
Conference on Disarmament

English

Final record of the one thousand five hundred and forty-eighth plenary meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 19 January 2021, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Marc Pecsteen de Buytsverve (Belgium)



The President: I call to order the 1548th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. Distinguished colleagues, I am honoured to open the 2021 session of the Conference as its first President. Before we proceed with our order of business for the day, it is my pleasure to extend a warm welcome to the new colleagues who have assumed their responsibilities as representatives of their Governments to the Conference since the end of the 2020 session. Two of them are with us this morning: His Excellency Mr. Yuri Sterk of Bulgaria and His Excellency Mr. Salomon Eheth of Cameroon, both of whom will be presiding over the Conference later this year. On behalf of my own Government and on behalf of the Conference, I would like to take this opportunity to assure you of our full cooperation and support in your new assignments.

I would like to propose that the order of business of this meeting be as follows: first, the adoption of the draft agenda for the 2021 session; second, the consideration of requests from non-member States to participate in the work of the Conference during the session; third, a statement by the Secretary-General of the Conference, Ms. Valovaya, and then my statement as President of the Conference. Following this, I intend to open the floor for any delegations who wish to deliver general statements.

I would like to invite you now to consider the draft agenda for the 2021 session. This draft is contained in the document CD/WP.630, which has been circulated electronically by the secretariat. I propose that the agenda be accompanied by a presidential statement, which, as in previous years, reads as follows: "In connection with the adoption of the agenda, I, as President of the Conference, should like to state that it is my understanding that if there is a consensus in the Conference to deal with any issues, they could be dealt with in this agenda. The Conference will also take into consideration rules 27 and 30 of the rules of procedure of the Conference."

Does any delegation wish to take the floor at this time on the draft agenda as contained in CD/WP.630? That does not seem to be the case. May I take it, then, that the Conference is ready to adopt the draft agenda as contained in document CD/WP.630, followed by the statement I have just read out?

It was so decided.

Let me turn now to the list of non-member States that have submitted requests to participate in the work of the Conference during the 2021 session. Requests received by the secretariat up to Friday, 15 January 2021 at 6 p.m. are contained in document CD/WP.631, which the secretariat circulated electronically yesterday. Any requests from non-member States received after that date will be presented for your consideration and decision at a subsequent plenary meeting.

My intention is to consider the list of States contained in document CD/WP.631 as a whole. If there is no objection, may I take it that the Conference agrees that we proceed on that basis?

We have a request for the floor. The representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran has the floor.

Mr. Baghaei Hamaneh (Islamic Republic of Iran): Mr. President, let me first congratulate you on assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament in its 2021 session. I would also like to congratulate our new colleagues from Bulgaria and Cameroon and wish them every success.

Mr. President, we would rather consider the requests for participation State by State, as has been the practice for the past couple of years. I kindly request that you go through the text naming each State, as was done previously, so that the delegations have the opportunity to either endorse the requests or to make such statements as they think are necessary.

The President: I thank the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran. We will proceed in accordance with the request just made, considering the countries that have requested to participate as observers one by one. The first name on the list is Albania. May I take it that the Conference decides to accept this State's request to participate in our work, in accordance with the rules of procedure?

It was so decided.

We will now decide on the request from Angola. May I take it that the Conference decides to accept this request?

It was so decided.

We will now proceed to the request by Armenia. May I take it that the Conference decides to accept this request?

It was so decided.

I now move to the request from Azerbaijan. May I take it that the Conference decides to accept this request?

It was so decided.

I now move to the request from Bosnia and Herzegovina. May I take it that the Conference decides to accept this request?

It was so decided.

I now move to the request from Costa Rica. May I take it that the Conference accepts this request?

It was so decided.

I now move to the request from Croatia. May I take it that the Conference accepts this request?

It was so decided.

I now move to the request from Cyprus. May I take it that the Conference decides to accept this request? I have a request for the floor from representative of the Turkey.

Mr. Işilak (Turkey): Mr. President, I would like to declare that Turkey will not support this particular request. Our reasoning is duly reflected in documents CD/PV.1524 and CD/PV.1525. The position of Turkey on this matter is clear, principled and duly reflected in the documents CD/1438 and CD/1738.

The President: I thank the representative of Turkey. I would like to ask him for clarification, because while he said that he did not support this request, he did not say that he opposed or objected to it. Could you clarify your position, please?

Mr. Işilak (Turkey): We have an objection to the request, sir.

The President: In view of the objection made, the request is rejected. We have a request for the floor from the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic. You have the floor.

Mr. Ali (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): Mr. President, I have taken the floor to express my support for the request by Cyprus to participate in this year's session as an observer.

The President: We take note of your remark. We have a request for the floor from the representative of the Russian Federation. You have the floor.

Mr. Belousov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. President, I would first like to congratulate you on assuming your position and express the hope that you and the remaining five Presidents of this year's session will make a serious contribution to the work of the Conference on Disarmament.

I would like to speak about the situation that has arisen around the request by Cyprus for observer status. The founders of the Conference introduced the mechanism of observers that can fully participate in substantive work so that our forum could not be accused of exclusivity. The Russian position on this issue is absolutely clear: any State Member of the United Nations is entitled to observer status at the Conference. In this we see a manifestation of true multilateralism and the democratic principles on which the entire United Nations system is based.

Any attempts to limit the representation of United Nations Member States at the Conference violate the principle set forth in the rules of procedure that our forum is open to participation during discussions or negotiations by all countries whose interests may be

affected. Such attempts also create an unconstructive atmosphere and have a negative impact on delegations' commitment to resolving the substantive issues before the Conference, which is of great significance for its effective work.

I would like to note that we fully support the request by Cyprus for observer status.

The President: The representative of the United States of America has requested the floor. You have the floor.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): Let me congratulate you, Mr. President, on assuming the presidency and assure you of my delegation's support as you carry out your duties.

Mr. President, it is unfortunate that Turkey has blocked the request of Cyprus to observe this year's session of the Conference on Disarmament. I call on Turkey to reverse its decision and allow Cyprus to observe the session.

The President: The representative of Israel has the floor.

Ms. Eilon Shahar (Israel): At the outset, allow me to congratulate you on assuming your duties as the President of the Conference on Disarmament. I would also like to extend our gratitude to the outgoing Presidents and to assure you of my delegation's cooperation in the conduct of your duties.

We regret the decision to block the participation of Cyprus as an observer. Cyprus is a European Union member State and has been participating in our debates for more than 20 years. My delegation would like to express our support for their application. We discourage any attempt to politicize the Conference's discussions.

The President: I now give the floor to representative of the Egypt.

Mr. Elsayed (Egypt): Mr. President, allow me to start by congratulating you on assuming your role as the first President of the Conference on Disarmament of 2021 and to assure you of my delegation's full support. I am confident that your rich experience and wide knowledge will guide our work in a constructive manner.

The position of Egypt on the participation of non-member States has been consistent over the years. This position emanates from our firm belief that the Conference is a technical body that is mandated to conduct multilateral disarmament negotiations. We believe that the participation of non-member States contributes positively to the work of the Conference. We regret that the request of Cyprus was denied again this year, despite its having participated as an observer in the work of the Conference every year since 1998. We would like to express to Cyprus our full support for its participation as an observer in the work of the Conference.

The President: I now give the floor to representative of the India.

Mr. Sharma (India): Mr. President, effective multilateralism requires participation by all interested States. Thus, it becomes important that no State is denied the opportunity to participate in the work of the Conference. The rules of procedure themselves provide for participation by non-member States, and denying them this opportunity has the potential to undermine the collective spirit in which we work together to achieve our shared objectives. We would therefore support the participation of any country that has expressed interest, including Cyprus.

The President: I now give the floor to representative of the Germany.

Mr. Beerwerth (Germany): First, I would like to welcome you as the first President of the 2021 session of the Conference on Disarmament and to pledge the full support of Germany for you in the execution of your important office.

I would like to join other speakers in regretting that Turkey has objected to the admission of Cyprus as an observer to the Conference. As previous speakers have said, Cyprus has participated in the Conference for many years. We strongly believe that it is a matter of accepting multilateral rules that countries wishing to participate as observers in forums such as the Conference on Disarmament should be granted that status.

I am particularly disappointed to learn of Turkey's continued objection today because only yesterday the foreign ministers of Germany and Turkey met and discussed a number of issues and one outcome of their meeting was that they pledged to ameliorate and approve relations in several fields. I would hope that, in the light of that outcome, Turkey will reconsider its position and withdraw its objection to the participation of Cyprus as an observer. Perhaps, if Turkey is forthcoming, we could come back to this issue at another meeting.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Liddle (United Kingdom): Mr. President, as this is the first time I have taken the floor in this meeting, let me congratulate you on your assumption of the first presidency of the 2021 session and assure you of the full support of my delegation in carrying out your important duties. I would also like to extend a warm welcome to all our new colleagues as they take up their functions in Geneva.

At the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, it was recognized that the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum should have a relatively small membership for the sake of convenience. The work of the Conference on Disarmament is, however, vital to the interests of all United Nations Member States and all Member States should have the right to participate in it as observers. My delegation sees no grounds for excluding any United Nations Member State from so doing and it regrets the decision of Turkey to block the application of Cyprus. We call on them to reconsider this position.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Mexico.

Mr. Martínez Ruiz (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, my delegation congratulates you on your assumption of the presidency of this body and assures you of its full support in ensuring your successful stewardship.

My delegation also regrets that the Turkish delegation has once again objected to the participation of Cyprus in the Conference on Disarmament as an observer. Nuclear disarmament is the concern and responsibility of the international community as a whole and in the interest of all of its members. Therefore, my delegation cannot fathom why some in this body would question the appropriateness of any member of the international community contributing to our work as an observer. The issues addressed here are of a universal nature; accordingly, we must allow all those interested in joining us in our endeavour to do so. In that connection, we call on the delegation of Turkey to reconsider its position on the participation of Cyprus as an observer.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Ecuador.

Mr. Izquierdo Miño (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, I would like to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and take this opportunity to reiterate the long-standing position of Ecuador that all countries should be able to participate in multilateralism without restrictions. We therefore support accepting the request of Cyprus to participate as an observer in the 2021 session of the Conference on Disarmament, as it has for so many years, and ask the delegation of Turkey to reconsider its position on this matter.

The President: There is a new request from the representative of Germany for the floor.

Mr. Beerwerth (Germany): Mr. President, I have asked for the floor again to speak on behalf of the European Union, since the country holding the presidency of the European Union, Portugal, has not yet been granted observer status.

The European Union strongly opposes the decision taken by Turkey to raise an objection to the request of Cyprus to participate as an observer in the 2021 session of the Conference on Disarmament. It is deeply regrettable that Turkey persists in blocking a Member State of the United Nations and of the European Union from participating in a United Nations forum. This decision goes against the basic principle of multilateralism and harms our collective endeavours.

Cyprus has participated as an observer in every session of the Conference since 1998, and therefore the change in the policy of Turkey, by objecting to the requests of Cyprus to participate in the 2020 session and now the 2021 session, is unacceptable. We consider this an act that undermines the constructive spirit and approach that we strive to create in the Conference.

We call on Turkey to revert to its pre-2020 position on the participation of United Nations Member States in the Conference and to submit its possible reservations in writing, without blocking the participation of any United Nations Member State, thus showing its unwavering commitment to multilateralism.

The President: There are no more requests for the floor, so I propose to go back to the list of requests and to consider the request from Czechia. May I take it that the Conference decides to accept this request?

It was so decided.

I now take the request from Estonia. May I take it that the Conference decides to accept this request?

It was so decided.

I now move to the request from Georgia. May I take it that the Conference decides to accept this request?

It was so decided.

I now turn to the request from Ghana. May I take it that the Conference decides to accept this request?

It was so decided.

I now take the request from Greece. May I take it that the Conference decides to accept this request?

It was so decided.

I now turn to the request from Guatemala. May I take it that the Conference decides to accept this request?

It was so decided.

I now turn to the request from the Holy See. May I take it that the Conference decides to accept this request?

It was so decided.

I now turn to the request from Jordan. May I take it that the Conference decides to accept this request?

It was so decided.

I now turn to the request from Kuwait. May I take it that the Conference decides to accept this request?

It was so decided.

I now turn to the request from Lebanon. May I take it that the Conference decides to accept this request?

It was so decided.

I now turn to the request from Lithuania. May I take it that the Conference decides to accept this request?

It was so decided.

I now turn to the request from Luxembourg. May I take it that the Conference decides to accept this request?

It was so decided.

I now turn to the request from Malta. May I take it that the Conference decides to accept this request?

It was so decided.

I now turn to the request from Montenegro. May I take it that the Conference decides to accept this request?

It was so decided.

I now turn to the request from North Macedonia. May I take it that the Conference decides to accept this request?

It was so decided.

I now turn to the request from Panama. May I take it that the Conference decides to accept this request?

It was so decided.

I now turn to the request from the Philippines. May I take it that the Conference decides to accept this request?

It was so decided.

I now turn to the request from Portugal. May I take it that the Conference decides to accept this request?

It was so decided.

I now turn to the request from Qatar. May I take it that the Conference decides to accept this request?

It was so decided.

I now turn to the Republic of Moldova. May I take it that the Conference decides to accept this request?

It was so decided.

I now turn to the request from Saudi Arabia. May I take it that the Conference decides to accept this request? The representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran has asked for the floor.

Mr. Baghaei Hamaneh (Islamic Republic of Iran): My delegation would like to begin by congratulating all the Member States whose requests to participate in the session as observers have already been endorsed.

The Islamic Republic of Iran attaches great importance to the Conference on Disarmament as the sole multilateral negotiating body devoted to disarmament. Upholding the integrity and efficiency of this body, as well as its inclusiveness, should be a top priority for all its members. At the same time, we have to ensure that it is able to concentrate on the advancement of its important mandate.

Observer status in the Conference is a very important position, and countries that apply for this status need to show their commitment to the Conference's mandate and terms of reference and play a constructive and positive role to that effect. Being an observer implies respect for the rules and a responsibility towards this body's core mandate. A responsible observer does not abuse the trust and the privilege bestowed upon it by using its status to wage a distraction and disinformation campaign against a member State of the Conference.

Unfortunately, past experience shows that Saudi Arabia would be unable to observe the rules and respect the mandate of the Conference. Not only is it the sponsor of a coalition that has waged war against its poorest neighbouring country for the past six years, it has the third highest military expenditure globally and by far the highest military expenditure in the region. Saudi Arabia is advised to reconsider its destabilizing policies and activities in the region and to allow the International Atomic Energy Agency to monitor its questionable nuclear programme.

Mr. President, we cannot afford to let this body be further distracted and poisoned by a disinformation and blame-shifting campaign, in which certain States use the Conference as a platform from which to blame others for their own mistakes and crimes. The Conference needs to focus on its critically important mandates, free from abusive distraction. With all good faith, therefore, we do not support the granting of observer status to Saudi Arabia.

The President: In view of the objection just made by the Islamic Republic of Iran, there is no consensus to allow the participation of Saudi Arabia as an observer in the 2021 session of the Conference. Consequently, the request is rejected. I now give the floor to the representative of the United States of America.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): Mr. President, I wish to express my country's regret at the decision by the Islamic Republic of Iran to block the request from Saudi Arabia. We think this is unjustified. We do not understand the reason behind this and we call for the Islamic Republic of Iran to reverse its decision and allow Saudi Arabia to observe this year's session of the Conference on Disarmament.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of India.

Mr. Sharma (India): Mr. President, I have taken the floor to express our regret at this unfortunate new trend of denying observer status to United Nations Member States who have requested it. I said in my previous statement that India supports requests by any United Nations Member State for observer status in the Conference on Disarmament. This new trend does not bode well for our work and I appeal to the countries concerned to reconsider their positions.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Egypt.

Mr. Elsayed (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): Mr. President, based on the same principle I mentioned in my previous intervention regarding the request of Cyprus to join the Conference, I would like to reiterate the firm position of Egypt in support of the participation of all non-member States as observers in the work of the Conference. We believe that it is important for all States to participate in the work of the Conference. I would like to express my delegation's regret that the request from the delegation of Saudi Arabia to participate in the Conference has been blocked. I affirm our full support for the request of the delegation of Saudi Arabia to join the Conference as an observer and I invite the Iranian delegation to reconsider its position.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Liddle (United Kingdom): I apologize for taking the floor again, but I have to refer to my previous statement, which I think was clear as a matter of principle. I deeply regret the position that Iran has taken on the application by Saudi Arabia to observe the work of the Conference on Disarmament. This Conference is not an exclusive club. This Conference has been entrusted by the General Assembly with a mandate to negotiate disarmament. If we start deciding who may and who may not observe the work of the Conference on the basis of the views they have expressed, then it will be the death of multilateralism.

Every United Nations Member State has a right to participate as an observer in the work of this Conference. Every United Nations Member State has the sovereign right to express their views on the work of this Conference. If we are going to start picking and choosing, I think it will be the beginning of the end of multilateralism. I strongly urge Iran, as I strongly urged Turkey, to reconsider its position.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Belousov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I apologize for having to take the floor again on the same subject, namely the granting of observer status to States that have expressed an interest and submitted a request to participate in the work of the Conference on Disarmament as observers. In my previous statement, I already indicated the position of the Russian Federation on this matter and I will not repeat myself. I only wish to express my regret that the work of our Conference, our distinguished forum, is starting out on a negative note. I hope that in future we will manage to work more smoothly and constructively.

Specifically as regards the two requests by Cyprus and Saudi Arabia, I would like to call upon my colleagues from Turkey and Iran to think carefully about the requests from these States and make a balanced decision, given that on one side of the scales are matters of international security and on the other are the foreign policy judgments and goals of a specific State. I think that the side with the international security should tip the balance and that both Iran and Turkey will be able to make a sensible, balanced and correct decision accordingly.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Mexico.

Mr. Martínez Ruiz (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation regrets having to take the floor again to call out the objection of the Iranian delegation to the participation of Saudi Arabia in the Conference on Disarmament as an observer. As my delegation noted earlier with regard to Cyprus, my country's position on participation as an observer is based on the fundamental principle that nuclear disarmament is the concern and responsibility of the entire international community and in the interest of all its members.

We cannot support the matter of observer participation being politicized, as it certainly runs contrary to the principles of multilateralism and to the importance of having all interested parties join us in our endeavours. Therefore, we call on the delegation of Iran to reconsider its position.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Canada.

Ms. Norton (Canada): Mr. President, as this is the first time that I am taking the floor, I would like to congratulate Belgium on its presidency and to thank all of the outgoing Presidents for their hard work.

I am taking the floor, like others, to state that Canada supports the requests of Cyprus and Saudi Arabia and regrets the decisions of Iran and Turkey.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Morocco.

Mr. Zniber (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency and to express our full support for your efforts, which, I hope, will lead the Conference to the expected successful outcome for the beginning of this year's session.

With regard to the question before us, the Moroccan delegation would like to express its full support for the participation of all States requesting observer status in the Conference for the reasons already given by many delegations this morning. I will not repeat those reasons, but I will say that we believe that a debate enriched by all those who wish to participate, including as observers, can be nothing but useful and beneficial to the work of the Conference. That is why we hope that the reservations and objections that have been expressed can be put aside so that we can move forward with our work with a minimum of agreement.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Germany.

Mr. Beerwerth (Germany): I apologize for taking the floor for the third time. For all the reasons given by previous speakers, I would like to record also the deep regret of Germany and its opposition to the fact that Iran has objected to the granting of observer status to Saudi Arabia for this session of the Conference on Disarmament.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Spain.

Mr. Sánchez de Lerín García-Ovies (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, allow me to congratulate you on assuming the presidency and to express my regret that we have had such a dismal start to the session, where we are not even capable of listening to one another. These vetoes, whether by Turkey regarding Cyprus or by Iran in relation to Saudi Arabia, are contrary to the spirit that should govern the Conference. We need to forge dialogue and build trust, and the first step towards that is to accept into our midst those countries that wish to participate. I therefore urge Turkey and Iran to reconsider their vetoes.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Chile.

Mr. Tressler Zamorano (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President on your assumption of the presidency of this very important

forum. I would also like to add our voice to the regrets regarding the vetoes of the participation of Cyprus and Saudi Arabia as observers, which in our view runs counter to the principles of multilateralism, where everyone should be able to participate and have the right to a voice on an equal footing. That is why we strongly urge both Turkey and Iran to reconsider vetoing these applications.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Algeria.

Mr. Soualem (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, I should like to begin by congratulating you and the other members of the Bureau on your election and to assure you of our full support.

Algeria believes in multilateralism. It calls for the inclusive participation of the entire membership of the United Nations to recognize the universal and interdependent nature of disarmament issues. Algeria believes that the Conference on Disarmament is a forum and framework for the expression of the diversity of views that contribute to the democratic functioning of the United Nations, an aspiration that my country supports. Openness to multilateralism is, thus, a permanent goal of my country, in terms of its principled positions and doctrine, and something we would like the Conference on Disarmament, of which my country is a founding member, to also espouse.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Iraq.

Mr. Al-Haidari (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): Mr. President, we would like to begin by congratulating you on assuming the presidency of the Conference and assure you of our full support for your efforts in leading its work.

Mr. President, my delegation regrets that the request of Saudi Arabia to participate in the work of the Conference as an observer has been rejected. We support the right of all States to participate in the Conference as observers and hope that this decision will be reconsidered.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Tunisia.

Mr. Bachtobji (Tunisia) (*spoke in French*): Allow me first of all to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your leadership of the Conference; we wish you every success in completing this task.

With regard to the question that arose at the beginning of our work, we believe that it is key that the States Members of the United Nations in this forum, responsible, as they are, for security issues, to which we attach great importance – and, in that connection, I recall that Tunisia is a non-permanent member of the Security Council – should be able to share their insights and participate on an equal footing. This will only strengthen multilateralism and, obviously, reinforce the purpose of multilateral work, which is to give a voice to those who would like to enrich our work. In the light of this principle, it is very important that countries have an equal right to participate in and enrich our work.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Australia.

Ms. Mansfield (Australia): Mr. President, I would like, in my turn, to congratulate you on your presidency and welcome our new colleagues from Cameroon and Bulgaria to the Conference on Disarmament.

I would like to put on record Australia's position, which, as is well known from past years, is that we strongly value the diversity of voices within multilateralism. We therefore regret that there have been objections to the requests for observer status from Cyprus and Saudi Arabia. We hope that it will be possible for the Conference to become a more inclusive body and we would welcome support for that position.

The President: Since there are no more requests for the floor, let us go back to the list of non-member States that have submitted a request for participation in the work of the Conference on Disarmament. I now move to the request from Serbia. May I take it that the Conference decides to accept this request?

It was so decided.

I am now advised that the representative of France is ready to take the floor.

Mr. Hwang (France) (*spoke in French*): First of all, Mr. President, I would like to thank you for assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament, whose session, I feel, is opening in a rather strange way. I would simply like to say that my delegation deeply regrets the position of Iran on the request for observer status made by Saudi Arabia, just as we deeply regret the position of Turkey on the request of Cyprus. This is clearly, in our view, an abuse of the consensus rule and a blow to inclusive multilateralism. We are on a very slippery slope embarked upon last year by Turkey, and we, like the other member States of the Conference on Disarmament that have spoken before me, call on Turkey and Iran to reconsider their position.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Bulgaria.

Mr. Sterk (Bulgaria): Mr. President, let me first add my voice to those who have congratulated you on becoming the first of the six Presidents of the Conference on Disarmament this year.

At the outset, I would like to state the position of Bulgaria on the principle of universalism, which we fully support, and our belief that any Member State of the United Nations should be able to join the work of this Conference as an observer.

I would also like to take the opportunity to make a point not of substance, but of form, regarding the Republic of North Macedonia, whose observer status has just been approved. Bulgaria would very much insist that, in the proceedings of this Conference, the State in question be referred to under its full constitutional name, that is, the Republic of North Macedonia.

The President: Your last point is duly noted. The representative of Iraq has the floor.

Mr. Al-Haidari (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): Mr. President, I am taking the floor on behalf of the Arab Group.

Mr. President, the Arab Group regrets that the request of Saudi Arabia to participate as an observer in the work of the Conference has been refused. We support the right of all States to participate in the work of the Conference.

The President: I think we may now move on. There are no more requests for the floor. So, I now turn to the request from Slovenia to participate in the work of the Conference. May I take it that the Conference decides to accept this request?

It was so decided.

I now turn to request from Thailand. May I take it that the Conference decides to accept this request?

It was so decided.

I now turn to the request from the United Arab Emirates. May I take it that the Conference decides to accept this request? The representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran has asked for the floor.

Mr. Baghaei Hamaneh (Islamic Republic of Iran): My delegation is not in a position to support the request of the United Arab Emirates to participate as an observer in this session of the Conference on Disarmament. The destabilizing policies and actions of the United Arab Emirates – as a main driver of the so-called coalition that is destabilizing the region – and its complicity in wrongful acts and dangerous policies of Saudi Arabia, including the war in Yemen, is well known.

I should remind everyone that this is the first and hopefully the last time that Iran has raised such an objection. In fact, Iran is obliged, out of good faith and genuine concern for the professional and decent conduct of the Conference's work, to object to the requests for observer status by these States.

Despite the fact that the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia have for two decades blocked its membership of the Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency and of other forums, Iran is raising this objection now solely to protect the Conference, as a multilateral platform, against useless politicization and malicious distraction during its deliberations in 2021.

The President: In the light of the objection that has been made, there is no consensus to accept the request from the United Arab Emirates. The request is therefore rejected. I now give the floor to the representative of India.

Mr. Sharma (India): Mr. President, we came to the Conference on Disarmament this year with great hopes that we would be able to agree on a programme of work and get on with our business. Unfortunately, however, my country is obliged to keep expressing its regret at the positions taken by countries to deny the participation of legitimate Member States of the United Nations in the Conference's work. It is quite unfortunate and it is going to diminish the credibility of this Conference. How are we going to negotiate legally binding instruments that have universal appeal and universal acceptance?

So, I must urge the countries that have decided to block other Member States from participating in the work of the Conference to reconsider their positions and see that our work is carried out in a cordial and amicable spirit and a collegiate atmosphere. I do understand that there are differences among Member States – they have their positions, but these can certainly be discussed in this forum. No member is denied the right to express its views, and delegations also have the right of reply to any statements and allegations that are made. Denying Members the opportunity to participate in the work of the Conference is not the right way to proceed. I think it is a matter of great regret and that it is a bad day for the Conference.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Mexico.

Mr. Martínez Ruiz (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, the same principled arguments we made with regard to the vetoes against Cyprus and Saudi Arabia apply to the decision of Iran to object to the participation of the United Arab Emirates as an observer. We call again on Iran to reconsider its position and, as others have expressed, we are concerned about the politicized manner, divorced from the negotiating mandate, in which the Conference on Disarmament has begun its session.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the United States of America.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): Mr. President, once again, I apologize for taking the floor. The effort, or the desire, of the Islamic Republic of Iran to prevent the United Arab Emirates from observing this year's session of the Conference on Disarmament is extremely unfortunate. What we are seeing today is an unacceptable assault on multilateralism. I call on Turkey and Iran to reverse their decisions to block the participation of other countries. In this body, the progress we are trying to make is long overdue and now we cannot even approve the participation of a bloc of observers. Indeed, this is a very sad day for the Conference. Again, I call on Iran and Turkey to withdraw these vetoes so that we can get on with the business at hand.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Liddle (United Kingdom): Mr. President, I apologize for taking the floor once again, but I cannot let this pass without registering yet another protest at the actions of the delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran. We cannot allow the States members of this Conference to police, or presume to police, the views of other sovereign United Nations Member States. This is not how multilateralism works. The distinguished ambassador of Iran protested that he was acting in accordance with professional standards or was defending multilateralism. I think we have to reject this in the strongest possible terms. Multilateralism involves a civilized exchange of views between delegates representing sovereign Member States. If we lose that, then we lose the entire essence of multilateralism. Once again, my delegation urges Iran to reconsider its position.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Egypt.

Mr. Elsayed (Egypt): Please excuse me for having to take the floor once again. It is unfortunate that we are starting our work this year on this negative note, namely the denial for the first time of requests from three United Nations Member States. I will not repeat my two previous statements; however, the principled position of Egypt on the participation of non-member States is clear. I would like to express the full support of Egypt for the request

of the United Arab Emirates to participate as an observer in the Conference, and to call upon Iran to reverse its decision.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Canada.

Ms. Norton (Canada): It certainly is not an auspicious start to this session of the Conference on Disarmament. Diversity of views and inclusion are important in multilateralism and so, for the record, we support the request of the United Arab Emirates and regret the decision of Iran. In the spirit of multilateralism, we call on Iran and Turkey to reconsider their positions.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Morocco.

Mr. Zniber (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): I apologize for taking the floor again, but, since this is such an important and sensitive topic, I find myself compelled to say the following. The Conference on Disarmament has a specific mandate. We have been saying this for years – indeed for more than 20 years – in an attempt to move our work forward: the Conference must not be held hostage to political discussions that have nothing to do with its mandate.

That is why we regret and deplore the objections that have been raised this morning to the participation of countries requesting observer status. We believe that these objections should be withdrawn unconditionally so that we can safeguard this forum we so cherish and which is the only multilateral organ charged with helping us progress on disarmament issues. I ask everyone to consider the responsibility entailed in the positions put forward this morning, and that is why we, as the delegation of the Kingdom of Morocco, support all the requests from brotherly and friendly countries to obtain observer status and believe that their contribution can be nothing but positive and useful.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Belousov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I would like to say that it is deeply regrettable that the issue of observer status, which used to be considered strictly technical, is becoming a serious political issue as time goes on. Clearly, the current situation is not only negatively affecting the start of the Conference on Disarmament but will hinder its work throughout the 2021 session.

I would like to align myself with what my Indian colleague, Ambassador Sharma, has said on the subject and turn to those States that have opposed the requests for observer status made by other States with a call to weigh up the situation again and make the right decision, one which would facilitate our work at the Conference and our joint efforts to consider the substantive issues on the agenda, which we adopted by consensus no more than one hour ago.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Germany.

Mr. Beerwerth (Germany): Mr. President, I apologize for taking the floor yet again, but the objection by Iran cannot be left unanswered. In my view, the rejection of the request of the United Arab Emirates to participate as an observer in the Conference on Disarmament flies in the face of the principles of multilateralism. This objection is totally unrelated to the work of the Conference and it is nothing but a political ploy, which is totally unacceptable. We thus deeply deplore this and we urge Iran, and also Turkey, to reconsider their rejections of the requests by two United Nations Member States to participate as observers in the Conference.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Chile.

Mr. Tressler Zamorano (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): I am sorry to be taking the floor again, but for the sake of coherence and consistency with what I said in my first intervention, Chile does not agree with the objection to the United Arab Emirates being an observer and, without repeating our reasoning, we would like to urge Iran to reconsider that objection in the interest of multilateralism and the need to strengthen this main disarmament forum.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Spain.

Mr. Sánchez de Lerín García-Ovies (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): I regret having to take the floor again to express my dismay at these attitudes, where national interest is put

above dialogue. Only by listening to each other can we overcome the obstacles we face, and only through dialogue can we reach an agreement.

If we deny a voice to those with whom we disagree, we reject any possibility of understanding. It seems that the principle of consensus that governs us is being hijacked by self-interest. We understand consensus to be an exercise in multilateral consultation in search of common ground, which is incompatible with this abusive use of the veto. This is a direct attack on multilateralism and on the spirit of the Conference. Accordingly, I urge delegations that are vetoing the participation of States entitled to make their voices heard to cease this practice, which is an attack on diplomacy and multilateralism.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Norway.

Mr. Rydning (Norway): Congratulations, Mr. President, on assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. Norway echoes the statements of so many of the various speakers who have expressed disappointment and regret at the decisions by Turkey and Iran to prevent Cyprus, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates from participating as observers.

I think that if we go down this route of blocking States from discussions just because we have disagreements with them, then that is the beginning of the end of multilateralism and the beginning of the end for any prospect of the Conference negotiating possible future treaties. The rules of procedure clearly suggest that all United Nations Members States that wish to observe should be allowed to do so, for obvious reasons. So, we strongly urge Turkey and Iran to reconsider.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of France.

Mr. Hwang (France) (*spoke in French*): I find that I am forced to take the floor once again, for the record. I agree with previous speakers that the objections put forward by Iran and Turkey are pointless. The only thing they will achieve is to sow mistrust in our forum, where we should be doing everything possible to rebuild trust at this start of our new session. The Conference is not an exclusive club; all States Members of the United Nations must be allowed to participate as observers, as has been the case for many decades now. As my Spanish colleague so brilliantly put it, this is a repeated attack on multilateralism and on diplomacy. We call on Iran and Turkey to reconsider their position.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Turkey.

Ms. Erçelik Vandeweyer (Turkey): Mr. President, let me begin by joining other colleagues in congratulating you on assuming the first presidency of the Conference on Disarmament in 2021.

In expressing our views, I would like to begin by regretting some of my colleagues' comments in which they accused my country of abusing the consensus rule. Let me remind colleagues that this started in 2019, not in 2020, with the rejection – by some colleagues who today advocate multilateralism – of the request of Palestine to participate as an observer, even though Palestine was eligible to apply for observer status.

I would also like to bring the Conference's attention to the discussions that we held with other delegations before this meeting. We had clear instructions on this issue. We were ready to revert to the pre-2020 practice of accepting a blanket list, as we were not in a position to go through the countries one by one. That is what I wanted to bring to the attention of the Conference.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Netherlands.

Mr. Gabriëlse (Netherlands): I want to add my voice to all those that have expressed disappointment about the start of this year's session. As it was probably not the start you envisaged, Mr. President, I wanted to wish you all the best and good luck in this endeavour. Since so many countries voiced their disappointment and requested the withdrawal of the veto on the participation of several United Nations Member States, I wish to make the following proposal to the Conference.

Mr. President, why do we not let the States that applied for observer status resubmit their requests so that the Conference can reconsider their admission as observers? If you are

willing and able, perhaps you could undertake some mediation or consultation behind the scenes to see whether there is a solution, both for those countries that have objected and for those that wish to have observer status. I sensed in the last intervention by the delegation of Turkey that there is a possible opening, as they said that Turkey had wished to consider a blanket proposal, rather than considering the requests State by State. I would like to urge those States that have raised objections to reconsider. If you are willing, Mr. President, maybe it would be possible to make an effort in this regard before the next meeting.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Pakistan.

Mr. Omar (Pakistan): Mr. President, please allow me to join others in congratulating you on assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament as the first President of the 2021 session.

We have listened to many statements on the issue of participation by non-member States, and I will not delve into pros and cons at this stage. However, my delegation would like to state for the record that, in the specific case of today's proceedings, Pakistan supports the requests by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates for participation in the Conference. We would also support requests that others may make in the future.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Bulgaria.

Mr. Sterk (Bulgaria): I would like to reiterate my Government's position, which is that the Conference on Disarmament, as the world's sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, should be open to any United Nations Member State that is willing to participate in it. Of course, that includes all the Member States that applied for observer status in the Conference in 2021.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Cameroon.

Mr. Eheth (Cameroon) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, my delegation congratulates you on the manner in which you are leading our work. My delegation is of the view that ours is a technical committee that deals with global security issues and problems that do not concern only one country. We therefore believe that all countries that request it should be able to participate.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Japan.

Mr. Ogasawara (Japan): First of all, let me congratulate you, Mr. President, on assuming the first presidency of the Conference on Disarmament of 2021. I assure you of the full support of my delegation.

Concerning the observer status of three United Nations Member States, namely Cyprus, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, I would like to associate my voice with those of previous speakers. Japan is ready and willing to join a consensus, if there is one, on welcoming these three countries to the Conference as observers.

I would like to recall that the future outcomes of the Conference's work should be of a universal nature, as was the case with past achievements such as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. For that reason, I think it is better to have a wider range of participation in the Conference and I believe that the more diversified the participation, the richer its activities will be. From this point of view, Japan is ready and willing to join the consensus on welcoming these three countries to the Conference as observers.

The President: I give the floor now to the representative of Iraq.

Mr. Al-Haidari (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): Mr. President, we, the Arab group, are working to the extent possible to make the Conference on Disarmament a forum for concluding international treaties. We call for the expansion of the Conference, which will lead to increased contributions, the infusion of new blood and a move away from politicization to allow us to move past the impasse that has faced the Conference for years. In this regard, we regret that the request of the United Arab Emirates to join the Conference as an observer has not been accepted and we call for a review of this decision.

The President: I have no more speakers on the list. We have come to the end of the list of non-member States that have submitted a request to participate in the work of the Conference. The Islamic Republic of Iran has asked for the floor.

Mr. Baghaei Hamaneh (Islamic Republic of Iran): I thank all the delegations for their comments, which we respect. At the same time, I would like to ask those who take issue with the decision of Iran whether they voiced the same concern and took the same position when the request of Palestine was rejected three years ago. I doubt that.

I was particularly interested in a comment by one speaker, who qualified the exercise by Iran of its sovereign right to object to requests for observer status, in accordance with the Conference on Disarmament's rules of procedure, as an "unacceptable assault on multilateralism", suggesting perhaps that only the assault on multilateralism led by the United States administration during the past four years qualifies as acceptable.

However, I should stress that there is no need for overstatement or exaggeration. Multilateralism will not be adversely affected by protecting the Conference against abusive distractions and disinformation campaigns. The decision by Iran to object to the participation of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates in the Conference is simply to help it avoid unnecessary and malignant politicizations, based on previous experiences.

On a different but related note, Mr. President, I would like to register our position on requests for observer status, which is that the Conference must act in strict accordance with its rules of procedure and its practice of previous years. This means that all requests by non-member States for observer status must be dealt with by the end of today's meeting.

The President: As I was saying, we have dealt with the list of requests for observer status. I welcome the non-member States whose requests to participate in the 2021 session of the Conference of Disarmament have been accepted.

As President of this Conference, I am very attached to the inclusiveness of our work and I think that the very nature of our work is to be universal. So, while I respect the positions of all members, I cannot but express regret and disappointment that three requests from non-members of the Conference have been rejected. I have noted the calls for the delegations that opposed these requests to reconsider their positions and I would like to echo those calls. As President, I am, of course, available for consultations at any time.

With that, we have reached the end of our meeting. We will reconvene this afternoon, when we will proceed with the statement by the Secretary-General of the Conference, Ms. Valovaya, followed by my own statement and then the general debate. The meeting is adjourned.

The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.