

# CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/PV.1123  
12 February 2009

ENGLISH

---

## FINAL RECORD OF THE ONE THOUSAND ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-THIRD PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,  
on Thursday, 12 February 2009, at 10.10 a.m.

President: Mr. Le Hoai TRUNG (Viet Nam)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 1123rd plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

First of all, I would like to say to the delegation of Australia, on behalf of the membership of this body, how saddened I am at the high level of loss of life and devastation that has been caused by fires in their country. Please convey to your Government and the families of the victims and the people of Australia the distress that the Conference on Disarmament feels over this dreadful tragedy.

Now I have the following speakers for today's plenary meeting: Algeria, on behalf of the Group of 21; the Czech Republic, on behalf of the European Union; Brazil; Pakistan; Costa Rica, Austria and Venezuela. I now give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador of Algeria, who is going to speak on behalf of the Group of 21.

Mr. JAZAÏRY (Algeria): Mr. President, first and foremost, in the name of the Group of 21, I would like very much to identify our Group with the words of condolence and sympathy that you have expressed towards our eminent colleague of Australia, and I request of her that she kindly convey this sympathy to the families of the victims in Australia.

I am making this statement on nuclear disarmament in the name of the Group of 21.

The G-21 expresses concern at the threat to humanity posed by the continued existence of nuclear weapons and of their possible use or threat of use. As long as nuclear weapons exist, the risk of their proliferation will remain. We would like to recall in this regard that the very first resolution of the United Nations General Assembly 1 (1) of 1946, adopted unanimously, called for the elimination of nuclear weapons from national arsenals. We would also like to recall that the Final Document of the United Nations General Assembly special session on Disarmament in 1978 accorded the highest priority to the goal of nuclear disarmament. Furthermore, the International Court of Justice, in its advisory opinion of 1996, concluded that there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control. The Millennium Declaration in 2000 also reaffirmed the commitment of the member States of the United Nations to strive for the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, in particular, nuclear weapons. Therefore, the Group, as it stated in previous statements to the Conference on Disarmament, reiterates that "achieving total nuclear disarmament remains its highest priority".

The G-21 would like to draw attention to the following contributions of the Group to the deliberations on nuclear disarmament in this Conference:

Working paper on cessation of nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament, submitted on 12 July 1979 (CD/36/Rev.1);

Working paper on the cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament, submitted on 9 July 1980 (CD.116);

Working paper submitted on 4 February 1983 (CD/341);

(Mr. Jazaïry, Algeria)

Draft mandate of an ad hoc committee on item 2 of the agenda, submitted on 18 March 1988 (CD/819);

Proposal for the establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament, submitted on 14 March 1996 (CD/1388);

Proposal on the programme of work, submitted on 5 June 1997 (CD/1462);

Proposal on the programme of work, submitted on 4 February 1999 (CD/1570); and

Draft decision and mandate of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament, submitted on 18 February 1999 (CD/1571).

The G-21 has noted a number of recent official statements made by States, including some nuclear-weapon States, as well as by statesmen and scholars, on issues related to nuclear disarmament and on visions for a nuclear-weapon-free world. The Group, while believing that the implications of these initiatives need to be further investigated, hopes that they will lead to new opportunities to make serious progress on nuclear disarmament, including in the CD.

Stressing its strong commitment to nuclear disarmament, the Group reaffirms its readiness to start negotiations on a phased programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons with a specified framework of time, including a nuclear-weapons convention. Therefore, we are of the view that an international convention on the prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons would be an important step in a phased programme towards the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, with a specified framework of time. In this regard, the Group stresses that the fundamental principles of transparency, verification and irreversibility be applied to all nuclear disarmament measures.

The G-21 notes the measures taken by the nuclear-weapon States for nuclear arms limitation, and encourages them to take further such measures. While reiterating its deep concern over the slow pace of progress towards nuclear disarmament and the lack of progress by the nuclear-weapon States towards accomplishing the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals, the G-21 underlines the importance of effective step-by-step implementation of concrete measures in order to achieve a nuclear-weapon-free world.

The G-21 reaffirms that nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation are substantively interrelated and mutually reinforcing. The G-21 States parties to the NPT remain concerned about the lack of progress in the implementation of the relevant decisions and the resolution on the Middle East of the NPT Review and Extension Conference in 1995 and the outcome of the 2000 NPT Review Conference and, in the wake of the recent military escalation in the Gaza Strip, express the urgent need for implementing the resolution on the Middle East. The G-21 States parties to the NPT also remain particularly concerned about the lack of progress regarding the unequivocal undertaking by nuclear-weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals leading to nuclear disarmament, and urge the nuclear-weapon States to abide by their legal commitments established under article VI of the NPT. The G-21 States parties to the NPT express the hope to see the next NPT Review

(Mr. Jazairy, Algeria)

Conference in 2010 effectively address this situation and therefore call upon all States to participate constructively in the preparatory process of this Conference in order to contribute to its success.

The G-21 emphasizes that progress in nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation in all its aspects is essential to strengthening international peace and security. The Group reaffirms that efforts toward nuclear disarmament, global and regional approaches and confidence-building measures complement each other and should, wherever possible, be pursued simultaneously to promote regional and international peace and security.

There is also a genuine and urgent need to eliminate the role of nuclear weapons in strategic doctrines and security policies to minimize the risk that these weapons will ever be used and to facilitate the process of their elimination. In this regard, the Group recalls its strong support for the objectives of United Nations General Assembly resolution A/RES/63/41 of 2 December 2008 on “Decreasing the operational readiness of nuclear weapons systems”, as well as United Nations General Assembly resolution 63/47 of 2 December 2008, entitled “Reducing nuclear danger”, as practical steps to enhance the level of confidence and transparency in the process of disarmament and non-proliferation.

Pending the achievement of the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, the Group reaffirms the urgent need to reach an early agreement on a universal unconditional and legally-binding instrument to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. In this context, the Group recalls paragraphs 32 and 59 of the Final Document of the tenth special session of the General Assembly, the first special session devoted to disarmament, which underscored the need for effective arrangements, as appropriate, to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.

The G-21 stresses the significance of achieving universal adherence to the CTBT, including by all NWS, which, inter alia, should contribute to the process of nuclear disarmament. The Group reiterates that if the objectives of the Treaty were to be fully realized, the continued commitment of all States signatories, especially the NWS, to nuclear disarmament would be essential.

The G-21 reaffirms the absolute validity of multilateral diplomacy in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation, and expresses its determination to promote multilateralism as the core principle of negotiations in these areas. In this regard, the Group strongly supports the objectives of United Nations General Assembly resolution A/RES/63/50 of 2008 on the “Promotion of multilateralism in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation”.

Therefore, the G-21 calls for renewed efforts to resolve the current impasse in achieving nuclear disarmament, particularly in the adoption of a balanced and comprehensive programme of work for the Conference on Disarmament. It is the Group’s sincere hope that at this year’s session, the Conference will be able to achieve consensus on the much-needed programme of work to move forward the disarmament agenda.

(Mr. Jazaïry, Algeria)

In view of the Group's strong commitment to nuclear disarmament, the G-21 suggests the following concrete steps to promote the goal of nuclear disarmament:

Reaffirmation of the unequivocal commitment of nuclear-weapon States to the goal of complete elimination of nuclear weapons;

Elimination of the role of nuclear weapons in the security doctrines;

Adoption of measures by nuclear-weapon States to reduce nuclear danger, such as de-alerting of nuclear-weapons and decreasing the operational readiness of nuclear-weapons systems;

Negotiation of a universal, unconditional and legally-binding instrument to assure non-nuclear weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons;

Negotiation of a Convention on the complete prohibition of the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons;

Negotiation of a nuclear-weapons convention prohibiting the development, production, stockpiling and use of nuclear weapons and on their destruction, leading to the global, non-discriminatory and verifiable elimination of nuclear weapons with a specified framework of time.

The Group of 21 expresses the hope that it will be possible for the CD to promptly commence negotiations on nuclear disarmament as part of its programme of work.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador Jazaïry, who has spoken on behalf of the Group of 21. I now give the floor to Mr. Ivan Pintér, who is going to speak on behalf of the European Union on two issues: nuclear disarmament and PAROS.

Mr. PINTER (Czech Republic): First of all, Mr. President, I would like to associate myself with the condolences you have addressed to our Australian colleagues. I would like to ask the Australian Ambassador to transmit this message to the Government of Australia and to the families of the victims.

Before delivering the two statements on behalf of the EU, I would like to remind delegations about CD/1854, which has already been distributed. Under this reference you can find letters of December 2008 concerning initiatives of the EU presented to the United Nations General Assembly and the text of the statement on strengthening international security. This last part of this document, the answer of the UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, to the French President, Nicholas Sarkozy, can be found at the back of this room.

And now I would like to deliver the two statements. First is the statement on nuclear disarmament, and then, the statement on PAROS.

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The candidate countries Turkey, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; the countries of the

(Mr. Pintér, Czech Republic)

stabilization and association process, and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia, as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, align themselves with this declaration.

In the statement of 20 January 2009 on behalf of the European Union, we outlined the overall views of the EU on the current situation at the Conference on Disarmament. Let me reassure you, and all your P-6 colleagues, that the European Union will continue to lend its full support to all your work aimed at overcoming the long-standing impasse in the CD. We will spare no effort to revitalize this unique forum in order to resume negotiations and substantive work without further delay.

Today I will, on behalf of the European Union, address the issue of nuclear disarmament. At the outset let me underline that the European Union attaches a clear priority to the negotiations at the CD on an FMCT. An effective FMCT would constitute a significant step in the process of nuclear disarmament, as well as strengthen nuclear non-proliferation. The EU will address the issue of an FMCT in a separate statement at a later date.

One of the key elements in the current proposal for a programme of work for the Conference on Disarmament, CD/1840, is that the CD should engage in “substantive discussions on nuclear disarmament and the prevention of nuclear war”. The EU is ready to engage further on these issues as soon as a programme of work has been agreed. In the meantime, the European Union and its Member States will continue to constructively participate in the informal debates on the issues led by the Coordinators, including on nuclear disarmament.

The last time the European Union made a formal statement at this Conference specifically dedicated to the issue of nuclear disarmament was on 6 February 2007. The EU stands by this statement. Since then, the EU has continued to stress that global security, as well as European security, would benefit from continued global disarmament efforts. The European Union intends to play a full-fledged role in this. In that regard, we call on the international community to work to promote the concrete and realistic disarmament initiatives which the EU submitted to the United Nations General Assembly at its current session. All these initiatives, which were endorsed by our 27 Heads of State and Government in December last year in the “Statement on strengthening international security”, which was submitted as an official document of the CD, were outlined in our statement in the CD plenary on 20 January 2009. Several of those initiatives are relevant inter alia to the Conference on Disarmament and its work on the specific issue of nuclear disarmament.

Besides the negotiation of an FMCT, which the EU will address in a separate statement, the European Union calls for the universal ratification of the CTBT, a treaty that is the latest, and hopefully not the last, concrete result from this negotiating body. In addition, the EU also calls for the completion of its verification regime and the dismantling of all nuclear test facilities in a manner that is transparent and open to the international community. The European Union is encouraged by recent signs of political momentum towards the entry into force of the CTBT. Statements made by the new United States administration give rise to some optimism for

(Mr. Pintér, Czech Republic)

progress towards this goal. We therefore repeat our urgent call to all States which have not yet ratified this crucial disarmament treaty, and in particular the nine remaining Annex II States, to sign and ratify the Treaty unconditionally and without delay.

The European Union calls for further progress in the current discussions between the United States and Russia on the development of a legally binding post-START arrangement and an overall reduction in the global stockpile of nuclear weapons in accordance with article VI of the NPT, in particular by the States which possess the largest arsenals. We take note of some encouraging signals in this regard with statements made by the new United States Administration.

The European Union also calls for the inclusion of tactical nuclear weapons, by those States which possess them, in their general arms control and disarmament processes, with a view to the reduction and elimination of these weapons.

The European Union also favours the establishment of transparency and confidence-building measures by the nuclear Powers. The EU welcomes the increased transparency shown by some nuclear-weapon States on the nuclear weapons that they possess and calls on other concerned States to do likewise.

The European Union proposes the start of consultations on a treaty banning short- and intermediate-range ground-to-ground missiles.

In these areas related to the issue of nuclear disarmament, the European Union is convinced that concrete progress is realistic. We note that these areas were also mentioned in the report of the Coordinator on nuclear disarmament during last year's CD session.

The European Union will continue its efforts on the issue of nuclear disarmament also in the context of the NPT review process. The NPT, based on its three mutually-reinforcing pillars, represents a unique and irreplaceable framework for maintaining and strengthening international peace, security and stability. The authority and integrity of the NPT must be preserved and strengthened, and to that end the EU will continue to promote all the objectives contained in the Treaty. The upcoming third session of the NPT Preparatory Committee, in May this year, will be an important occasion to continue to lay the groundwork for a successful NPT Review Conference in 2010. The EU intends to work actively towards this end.

I would now like to deliver the second statement, on PAROS.

Mr. President, I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The candidate countries Turkey, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; the countries of the stabilization and association process and potential candidates Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia, as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, align themselves with this declaration.

I would like to assure you, as well as all Coordinators, of my full personal support and the support of the European Union in your efforts to guide and lead our work.

(Mr. Pintér, Czech Republic)

The EU and its Member States recognize the ever-growing dependence of the international community on outer space for economic and industrial development and progress, as well as for ensuring security. Activities in this respect should be developed in a peaceful, safe and secure environment: an arms race in outer space must be prevented. Such prevention contributes to the strengthening of international security and promotes international cooperation in the field of free exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes by all States. Hence, the longstanding position of the EU and its member States in the Conference on Disarmament which favours the enhancement of the multilateral framework concerning the preservation of a peaceful, safe and secure environment in outer space.

The EU places great importance on the relevant existing agreements and sees these as the basis on which we should build. We recall in particular the 1967 Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and other Celestial Bodies, generally known as the Outer Space Treaty, the 1979 Agreement Governing the Activities of States on the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies, generally known as the Moon Treaty, and the relevant existing arms control agreements.

Very important from our point of view are also the Registration Convention of 1975, the Liability Convention of 1972 and the Astronauts Rescue Agreement of 1968. The EU would also like to underline the relevance of the Hague International Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation and the need for its universalization as highlighted in the concrete and realistic proposals presented by the EU at the United Nations General Assembly and referred to in our statement at the CD on 20 January 2009. On the basis of these existing agreements, space-faring nations are encouraged to provide advance notice if there is reason to believe that their activities may cause interference and thereby harm the operation of another nation's space objects. They are also encouraged to provide launch notifications and registration. These agreements contribute to transparency and are important confidence-building measures between space-faring and non-space-faring nations.

We would also like to recall that last year the EU introduced the United Nations General Assembly resolution on the Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation and that the EU member States unanimously voted in favour of United Nations General Assembly resolutions on transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities and on prevention of an arms race in outer space in recent sessions of the United Nations General Assembly.

The EU appreciates the efforts of the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China to enhance international space security and to put the subject on the international agenda. In this connection we took note of the proposal for a draft treaty on the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space, the threat or use of force against outer space objects (PPWT) submitted last year in the CD. Concerning the draft PPWT, in its statement of 28 February 2008, the EU already indicated that while it identified itself with the overall goal to preserve outer space as an area free from armed conflict, further reflection and work was required on the elements for an effective international treaty. For example, it remains a difficult challenge to achieve consensus on the definitions needed for a legally-binding instrument. As a matter of principle, an effective and robust verification system must be an integral part of any

(Mr. Pintér, Czech Republic)

future treaty concerned with space security. The EU considers it is not sufficient only to refer to a possible future additional protocol. Also any PPWT would need to clearly address the issue of anti-satellite weapons tests.

The EU therefore appreciates the discussions so far in the CD on PAROS. Furthermore, the EU welcomes the P-6 decision to again task a coordinator to lead our discussions on this topic in the CD in 2009. We pledge to Ambassador Grinius our full support and place great confidence in his abilities. In that context, the EU emphasizes that further substantive discussions concerning space issues will take place when the proposed programme of work of the CD (CD/1840) is agreed. The EU again urges all CD members to show flexibility and to make consensus possible on the basis of this proposal.

The European Union also recognizes the relevant work carried out by the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS). We appreciate in particular the work of COPUOS on debris mitigation guidelines and the preservation of the space environment, which will include space rules of the road. The outputs of this work should be used as a basis for further transparency and confidence-building measures. The EU also supports the initiative for the long-term sustainability of outer space activities.

As the CD is aware, the European Union has been preparing a draft proposal for an international code of conduct for outer space activities, aimed at increasing the security of outer space activities. On 8 December 2008, the Council of the European Union approved an initial draft text of the code of conduct for outer space activities. The draft text of the code includes transparency and confidence-building measures; it is, however, not a legally-binding document, nor does it seek to replace initiatives which work towards that aim. It recognizes that a comprehensive approach to safety and security in outer space should be guided by the following principles: freedom of access to space for all for peaceful purposes, preservation of the security and integrity of space objects in orbit, and due consideration to the legitimate defence interests of States. The main objective of the code of conduct is to strengthen the safety, security and predictability of all space activities, inter alia by limiting or minimizing harmful interference in space activities. It covers all outer space activities: civil as well as military and present as well as future ones.

The main purpose of the code-of-conduct project is twofold:

- To strengthen the existing United Nations treaties, principles and other arrangements, as the subscribing parties would commit to comply with them, to make progress towards adherence to them, to implement them, and to promote their universality
- To complement them by codifying new best practices in space operations including measures of notification and of consultation that would strengthen the confidence and transparency between space actors and contribute to developing good-faith solutions that would permit the performance of space activities and access to space for all

As the code of conduct would be voluntary and open to all States and would lay down the basic rules to be observed by space-faring nations, it does not include any provision concerning

(Mr. Pintér, Czech Republic)

the specific question of non-placement of weapons in space. The purpose of such a code is neither to duplicate or compete with the initiatives dealing with this specific issue, nor to oppose them. On the contrary, the project complements and contributes to those initiatives, inter alia by insisting on the importance of taking “all measures in order to prevent space from becoming an area of conflict”. The draft text of the code is distributed as an attachment to this statement and is available on the website of the Council of the European Union.

The European Union is currently consulting other space-faring nations on the text with the aim of reaching a consensus text that would be acceptable to as many States as possible. It is envisaged that at the end of the consultation process an ad hoc conference would be organized in order for States to subscribe to the code. While it is not our intention to negotiate the code in this forum, we will keep the CD informed on the progress of the work on the code. More detailed information on the substance of the code is also available at the back of this room.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Mr. Ivan Pintér for the statement that he has made on behalf of the European Union on two important issues, namely, nuclear disarmament and the prevention of an arms race in outer space. I now give the floor to Ambassador Luiz Filipe de Macedo Soares of Brazil.

Mr. MACEDO SOARES (Brazil): Mr. President, my delegation associates itself with the sentiments expressed by you to the Australian Ambassador on the unfortunate events in her country.

Since this is the first time I take the floor in the Conference on Disarmament during this year's session, allow me at the outset to congratulate you, Ambassador Le Hoai Trung, and Viet Nam, for the excellent manner in which you conducted the work of the Conference during the first presidency of the 2009 session and express our appreciation to you and your delegation for the consultations carried out since last year with a view to getting the Conference back to work.

Brazil comes to the 2009 session of the Conference on Disarmament in the same spirit that has oriented its participation in previous years. Nuclear disarmament remains the highest goal in international relations insofar as nuclear weapons may thwart all other aspirations, including development. We come confident that progress can be achieved, not in a Panglossian spirit, but based in our sense of responsibility towards our fellow countrymen and all humankind. We know that all States here represented share this understanding. However, the difficulties we face are not the same for every one of the member States. It is neither unjust nor superfluous to recall that a heavier responsibility falls upon those States that possess nuclear arsenals.

I would like to touch briefly on some topics that seem to pose here and there some question. Perhaps the doubts raised stem from the very repetition of certain ideas. The term “mantra” should not be used ironically, since its meaning, if I am not mistaken, is exactly one of propitiation.

The Conference on Disarmament is the sole multilateral negotiating body for nuclear disarmament. More than historical reasons related to the successive mechanisms or reasons of a

(Mr. Macedo Soares, Brazil)

formal if not legal nature proceeding from the text that established the CD, the uniqueness of this forum derives from political realities, among them the acceptance by the nuclear-weapon States to meet institutionally and permanently. Since the objective is a world free of nuclear weapons, all the different aspects and negotiations thereon cannot be detached and treated as separate matters in different bodies, not necessarily with the same participants. Every substantive item in the agenda of the CD is essentially linked to that overall objective. It would not be useful and realistic to think of making progress on the basis of generous impulses or idealistic processes.

In other words, the obstacles we face are not of an institutional nature.

There has been mention of a principle of equal security among States. The existence of such a principle is doubtful. It is certainly not a synonym of the basic principle of international law concerning the equality of States. The goal of equal security was at the roots of the outdated system of balance of power or, more crudely, at the heart of the mutual assured destruction, one of the many sad features of the cold war.

While making this comment, I am not ignoring the realities of acute insecurity prevailing in many parts of the world. On the contrary, it is not only in conflict-ridden areas, but indeed everywhere, that the right not to be aggressed or threatened must be assured. In fact, the sense of insecurity is a fertile soil not only for the reluctance to disarm but also for the ambition to acquire nuclear weapons. The malaise of insecurity can be remedied by means of weapons in the way that vitamins are supposed to strengthen one's resistance to disease. Taking that image further, nuclear weapons are like anabolic-androgenic steroids, which are outlawed in the world of sports.

The way out of this dilemma involving security and nuclear weapons is to face with determination the moral and political obligation to sit at the negotiating table.

The aim of this opening and general speech is necessarily to assess the expected developments in this august body and in the framework of nuclear disarmament during the present year. It is not so much a question of foreseeing what will happen, rather of stating what Brazil thinks should be done as a member of the CD, co-responsible for its functioning, and as a country that inscribed in its political and juridical foundation, that is to say, in its Constitution, the interdiction to possess nuclear weapons.

It is likely that the barriers that have been preventing the effective functioning of the CD are about to be lifted. We must prepare therefore to engage in meaningful negotiations. The tone and context of the recent informal exchanges of views show this not to be a preposterous assertion.

The adoption of a programme of work, in accordance with our rules of procedure is not a formality, but a tool to allow every member to efficiently prepare its participation. Moreover, it corresponds to a political decision of the Conference, taken by consensus, establishing the order and the modalities by which it will take up the substantive agenda items. It has been according to this fashion that the CD has reached important achievements, the last one being the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty.

(Mr. Macedo Soares, Brazil)

After a regrettably long interval, the reasons for which it is not now the moment to explore, the Conference should be ready to embark on the negotiation of a treaty on fissile material. The discussions thereon, especially in an informal context, evidence the wealth of possibilities and the range of positions. We should nevertheless refrain from placing our preferences or intentions regarding this or that aspect of the possible instrument as conditions for accepting the negotiation. If such an attitude prevails, we can be sure that no negotiation will ever take place. No one can imagine a treaty that in its final form corresponds exactly to the initial position of any individual party.

An FMCT could be the gateway leading to nuclear disarmament. One could argue that a treaty banning nuclear weapons would not depend on a measure controlling one ingredient. However, it is difficult to deny that the major step of ridding the world of those weapons of mass destruction cannot be attempted if States shy away from negotiating an FMCT.

For a country like Brazil, that has no nuclear weapons and will not possess such an arsenal, nothing is more sensible than to ask for the prompt preparation and adoption of a legally-binding instrument assuring non-nuclear-weapon-States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. This is a preliminary measure, far away from the final ban on nuclear weapons but an indispensable, just and civilized decision that should still be taken in this first decade as a good omen for the twenty-first century.

Agreed measures for the prevention of an arms race in outer space are undoubtedly in the interest of the very nations that are in a position of undertaking such a dangerous, unfortunate adventure. For world public opinion it is impossible to understand the supposed security impediments in the way of preventive actions regarding outer space.

These considerations show that for Brazil it is not only viable but also desirable to commence negotiations on more than one agenda item. However we refuse a position of all or nothing. In this sense, for example, we may welcome reductions in nuclear weapons arsenals, but no one can expect that we celebrate such not-so-transparent unilateral measures, especially in view of the persistence of technical improvements and alertness.

It seemed appropriate to my delegation to address some of the main aspects concerning this Conference on Disarmament in the early phase of the 2009 session. We should not forget that this is a crucial year in the process of preparation for the Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference, the positive outcome of which is one of our main concerns.

Last year Brazil, after an interval of 18 years, re-established a separate Permanent Representation to the CD, also in charge of other forums and initiatives dealing with arms control and international security. Some countries have simultaneously been taking the opposite path. Is my country going against the trend of history? If it were so, too bad for all of us. We firmly believe that ours was the right decision at the right moment.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of Brazil for his statement and I hope that Brazil and many others have made the right decision. I now give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador of Pakistan, Ambassador Zamir Akram.

Mr. AKRAM (Pakistan): Mr. President, before I begin, I would like to join you and other colleagues in conveying our condolences to our Australian colleague for the unfolding tragedy in her country. I would also like to express our association with the statement made by the honourable Ambassador of Algeria, Ambassador Jazaïry, on behalf of the Group of 21.

Allow me to begin by complimenting you on your conduct of this CD session. You have conducted your presidency in a constructive, cooperative, open and transparent manner. You have guided our work with professionalism, drive and dedication. We commend you and all the members of your delegation. You will conclude your term this week and pass on the baton to Zimbabwe. We assure the incoming Presidents of our full support and cooperation during their respective terms.

Last month, I made a brief statement in order to express our position on the CD's programme of work. Today, I have asked for the floor to share Pakistan's perspective on the broad spectrum of arms control and disarmament issues.

It is our conviction that the Conference on Disarmament is the sole disarmament negotiating forum. Pakistan, as always, supports this important body and will oppose any effort to undermine this august forum. It is unfortunate that despite its critical role in international peace and security, the CD is passing through a decade-long impasse. My delegation remains ready to work with other members to break this deadlock at the earliest.

It is an accepted fact that States represented here will only participate in negotiations that will promote and protect their national security. It follows that we must pursue objectives that ensure equal security for all. The security of some States cannot be built upon the insecurity of others. Moreover, Mr. President, as pointed out by you in your statement of 20 January, there is a direct relationship between disarmament and respect for self-determination and national independence, the peaceful settlement of disputes in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the strengthening of international peace and security.

Every item on the agenda of the CD has its significance and relevance. There is a consensus in the Conference that the four core issues - nuclear disarmament, negative security assurances, prevention of an arms race in outer space and a fissile material treaty - constitute a delicate balance. None is more important nor riper than the others for negotiations. Any proposal on the CD's programme of work must maintain this delicate balance, while keeping in view that the CD is not a debating society but a negotiating forum. The end objective of any deliberations in the CD should be the negotiation of a legally-binding treaty.

Nuclear disarmament is the CD's *raison d'être*. This is the fundamental issue around which all other issues revolve. The CD was conceived to pursue the disarmament agenda, to avert nuclear war and to seek measures for the security of all. Immediate negotiations on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international controls are what we need to create a world free of nuclear weapons. The International Court of Justice, as well as a number of prominent international personalities, have also called for the elimination of nuclear weapons. The CD must respond to this call.

(Mr. Akram, Pakistan)

While the negotiation of a nuclear weapons convention will be a long, drawn out process, nuclear-weapon States have a major responsibility to assure non-nuclear-weapon States that nuclear weapons will not be used against them. Since such statements have been made in the Security Council by the nuclear-weapon States, there is no reason why these commitments cannot be transformed into a legally-binding instrument so that non-nuclear-weapon States feel secure. Pakistan, as a responsible nuclear-weapon State, has consistently extended the assurance that its nuclear weapons will never be used against a non-nuclear-weapon State and we stand ready to transform our commitment into a legally-binding instrument. Every year the United Nations General Assembly calls on the Conference on Disarmament "to actively continue intensive negotiations with a view to reaching early agreement and concluding effective international agreements to assure the non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons". The CD has yet to respond to this call.

Pakistan believes that outer space must remain a peaceful and common heritage of humankind. It is in our joint interest to explore and use outer space for peaceful purposes. It should not be weaponized or colonized. An arms race in outer space will also have serious ramifications for all military and defence doctrines.

Prevention of an arms race in outer space, therefore, has gained urgency, given the growth and expansion in space activities, as well as the level of advancement in space technology. The distinction between benign and malign uses of space is too blurred to be left uncontrolled and unchecked. The existing legal regimes - comprising the 1967 Outer Space Treaty, the 1984 Moon Treaty, and the abrogated ABM Treaty of 1972 - are not sufficient and adequate to stem the induction of nuclear weapons through surveillance and verification. The time is ripe for negotiations on PAROS.

A fissile material treaty with a robust verification regime and covering existing stockpiles is a key to the cessation of a nuclear arms race. A non-verifiable and mere cut-off treaty will not be a disarmament measure. It will just freeze the status quo and not further the goal of disarmament.

The unanimous 1993 United Nations General Assembly resolution 48/75 L, which envisaged a "non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable" fissile material treaty, is the fundamental basis for FMT negotiations. Later in 1995, the CD invested sufficient time, energy and resources in developing a road map for such negotiations and reached an agreement by consensus on the Shannon report. In 1998, the CD established an ad hoc committee and launched negotiations of a treaty on the basis of the Shannon report. These negotiations were derailed when one delegation changed its position on the issue of verification of an FMT. Pakistan has remained consistent in its support for a verifiable treaty and remains prepared to resume negotiations on the basis of the Shannon mandate at the earliest.

Our stance on this issue is clear and unambiguous. Attempts by some States to blame Pakistan for blocking so-called progress on FMT are not only disingenuous but designed to deflect attention from the real reasons for the breakdown in FMT negotiations. Such deliberate distortion of our clear and unambiguous position is unacceptable.

(Mr. Akram, Pakistan)

The recently concluded nuclear cooperation arrangements in our neighbourhood, without adequate international safeguards, have the potential for increasing fissile material stocks that can be diverted towards weapons production, as has been done in the past. For this reason, the issues of verification and stocks have become vital for Pakistan in any negotiations on an FMT.

Pakistan strongly favours international cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and technology under appropriate IAEA safeguards. Our rapidly growing economy requires energy from all sources, including nuclear energy. International cooperation in this area should be based on a level playing field, and without discrimination or double standards. Such cooperation ought to be pursued in keeping with a criteria-based approach, along with adequate international safeguards. However, the adoption of discriminatory policies or double standards relating to nuclear cooperation, whether in South Asia or the Middle East, can only be counterproductive and self-defeating. It is indeed unfortunate that even the self-proclaimed high priests of non-proliferation are being driven by the profit motive to reward countries they themselves have accused of proliferation. Such a biased approach can only lead to dangerous consequences.

Pakistan was not the first to introduce nuclear weapons in our region. We were compelled to do so in order to achieve a credible deterrence to guarantee our security. Pakistan's nuclear programme is purely defensive and based on minimum credible deterrence. It is security-driven, not status-driven.

We have put forward numerous proposals to stabilize the nuclear equation in South Asia. Among these is the concept of a strategic restraint regime which has three constituents - nuclear and missile restraint, conventional balance, and conflict resolution.

We remain concerned about the introduction of new weapon systems and the build-up of strategic and conventional forces in the region. In this context it is pertinent to recall the statement made by our National Command Authority: "While continuing to act with responsibility in maintaining credible minimum deterrence and avoiding an arms race, Pakistan will neither be oblivious to its security requirements, nor to the needs of its economic development, which demand growth in the energy sector."

Before concluding, I would like to inform the CD members that we ratified Protocol V on Explosive Remnants of War on 19 January 2009. The instrument of ratification has been submitted to the United Nations Secretary-General. Pakistan, as a State party to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) and its five Protocols, is fully committed to implement it. We believe that the CCW framework is the most appropriate forum to address humanitarian issues related to conventional weapons. We will actively and constructively take part in next week's negotiations on cluster munitions. We call on all CCW States parties to demonstrate their commitment to ensure the successful outcome of these negotiations.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of Pakistan, Mr. Zamir Akram, for his statement and for the kind words he addressed to me and my delegation. I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Costa Rica, Mr. Carlos Garbanzo.

Mr. GARBANZO (Costa Rica): Costa Rica associates itself with the condolences expressed to Australia by you, Mr President, and the other delegations that have spoken in this forum. Since this is the first time that my country has taken the floor in this body, allow me to seize the opportunity to convey my delegation's congratulations to you and your Government on your appointment and record as President of the Conference on Disarmament and assure you of my delegation's support in your conduct of this office. In addressing this forum my delegation is greatly concerned by the deadlock which this Conference has been experiencing for years now and which, unfortunately, has grown steadily worse in recent times. My delegation ventures to issue an alarm call over this situation in its capacity as the first country in the world not to have an army and, consequently, the first country to have achieved the complete disarmament which is the ultimate goal of this body.

Last December, my country commemorated the sixtieth anniversary of the abolition of the army, a historic step taken through an amendment to our Political Constitution. Since 1949, the army has been proscribed as a permanent institution in our country. This historic decision has enabled Costa Rica, a country with few natural and financial resources, to devote the funds that would have been misspent not only on arms and military personnel but also on attending to victims and on war reparations, to strengthening our public health and education system and our infrastructure, elevating us to higher standards than those of other developing countries in similar circumstances. All this has enabled us to nurture and guarantee greater political and social stability, which is of the utmost importance in today's world crisis.

Costa Rica considers the Conference on Disarmament to be the main international disarmament forum, and wishes to support its work. However, my country has been seeking membership of this body since 1994 to no avail. In part this reflects the paralysis of the Conference on Disarmament and the structural crisis it is facing. In our view, this results from approaching disarmament from an arms perspective rather than from a humanist perspective, which is the one that should obtain in this forum for discussion. Only a vision centred on humanitarian interests can promote international peace and disarmament. In the best of cases, the alternative - an approach based on technical and arms-oriented considerations - might lead to arms regulation and control of international arsenals, but never to world disarmament. My country considers that the difficulties confronting this forum lie not in the agenda or in the programme of work but in the militarist nature of approaches and visions, and that this situation will not alter without a change in the overall vision of this organ and in its methods of operation.

My country is nevertheless optimistic and has positive expectations for progress in this forum during the current year. In this connection, we would like to support the initiative promoted by various delegations that have spoken in this plenary in favour of opening up to civil society and hence, let it be said, recognizing the steady, silent work that various non-governmental organizations have been performing on this subject.

Costa Rica is a firm believer in the international legal system, and it is convinced that international disarmament must be achieved through dialogue and the negotiation of international legal instruments. Although my country has already achieved disarmament, we are guided in this forum by a position of principle regarding the protection of the civilian population and the strengthening of conditions of security for future generations. That is why it is important

(Mr. Garbanzo Costa Rica)

to note that disarmament is not, and never has been, a matter exclusively for countries with weapons but also, and all the more so, a subject that concerns and affects the interests of any country and population that can be harmed by the use of weapons of any kind.

In this connection, my country promotes and has participated actively in various international initiatives enabling substantial progress to be made in the area of disarmament, among which I might mention the initiative on the arms trade treaty, the Oslo process which led to the adoption of the Convention on Cluster Munitions on 3 December 2008, and the dialogue concerning the Model Nuclear Weapons Convention, an initiative which has been revived by the Secretary-General of the United Nations. Costa Rica has also presided over various disarmament bodies, such as the Preparatory Commission for the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the Committee on Hemispheric Security of the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Security Council 1540 Committee. Lastly, on 19 November 2008, my country, as pro tempore President of the Security Council, convened a debate on “Strengthening collective security through general regulation and reduction of armaments: the safest road to peace and development”, at which the Council discussed and recognized, among other elements, the links between disarmament and economic and social development.

Allow me to conclude with the words spoken by my President, Mr. Oscar Arias Sánchez, at the Security Council meeting of 19 November 2008:

“This is a particularly opportune moment. On one hand, arms races are developing in many situations around the world. On the other hand, there are the crises that afflict us. The food crisis, the environmental crisis, the energy crisis and the economic crisis are impeding efforts to improve the lives of those who are condemned to poverty, ignorance and ill-health. It would appear that the time has come for us to recognize the link that exists between the squandering of resources on arms and the need for those resources to advance us to greater levels of human development. This is what we must do after having recognized that peace and security, development and human rights are the pillars of this Organization and the basis of our collective security and well-being. Today we need to go beyond words. The dialogue that we are starting now must lead us to action.”

Costa Rica supports the reactivation of the Conference on Disarmament and appeals to this body and its members in this sense. The right moment is now.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Mr. Garbanzo for his statement on behalf of Costa Rica. I now give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador of Austria, Ambassador Christian Strohal.

Mr. STROHAL (Austria): Mr. President, allow me at the outset to thank you for the admirable manner in which you are conducting your presidency at this critical phase of the beginning of this year’s session. I also join you in your expression of condolences and sympathy to Australia through our distinguished colleague. We would also like to extend our gratitude to the Coordinators for their efforts in steering our informal debates. In fully subscribing to the

(Mr. Strohal, Austria)

statements just delivered by the Czech presidency on behalf of the European Union, I would like to address a couple of issues pertaining to the three agenda items that have been discussed in the informal settings this week.

First, a brief remark on PAROS. My delegation is of the opinion that codes of conduct significantly contribute to enhancing security of outer space activities or to curbing proliferation risks. In our role as Immediate Central Contact and Executive Secretariat of The Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation, we note with satisfaction that more than two-thirds of the United Nations membership have already subscribed to that Code. We call upon all Subscribing States to respect their obligations under the Code, especially with a view to submitting pre-launch notifications, and encourage those States not having yet subscribed to the Code to take such a step in the near future.

Let me now turn to nuclear disarmament and start by mentioning our efforts in support of the CTBT. The entry into force of the CTBT is long overdue. As an expression of its commitment to that treaty, we assumed last year together with Costa Rica the presidency of the Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the CTBT, the so-called Art. XIV Conference. In this capacity we have sponsored outreach activities in several parts of the world in order to speed up the ratification process. We also co-organized the CTBT Ministerial Meeting in New York last September, with high-level representatives from more than 90 States, as well as the Secretary-General of the United Nations and other personalities.

That meeting has raised the wider public's awareness about the significance of nuclear disarmament for world security and also clearly underlined that civil society needs to play a strong role in our common disarmament efforts. We note with satisfaction that a considerable number of States, among them Annex II State Colombia, have ratified the Treaty during our tenure, raising the total number of ratifying States to 148. There is, undoubtedly, a global momentum towards the entry into force of this Treaty. We are hopeful that the new American Administration's positive attitude towards the CTBT will act as a further boost to accelerate the entry into force. In the remaining time of our chairmanship, Austria will do its utmost to encourage all Annex II States who have not yet done so to ratify the CTBT as soon as possible.

In the context of the NPT and IAEA framework, Austria actively contributes to the debate on the multilateralization of the nuclear fuel cycle. We believe that it is time to design a framework suited to the nuclear realities of the twenty-first century, which restricts the most dangerous technologies, enrichment and reprocessing exclusively to facilities under multilateral control. One of the most tangible projects so far is the establishment of a nuclear fuel reserve under the control of the IAEA. Initially proposed by the Nuclear Threat Initiative, this project is fully endorsed by the Austrian Government and the European Union. From our point of view, however, fuel reserve mechanisms can only be a first step in a long journey. When the IAEA Director-General reinvigorated efforts on multilateral approaches to the nuclear fuel cycle a few years ago, he argued that the ultimate goal should be the multilateralization of all new existing enrichment and reprocessing capabilities. This is an ambitious goal and it is necessary to begin our work now so as to be able to identify the most opportune avenues for getting to a full scope-multilateralization as soon as possible.

(Mr. Strohal, Austria)

Efforts towards the multilateralization of the nuclear fuel cycle are closely interrelated with those towards banning the production of weapons-grade fissile material. In this regard, a fissile material cut-off treaty must be the next step towards complete nuclear disarmament. From our perspective, a comprehensive ban on the production of highly enriched uranium and plutonium for weapons purposes is indispensable to stop the nuclear arms race.

It goes nearly without saying that such a treaty can and must be verified. Effective verification should comprise any enrichment and reprocessing facilities. Furthermore, mechanisms need to be established also to detect undeclared or clandestine enrichment or reprocessing activities.

As to the question of existing stockpiles of fissile material, an eventual FMCT could include provisions enhancing transparency and confidence. Firstly, any fissile material for civil purposes should be placed under the auspices of the IAEA. Such a provision would also be in accordance with our aforementioned proposal on the multilateralization of the nuclear fuel cycle. Secondly, all nuclear-weapon Powers, regardless if they are States Parties to the NPT or not, should be obliged to apply the highest security standards to curb the proliferation risks and to enhance confidence through greater transparency concerning their military stockpiles.

An FMCT should not only entail the cessation of a nuclear arms race by capping the amount of weapons-grade fissile material, but also increase confidence through an effective verification regime and enhanced transparency. This would pave the way for the negotiation of a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control, as called for in article VI of the NPT.

In conclusion, my country strongly believes that the international community needs to pursue a determined approach on our way towards a world without nuclear weapons. This Conference on Disarmament should play a central role in this regard. Many delegations have stated that the time is ripe for negotiations of an FMCT. As I have said, and from our perspective, such a treaty is long overdue and should be negotiated here in an open and transparent manner, giving all delegations the opportunity to pronounce their respective priorities. Extended discussions on a programme of work are only a pretext for an unwillingness to engage in substantive negotiations. We are looking forward to achieving progress in substance in the course of this year's session.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador Strohal for his statement and the kind words that he had for me and my delegation. I would now like to give the floor to Ambassador Mundaraín Hernández of Venezuela.

Mr. MUNDARAÍN HERNÁNDEZ (Venezuela): Allow me to make two remarks before proceeding with my statement.

Firstly, we associate ourselves with your expressions of regret, Mr. President, regarding the tragedy suffered by the Australian people.

(Mr. Mundaraín Hernández, Venezuela)

Secondly, we endorse the statement made by the distinguished ambassador of Algeria, Mr. Jazaïry, in his capacity as Coordinator of the G-21.

As the last country to exercise the presidency of this important forum in 2008, we were obliged to adopt an appropriately prudent and measured approach.

Mr. President, my delegation has respected your stewardship and the decisions you have taken, supporting you at all times and ready to cooperate in any way possible in facilitating the performance of your task within an atmosphere of cooperation and respect and without interference of any kind. Recognizing your consensual and inclusive style and your permanent consultations with delegations, we have been especially pleased to see a delegate of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, a member of the G-21, assume these important functions.

Bearing in mind the responsibility represented by exercising the first presidency of the year, we are glad to note that your easy manner and sober, tolerant style respectful of the diversity and plurality of this forum have enabled you to record an important victory by adopting the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament for 2009 and hence laying the bases for the conduct of this Conference's work during the current year.

We have also noted your skill in successfully overcoming difficult situations arising within the Conference, that could have led to differences and controversy.

As everyone in this impressive room will recall, I myself served as President of this body. For me and my delegation this was an enriching experience which has been and remains available to the Presidents for 2009 in order to help them in their functions and, above all, to pursue our common aim of revitalizing the Conference on Disarmament.

The present scenario confronts us with traditional and new challenges. There are threats endangering international peace and security. These are times of change, economic crisis, social crisis and possibly political crisis. These are times of conflicts which without doubt will make it difficult to achieve consensus. This obliges us to improve on last year and redouble our efforts to agree on a programme of work that meets the legitimate security concerns of all members of the Conference on Disarmament and can be approved by all. In this connection, Venezuela's active participation reflects its continuing belief in the value of this forum, which can serve as a basis for breaking the deadlock in which the Conference finds itself.

The task facing us as members of the Conference on Disarmament goes beyond the programme of work: it is the very existence and necessary renewal and strengthening of the only existing forum for the negotiation of treaties in the multilateral disarmament system. It may be that geopolitical conditions for reaching a consensus crystallizing all our efforts do not exist at the present time, but we cannot give up: we must carry on working towards that possible outcome to which we all aspire.

As you near the end of your term of office, Mr. President, we could not fail to convey our positive assessment of your work in the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. That is why we, like other delegations, have taken the floor to express our profound gratitude to you.

The PRESIDENT: I would like to thank Ambassador Mundaraín for his statement, his kind words for me and my delegation, and for the support that his delegation has provided to our delegation in his capacity of last President of 2008 and also as a member State of the Conference. I now give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador of Algeria, Mr. Idriss Jazaïry.

Mr. JAZAÏRY (Algeria): Mr. President, I would first like to make a statement on behalf of my Government and then one in the name of the G-21.

The one I am making in the name of my Government is a result of the very interesting discussion we have had on PAROS. I was expecting, as we got a statement from the presidency of the EU, and particularly on PAROS, this morning, that they might indicate how this draft code of conduct for outer space activities, which does apply to civilian, as well as military activities - therefore it is a broad code of conduct - how it would, if it had been in force, have avoided the collision that we had yesterday between the Cosmos satellite and the Iridium satellite?

Sometimes I feel that we are a bit out of touch with what happens on the ground - or I should say, in the sky, in this particular case, and nobody spoke about this today. I mean, as you do the salesmanship for the code of conduct, it would be interesting to see what you think of the fact that, for instance, paragraph 4.2 says "take appropriate steps to minimize the risk of collision". Well, you know that that is quite a topical subject. What have you done, or what could you do, to avoid such risks? People say that it is just by chance that this happens. We have 3,000 satellites, I think, in the sky. Algeria has one, by the way. We are also interested. But we when we have several thousand more, then the chance is going to increase. I would like to know how this Conference can have an input into this discussion, especially as we are talking about the general guidelines.

This is on my first statement. Now, in the name of the G-21, and as the first presidency of the 2009 session comes to a close, I would like to express on behalf of the Group of 21 our deep gratitude for the work you have accomplished, Mr. President. I would borrow the expression used by the distinguished Ambassador of Austria: admiration for the way you have discharged your mission. You and your able team did not spare any effort to put the 2009 session on track and to allow the Conference to begin its work. You deserve full recognition for achieving this difficult task. You pursued it with dynamism and perseverance, and the outcome of your efforts bodes well for the continuation of our work. You contributed within the framework of the CD agenda an important input in bringing together different points of view thanks to the broad consultations that you held with great talent. You thus showed us the way to finalize, hopefully, the arduous task which lies ahead. I voice the hope that your sustained and determined efforts will contribute to bringing our session closer to the objectives set for the Conference on Disarmament. We unanimously feel pride in having had you, Mr. President, a member of our group, as President of the Conference during this period. The Group of 21 would like to commend you for your able leadership and wish your successor, the honourable Ambassador of Zimbabwe, every success in moving the work of the CD ahead. Wishing you all the best, we look forward to seeing you soon among us and to continuing to benefit from your wide experience and your recognized talent as a skilful diplomat at the service of the Conference on Disarmament.

The PRESIDENT: I want to sincerely thank Ambassador Jazaïry for the kind words that he has addressed to me and my delegation on behalf of the Group of 21.

I have no more speakers on my list. Does any delegation wish to take the floor at this stage? I give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador of Australia, Ms. Millar.

Ms. MILLAR (Australia): Mr. President, I would just like to thank you for the very kind words you expressed to my country this morning on behalf of the Conference regarding the devastation caused by the bush fires in Victoria. I would also like to thank all other colleagues who have spoken this morning. It is very moving, and we are very touched and will pass on those messages.

I would also just like to join others in expressing my appreciation for the excellent work that you and your delegation have done as President. You have handled this opening session, which was never going to be completely straightforward, with professionalism, and I think one of the things that has impressed me is that, despite any little obstacles along the way, you have maintained complete equanimity and good humour. We thank you for the way you have delivered us with a very orderly way forward for the next little while. We wish you all the best for your return to Hanoi and we look forward to seeing you here again in the not-too-distant future.

The PRESIDENT: I would like to thank you, Madam Ambassador, for all the support that you and the delegation of Australia have extended to us. Thank you for your kind words.

And now permit me to make a few closing remarks.

This plenary is the last one of the period under the presidency of Viet Nam. During the period, we have been able to expeditiously adopt the agenda of the 2009 session and agree to the organizational framework for the informal thematic debates on all the seven substantive items of the agenda. My delegation is glad to note that our member States from all regional groups have kindly stated their willingness to be actively engaged in the work of the Conference and the first three informal debates are indeed marked with active participation, a substantive exchange of views and even concrete proposals. All the regional groups and China have asked me as President of the Conference, to convey to the distinguished thematic coordinators great appreciation for the strong efforts that the distinguished coordinators have made.

As I have reported to you, to prepare for the assumption of the responsibility of being the President of the Conference, in the last months of 2008 my delegation conducted more than 60 bilateral consultations with member States. Since then, my delegation has had 23 more bilateral consultations with member States. Delegations from member States and observer States have also had numerous discussions in different bilateral or multilateral settings. I believe that the consultations among us in the Conference and the work that we have conducted so far have helped maintain the constructive and cooperative spirit and facilitated further exploration of options that may be available to us in both organizational and substantive respects. This year, I

(The President)

hope that these modest activities undertaken by us all can not only keep the Conference in the “play mode” but also gear it closer to the “ready mode” for a significant change that hopefully will take place at a later stage.

I fully subscribe to the disappointment over the lack of progress in the work of the Conference over the years and completely share the strongly pronounced view that the Conference should be able to function as a negotiating body. We all hope that the recent emphatic discourse on the promotion of policies based on the security of all States, particularly through peaceful means and multilateralism, will turn into conditions more favourable for disarmament, hence, the “Conference on Disarmament”.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my deep gratitude for the precious support that all distinguished delegates have reserved for my delegation and the professional assistance that the Secretariat, headed by Mr. Sergie Ordzhonikidze, Secretary-General of the Conference, has provided to me. I sincerely thank the distinguished Ambassadors of Zimbabwe, Algeria, Argentina, Australia and Austria, who are presidents of the Conference for this year, the distinguished Ambassadors of Slovakia, Belarus and China who are regional coordinators, and the distinguished Ambassadors of Chile, Italy, Canada, Senegal, Bulgaria, Sri Lanka and our ASEAN fellow country of Indonesia, who are thematic debate coordinators, for their effective cooperation. I have often been told that, in the world of multilateral diplomacy, Ambassadors and delegates working at the Conference on Disarmament are always held in high regard for their dedication and expertise, and I must say that I totally agree with that view. I think that the international community is fortunate for that beautiful fact, given the importance of the work of the Conference on Disarmament to international peace and security. I would also like to thank all conference officers and interpreters for their kind assistance.

As we said in the opening plenary, Viet Nam takes the task of being President of the Conference seriously, and the Vietnamese delegation would try to work in a constructive, cooperative, open and transparent spirit. Our delegation would like to take this opportunity to reiterate its commitment to that spirit.

My duty stay in Geneva has been brief but really rewarding to me in many respects. It has provided me with an opportunity to learn and grow professionally and have new friendships. As I follow the work of the Conference from afar, in Hanoi, I will think much about you. I wish all of you good health and the best of success in all your endeavours. I really look forward to seeing you again and thank you for your kind attention and support.

As you are fully aware, from next week, the distinguished Ambassador of Zimbabwe, Mr. Chitsaka Chipaziwa, will assume the presidency of the Conference during the second period of the 2009 annual session. I am convinced that with his diplomatic skills and experience he will successfully guide the work of the Conference.

With respect to next week’s activities under the presidency of Zimbabwe, I would like to announce the following: all meetings that are normally held in the Council Chamber, including meetings of the regional groups and presidential consultations, will be held in Room VII, which is situated on the third floor. On 17 February, Mr. Barth Eide, Deputy Minister of Defence of

(The President)

Norway, will address the Conference at 10 a.m. sharp. Therefore, a formal plenary meeting will be organized for that reason. I would also like to inform you that the informal debate of 17 February on agenda item 6, under the guidance of Ambassador Jayatilleka, will have to be rescheduled for unexpected personal reasons of which Ambassador Jayatilleka has just informed me, and I request the next President of the Conference to kindly consult with Ambassador Jayatilleka and the Secretariat to reschedule that event.

This concludes our business for today. As stated, the next formal plenary meeting will be held on Tuesday, 17 February, at 10 a.m., in Room VII.

Thank you again for your kind attention and support.

The meeting rose at 11.50 a.m.