

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE ONE THOUSANDTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 31 January 2006, at 10.10 a.m.

President:

Mr. Zdzisław RAPACKI

(Poland)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 1,000th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. I give the floor to Ambassador Park of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. PARK (Republic of Korea): On Saturday, 28 January this year, the roof of an exhibition hall collapsed in the city of Chorzów, in Poland. Sixty-two people lost their lives, including seven foreigners, citizens of Belgium, the Czech Republic, Germany, the Netherlands and Slovakia. About 160 people were injured.

As incoming President of the Conference on Disarmament, I would like to express, on behalf of the CD and on my own behalf, the most sincere condolences and deepest sympathy to the people and the Government of Poland.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador Park for the condolences and words of sympathy conveyed to the Polish authorities and to me at the tragic accident which happened last Saturday in Poland. I share these condolences with representatives of those countries whose citizens died in this tragic accident.

As the Conference on Disarmament has gathered in the Council chamber for the 1,000th time, I would like to share some thoughts with you on this occasion.

Today is the 1,000th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. Mankind has long manifested a fascination with round numbers; we often seek symbolic and celebratory qualities within them. We have a tendency to want to find answers and meaning in such essentially arbitrary symbols. We expect closure, some sense of completeness.

We do not want to, nor do we expect to, attribute a celebratory quality to today's meeting. We would, however, like to take advantage of this opportunity to reflect on, and to draw lessons from, the accomplishments of this body and to reaffirm its unique role in the international system.

For the fourth time Poland is presiding over the Conference on Disarmament. My Polish predecessors in this seat were in a much more favourable position than I am. In 1984, Ambassador Turbański had the pleasure of being the first President of the CD - as the Committee on Disarmament was transformed into the Conference on Disarmament precisely at that time. In 1990, Ambassador Sujka - previously the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons - was able to re-establish the Ad Hoc Committee on a Nuclear Test Ban (NTB). Six years later, another Polish President of the CD, Ambassador Dembiński, had the honour of chairing the NTB Committee.

The predecessors of the Conference on Disarmament successfully negotiated such treaties as the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC). During the 1990s, the Conference concluded negotiations on the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and managed to send the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) for adoption by the United Nations General Assembly. These are evidence that the Conference was able to take advantage of the favourable conditions before it, and that member States were able to generate political will to act in concert.

(The President)

However, we should ask ourselves a question: has the CD always been as active as we think it was? The simple truth is that, since the first special session of the United Nations General Assembly on disarmament (SSOD-1), there have only been two treaties negotiated in this room, which I mentioned earlier: the CWC and the CTBT, of which only one is in force today. What does this tell us about the “intensive negotiations” in the CD in the past? Well, the answer is not that simple.

When we look at the intensity of subsidiary bodies, the negotiations were quite vivid. However, some subsidiary bodies with negotiating mandates had been working here for many years without visible effects. On the other hand, the Ad Hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons, which had a discussion mandate, later led to the successful negotiation of the Convention.

We should not judge the accomplishments of the Conference by its functioning or the number of its subsidiary bodies. Negotiations take place all the time in this room - with or without subsidiary bodies. Moreover, they take place with or without a programme of work. We constantly check each other's positions on numerous issues in the area of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. We do it in and outside this room.

The missing link today is the lack of so-called “political will”, or more precisely, different perceptions of today's threats to security among nations. And that is what we should concentrate on.

We often blame the rule of consensus for the lack of progress in the CD. Let us look a bit closer at that issue.

Until 1996 the CD had a programme of work. That particular year was, however, the first one without a programme. Still, it fortunately managed to re-establish the Ad Hoc Committee on a Nuclear Test Ban and appoint a Special Coordinator on other substantive issues. We had a similar situation in 1998, when without an agreed programme of work the CD established two subsidiary bodies, on an FMCT and NSAs. What does that tell us? At that time, people in this room were concentrating - and rightly so - on the current issues of importance to the international community. This is proof that substantive work can take place - if there is consensus to do so - even if problems of a procedural nature persist.

Our predecessors in this room would adopt, when possible, a programme of work, which was a measure to organize the CD's proceedings, based on its agenda. Mandates for subsidiary bodies were adopted when there was consensus to do so or when all in this room agreed that such a mechanism was needed to deal successfully with issues that were calling for action.

To conclude my thoughts about the methods of work, I admit that we might have to seek ways to improve it. That is why we - all six CD Presidents in the 2006 session - are taking on the task of consulting with delegations on this matter.

(The President)

Now, let me say a few words about substance itself. From old documents of the CD and its verbatim records, we can see that the programme of work was not the basis for the substance itself. Substance came in the form of working papers, non-papers, proposals etc. from delegations and the NGO community. That was substance! That was what we sent to capitals, that was a basis for our positions and later for our discussions here. As the “good old days” passed, we stopped working in this manner. In recent years, practically no official CD documents dealing with the substance have been produced. Even the NGO community stopped supplying us with their ideas.

It seems in recent years we have all been behaving like the proverbial “Sleeping beauty”, who dreams about her “brave prince”, called a “programme of work”, kissing her out of her sleep. The “brave prince” will not arrive as he did in the fairy-tale. We need to get ourselves out of this hibernating state. What is truly needed in this Council chamber is creativity. We have all the necessary potential to make things move forward - the best diplomatic skills, the necessary expertise. We just need to realize that a stroke of a “magic wand” will not do the trick. We ourselves need to create a basis for substantive deliberations, which would then lead us to real work on substance.

Therefore, I call on all delegations, as well as the NGO community, while waiting for the programme of work, to start feeding substance into this body.

Arms control strategy is currently taking shape in an environment for which a functioning security system is still lacking. Essentially, the Conference is confined to that environment, and it needs to address challenges in a creative and unconventional way, a way that goes far beyond the anachronism that is the cold war mentality. The Conference is not a static body; it has the capacity to effectively utilize procedures and working methods. It provides opportunities for holding multilateral talks. The instruments to bridge the gaps are at our disposal. We need to know how to use them and we need the will to use them.

The problems of machinery are not unique to the Council chamber in the Palais des Nations. For some time, we have been witnessing attempts to revitalize the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly. The same goes for the United Nations Disarmament Commission. The international community feels that the machinery created during the cold war is unresponsive to the fast-changing political environment.

Recent years have brought us new challenges. Or maybe not new, maybe they are old challenges in a new geostrategic reality. We are witnessing a rise of concerns about the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. We also see attempts to address threats posed by conventional weapons, especially in the small-arms and landmine areas. However, except for the Mine Ban Treaty, we do not see any new legally binding instruments in those areas. Neither WMD proliferation, nor small arms, nor landmines are being dealt with in the CD.

Recent years have also shown that the disarmament community should pay more attention to the issues of the universalization of the arms control and disarmament treaties,

(The President)

as well as to their effective verification. Should the CD ignore these modern dilemmas? My answer is no. We should treat this Conference as a tool to address the real challenges of the world. Only if the CD is able to do that can it regain its respect. The world will judge us by what we have accomplished, not by what we are trying to accomplish.

I urge you to take full advantage of whatever opportunities present themselves in this unique forum, so that we may all live up to the ideals that have forged these very walls. We also should not waste the efforts of those who allow us to be here and to continue their work.

My greatest compatriot, Pope John Paul II, said: "If you wish to be brothers, drop your weapons." It is my strong belief that this very Conference is able to assist us in achieving that goal.

Today the Conference will continue the debate that we started last Thursday. Accordingly, the floor is open to general statements on any subject related to the Conference. I have on my list of speakers for today's plenary meeting eight countries: they are the distinguished representatives of Switzerland, Italy, Norway, the Russian Federation, China, the Netherlands, Colombia and Sweden. We have another speaker on today's list. The Director-General will take the floor as well.

I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Switzerland, Ambassador Jürg Streuli.

Mr. STREULI (Switzerland) (translated from French): Mr. President, first of all I would like to say that your country is in our thoughts following the terrible accident which struck it in Katowice.

I am taking the floor for the first time during your term of office, and I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you warmly on taking the Chair and assure you that you can count on the unreserved support of the Swiss delegation in accomplishing your task.

As representative of a host country, I wish to recall in turn that this is our 1,000th meeting, and most delegations will agree with me in underscoring that there is no reason to celebrate this anniversary in view of the parlous state of work in the CD. But this is perhaps an appropriate moment to take stock, look to the future and remind ourselves of the responsibility entrusted to us as members of the Conference on Disarmament by the community of States. The responsibility to make progress in disarmament and to negotiate conventions arises from our mandate and the significant results obtained in the past by the Conference on Disarmament and the organizations which preceded it. It is therefore a historic responsibility that we bear.

Some reproach the CD as an institution, as a structure, for the stagnation of years past, and hold it responsible. We do not share that view. The CD is an institution which can work and has worked. The problem lies in the lack of political will on the part of States to engage in

(Mr. Streuli, Switzerland)

fresh negotiations. Changing structures would not change anything. For example, negotiations on nuclear disarmament without the participation of the nuclear States would be merely an exercise in futility.

Disarmament is a long-term process which affects the fundamental security interests of States. As diplomats we must accept that the cycle of this process does not necessarily match our stay in Geneva. Despite a feeling of frustration, we must accept this period in the wilderness and recognize that the imbalance in the current array of forces makes a swift solution very difficult. This does not mean that we must abandon the idea of making every effort to achieve a breakthrough. The Swiss delegation believes that the best prospects for achieving a breakthrough lie in the prompt resumption of negotiations on a halt to the production of fissile material (FMCT), without any preconditions, on the understanding that verification will be one of the subjects for negotiation. In the meantime we support unreservedly the proposal made by this year's Presidents for a structured thematic dialogue with annual planning.

We have had our setbacks, but we have also had our successes. Before I conclude, let me briefly recall the history of disarmament negotiations which are also indissociable from their environment, and the town of Geneva as the city of peace.

In 1863 the ICRC was set up, and the first Geneva Convention was adopted the following year. In 1919 the League of Nations was founded, and we are meeting today in their Council chamber. Article 8 of the Covenant of the League of Nations stated that "the members of the League recognize that the maintenance of peace requires the reduction of national armaments to the lowest point consistent with national safety and the enforcement by common action of international obligations". That was in fact the beginning of multilateral disarmament diplomacy, and I would single out the following highlights.

In 1925, the Conference to negotiate a convention on the supervision of the international trade in arms and ammunition and in implements of war. (You will note that, in contrast to what is happening today with the United Nations Programme of Action on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, ammunition was included.) In 1925, the Geneva Protocol for the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or Other Gases, and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare. From 1932 to 1934, the Conference for the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments.

After the Second World War, the disarmament machinery was gradually put back in place, basically in the form of bilateral negotiations such as SALT and START and through the development of international humanitarian law. The Conference on Disarmament slowly began to work in 1959 and adopted its definitive structure in 1983. It was in 1968 that this forum reached its zenith with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Between 1968 and 1996 it went through its most productive phase - the Seabed Treaty, conventions on biological weapons, on environmental protection, on conventional weapons, on chemical weapons, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. This last treaty brings us to the present, and we have had no new conventions for nearly 10 years. This must change. We must hope that the spirit of peace, the spirit of Geneva, as we like to call it, will guide us and will enable us to get the Conference moving again.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Switzerland, Ambassador Streuli, for his statement and his words of sympathy. I now give the floor to Ambassador Carlo Trezza of Italy.

Mr. TREZZA (Italy): Mr. President, let me at the outset express Italy's great satisfaction at seeing you on the podium as President of the Conference on Disarmament and wish you success in your presidency. Italy will support you in your endeavours. And since you represent Poland, I, too, wish to express to you my sincerest condolences for the tragic accident which took place near Katowice last Saturday.

Today, as you said, we are celebrating the 1,000th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament, and I listened with great interest to your statement. Some believe that there is not much to celebrate, but we should be cautious in our "self-flagellation". As Ambassador Streuli said, we must be proud of the past tangible results achieved by this forum, in particular the negotiation of the NPT, the Biological Weapons Convention, the Chemical Weapons Convention, the CTBT. Last week, in a statement the general content of which we appreciate, our Algerian colleague mentioned the exorbitant sums spent for military budgets. What would those budgets have been had we not limited the number of nuclear-weapon States to five? How much would have been spent for chemical and biological weapons, nuclear explosions, had the CWC, the BWC, the CTBT not been in place?

How much is being saved by ensuring the implementation of those treaties through the appropriate follow-up mechanisms, be they fully fledged organizations or simple review processes? And how much could be saved if we achieved prevention of a new nuclear arms race by banning the further production of fissile material for purposes of nuclear explosions? The budgets of the CD and of all the review processes pale if compared to overall military budgets. Moreover, we should consider the priceless improvement obtained in terms of international security and stability and in terms of humanitarian benefits which derive from existing and potential disarmament and non-proliferation agreements. Today's "millennium" should make us reflect on the nobility of the cause we pursue and on the benefits for humanity of successful results in the CD. It is also true - and this has been said today - that the past years have not been productive, since we have not been able to reach a compromise on our priorities. But our efforts must continue.

Mr. President, your mandate starts under good auspices, and we were very satisfied by the early adoption of the agenda and by the approval of the non-member States interested in participating in the work of the Conference. All non-member States belonging to the European Union will work with us in accordance with section IX of the rules of procedure.

We read with great interest the inspiring message of the Secretary-General of the United Nations. His words confirm that the difficulties we encounter are not unique to this Conference; they reflect a much wider "malaise". Indeed, weakened global disarmament machinery has been eroded by the disappointing results of the 2005 NPT Review Conference and by the absence of any reference to disarmament and non-proliferation in the outcome document of the 2005 World Summit. It should come as no surprise that the difficulties encountered in those forums have had repercussions on our work.

(Mr. Trezza, Italy)

The fact that last year we were able to hold substantive debates on the issues of the agenda and on other issues relevant to the international security environment is in itself a sign of vitality. Those debates were useful for fostering a compromise on priorities, but not sufficient to launch negotiations.

We welcome the Secretary-General's encouragement to Foreign Ministers to address the Conference. I recall that in our report of last year (CD/1761 of 22 September 2005), all CD members welcomed such addresses as an expression of political support to our endeavours. We do not need to be reminded that our Conference cannot deliver immediate political gains. But participation at the political level is useful, and we should avoid falling into a vicious circle by discouraging political participation because of a lack of progress, while making no progress for lack of political participation. As you said, we need creativity, flexibility and above all the political will to make this Conference live up to its challenges. We therefore encourage you to issue invitations to Foreign Ministers and other high-level officials to come to the CD to address delegates. We also encourage delegations to include in their national or collective high-level statements references to the CD, as was done in recent years by the G8 leaders and by the Ministers of the Non-Aligned Movement.

After the adoption of the agenda, the Conference should seek consensus on a programme of work. We look forward to a debate based on the CD agenda to identify issues which might constitute the items for a future programme of work. We shall contribute to this debate either on a national or a collective basis. In a spirit of effective multilateralism, we ask delegations not to simply express their national postures but also to take into account the priorities of others. A final synthesis has to be made by the President, and we trust his judgement, but everyone should show flexibility. It is also the duty of a President to be creative and to fully use his prerogatives. We believe that it is within your prerogatives to structure stronger coordination of all this year's incoming Presidents. This is a welcome follow-up to the initiative of the then Italian presidency to establish a presidential "troika" and to the Japanese efforts to strengthen presidencies. It is also within your prerogatives to appoint a number of Friends of the Presidents to assist them in informal consultations. You have our support.

Finally, we ask you and the incoming Presidents to establish a timetable for our work for the whole year. Delegations should be able to prepare themselves in advance on the issues to be discussed. We believe this too is your prerogative, and would answer the expectations of many.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador Trezza of Italy for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Norway, Mr. Paulsen.

Mr. PAULSEN (Norway). Mr. President, a few days ago your homeland and a large number of people suffered one of the worst accidents in Poland's recent history. With grief, I offer the condolences of my Government.

(Mr. Paulsen, Norway)

Today you are convening plenary meeting No. 1,000 in the history of the Conference on Disarmament. There are few reasons for celebration. Or should we continue to be bewildered by the conventional wisdom that the CD has a glorious past and that problems in recent years do not affect the excellence of this so-called "best club in town"?

As pointed out by the Ambassador of the Netherlands a few days ago, the problem is not that it is being repeated over and over again in this chamber that the CD is the best club in town, the problem is that it is being stated with no irony.

It is true that the CD produced two arms control treaties in the period 1990-1996. The first one, the Chemical Weapons Convention, is undoubtedly a success. The other one, the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty, has not entered into force. It is, nevertheless, not without utility. But it is also true that in the CD's 27-year history nothing else has been produced. We can boast of one and a half successes. Is that impressive? Hardly.

And it is equally true that almost all the existing arms control instruments were negotiated before the CD, in its current form, was established, or outside the CD, on parallel tracks. In the 1990s quite a few of the CD's meetings were devoted to discussions on a treaty banning anti-personnel mines. The efforts failed completely, and the Landmines Treaty was negotiated among interested States, far away from the CD.

When the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty was negotiated in the 1960s, the time was ripe. The two super-Powers considered it to be in their self-interest - as it obviously was for the rest of the world - to regulate the nuclear issues and options of the time. Likewise for chemical weapons. They were out of fashion for important Governments around 1990, and that paved the way for the final negotiations. The CD was a convenient forum for that enterprise. But had the CD not existed, a similar multilateral forum would have been invented. And the time was also ripe to negotiate a test-ban treaty, not least due to strong international reactions against nuclear testing in the South Pacific.

In the field of arms control the historical lesson is pretty straightforward: when the time is ripe negotiations commence, whether the approach is bilateral or multilateral. We can all contribute in substantive dialogue and discussions, to facilitating the ripening process. But issues must not be confused. At our meeting No. 1,000 it should be recalled that this Conference is a means, not an objective. In this respect it does not need to be fixed, except that we probably do not have to meet every week to listen to each other's statements about whatever happens to be on our minds. What must be fixed is the policies in some capitals.

But, occasionally, the means may obscure the objectives. Let me take one example: it has been stated in this hall over and over again that the time is ripe to negotiate a fissile material cut-off treaty. I am not convinced that this is the case. But the problem is that as long as the issue is being dealt with in the CD, we cannot know whether the time is ripe, because in this chamber all issues are being kept hostage to each other. It is in effect prohibited to address one concern unless all other concerns are being addressed simultaneously.

(Mr. Paulsen, Norway)

If the time is ripe to negotiate a fissile material treaty, I suggest that the nuclear-weapon States get together with the biggest consumers of fissile material for peaceful purposes - far away from the CD - to consider negotiations. Only then we will see if the time is ripe.

Finally, the CD was established in a political context drastically different from the international security situation in 2006. It seems to me that this is not always reflected in our debates, which occasionally suggest that the cold war is not over and that 11 September never took place. No wonder that the real world outside this hall is surprised and confused when reports leak out from our undertakings.

Let the CD remain as it is in physical terms: a meeting room, microphones, available interpreters, an available secretariat and available delegates ready to negotiate arms control instruments when the time is ripe. No suspension, but more emphasis on availability than time-consuming artificial procedural manoeuvring.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of Norway, Mr. Paulsen. I take note of his speech. I now give the floor to the representative of the Russian Federation, Ambassador Valery Loshchinin.

Mr. LOSHCHININ (Russian Federation) (translated from Russian): Mr. President, I would like to associate myself with the words of condolence that have been expressed in connection with the tragic incident in Katowice. A similar tragedy occurred a few years ago in Moscow, and therefore we understand particularly keenly everything that occurred in Katowice. Please convey to the Government of Poland and the family and friends of those who died our sincere deep condolences and sympathy.

Broadly speaking we share the assessments we have heard concerning this 1,000th anniversary official meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. We endorse in particular the analysis of its activities provided in your statement, Mr. President. We share your optimism. However we may view the activities of the Conference on Disarmament at the current stage, its substantial contribution to the cause of international peace and security and disarmament during the years of its existence cannot be questioned. Even today it remains a unique and authoritative international forum, and the world community pins its hopes for a safer world and a just world order on the Conference.

We have not made a bad start. The Conference has adopted its agenda swiftly and reacted positively to the plans of the six Presidents of the Conference for 2006. Here a number of interesting proposals and views have already been put forward, and some practical proposals contained in the statement by the Ambassador of Italy, for example, are of interest. Even small practical steps, initiatives and ideas move us ahead towards our main goal of securing a compromise on the Conference's programme of work. We hope that such a compromise will be found.

(Mr. Loshchinin, Russian Federation)

Today I would like to draw the attention of the Conference to the important initiative put forward by President Putin on 25 January this year, which is directly relevant to the issues of nuclear non-proliferation, nuclear disarmament and nuclear energy. It is also directly related to the difficult issues connected with strengthening the regime established by the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which are currently under discussion, and also with some points of the agenda. I am talking about the initiative to strengthen cooperation in the peaceful use of nuclear power in the context of efforts to secure global energy security.

Its thrust is the creation of a prototype global infrastructure which will guarantee all interested countries equal access to the benefits of the peaceful use of nuclear power in strict compliance with all the rules of nuclear non-proliferation. The key element in such infrastructure must be the establishment of international centres providing nuclear fuel cycle services, including uranium enrichment and reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel. These centres would have to function on a non-discriminatory basis and under IAEA supervision.

One of the central issues is how to deal with technologies of uranium enrichment and chemical reprocessing of nuclear fuel. It is no secret that these technologies can also be used to produce material for nuclear weapons. Existing limitations on the transfer of such technologies do not solve all the problems that exist. Economic incentives are needed, it would seem, to lead the countries that are developing nuclear energy to conclude that it is not desirable to build the infrastructure related to such technologies at home. This is why we have proposed in the Russian President's initiative the establishment of multilateral mechanisms providing services for uranium enrichment and handling spent nuclear fuel.

The international centres we have proposed should produce and process nuclear fuel on clear and reasonable commercial terms for countries which have decided not to develop these sensitive technologies themselves and do not wish to invest in expensive industries requiring enhanced security measures.

I must say that many questions have arisen in relation to this initiative, which has prompted a great deal of interest. How could it be implemented? In what way could the international community be involved in this endeavour? But these are questions that we all need to give careful thought to. Russia calls on all parties to support this approach and to express their views. We are ready to listen to them, and we are ready to engage in further joint work with various bodies, above all with IAEA. This is an important issue.

As for our comments on the programme of work, we intend to present our views soon at a forthcoming plenary meeting of the Conference.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of the Russian Federation, Ambassador Loshchinin, for his statement and now give the floor to the representative of China, Mr. Sha Zukang.

Mr. SHA (China) (translated from Chinese): Mr. President, with regard to the calamity in your country last Saturday, the Chinese delegation extends its sympathy and heartfelt wishes for the swiftest possible recovery of the many victims.

I am very happy to have the opportunity to attend the Conference on Disarmament once again because, as I look around the colleagues present in this room, I find I am one of a very few old disarmament hands that are still here. I am willing to exchange views with any colleague on security and arms control issues that bear upon international peace and stability. I wish to congratulate you again, Sir, on your assumption of the CD presidency. As we have just celebrated the Chinese Lunar New Year, I would like to extend festive greetings to all. This year is the Chinese year of the dog, a year of good augury. It is our hope that the year of the dog will bring success to the CD.

Today's meeting is of special significance: it is the 1,000th plenary meeting of the CD. The Conference has come a long way, evolving, witnessing profound changes in the international situation and making a significant contribution to world peace and security.

However one looks at it, the importance of the CD is beyond question. In terms of authority, it is at present the world's only negotiating body for multilateral disarmament and an essential part of multilateral disarmament regimes. In terms of mandate, it deals with security and arms control issues that affect world peace and stability - a weighty responsibility. In terms of representativeness, its membership embraces all the major political military Powers in the world today.

Over the years, guided by the common desire of the international community, the CD and its predecessors have negotiated many important arms control treaties in changing situations. In the 1960s and 1970s the CD negotiated the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Outer Space Treaty, the Seabed Treaty and the Biological Weapons Treaty. After the end of the cold war it concluded the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, both of which are of major historical significance. Today the NPT, CWC, CTBT and other such treaties are the essence of the international arms control treaty system. They have made powerful contributions of lasting significance to the realization of the human ideals of comprehensive and complete disarmament and world peace and stability.

The glory of the CD's past cannot cover up its present difficulty. The CD has been unable to do substantive work for many years. Some attribute the situation to its "outdated" working method and believe that it cannot adapt to new circumstances. Others blame a lack of political will in some member States to break the deadlock, and question the CD's future. As a matter of fact, the CD's working method is long-established. During the cold war, when international relations were tense, we were able to achieve a series of good results with the same system. The root cause of the present deadlock is a difference of opinion over the current security situation, over the concept of maintaining security and over the priorities of security interests, and this leads to differences over the programme of work.

(Mr. Sha, China)

An old Chinese saying goes “A leaf before the eye shuts out Mount Tai”, which means having one’s view of the important shut out by the trivial.

The CD does not operate in a vacuum. In searching for the best way to break the deadlock we need to broaden our vision by reassessing the world we live in, our basic understanding of security and the fundamental links between security and arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. The world is undergoing rapid globalization, threats to security are becoming multifaceted and the line between conventional and non-conventional security is becoming blurred. Countries are moving closer to one another because of security concerns and common interests are multiplying. No country, no matter how strong or how advanced its arsenal, can achieve security by relying on itself alone.

Security is always relative, not absolute. Only when the common security of all countries is achieved can the security of individual countries be guaranteed. Multilateral arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation are means, not an end in themselves. The ultimate goal is to improve the security of all countries. History has shown that unrestrained expansion in arms is detrimental to the lasting peace and common security of the world. In our present circumstances, only if countries respect each others’ sovereignty and right to development, and boost their dialogue and cooperation in a spirit of equality, openness and solidarity, will we be able to build a world of lasting peace, security, stability, harmony and prosperity.

China is in favour of cultivating a new security concept with mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and cooperation as core values. He strongly supports multilateralism and more democratic international relations. In the multilateral disarmament process China stands for security through cooperation.

With regard to the CD’s future work, we wish to make the following proposals. First, in carrying out its work, the CD must respect and take into full consideration the resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly, the most representative multilateral mechanism. The relevant General Assembly resolutions reflect the shared aspirations of the international community and provide important guidance for our work. Without such respect our work will be futile. Second, the CD must continue to uphold multilateralism, adopt a working method that is compatible with different ideas, and stick to consensus. The concerns of all parties on specific topics must be taken fully into consideration and settled in negotiations. Attempts to force proposals through in total disregard of others’ interests, or to force a vote while ignoring the possibility of a split in the CD, are unacceptable.

As I have said above, disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation promote safety and peace for all countries - both major Powers and the weak and small. The first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament stipulated that disarmament must follow the principle of undiminished security for all. In order to ensure that all States would be able to participate in negotiations in a constructive, worry-free manner, the CD decided to work by consensus.

(Mr. Sha, China)

If majority decision is not appropriate for the CD, decision by a minority is much, much worse. As a working practice, “what is mine is mine, what is yours is negotiable”, or “do what I tell you to do”, is neither acceptable nor productive. It is undemocratic: a typical example of taking care of one’s own security interests while ignoring the security of others.

Third, we should cherish the mechanism of the CD. We have a saying in Chinese which, roughly translated, means “when we are united, no difficulty is insurmountable”. The more difficulties there are, the greater the need for us to close ranks. Constant threats to abandon the CD and start anew seriously undermine the CD’s authority. Such threats are unacceptable. In actual fact, what cannot be achieved in the CD will be just as hard to achieve in other forums or future negotiating frameworks.

The Chinese side has always been supportive of the work of the CD, and its hope is that the deadlock in the CD will be broken soon and that substantive work can start in a comprehensive and balanced manner at an early date. China will, as always, support and constructively participate in relevant efforts and join hands with all parties in promoting progress in the CD.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador Sha of China for his statement and I now give the floor to the representative of the Netherlands, Ambassador Johannes Landman.

Mr. LANDMAN (Netherlands): Mr. President, also from my side, sincere condolences for the tragic events of Saturday, and as a representative of the country with victims, I would like to inform you of the immense admiration and praise lavished in the Dutch press and the media about the efficiency and the rapidity with which the Polish authorities have been able to take action, which I think is worth mentioning because this is often not the case.

On the occasion of the 1,000th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament, allow me to take a step back to reflect from the perspective of a newcomer on some elements characterizing our work. I will close with a couple of more topical words on the present state of play in the CD.

To the incoming participant in the CD, three things stand out: the peculiar role of the regional groups, the absence of civil society, and, dare I say, a certain lack of imagination.

Firstly, the regional groups: quite a substantial portion of my professional life has been spent in multilateral diplomacy. Often, a balanced distribution of high offices benefited from regional and subregional coordination. Sometimes, work on substance was effectively carried out as well. But it has also become clear to me that regional pre-cooking on substance has not always proved to be helpful - on the contrary, as was clear during the cold war and its block-to-block confrontation between the Warsaw Pact and NATO.

Within the CD, the functioning of the regional groups - on which the rules of procedure are silent - strikes me as particularly unfruitful. The emphasis on regional positioning is the more surprising since on the issue of disarmament and non-proliferation the States making up

(Mr. Landman, Netherlands)

any regional group have rather diverging views. For instance, there is no regional pattern in the distribution of what we have colloquially come to call nuclear “haves” and nuclear “have-nots”. Research by UNIDIR, in its recent publication on Alternative Approaches in Multilateral Decision Making, confirms that the presence of regional groupings can play a spoiling role in arms control negotiations, obscuring transparency, preventing flexibility and unnecessarily hardening positions, as it has done in particular with respect to the Biological Weapons Convention and in the CD. As a matter of fact, to me, the central role of regional groups appears more as an impediment than as an asset for the functioning of the CD.

Secondly, the role of civil society: it has been quite an experience to see globalization and interconnectedness become ingrained in all aspects of diplomatic work, but then, in 2005, to join a forum which is still so utterly disconnected from the outside world. NGOs are only allowed to communicate with this body in writing, as well as through a once-a-year joint statement to be read out by the Secretary-General. It would be a good laugh if it weren’t so sad.

This is not only about diplomacy staying in touch with reality. It is very much a matter of much-needed expertise, which quite a number of professionals in civil society are able to contribute. In the highly technical world of disarmament and non-proliferation, the know-how, the grasp of precedents, and the ability to link with related fields such as human rights, health issues and development, make a simple and convincing case for mature NGO involvement in the work of the CD.

The fact that for some reason this very room is almost permanently obscured, with the light from the outside blocked, making it look like a pharaonic tomb that, moreover, lost its golden brightness long ago, is in my opinion illustrative. Now in its second millennium, it is about time for the CD to draw the curtains, metaphorically as well as literally. As Goethe said on his deathbed, “Mehr Licht!” More light is needed.

Thirdly, let me briefly dwell on the concept of imagination. It is important, since it involves capitals as much as us here in Geneva, since the CD deadlock is not particularly a Geneva problem, but one in which capitals of course play a central role. When speaking to colleagues about the present stalemate in the CD, quite a number reluctantly agree that perhaps only a massive catastrophe in the near future would give renewed urgency to agreeing on a programme of work and getting down to business. Of course, no one would want this to happen.

My only point is the following. We should never find ourselves in a situation where in retrospect only the occurrence of a disaster of sorts could have catalysed the necessary “political will” to start working again. That is why it is our duty to duly imagine all possibilities; it is our task to come up with security analyses as broadly shared as possible, and it is the plight of all of us to compromise, so that we can effectively contribute to preventing such a catastrophe. As the former President of the United States of America, John F. Kennedy, once put it: “We cannot negotiate with those who say, ‘What’s mine is mine, and what’s yours is negotiable.’”

Mr. President, some concluding remarks. Allow me here to return to today’s reality in the CD.

(Mr. Landman, Netherlands)

Last week, at our opening session, the Netherlands urged the P6 to circulate, without unnecessary delay, a timetable of activities, structuring the discussions in the CD for the rest of the year. I was delighted by your assurances that you will, on behalf of the P6, circulate such a timetable no later than 9 February.

In our view a timetable should be designed in a manner allowing the CD to engage in focused discussions, dealing with the 4 + 1 items that I mentioned last week as the obvious topics for discussion. Each should be discussed in its own right. And each topic should be allocated at least several consecutive days for in-depth formal discussions on an equal basis. Having furthermore a number of Friends of the President assisting the presidencies, they could assist in preparing and/or moderating follow-up informal discussions and provide much-needed continuity.

The reasons for such an approach seem self-evident. Member States can organize and prepare themselves beforehand, send qualified experts to participate in the discussions and provide adequate briefings and instructions. Indeed, in-built flexibility should allow for follow-up on any subject, like informal sessions, a continuation of the discussion on a specific topic, if needed, and side events.

Our expectations are high, but the stakes are high as well. At stake is the very existence of this institution as a viable and credible framework for global multilateral negotiations on disarmament and non-proliferation.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador Landman for his statement, and I now give the floor to Ambassador Clemencia Forero Ucrós of Colombia.

Ms. FORERO UCROS (Colombia) (translated from Spanish): Mr. President, allow me to convey to you, in your capacity as Ambassador of Poland, my Government's condolences and the feelings of solidarity of the Colombian people for the tragedy which has plunged your country into grief.

I wish to begin by expressing the satisfaction of my delegation at seeing you directing our work. We are sure that under your guidance, and with your commitment to the subject which you have demonstrated, we will be able to take effective steps to enable the Conference to return to its substantive work. You may count on the full support of my delegation to that end.

The year 2005 ended with scant results in the field of disarmament, such as those achieved at the NPT Review Conference. The year 2006 has begun with little ground for optimism. Against a background of news reporting policies that bring fresh disquiet in the field of disarmament, we are therefore encouraged to begin this year by learning of the initiatives you have put before the Conference on coordinated and ongoing action by the six Presidents for the 2006 session, the setting up of a group of "Friends of the Presidents", and the establishment of a timetable for holding thematic debates. My delegation finds these proposals very constructive, and hopes that they will meet with the shaping of the necessary political will to ensure that

(Ms. Forero Ucrós, Colombia)

these proposals can contribute to putting an end to the worrying paralysis that has dogged the Conference for too long. Political will, of course, depends on our capitals, but as the artisans of disarmament, we have an obligation to encourage it.

In our interpretation, this first stage is intended to identify common positions on agenda items considered individually, as well as possible additional issues of particular concern to members of the Conference which could extend the scope of the agenda, with a view to achieving consensus on all or some of them individually. I will not attempt to repeat the profound analyses already undertaken in this chamber on whether each of the issues is ripe for action, nor wonder why one group of members feels that only if there is agreement to negotiate on certain issues would it be prepared to negotiate on issues of interest to their interlocutors. However, I should point out that elements such as the possibility that a non-nuclear-weapon State might fall victim to an attack or a threatened attack by a State which possesses this type of weapon of mass destruction rekindle concern as to the importance of negative security assurances, and highlight once again the fact that balance is a very delicate element which cannot be omitted from any possible programme of work for the Conference on Disarmament.

My Government does not prejudge the outcome of any negotiation, as we have often repeated, nor are our positions set in stone. That is why we would look forward with interest to some additional issues which have been referred to at Headquarters being addressed in this chamber, owing to their particular relevance to and impact on Colombian society. As an example, I would venture to mention just two: small arms and light weapons, which in my country are veritable weapons of destruction, together with the issue of anti-personnel mines, which are spread in our countryside by the illegal outlaw groups; and possible terrorist attacks on critical civilian infrastructure. However, such a prospect gives rise to new concerns. On the one hand, there are or could be specific forums for dealing with those issues and adopting more flexible and effective instruments to deal with them; on the other, in the circumstances currently prevailing in the Conference on Disarmament, adding such serious issues could do more to disperse our efforts and our interest than to facilitate a convergence of wills and consensus. In contrast, I think that we could have useful contributions and exchanges of views and experience in this regard under one or other of the headings or issues which already appear on the agenda of the Conference.

Allow me to sum up my country's position in the Conference. If all members of the Conference consider that addressing additional issues and dealing with each of the issues on our agenda separately and with no interlinking, or waiting for new proposals on a programme of work based only on issues which are ripe, is the most efficient way to end our deadlock, then Colombia would be the first in line to encourage negotiations. On the other hand, if the members of the Conference believe that we should work without prejudging the outcome on the issues on the agenda which we have re-endorsed, and that what we need to do is to overcome mutual distrust and the lack of political will, then allow me, Mr. President, to repeat what we said in past statements last year, and invite you to reread the five Ambassadors' proposal, supplementing it wherever you feel it necessary and appropriate, formally and explicitly sharing your disagreements or fears. Once we have done that, then perhaps we could reach a political

(Ms. Forero Ucrós, Colombia)

agreement at a high level, so that taking into account the physical limitations involved for delegations of member States if all the core issues were negotiated at one and the same time, we should set up an orderly sequence and a mechanism for a negotiating round to address the issues in parallel.

We further believe, as has been said here today, that participation by civil society is something to be encouraged in a responsible way and with all due maturity. Of course, we would have to find ways and means to permit such participation, as proposed by the Government of Ireland during its term in the Chair in 2004. Perhaps the contribution of civil society could prompt the world's governments and principal leaders to include in their agenda a real commitment to avoid nuclear catastrophe through the progressive negotiation of the appropriate instruments which would lead us to our goal - the end of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador Forero Ucrós of Colombia for her statement. I now give the floor to the Ambassador Elisabet Borsiin Bonnier of Sweden.

Ms. BORSIIN BONNIER (Sweden): Mr. President, initially, let me warmly welcome you on the assumption of the Chair of this august body, for an august body it still is. My delegation will do its utmost to support you in the tasks ahead. Regrettably, today is also a day of national mourning in your home country and, on behalf of Sweden, I ask you to convey the most sincere respect and condolences to the families and friends of all those who lost their lives in that tragic accident.

Mr. President, today you are presiding over the 1,000th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. In hundreds and hundreds of those past plenary meetings the CD members joined in sincere search of solutions to common problems. New and creative approaches were tried. Important pieces of international law were negotiated, together with the essential mechanisms to monitor that the laws, treaties and norms are being upheld. We know what the CD has been capable of. Personally I remember the plenary meetings of the past as exciting events not to be missed, when nations challenged each other with various ideas on how to move the substance forward.

The rule of law remains an essential principle not only in domestic affairs, but also in international affairs. The fact that some might break the law does not make laws less important. Lacunae do exist, both on the legal side and on the implementation side. The CD should be mobilized to fill these gaps. Rejecting the use of the CD to develop necessary rules and norms and to strengthen verification and compliance carried the risk of a slippery slope towards anarchy and the use of force in international relations. This is particularly disturbing at a time when globalization works to make weapons and weapon technologies widely accessible and security problems more and more interconnected.

Perceptions, threats and challenges evidently change over time, and will continue to do so. But the emergence of new dangers does not alleviate the burden of dealing with the old ones, and addressing the old ones is no reason not to face up to new ones. The present debate on old

(Ms. Borsiin Bonnier, Sweden)

versus new threats is a false debate, and the effect has largely been that neither is dealt with. For too many years now the CD has been effectively stymied by fruitless debates where some agenda priorities are pitched against others. Various diplomatic and procedural tools have been tried to overcome the stalemate. The problem is not the machinery itself. The failure is political.

We are now entering a new year for the CD. Let us use this year to get back to work. Let us realize that global security is not a zero-sum game and that the legitimate security concerns of all States must be acknowledged and addressed. Effective multilateralism means seizing opportunities when they arise. It means reconsidering positions that yield no results. And it means a readiness to give and take. Those blocking progress must be made to understand that the inertia in the CD is doing damage not only to our common security but also to their own.

We now look to you and the Presidents who will follow later in the year to use your prerogatives and with firm hands guide us back to substantive work. We have an agreed agenda. We have broadly supported proposals, formal and informal, on what subject matter to focus on. We have talked about these items in formal and informal plenary meetings. You and your predecessors have spent weeks and weeks consulting on what to deal with. And we all know which subjects are on the table.

We know that the FMCT is there. The CD should without any further delay begin negotiations on an FMCT. Such a treaty would be an important and irreversible step towards long-term nuclear disarmament. And it would significantly reduce the risk of nuclear proliferation. It would also facilitate discussions in the relevant forums on multilateral approaches to the nuclear fuel cycle. And in this context, I thank my Russian colleague for the very important and interesting contribution he made today.

We also know that the issues of nuclear disarmament and negative security assurances are on the table. The NPT States have agreed by consensus that the CD should create a subsidiary body to deal with nuclear disarmament measures. Discussions on nuclear disarmament and legally binding negative security assurances remain priorities at a time when many are deeply concerned about indications that some nuclear-weapons States may consider developing new kinds of nuclear weapons and new doctrines for their use.

And we know that preventing an arms race in outer space is vital. The weaponization of this last frontier would not only endanger our security and risk triggering countermeasures, in space as well as on the ground. It would also jeopardize the chances for future generations to reap the benefits of the enormous scientific and economic potential of the peaceful uses of outer space.

It is also clear to us that the agreed agenda of the CD is an inclusive one and that it does not limit our work to those priority areas. My delegation will seriously study any other concrete proposal aiming at negotiations on agreements or instruments within the field of global security, disarmament and non-proliferation.

(Ms. Borsiin Bonnier, Sweden)

Nobody expects our work to be easy. But we must dare face the difficulties, and we will not be forgiven for not trying. The time has come, and we now look to you, Mr. President, to organize our meeting time in such a way that we can plan and focus our work in a constructive and predictable manner.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of Sweden, Ambassador Elisabet Borsiin Bonnier, for her statement and for the kind words she addressed to the Chair. Moreover, I would like to thank her and previous speakers for the condolences they conveyed on the occasion of the accident which happened last Saturday in Poland.

I now give the floor to the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Sergei Ordzhonikidze.

Mr. ORDZHONIKIDZE (Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations): Since I represent all of you, I would like to join all of you in your expressions of condolences at what happened in Poland in Katowice, in condolences to the Government and people of your country.

The 1,000th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament is an appropriate occasion to assess past achievements, to reflect on the causes of the impasse which has existed since around 1999, and to give thought to ways and means of restoring the leading role of the Conference in multilateral arms control and disarmament negotiations.

During the first decade of its existence, the Conference on Disarmament set up its priorities, recorded in the so-called "Decalogue", on the basis of which the yearly agenda was to be drawn, and detailed its working methods that were then periodically reviewed and modified. Towards the end of this period, preparatory efforts started to bear fruit - the Conference entered the phase of the negotiation of treaties.

With the conclusion of negotiations on the Chemical Weapons Convention in 1992 and on the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty in 1996, these items were removed from the agenda. Following the adoption of the treaties, the Conference entered a period of a slowing-down of activities, which over the years has led to the impasse. Paradoxically, the origins of the impasse can be attributed to the end of the cold war, which significantly changed the international security equilibrium and led to a re-evaluation of disarmament priorities by States. These priorities - until then rather stable - started to evolve with the changing perception of security by member States.

New actors have emerged on the international scene, and with the possibility of the acquisition of weapons of mass destruction by terrorists, international relations have become even more complex, more dangerous and less predictable than previously, paradoxically enough. Notions of strategic stability, the avoidance of war and nuclear deterrence have been redefined, and multilateralism has been giving way to the predominance of particular national interests.

(Mr. Ordzhonikidze, Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations)

Besides the short period in 1998 when two ad hoc committees were established, one on negative security assurances and the other on the prohibition of the production of fissile material for weapons purposes, the Conference on Disarmament has been unable to start negotiations, or structured deliberations, on any item on its agenda. Intensive efforts to break the deadlock have not brought the expected results. Gradually, the divergence of views on disarmament priorities led to the establishment of a package of items representing the priorities of different groups of States, but not acceptable as a whole to a number of States - the so-called "programme of work". Subsequent variations of such a programme of work, although sometimes attracting the support of a considerable number of CD members, have never enjoyed consensus. For years, success in striking a balance between these priorities has eluded the Conference. Thus, instead of negotiating multilateral disarmament agreements, the Conference has been trying to forge consensus on current disarmament priorities.

Over the years, the impasse has been attributed to a number of causes, including differing views concerning the agenda, the rules of procedure, the decision-making process, the informal system of political groups, the composition and the lack of involvement of civil society, and so on and so forth. Potential remedies have not had the desired effect. The expansion of the Conference's membership by 23 members in 1996, and by 5 members in 1999, did not help the Conference overcome its problems. Member States have continued to disagree on changing the agenda that was developed in the early years of the existence of the Conference and on changing the composition of the political groups. Also, civil society is not fully using the existing mechanisms for disseminating its views and materials to the members of the Conference, including those adopted by the CD in 2004.

In this context, we should not lose sight of the fact that progress on disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation has also been elusive in other contexts. The greatest disappointment of the 2005 World Summit in September was no doubt the failure to reach agreement on even a single paragraph on non-proliferation and disarmament. Weapons of mass destruction pose a severe danger to all of us, in particular the possibility of such weapons falling into the hands of terrorists. Progress on disarmament and non-proliferation is vital for our collective security, and efforts must continue as a matter of priority.

Figures by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) indicate that in 2004 alone, the global total spent on arms topped \$1 trillion for the first time since the height of the cold war. In contrast, the amount spent on aid over the same period was \$78.6 billion. Disarmament could thus - if we ever start working - liberate significant resources to be channelled towards development efforts, in addition to building greater confidence among States and contributing towards stability, which in turn would also be conducive to the development agenda, including the Millennium Development Goals.

Following the setbacks in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation last year, the whole multilateral disarmament machinery needs an overhaul. The impasse in the CD has political - and I would like to emphasize the word "political" - not structural or procedural

(Mr. Ordzhonikidze, Secretary-General of the Conference
on Disarmament and Personal Representative of the
Secretary-General of the United Nations)

sources. Debates aimed at “getting the CD back to work” that took place in 2004 and 2005 revealed the mostly unchanged political positions of States. In such circumstances, it seems that it would be difficult to agree on the programme of work without joint efforts based on new, imaginative approaches. And I would like to call upon you to use your imagination in political approaches as to the substance of the issue, rather than on procedural problems.

Generating more interest and changing the attitude towards the Conference in capitals could be a welcome remedy. Also, developing a new political consensus on priorities in arms control and disarmament and going beyond narrowly defined national security interests could be of crucial importance in the revitalization of the Conference. Without political decisions at the highest levels, even the most determined efforts of the existing multilateral disarmament bodies, including the Conference on Disarmament, will not succeed. As the Secretary-General of the United Nations stated in his message to the Conference this year, “the impasse cannot be broken by procedural means or by merely fine-tuning existing proposals. Capitals need to thoroughly reassess attitudes towards the Conference, and develop a new political consensus on priorities in arms control and disarmament”.

Frustration over the impasse has led some to contemplate the possibility of suspending or even dissolving the Conference, should it not be able to “deliver results in the foreseeable future”, and setting up an alternative forum based, for example, on the “like-minded” concept. There are, however, other views to the effect that replacing the Conference on Disarmament with another negotiating mechanism would not necessarily solve the problems it now faces. Firstly, the existing fundamental divergence of views on priorities on the international disarmament agenda and the specific security concerns of States would not disappear with the dissolution of the CD. Secondly, the main difference between the Conference on Disarmament and any negotiating body based on the “like-minded” concept is that the latter, by definition, excludes some States that do not consider themselves “like-minded” but whose participation would still be crucial for a meaningful outcome of negotiations. Needless to say, certain issues can only be resolved through the multilateral disarmament negotiating body, and that is the Conference on Disarmament, due to its intellectual and political potential, experience and clear rules of engagement.

We should not be discouraged, though, from using the existing and potential mechanisms available to the Conference now, such as debates on issues on the agenda, for mutually influencing policies and security perceptions of member States and for furthering the consensus-building process. In parallel, the Conference should review its working methods and seek new approaches that could make it more responsive to contemporary security threats and challenges. Progress may be modest, but the Conference cannot afford to remain inactive. We must remember that consensus-building is a process that may take time - but not as long as it took here for the CD - especially when dealing with issues of strategic importance. I firmly believe that political will, perseverance and patience should be the virtues guiding our efforts in the future.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament for his statement. This concludes my list of speakers for today. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor at this stage? I recognize the Ambassador of Ukraine.

Mr. BERSHEDA (Ukraine): I wish also to convey our deepest condolences to the Polish people and families of those who died in the tragic accident last Saturday.

Since this is the first time I am taking the privilege to address the Conference on Disarmament, may I start by congratulating you, Ambassador Rapacki, on the assumption of the presidency of the CD and by wishing you every success in this endeavour?

The year 2005 proved to be another year of standstill for the CD, which was unable to launch its work effectively, notwithstanding the numerous and tireless efforts made by the Presidents of the Conference last year.

The CD cannot remain deaf to the legitimate expectations of the international community. We cannot but acknowledge that some items of the Conference agenda have been taken up in other forums. Does the international community still need to have at its disposal an ineffective multilateral forum for disarmament negotiations?

As ever before, we all need to restate our commitments to multilateralism as a core principle in negotiations in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation with a view to maintaining and strengthening appropriate universal norms and enlarging their scope.

Ukraine has repeatedly stated that the NPT is the cornerstone of the global non-proliferation regime and the essential foundation of the pursuit of nuclear disarmament under article VI of the Treaty. We continue to attach great importance to achieving the universality of and universal compliance with the NPT, as well as the 13-point action plan. We call upon all States which have not yet done so to adhere to the Treaty without delay, and unconditionally. Pending its entry into force, we urge all States with a nuclear capability to abide by a moratorium on nuclear test explosions and refrain from any actions which are contrary to the Treaty.

I would like to stress that progress on nuclear disarmament is as essential to winning the struggle against proliferation as ever. There can be no progress in combating the scourge of nuclear proliferation without tangible steps in nuclear disarmament, and vice versa.

In the context of the CD, this refers especially to two important practical steps agreed by all NPT States parties, i.e. the negotiation of a fissile material cut-off treaty and the establishment of an appropriate subsidiary body with a mandate to deal with nuclear disarmament. This undertaking should pave the way for an agreement on the Conference's programme of work.

Ukraine believes that legally binding security assurances by the nuclear-weapon States to the non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the NPT will significantly strengthen the nuclear non-proliferation regime by eliminating plausible incentives for pursuing nuclear capabilities.

(Mr. Bersheda, Ukraine)

We strongly encourage the nuclear-weapon States to reconfirm their commitments laid out in the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions and the decisions of the 1995 and 2000 NPT Review Conferences. In this regard Ukraine endorses the idea of establishing the appropriate ad hoc committees in the CD.

The success of this endeavour requires that the security concerns of all States be taken into account. The immediate launch of FMCT negotiations, as well as dealing with both nuclear disarmament and the prevention of an arms race in outer space, within the appropriate subsidiary bodies whose mandates will need to be both pragmatic and substantial in order to be accepted by all - these three parts together constitute the basis today for an agreement to begin our work. Ukraine is convinced that such an agreement is within our grasp.

We cannot but highlight areas on which there is already broad agreement, such as the universal application of the Additional Protocol to the IAEA Safeguards Agreement. Ukraine believes that the safeguards serve as an important technical tool for sustaining an environment in which there can be the peaceful use of nuclear energy without the threat of proliferation. In this connection, we strongly support the verification role of IAEA. We also take the view that the universal adoption and faithful implementation of the strengthened safeguards and the additional protocol to them is a prerequisite to an effective and credible nuclear non-proliferation regime. This leads me to suggest that those new developments in the field of the non-proliferation of WMD that the world has seen over the past years may well bring about progress in nuclear disarmament.

Under such new developments, I mean first of all United Nations Security Council resolution 1540, adopted in 2004. The adoption of this instrument has marked the more active involvement of the United Nations in addressing the problem of the non-proliferation of WMD. Resolution 1540 is, undoubtedly, vital to consolidating international efforts to enhance the global WMD non-proliferation regime and, accordingly, to intensify the nuclear disarmament process. In this context it would also be expedient to mention the G8 Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction, established to address, inter alia, non-proliferation and disarmament issues.

The illicit trafficking and uncontrolled accumulation of small arms and light weapons remain among the greatest impediments to sustainable development, conflict prevention and post-conflict peacebuilding. Ukraine is a strong advocate of the efforts within the United Nations system, and especially at the regional level, to address the SALW issue in all its aspects. Being a firm supporter of practical steps at the national level to ensure the effective implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action, as well as of the OSCE document on SALW, Ukraine attaches particular importance to the issue of the destruction of excessive stockpiles of this kind of weapons and related ammunition.

Ukraine fully supports the aspirations of the Ottawa process initiators and like-minded States to overcome the humanitarian crisis caused by the large-scale proliferation and the indiscriminate use of anti-personnel landmines. In this regard I have the pleasure to inform you that on 27 December 2005 Ukraine's instrument of ratification of the Mine Ban Treaty was deposited with the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

(Mr. Bersheda, Ukraine)

Ukraine is open to a constructive dialogue aimed at breaking the current impasse and getting the CD back to work. And in this regard we are pleased to be invited to become one of the group of “Friends of the President”. Ukraine is deeply concerned over the continuing lack of consensus in this room that could eventually cause and is already leading to the erosion of multilateral instruments in the arms control and disarmament sphere, thus making a negative impact on mutual trust and confidence among States.

The considerable potential of the CD needs to be activated as soon as possible. Ukraine pledges its strong support to you, Mr. President, and to your successors with a view to bringing the Conference back to the leading role it is designed to play in this ever-changing world.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador Bersheda of Ukraine for his statement. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor at this stage? That does not seem to be the case.

Today we have heard statements related both to the 1,000th plenary and to the substance of our work. We will study the possibilities of implementation of all suggestions and advice addressed to the Chair and to the incoming Presidents of the Conference on Disarmament very carefully.

This concludes our business for today.

The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Thursday, 2 February 2006 at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.