Conference to generate more mutual understanding and confidence, while not ignoring developments outside the Conference. We hope the recently established informal working group will help us to reach agreement on a programme of work.

We also would like to emphasize that the rule of consensus serves the natural interests of States.

Finally, we would like to state at this stage that there is no consensus regarding the enlargement of the Conference or appointing a special coordinator on the expansion of the Conference's membership. Reaching the intended destination safely becomes all the more burdensome and difficult if one begins the journey from the wrong starting point and then continues always along the same path. We should not dilute our focus on the main substantive issues by introducing into our deliberations additional points of contention.

The President: I thank the representative of Turkey for her statement and for the kind words addressed to the President.

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

Mr. Vasiliev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. President, first of all allow me to welcome you to your high-level post. We wish you success in your work. You can count on support and cooperation from the Russian delegation. We are also happy to see experienced colleagues and old acquaintances in your team. We are also grateful to the Irish delegation for the informal paper, which raises topical questions for our forum. We will study it with care and will be ready to provide answers to the questions it contains. We also count on your wisdom in the drafting of the report of the Conference on Disarmament to the United Nations General Assembly.

At the last meeting, the Russian delegation supported the decision on the establishment of an informal working group to prepare a programme of work for this forum. This is a major step in the right direction, creating a space for seeking compromise. At the same time, in our view, the only possible path to restoring the

authority of the Conference is the adoption of a programme of work itself. We welcome the efforts of the previous Presidents — the Permanent Representatives of Hungary, Indonesia, Iran and Iraq — to achieve consensus. We are convinced that the adoption of a programme of work, besides bringing our forum out of its lengthy standstill, could become a real alternative to radical approaches to the reform of the United Nations disarmament machinery.

We have shared our assessments of the current situation several times. I reiterate that the reasons for the impasse in our forum do not lie in the administrative sphere or in its rules of procedure, which of course can and must be improved and rationalized. But this is a secondary matter. The principal problem lies in the political sphere, and stems from the fact that the work of our forum is directly related to a sensitive area — that of national security. The Conference's rich record of achievements shows that when there is political will on the part of States, productive negotiations can be carried out in this forum on the most varied aspects of disarmament and non-proliferation on the basis of the existing rules of procedure and the principle of consensus. We are convinced that issues relating to the vital interests of States' national security cannot be resolved through simple voting. Neglecting this fact can create an illusion of forward movement and lead to the drafting of treaties which, the day after their adoption, are ignored by the States which worked actively for their conclusion. In practice, this leads only to greater division and the exacerbation of international contradictions.

Russia, for its part, has sincerely striven to contribute to efforts to achieve the goal of agreement on a programme of work. We have put forward the idea that, as a first step, we could agree on a discussion-based programme of work, providing for a thoroughgoing examination of the four core issues on the agenda. In our view, this would make it possible to gain time for continued work on securing a negotiating mandate for the Conference and to maintain the Conference as a multilateral disarmament body. Of course, we are ready to study other approaches designed to bring about a start to substantive work in the Conference.

In this regard, we are ready to actively support the work of the two Co-Chairs of the working group, Ambassadors Gallegos and Woolcott. In addition, we consider that the authority of the Conference would be boosted by an expansion of its membership, in the first place by incorporating the observer countries. We believe that the membership of the Conference should be in line with present-day realities and include all the major stakeholders in the field of disarmament and international security. We would also welcome further review of the question of the broader involvement of civil society in the work of the Conference, on the model of the review process for the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the First Committee of the General Assembly.

In conclusion, allow me to wish our colleagues, the Ambassadors of Italy and Japan, success in their new posts as well as personal happiness. Meanwhile, for me, too, it is my last plenary meeting in the Conference on Disarmament after nearly six years of work. I will keep wise assessments and recipes for an informal venue. As far as I recall, it is also in the Irish tradition that the most intelligent thoughts are prompted by a glass of wine or a pint of beer. I hope that many of you have received an invitation for 26 August. I will be happy to see you and to raise a glass to your health.

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

I now give the floor to the representative of Egypt, Ambassador Bassim.

Ms. Bassim (Egypt): Mr. President, at the outset, let me congratulate you on assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and, through you, allow me to express our appreciation to your predecessor, the Ambassador of Iraq, and his team for all their tireless efforts. Indeed, this year has been characterized by a chorus of diligent efforts by all the successive presidents and their attempts to help the Conference fulfil its mandate as the sole multilateral negotiating body on disarmament by seeking consensus on a balanced and comprehensive programme of work. We look forward to the work of the informal working group on the programme of work and suggestions for a draft that would be balanced, comprehensive and would reflect the top priority of the international community: to start negotiations on nuclear disarmament and the establishment of a world free of nuclear weapons.

We are particularly happy to see a fellow member of the New Agenda Coalition presiding over the Conference. Since its foundation 15 years ago, the Coalition has actively worked for the successive and mutually reinforcing implementation of concrete, transparent, verifiable and irreversible nuclear disarmament measures. While there have been some successes along the way, we have also been disappointed by the slow pace of nuclear disarmament efforts. Our efforts are driven by the conviction not only that a world free of nuclear weapons would be a global public good of the highest order, in the words of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, but also that the only guarantee against the use or the threat of use of nuclear weapons is their total, irreversible and verifiable elimination.

Just yesterday, I had the pleasure to present on behalf of the New Agenda Coalition a working paper to the open-ended working group on taking forward multilateral negotiations on nuclear disarmament. In that paper, the Coalition first examines (I think there are copies in the back of the room) what elements will be required to maintain the end state: a world free of nuclear weapons. It then surveys the nuclear disarmament landscape as it exists today, noting where there are gaps in the current regime and how they might be filled. It prescribes a number of critical elements that will need to be put in place in order to accelerate progress towards nuclear disarmament.

Such elements are by no means new, but rather they draw on several sources, such as the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament and the well-known “13 practical steps” for the systematic and progressive efforts to implement article VI of the Treaty on Nuclear Non-Proliferation of 2000. The essential key conclusion of the Coalition’s working paper, however, is that the most important, and most overdue, gap in the current regime is a clear, legally binding and multilateral commitment to nuclear disarmament backed by clearly defined timelines and benchmarks. Such a commitment would serve to maintain integrity and sustainability in the regime and would underpin and guide all future nuclear disarmament efforts. The current lack of progress on nuclear disarmament is simply unsustainable.

Mr. President, I reiterate my congratulations to you on assuming the presidency of this august body, and I assure you of my delegation’s full cooperation.

Finally, allow me to bid farewell to all our colleagues that have announced today that they are starting a new page of their diplomatic life and will no longer be working in Geneva in the Conference on Disarmament, and wish them the best of luck in their new endeavours.

The President: I thank the Representative of Egypt for her statement and for the kind words addressed to the President.

There are five more speakers inscribed on the list: Indonesia, Republic of Korea, Germany, India and Iran.

I now give the floor to the representative of Indonesia, Ambassador Wibowo.

Mr. Wibowo (Indonesia): Mr. President, allow me to congratulate you on assuming your duties as President of the Conference on Disarmament. Rest assured of my delegation's full support and cooperation in discharging your challenging task as the last President of the Conference at its 2013 session. With your wisdom and able leadership, I am confident that you will be able to come up with a factual and balanced draft annual report of the Conference.

I would also like to congratulate Ambassador Mohammad Sabir Ismail of Iraq and his team for their strong dedication in trying to get the Conference back on track. The adoption of the decision on the establishment of an informal working group is a starting point towards reaching a destination of the so-called programme of work. My delegation is ready to engage in this endeavour.

Mr. President, I would like to commend you for preparing the informal paper of 19 August 2013 entitled "Work of the Conference on Disarmament: challenges and future direction". You have presented a number of questions which I consider valid and pertinent in addressing the stalemate in the Conference. The set of issues in your paper deserve our serious attention and consideration; in this regard, I would like to propose to you, as President of the Conference, that — in addition to preparing the draft annual report for 2013 and engaging in the informal working group — you hold consultations with member States to specifically address the questions and issues in your paper.

We must not shy away from taking measures to revitalize the Conference, as has been voiced repeatedly by the United Nations Secretary-General and the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament. The existing working methods of the Conference certainly need to be addressed and adjusted to correspond to the current circumstances. I fully subscribe to the view that achieving a functional Conference on Disarmament will require thinking outside the box. Only in doing so can we make the Conference relevant and fulfil its mandate.

In conclusion, Mr. President, allow me to bid farewell to Ambassador Cosimo Risi of Italy and to Ambassador Mari Amano of Japan. I wish them the best and success in their future endeavour.

The President: I thank the representative of Indonesia for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the President.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Republic of Korea, Ambassador Yoo Yeonchul.

Mr. Yoo Yeonchul (Republic of Korea): Mr. President, first of all, I would like to join all of our colleagues in congratulating you on your assumption of the presidency and to thank the former President, the Ambassador of Iraq, for his excellent leadership and the departing Ambassadors of Italy and Japan for their great efforts so far. As we are currently preparing for a self-evaluation of the work which has been carried out by the Conference on Disarmament this year, my delegation would like to once again affirm our full support of your presidency.

I am confident that your able leadership will serve us at this important juncture as we launch the informal working group with a mandate to produce a programme of work which is robust in substance and progressive over time in implementation. Document CD/1956/Rev.I is the first consensus we have had since document CD/1864 was adopted more than four years ago. Small and modest as it is, the consensus reached last week is indeed commendable. It is my wish that we be able to maintain the positive momentum stemming from the decision made in the Conference and

revive the spirit of cooperation and collaboration throughout our discussion in the informal working group.

There is a saying that work begun is half done, stressing the importance of the starting. But it is good to have a balanced attitude on this issue. We should neither overestimate nor underestimate the significance of last week's decision on the establishment of the informal working group.

Along these lines, I would like to extend my deep appreciation for the informal paper which the President circulated yesterday. I believe that paper will provide valuable food for thought for our future work, including the task of the informal working group. In line with your perspective, the Republic of Korea supports all the efforts to revitalize the Conference to resume multilateral disarmament negotiations according to its mandate.

The Republic of Korea extends its full support to the Co-Chair and the Vice-Co-Chair of the informal working group, Ambassador Luis Gallegos Chiriboga of Ecuador and Ambassador Peter Woolcott of Australia, in their future endeavours.

The President: I thank the representative of the Republic of Korea for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the President.

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

Mr. Biontino (Germany): I would like to begin by extending my congratulations to you, Mr. President, for the assumption of your office and assure you of the full support of my delegation and myself in your very difficult duties, in particular the drafting of the report for the General Assembly.

Furthermore, I would like to thank Ambassador Ismail for the work he has done during the last presidency, when we were trying to negotiate a programme of work — unsuccessfully, unfortunately — and successfully negotiating an informal working group, which I am going to cover right now.

Thirdly, I would like to bid farewell to Ambassadors Risi, Amano and Vasiliev and wish them all the best for their future endeavours.

We wish to thank you, Mr. President, for the informal paper, which raises a number of very relevant issues.

In our understanding, and I wish to be brief for the sake of time, there are three aspects which merit particular attention.

The first is the working methods of the Conference on Disarmament. Indeed, we believe that changed working methods could enhance the work of the Conference, even if substantive policy problems lie at the heart of the impasse we have been experiencing for 17 years.

The informal working group is a first step in the right direction of drafting the urgently needed work programme, which then in turn should lead to substantive negotiations. However, if the stalemate persists, we believe a subsidiary body of the Conference to examine and make proposals on improving the Conference's working methods would be the next logical step. In this context, the composition of the Conference should be examined as well.

Secondly, the issue of the cohesion of the disarmament and arms control debate, in particular in conjunction with the recommendations made by the General Assembly, is raised in your paper. We strongly believe that an effort is overdue to integrate all aspects of arms control and disarmament in a coherent and well-structured format. In the nuclear field, this is something the Conference on Disarmament could and should

be able to achieve. We expect that thus all relevant issues of arms control and disarmament will be dealt with.

Thirdly, we believe that a schedule of activities, as mentioned in your paper, could usefully supplement a programme of work. It could raise additional awareness concerning urgent arms control and disarmament issues and foster consensus on the areas where the Conference should and could take action. We believe that integration of all aspects of arms control and disarmament in a coherent and well-structured format, as mentioned earlier on, would fit very well in such a schedule of activities.

The President: I thank the representative of Germany for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the President.

I now give the floor to the representative of India.

Mr. Gill (India): Mr. President, let me join others in congratulating you on assuming the functions of the President of the Conference. We have always admired the sagacity and tenacity with which Ireland has pursued multilateral disarmament, and in particular we admire the way you have upheld the idea of nuclear disarmament despite vicissitudes in geopolitics. Let me assure you of the full cooperation of my delegation as we wind down our 2013 session of the Conference on Disarmament.

Mr. President, let me also thank you for your informal paper, which we have studied carefully. I do not want to tire delegations with a repetition of our views on the various aspects related to revitalization of the Conference. Let me just say what you yourself have noted in your statement, namely that the world continues to need a standing multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, and that such a forum should function effectively. For us, an effectively functioning Conference on Disarmament means a Conference on Disarmament that can negotiate multilateral treaties. As you said, we are here to negotiate treaties: that is our job.

We do not think that the Conference's failure to negotiate treaties is due to any intrinsic failing. It is solely due to obstacles placed in the Conference's path for one reason or the other. We believe that the Conference continues to have the membership, the authority and the rules of procedure necessary to discharge its responsibility.

The closest we came in recent years to negotiating in the Conference on Disarmament was in 2009, when we adopted the decision contained in document CD/1864. We believe that we should continue to strive to stay as close as possible to that consensus decision, so that whenever there is an opportunity to be able to negotiate, we can close the gap quickly.

In conclusion, allow me, like many others before me, to wish the very best to our colleagues who are leaving Geneva. Ambassador Mari Amano of Japan, I must say that our two delegations have enjoyed excellent relations during his tenure here. We worked together on a variety of issues, and I am sure that will continue under his successor. All the very best to Ambassador Cosimo Risi of Italy, and to my dear friend Victor Vasiliev of the Russian Federation. Mr. President, as you say in Ireland, may the long-time sun shine upon them.

The President: I thank the representative of India for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the President.

I now give the floor to the representative of Iran.

Mr. Daryaei (Islamic Republic of Iran): Allow me to begin, Mr. President, by congratulating you on the assumption of the post of the presidency. We assure you of our delegation's fullest cooperation in your important task.

I would like also to join other colleagues in bidding farewell to the Ambassador of Japan, the Ambassador of Italy and also the Deputy Representative of the Russian Federation, Mr. Vasiliev. I wish all of them all the best in their future endeavours, which I hope will be in the field of disarmament and security-related issues, because we have benefited and learned a lot from the experience of these distinguished colleagues.

Mr. President, we take note of your paper, which focuses mainly on procedural issues related to the Conference on Disarmament. As we have expressed them at various meetings, our views on revitalization are clear, so I do not want to elaborate on the aspects mentioned in your paper. I just wish to say that the crux of the problem of the Conference's inactivity over the past decade is the lack of political will to eliminate the common threat posed to the international community by nuclear weapons.

The impasse in the Conference is a problem not of form but of substance. It does not relate to any problem of institutional or procedural modalities in the Conference; rather, it is closely linked to the lack of progress in the realm of disarmament. I believe that promoting the work of the Conference cannot be achieved by changing the format or modality of work in the Conference. The problem of the Conference is neither its rules of procedure nor the interpretation of those rules. It is worth reminding ourselves that not only all existing multilateral treaties were negotiated in the Conference under the same rules of procedure, including the rule of consensus, but also the sensitive nature of issues related to the security of nations and disarmament obligate us to adopt similar rules in the negotiation of multilateral disarmament treaties in other forums. It is worth mentioning again that after many consultations we have finally adopted the same rules of procedure for the proposed informal working group on producing a programme of work in the Conference.

If you want to really change the approaches and modality, I think I have to say that the double standards, discrimination and selective approaches with regard to the four core issues are the main problem. This body is the sole negotiating body in the field of disarmament. It relates to the sensitive issues which directly link to the security of all nations. All members of the Conference participate in this meeting on an equal footing, and no member of the Conference is allowed to have the illusion that it is more equal than the others, or wrongly attempt to define a special advantage or privileges for itself, or try in an unjustified and irrational manner to deprive other members of the Conference of their membership rights, based on the rules of procedure of the Conference.

So, I think we have to put aside this selective and discriminatory approach and pay attention to the root cause of the problem of the Conference on Disarmament, which is the lack of political will to move forward to complete disarmament.

The President: I thank the representative of Iran for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the President.

I now give the floor to the representative of the United States.

Mr. Buck (United States of America): Mr. President, at the outset of my remarks please allow me to join others in congratulating Ireland, and you personally, on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. I wish to assure you of the United States delegation's full support as you guide the work of the Conference. In that regard, my delegation appreciates, and strongly shares, your desire to move the Conference beyond the current impasse, and we read the informal paper you prepared on the work of the Conference, which was circulated yesterday to delegations, with interest. I would like to make a few brief preliminary remarks in this regard.

While the United States agrees that there may be some modifications that might contribute to the smoother operation of the Conference — for example, it may be that consideration should be given to possibly adjusting the duration of presidencies or consideration as to whether arrangements should be made to allow for continuity on an agreed Conference programme of work from one year to the next — the United States does not take the view that the impasse in the Conference is the result of its procedural rules. Some delegations have spoken about amending the Conference's consensus rule in order to break the current log-jam. However, we believe that the consensus rule has served Conference members well by providing assurance that individual member States' national security concerns can be met. Again, there may be a case for some modifications to how decisions are taken on small procedural items of the Conference, but we believe these issues are not at the heart of the impasse. It is against this backdrop that we welcome the decision last week to establish an informal working group, which we believe could be a useful intermediate step to a programme of work that can command consensus. We look forward to engaging in the work of the intersessional working group soon with a view to supporting a strong, relevant and robust Conference that is fulfilling its mandate.

The President: I thank the representative of the United States for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the President.

I now give the floor to the representative of Algeria.

Mr. Khelif (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, the delegation of Algeria wishes, first of all, to join the preceding speakers in congratulating you on your appointment to the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and to offer you its full support. It would also like to pay tribute to your predecessor, the Ambassador of Iraq, for his efforts during his presidency, as well as to his team.

Mr. President, the delegation of Algeria has taken note of the informal paper that you circulated yesterday on certain aspects, particularly the institutional procedures relating to the functioning of the Conference. The Algerian delegation stands ready to contribute to any efforts that might lead to progress within the Conference and get it back on track. In that regard, echoing the statements of a number of other delegations, we are prepared to consider the possibility of making certain concessions relating to the functioning of the Conference, particularly on the issue of the extension of the presidential term and other aspects. However, like a number of other delegations, we believe that the main obstacle preventing the Conference from working is neither a procedural nor an institutional issue. The real problem is political in nature and external to the Conference, which remains dependent on the willingness, or lack of willingness, of the member States to make progress on disarmament issues, particularly nuclear disarmament. As some have suggested, we could extend the duration of the presidential term, but we do not believe that such an extension, even just for one session, would resolve the problem.

As to the consensus rule, it is a fundamental part of the Conference on Disarmament. Abandoning that principle would not lead to progress, firstly, because it plays an essential role in ensuring that all members of the Conference adhere to the negotiating process and, secondly, because it guarantees the universal nature of any instruments arising from that process. Furthermore, like the delegation of Switzerland, we believe that a simplified programme of work based on a schedule of activities could allow us to make headway within the Conference, particularly given that rule 28 of the rules of procedure provides that the programme of work to be adopted by the Conference at the beginning of each session is based on a schedule of activities. The problem which the Conference has been experiencing since 1998, when it negotiated the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, is that confusion arose in the Conference between the programme of work, which, according to the rules of procedure, is in

principle based on a schedule of activities, and the establishment of subsidiary bodies, which, according to rule 23 of the rules of procedure, is an optional solution that may be employed when the conditions are right within the Conference. It is the confusion between these two elements that has prevented the Conference from reaching agreement on a framework for its work.

Lastly, the delegation of Algeria would like to wish the Ambassadors of Italy and Japan and our Russian colleague good luck and success as they leave the Conference on Disarmament.

The President: I thank the representative of Algeria for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the President.

Would any other delegation like to take the floor? That does not seem to be the case.

I want to express appreciation to the many delegations who took the floor this morning and made comprehensive, wide-ranging and very clear statements. It offered, I think, a very wide landscape view of where we stand in the Conference and of the real challenges we have, but also opportunities for getting the Conference on Disarmament back to work. It showed a determination to set about this task urgently and with commitment, and I look forward to following on in discussions with colleagues over the coming weeks on the issues raised.

Before concluding our business today, I would like to set out in more detail our proposed schedule for consideration of the Conference's annual report. I have asked that the secretariat make advance copies of the draft report, in English, available on Thursday, 22 August, both in hard copy and in soft copy via e-mail to assist delegations in onward transmission. A translation of the draft report into the other five working languages is under way, so that these can be available to delegations two weeks before scheduled adoption.

I look forward to receiving the views of delegations on the draft report, and will be grateful if delegations could provide their comments and suggestions to the secretariat in writing by 3 p.m. on Thursday, 29 August.

I have asked that the secretariat then collate these suggestions and comments in a single document with attribution, which will be transmitted to delegations on Friday, 30 August. Naturally, we will need to consider also how to reflect the work done by the informal working group in the report.

In advance of the receipt of written comments on 30 August, I think that it would be useful to have general reactions on the draft, but not negotiations, at our plenary meeting on Tuesday, 27 August — next Tuesday. In order to move as expeditiously as possible in our collective drafting of the annual report, I would intend that we would convene in an informal format, with interpretation, and that the first of such informal sessions following a brief plenary would take place immediately after the conclusion of that plenary meeting scheduled for Tuesday, 3 September. We could then have smaller meetings and consultations as necessary outside this chamber in the afternoon of Tuesday, 3 September, Wednesday, 4 September, with further such meetings, if need be, on Friday, 6 September. I would hope that we can conclude our collective work of agreeing a report in the most expeditious manner, and I am confident that with the collective knowledge and experience gathered in this chamber we will be able to do so.

In addition to receiving written comments and suggestions, I have asked the coordinators of regional groups if their groups would wish to meet with me in my capacity as President. I look forward to hearing comments and views at those meetings also.

I am also at the disposal of any delegation who would wish to meet on a bilateral basis during the course of the presidency.

I would also like to inform the membership that the Ambassador of the Czech Republic, in her capacity as coordinator of the informal group of observer States, has asked that the group be briefed by me, as President, and that I have responded that I shall do so.

As we shall be engaged in drafting the annual report of the Conference which is meant for the General Assembly, I believe that it is important that States who are not members of the Conference should be as informed as possible about progress being made.

Let me emphasize in conclusion: the draft report is written in the spirit of being factual and objective, and I hope therefore that we can move expeditiously to agree it in that spirit.

Before concluding our meeting, I give the floor to the Deputy Secretary-General for comment.

Mr. Sareva (Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament): I just want, on behalf of the Secretary-General, who was prevented from attending this meeting, and on my own behalf and that of my team, to thank the Ambassadors of Japan and Italy for their kind words addressed to the secretariat and also wish them well in their future endeavours.

(spoke in Russian)

I would also like to bid farewell to Mr. Victor Vasiliev, who has guided the work of the Russian delegation on disarmament in Geneva so skilfully, including in the Conference on Disarmament. I wish him all the very best in his new and important tasks in Moscow.

The President: I also conclude on the note which I began, which is to wish the Ambassadors of Italy, Japan and the Russian Federation every success and happiness for the future, and to thank them for their work for the Conference.

This concludes our meeting today. The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held next Tuesday, 27 August 2013, at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 12.25 p.m.