

Conference on Disarmament

English

Final record of the one thousand four hundred and twenty-fourth plenary meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 22 August 2017, at 10.05 a.m.

President: Mr. Julio Herráiz España..... (Spain)

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The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I call to order the 1424th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

Excellencies, dear colleagues, Mr. Møller, Ms. Kaspersen, ladies and gentlemen, it is an honour for me, on behalf of Spain, to preside over the Conference on Disarmament. I wish to propose the following order of business for this morning's meeting: firstly, take a decision on requests by non-member States to participate in the work of the Conference during the 2017 session; secondly, I will make some opening remarks in my capacity as President to outline our expectations and plan for this session; and thirdly, we will hear statements by any delegations that may wish to take the floor.

Following up on the meeting of the working group on the way ahead held last Thursday, allow me to remind you that Ambassador Lynn will chair another meeting of the working group this morning after our plenary meeting or, if necessary, this afternoon. In the light of the ongoing deliberations within the working group and to give Ambassador Lynn more time to finalize a text that all delegations will find acceptable, I propose that we postpone consideration of the working group's report until a future plenary meeting.

Before proceeding to the next item on our agenda, I wish to extend a warm welcome to the colleagues who have recently joined us here in the Conference: His Excellency Ambassador Robbert Gabriëls of the Netherlands and His Excellency Ambassador Juraj Podhorský of Slovakia, who have taken up their functions as the Permanent Representatives of their respective Governments to the Conference on Disarmament. On behalf of my own Government and the Conference, I take this opportunity to assure you of our full cooperation and support in your new assignments.

It is also a pleasure for me to welcome and introduce today our new Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Anja Kaspersen, who took up her duties on 24 July 2017. Ms. Kaspersen has had a long and distinguished career within her own Government, the United Nations and several international organizations, where many of you have crossed paths with her in the past. Ms. Kaspersen, on behalf of the Conference and all those present in this room today, we wish you a warm welcome and look forward to working with you.

Since our last plenary meeting, we have received a request from a delegation to participate in the work of the Conference as a non-member State. The list before you, which bears the symbol CD/WP.598/Add.8, includes all the requests received up until 3 p.m. yesterday, Monday, 21 August 2017. Any requests received after the publication of this document will be considered at our next plenary meeting.

Are there any questions or comments on these requests for participation? May I take it that the Conference decides to invite these States to participate in its work in accordance with the rules of procedure?

It was so decided.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to briefly suspend the meeting to allow the representatives of the non-member States who have just been invited to participate in the work of the Conference to take their seats in the Council Chamber.

The meeting was briefly suspended.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The meeting is resumed. Excellencies, distinguished colleagues, I will now make a statement in my capacity as President of the Conference on Disarmament.

It is a great honour for me to represent Spain as the President of the Conference on Disarmament: it is a responsibility that I assume without reservation at this critical juncture — given the complicated international security situation — and with renewed resolve and awareness of the importance of promoting disarmament measures that can contribute to peace and stability.

I wish to begin by thanking the Presidents who preceded me this session and who made proposals intended to advance the work of the Conference, as well as Ambassador Lynn and the co-facilitators of the working group on the way ahead for their efforts.

On this solemn occasion, allow me briefly to recall the powerful symbolism of the engagement undertaken in 1936 when my country presented the League of Nations with the paintings that now adorn the Council Chamber in which we find ourselves today, a room that pays tribute to and is named after Francisco de Vitoria. As you well know, this Spanish member of the Dominican Order is regarded as one of the founders of modern international law and a driving force behind the contemporary principles of the United Nations. Francisco de Vitoria was the first jurist to truly see the world as a globe and as an overarching political entity capable of making laws applicable to all nations in an era rocked by religious conflict and wars of conquest.

Today, I wish to reiterate the historical commitment of Spain to multilateralism and the United Nations, as well as to treaties and initiatives to promote disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. A recent testimony to this has been the Spanish presidency of three non-proliferation committees of the Security Council during the 2015–2016 period. We must act with determination to counter the real risk of non-State actors, especially terrorists, accessing weapons of mass destruction. The adoption of Security Council resolution 2325 (2016) during the Spanish presidency of the 1540 Committee confirmed our commitment to urgently address this shared concern by joining forces in the face of this real threat that affects us all.

Spain strongly supports the work of the Conference on Disarmament, which was instrumental in the adoption of some highly significant treaties in the past. The tensions and uncertainties that constitute a great challenge of our time provide us with an even greater incentive to establish constructive and peaceful dialogue. Resignation can never be an option. We are all aware of the long-standing difficulties faced by the Conference in adopting a programme of work with a negotiating mandate, and that has inevitably been a source of frustration. However, we believe that the Conference remains a valuable instrument for bringing all the nuclear Powers together and for proposing, through dialogue and exchanges of views, measures that will allow us to approach disarmament realistically, despite all the difficulties encountered to date.

Spain considers the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty to be the cornerstone of the international non-proliferation and disarmament regime. It offers us, through the 2010 action plan, an ambitious catalogue of recommendations intended to achieve further progress. We once again stress the need to abide by all the provisions of article VI of the Treaty that relate to nuclear disarmament, with particular emphasis on the responsibility of the States with the largest arsenals. We must all be more ambitious in our attempts to achieve real progress through practical measures that will enable us to move forward towards our objective of a world free from nuclear weapons.

I cannot stress enough that, in this day and age, there is no longer any place for nuclear tests and that the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is more pressing than ever. We reiterate the deep concern expressed by the international community over the crisis triggered by the nuclear and ballistic programmes of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which currently pose the main threat to international peace and security. We urge that country to comply with all relevant Security Council resolutions and call for a favourable resolution to this crisis through dialogue.

The Conference on Disarmament must approach its task of negotiating disarmament treaties in a coherent fashion and, therefore, in our view, the mandate of the working group on the way ahead should be renewed for the 2018 session so that work may continue in this direction. The Conference presidency today reiterates its willingness to take, together with all delegations, practical and effective steps towards adopting a programme of work. To this end, we will coordinate with the presidency that will succeed us in 2018, as provided for in the rules of procedure.

I trust that, with the cooperation of all delegations, we will be able to achieve a satisfactory, consensus-based outcome during our presidency. I thank you in advance for the flexibility and constructive spirit that I am sure you will show as we strive to achieve this goal.

I have asked the secretariat to circulate informally — by email — the first draft of the Conference's report. The report is currently available in English only but the secretariat

has taken the necessary steps so that it may be circulated in all official languages as soon as possible. I would be grateful if delegations could send their written comments to the secretariat by email before the close of business on Friday, 25 August 2017. Comments may be sent to the following email address: cd@unog.ch. In the meantime, I am willing to meet with any delegation, either bilaterally or in small groups, to continue the informal consultations that we have already begun on the draft report.

I have also asked the secretariat to distribute a tentative schedule of work for our presidency, which was discussed yesterday at the regular coordination meeting with the session's other five Presidents and the regional coordinators. I hope that you all will find this tentative, indicative schedule of work acceptable.

Furthermore, in order to initiate a discussion within the Conference on the draft report, we have set aside time for a possible plenary meeting this Friday, 25 August 2017, at 10 a.m. I will take the final decision on whether the meeting will go ahead based on whether we deem sufficient progress to have been made with the proposed amendments this week. Should it not be appropriate to hold such a meeting, our next plenary meeting will take place on Tuesday, 29 August 2017. In any case, the next meeting will be announced in due time.

I will now turn to the list of speakers for today. I have received requests for the floor from the Netherlands, Slovakia, South Africa, Iraq, the United States, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, France, Sri Lanka on behalf of the Group of 21, Pakistan, also on behalf of the Group of 21, Cuba, also on behalf of the Group of 21, India, Colombia, Estonia on behalf of the European Union, Austria, Peru, Italy, Switzerland and Indonesia.

Without further ado, I have the pleasure to give the floor to the Ambassador of the Netherlands.

Mr. Gabriëlse (Netherlands): Let me start by thanking you, Mr. President, for convening this plenary session of the Conference on Disarmament, and please be assured of the support of my delegation. I would also like to congratulate and welcome my Slovakian colleague, Ambassador Podhorský, who recently assumed his responsibilities as Permanent Representative as well.

This forum is of great importance to all its members and, taking into account the fast-changing security landscape, it is of the utmost importance that we have the opportunity to meet in a plenary session and exchange our views on the different topics we deem important. Where possible, we should aim at making concrete steps forward.

Mr. President, we no longer live in the times of the cold war; neither are we witnessing what has been labelled as the end of history. We are experiencing a fast-changing security environment. Unfortunately, we are not surprised anymore by yet another terrorist attack anywhere in the world on any day. In this connection, please allow me to extend my condolences to the Spanish and Finnish colleagues for the recent attacks in which, again, innocent civilians became victims.

Non-State actors are active in many countries and in different regions; and technological developments are making it possible to develop new types of weapons. Experiments with artificial intelligence are no longer fiction or the subject of futuristic Hollywood movies, but reality. As you probably know, Facebook was recently forced to shut down a chat box experiment with robots after the robots invented their own language, which the researchers did not understand. It could be an interesting experiment to have dialogue agents equipped with artificial intelligence take over our work here for a week and see what they would come up with. That is, if we could understand the result.

Luckily, we still rely on human interaction, and there are very smart and experienced colleagues in this room who have the best intentions of reaching consensus on important issues relevant to disarmament. We all have our different mandates and interests, but one thing I have learned here in Geneva is that we all share the same ultimate goals. We differ only in our ways of how to reach them. But since we are all experienced diplomats and have the desire to communicate with each other, we should be able to reach consensus and make some practical steps forward. Zero-sum outcomes are in no one's interest.

In the twenty-first century, international actors are not confined to national States only. We are living in a multilateral and globalizing world in which non-State actors are playing an increasing role in the international political arena. And the public at large can look directly over our shoulder at what we are doing here, not least of all because we keep them informed through social media. I would not be surprised if one of you at this moment is sending a tweet, probably saying how boring the statement by the Netherlands Ambassador is.

So, Mr. President, eyes are on us. Our Governments, non-governmental organizations and members of the public expect something of us. Bearing in mind that we find ourselves in uncharted territory and it is unclear in which direction we are heading, we, as representatives of our countries, have an important role to play in shaping the future in which concrete steps towards disarmament will be made.

Having the privilege of representing the Netherlands, I would like to underline my Government's strong belief in multilateralism and working with a broad coalition of different actors — be they States, civil society or the private sector — to move our agenda forward. Disarmament, in this context, is a cornerstone of our security policy.

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty is central to the international regime of disarmament and non-proliferation, a regime with near-universal application that continues to need our full support and efforts for further strengthening. The Treaty shows that nuclear arms control is not a zero-sum game. You all worked very hard at the first session of the Preparatory Committee as part of the new review conference cycle under the chairmanship of my predecessor. You made a good start on which we can build further. I congratulate our successor, Poland, for taking up duties as the President for the next session of the Preparatory Committee and I offer the full support of my delegation.

The fact that 120 countries reached an agreement on 7 July this year on a nuclear ban treaty is something we cannot ignore. As I stated last week in the working group on the way ahead, it is now of key importance to bridge the differences between nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States and to restore a shared sense of purpose to the international disarmament and non-proliferation regime.

One of the subjects that I have noticed since arriving here on which I sense we can make concrete steps forward is a fissile material cut-off treaty. Good progress has been made, previously by the Group of Governmental Experts and most recently by the high-level expert preparatory group, once again under the outstanding chairmanship of Canada. I believe that it is ready to be brought to the negotiating table. We have already had some discussions on the report of the working group on the way ahead and we will continue these discussions today, but I hope that there is a willingness among delegations to go the extra mile in a constructive spirit. We can take an important step towards nuclear disarmament here. Ending the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons will cap nuclear arsenals and help put an end to nuclear arms races. Negotiations on this topic will not be easy, but we should not shy away from them.

On the issue of cluster munitions and landmines, we have witnessed substantial progress. This is an area where State and non-State actors alike play a crucial role and I would like to pay tribute to all actors who have worked tirelessly to make great strides in protecting civilians. My Government has and will keep supporting mine action worldwide. As you know, the States parties to the Ottawa Convention have set the goal of a mine-free world in 2025, and under the Convention on Cluster Mines the parties agreed to do away with cluster munitions worldwide by 2030. That is ambitious, but doable — although we are witnessing in regions of conflict an increase in the use of these types of munitions. One of these places is dear to me, namely Iraq, since I served there 10 years ago. With a common effort we should be able to make progress in Iraq and other areas as soon as conflict has ended.

We have seen the devastating effects of the illegal arms trade — from the Sahel to the heart of Europe. Weapons are deadly, no matter where they come from or where they are used. The insecurity caused by the illegal arms trade does not stop at our borders and neither should our efforts to combat it. That is why effective implementation and universalization of the Arms Trade Treaty is crucial. Further steps also need to be taken in

the field of small arms and light weapons, as it is thought that they account for about half a million deaths per year and, hence, cause more casualties than any other weapon. This is also one of the areas in which we can link up with the Sustainable Development Goals, as the reduction of lethal illicit arms flows is an important topic for sustainable development.

In this forum, we also address new types of weapons and threats. Lethal autonomous weapons systems are being discussed in the context of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. My delegation looks forward to the start of work in the Group of Governmental Experts and is most willing to keep contributing to this topic. The Netherlands firmly rejects the development and deployment of fully autonomous weapons systems, as those systems have no meaningful human control at all. For the development of autonomous weapons systems, meaningful human control in the wider loop of the targeting process is necessary.

With respect to cybersecurity, we have witnessed an increased use by State and non-State actors of information and communications technology capabilities for coercive political and criminal purposes. The topic has been dealt with in a group of governmental experts and we are awaiting their procedural report, which is currently still under discussion.

With respect to negative security assurances in the framework of non-proliferation and disarmament, we see merit in exploring this further but we have to look carefully at the preconditions for taking this further.

Lastly, with respect to the proposal of looking into the issue of chemical and biological terrorism, we might need some more reflection. At this time, we believe the existing legal instruments, such as the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, form a sufficient framework for countering the threat of chemical and biological weapons. But we will listen carefully to the arguments for having a new, legally binding instrument on this issue.

Mr. President, in my first weeks here I have already met many colleagues on a more personal basis and in the coming weeks I hope to meet more. As a newcomer, I am impressed by the knowledge and experience of all of you and your delegations, and I sense a wish by all of you to work together on disarmament issues. It will not be easy, considering the sometimes very divergent national views, but as Ambassador Lynn said last week, we should not only bring to the negotiating table what we would like to achieve but also what we have to offer to other parties. There is a lot at stake, too much in fact. I very much look forward to working with all of you in a constructive and flexible spirit.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of the Netherlands for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the presidency. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Slovakia.

Mr. Podhorský (Slovakia): Mr. President, since this is the first time my delegation is taking the floor during your presidency, let me begin by congratulating you on your assumption of this role. I assure you of the full support of Slovakia to assist you in fulfilling your presidential tasks.

With great sadness, I start by conveying our sincerest condolences to the delegation of Spain and the delegation of Finland. We are deeply saddened by the large loss of lives and injuries caused by the brutal terrorist attacks in Barcelona and the city of Turku, which I loved to visit during my previous posting as Ambassador of Slovakia to Finland. Slovakia strongly condemns these acts of terrorism and we denounce all forms of terrorism and are determined to continue supporting specific measures and tools to fight this global threat.

Mr. President, as I begin my duties as Permanent Representative, I assure you that Slovakia continues to attach great value to the work of the Conference on Disarmament. Slovakia believes that the Conference — the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum of the international community — is an indispensable element of the disarmament machinery and essential vehicle for the promotion of international peace and security. This body is central to multilateral disarmament negotiations. Slovakia believes that the only way to achieve the complete elimination of nuclear weapons is through effective, verifiable and irreversible nuclear disarmament. We are supporters of the progressive “building-block” approach. We believe that we should work towards a set of mutually reinforcing and

legally binding instruments and that the prevailing international security environment must be taken into account.

Slovakia also continues to support the immediate commencement of negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices. I share the view of my Dutch colleague that such a treaty would offer a unique opportunity to create a non-discriminatory regime with equal obligations for nuclear and non-nuclear-weapon States.

Mr. President, unfortunately, for the past two decades the Conference has been in a deadlock. Its revitalization is a crucial task. We need to restore its negotiation role if the Conference is to meet expectations, fulfil its purpose and address current security needs. The fruitful past of the Conference and its predecessors proves that it is a tool in the hands of its members and, when strategic political realities are conducive, the Conference can be productive and bring about positive results.

During its presidency this June, Slovakia attempted — through its consultations with member States — to revive the Conference. Despite our efforts, we were unfortunately unable to get any closer to reaching a consensus on a possible programme of work which would include a negotiation mandate. Nevertheless, it is necessary to continue this effort and to bring the Conference back to the relaunching of substantive negotiations. We should remind ourselves that it is the member States that bear the primary responsibility in this regard and they should not give up their attempts to overcome the existing status quo.

I commit myself and my delegation to work with all of you in order to bring this important body back to life for the benefit of the international community. I would also like, once again, to highlight and express my appreciation for the determined efforts of the Chair of the working group on the way ahead, Ambassador Lynn, to help the Conference to move forward. We believe the ongoing process is on the right track and could allow us to identify common ground for our future work.

Mr. President, I am very much looking forward to constructive cooperation with you and all of my colleagues in the Conference.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of Slovakia for his statement and for the kind words of solidarity addressed to the presidency. I now give the floor to the representative of South Africa.

Ms. Mxakato-Diseko (South Africa): Mr. President, let me begin by taking this opportunity to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. Before I go further, let me convey my deepest condolences to Spain, Finland, the Russian Federation and other countries in the house and beyond who have witnessed the wanton destruction of life that is becoming the norm by terrorists. Mr. President, kindly accept my assurances of our cooperation in support of your efforts to guide us through this final phase of the 2017 session of the Conference.

I would also like to extend a warm welcome to Ambassador Rob Gabriëls of the Netherlands and Ambassador Juraj Podhorský of Slovakia. We look forward to working with them as they bring the wealth of their experience to this multilateral body. I would also like to congratulate the new Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Kaspersen, on her appointment. In addition, we would like to welcome the youth communicators for a world without nuclear weapons from Japan, who are here to bear witness to the workings of this august body, the Conference on Disarmament, whose founding ideal and promise — as expressed in its mandate — South Africa fully shares as a country.

Mr. President, South Africa would like to reconfirm its unwavering commitment to the ultimate goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. My country's credentials are well known in the area of non-proliferation, disarmament and arms control. We are the only country to have voluntarily dismantled its nuclear weapons programme. Woven into the DNA of our democratic State is the commitment to a world free of weapons of mass destruction on a par with respect for human rights, justice, democracy and sustainable development. Our democratization process was symbiotically linked to our denuclearization. In short, critical to the rebirth of South Africa under the late President Mandela, the first President of the Republic, was relinquishing the nuclear option militarily

in all its aspects. It is for this reason that, as my country was being reborn, we joined the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and immediately exerted our efforts to ensuring its indefinite extension. Since then, we have spared no effort to ensure that NPT review conferences yield outcomes on the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. We were also part of the community of nations that finalized the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which is as yet to enter into force. We are part of a numerous number of initiatives, such as the high-level fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT) expert preparatory group, which are all striving for nuclear disarmament; and, most recently, we participated in the negotiations that culminated in the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons on 7 July 2017.

For South Africa, all these are a part of an integral chain of instruments that should lead us to a world free of nuclear weapons. The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is a logical part of this chain that forms the framework for a safer world. In our view, we do not have the luxury of picking and choosing which of these instruments will assure the world that we are all committed to a world free of nuclear weapons. Therefore, as a responsible player whose commitment is incontestable, South Africa is not selective and choosy on which instruments to join as long as they fit into the larger scheme of things and contribute towards a world free of nuclear weapons.

What is of grave concern to South Africa are premeditated actions to debilitate structures meant to further nuclear disarmament. The collapse of the NPT Review Conference in 2015 created an urgency for the Conference on Disarmament to begin working and to break the 21-year deadlock on the programme of work.

Mr. President, there was a reason that the founding fathers of the United Nations decided to establish a single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum at the first United Nations special session on disarmament to ensure that there is no repetition of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This is the vision that South Africa believes in and cherishes. My delegation would like to place on record that South Africa is committed to a functioning — a functioning — Conference on Disarmament.

It is therefore regrettable that even though we have a body that is mandated to negotiate multilateral disarmament instruments, it has not discharged its basic mandate for 21 years. What do we tell our visitors? What do we tell young children who were not born then? How do we account to the world for this protracted deadlock? We therefore urgently need to attend to the current state of the Conference on Disarmament. In the view of South Africa, the continued impasse in the Conference is not only unsustainable but it increasingly affects its relevance and therefore erodes international confidence in the Conference as a multilateral disarmament negotiating forum. We would do well to remind ourselves that while the Conference may be recognized as the multilateral institution responsible for the negotiation of international disarmament agreements, it is not the Conference's limited membership that bears the cost. It is not the limited membership of the Conference on Disarmament that bears the cost of the United Nations resources that are being expended while the deadlock in the Conference continues. On the contrary, it is the entire membership of the United Nations, namely, members of the Conference as well as those Member States that have not been included in the Conference's membership — most of them are developing countries, who could do well with diverting resources to development. They do this through their assessed contributions to the United Nations budget which foots the bill for what has now become the Conference's continued inactivity for 21 years.

All United Nations Members therefore have the right to hold the Conference accountable for its failure to move forward on negotiations that have been identified by the international community as a whole, and to hold the Conference responsible for the resources that have been committed to sustain the functions of the Conference. It is our firm belief that these resources could have been used in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and other national programmes aimed at eradicating poverty and could have achieved a lot of good.

Mr. President, South Africa remains firmly committed to multilateralism and will do what is necessary to strengthen multilateralism, especially in the field of disarmament, non-

proliferation and arms control. In addition, we will pursue all possible options for taking multilateral disarmament negotiations forward with the aim of achieving our goal of a world free from nuclear weapons. But if the Conference cannot agree on a programme of work, as it has not for 21 years, who can blame countries when they take issues out of the Conference?

We look forward to the completion of an accurate and balanced report on the workings of the Conference this year, especially on paragraph 20, and hope we can enhance its accuracy in terms of reflecting the activities of the Conference.

Mr. President, I cannot conclude my address without speaking to efforts to discredit the ban treaty. Essentially, what this does is to present a morally untenable message that we do not all desire a world free of weapons of mass destruction, and especially where leadership is abdicated and processes in which the majority of the Member States participate are attacked and boycotted. It is heartening that over 124 countries participated in the negotiations on the legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons. We commend the Netherlands and Sweden and Switzerland for their leadership in being part of this process. Nowhere in the ban treaty is there an effort to undermine the Non-Proliferation Treaty; no article encourages countries to opt out of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. In fact, the ban treaty gives content to article VI. If there were any issues of discontent, the responsible thing would have been for parties to participate in the processes that delivered this treaty, as opposed to boycotting it and attacking it.

However, Mr. President, in conclusion, we draw comfort from how the NPT evolved. If we recall, not all subscribed to it. Some joined later than South Africa did. We take this as a process. Issues of verification that are of concern to those outside can be addressed as soon as they come in. In fact, the whole package of the treaty is designed in such a way that it invites the critical Member States to join. Not to join would be an abdication of moral responsibility.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of South Africa for her statement and for the kind words addressed to the presidency. I now give the floor to the representative of Iraq.

Mr. Saleh (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): Mr. President, as this is the first time I have taken the floor during your presidency of the Conference on Disarmament, let me begin by congratulating you on your assumption of that office and wish you every success in your work. You can count on my delegation's full support.

I wish to extend my sincere condolences for the terrorist attack that occurred in the city of Barcelona and to assure you of our solidarity with your country and with the families and friends of the victims. We also wish the wounded a speedy recovery.

Action to combat terrorism and extremism calls for greater international coordination and cooperation in order to identify and eliminate terrorist cells and cut off their sources of support and funding.

Mr. President, I have requested the floor in order to inform you that, as Chair of the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly on disarmament and international security at its seventy-second session, I will be preparing a summary of the work done by the Committee during its meetings beginning in October 2017. I would look forward to hearing your views and proposals aimed at facilitating the Committee's work and enabling it to produce tangible results that contribute to the promotion of disarmament and international security.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of Iraq for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the presidency. Indeed, solidarity and international cooperation in the face of terrorism are the key to countering this scourge.

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

Mr. Wood (United States of America): Mr. President, I seek your indulgence as my statement is a little bit lengthy, but I will try to be as brief as I can.

Mr. President, let me first congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. My delegation and I look forward to working closely with you and your team as you carry out your duties.

Let me also express my deep condolences to you and to the Government and people of Spain following the horrific terrorist attack last week in Barcelona. Please know that the United States Government and the American people stand with Spain and with the victims and their families at this very difficult time. I also wish to send my condolences to the Finnish Government and people for the recent terrorist attack in Finland.

Mr. President, my delegation is pleased that Spain has now assumed the presidency of the Conference. As everyone in this august chamber knows, the previous four weeks of the Conference's schedule brought us to what I would call "a presidency in absentia". The previous President refused to convene even one single plenary meeting. We have yet to hear an official explanation as to why. We also know that it is the responsibility of every Conference President to engage in consultations in pursuit of a programme of work. This clearly was not done. The unwillingness of the previous President to hold a plenary meeting or to want to take consultations on a programme of work is not acceptable to my delegation and raises a number of questions about whether the rules of procedure were complied with. My delegation hopes that the Office for Disarmament Affairs will look into this matter.

Attempts to try to undermine the Conference or to try to shut down its work in pursuit of some other agenda should not be accepted by this chamber. Opportunities were lost over the previous four weeks to have discussions on matters highly relevant to this body, such as the recent intercontinental ballistic missile tests by North Korea and its highly provocative behaviour.

The ballistic missile and nuclear weapons programmes of North Korea pose grave threats to the entire world. North Korea openly states that its ballistic missiles are intended to strike cities in the United States, the Republic of Korea and Japan. Its recent intercontinental ballistic missile tests are another example of dangerous and reckless behaviour of the North that is destabilizing the region and beyond. The United States has been clear about the failure of previous approaches towards North Korea. While the path to dialogue still remains an option, the United States remains undeterred in defending against the threat North Korea poses.

My President's top priority remains protecting the homeland, United States territories and our allies against North Korean aggression. We remain prepared to use the full range of capabilities at our disposal against the growing threat from North Korea. We call on all nations to use every available channel and means of influence to make clear to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and its enablers that further provocations are unacceptable. We also call on all nations to take steps to show there are consequences to the escalations by North Korea. North Korea has a choice: take a new path towards peace, prosperity and international acceptance or continue further down a path of belligerence, poverty and isolation.

The last issue I wish to raise pertains to the recent adoption of a treaty banning nuclear weapons. I would like to read a joint press statement from the Permanent Representatives of the United States, the United Kingdom and France to the United Nations, issued on 7 July 2017:

France, the United Kingdom and the United States have not taken part in the negotiation of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. We do not intend to sign, ratify or ever become party to it. Therefore, there will be no change in the legal obligations on our countries with respect to nuclear weapons. For example, we would not accept any claim that this treaty reflects or in any way contributes to the development of customary international law. Importantly, other States possessing nuclear weapons and almost all other States relying on nuclear deterrence have also not taken part in the negotiations.

This initiative clearly disregards the realities of the international security environment. Accession to the ban treaty is incompatible with the policy of nuclear deterrence, which has been essential to keeping the peace in Europe and North Asia

for over 70 years. A purported ban on nuclear weapons that does not address the security concerns that continue to make nuclear deterrence necessary cannot result in the elimination of a single nuclear weapon and will not enhance any country's security, nor international peace and security. It will do the exact opposite by creating even more divisions at a time when the world needs to remain united in the face of growing threats, including those from the ongoing proliferation efforts of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. This treaty offers no solution to the grave threat posed by the North Korean nuclear programme, nor does it address other security challenges that make nuclear deterrence necessary. A ban treaty also risks undermining the existing international security architecture which contributes to the maintenance of international peace and security.

We reiterate in this regard our continued commitment to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and reaffirm our determination to safeguard and further promote its authority, universality and effectiveness. Working towards the shared goal of nuclear disarmament and general and complete disarmament must be done in a way that promotes international peace and security and strategic stability based on the principle of increased and undiminished security for all.

We all share a common responsibility to protect and strengthen our collective security system in order to further promote international peace, stability and security.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of the United States for his statement and for the kind words of condolence and solidarity addressed to the presidency. I now give the floor to the representative of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Rowland (United Kingdom): Mr. President, let me also congratulate you on the assumption of your role and assure you of my delegation's full support. Let me, too, offer you the condolences of the United Kingdom on the attacks in Barcelona. I would like to welcome new colleagues in addition.

I did not take the floor to comment on the presidency or the lack of presidency last month, but having listened to the statement by South Africa, I found it big on rhetoric and empty on substance. Fundamentally, however, it was the hypocrisy in that statement that has made me take the floor. A member that has not fulfilled its presidential responsibilities neither holding consultations on a programme of work nor holding plenary meetings to provide members the opportunity to present their views publicly has little moral standing to preach to us about the role of the Conference on Disarmament or the conduct of disarmament, however illustrious its past actions.

I took the floor to read the following statement:

The United Kingdom is committed to the long-term goal of a world without nuclear weapons and to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty as a cornerstone of the international nuclear non-proliferation regime and the essential foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament and for peaceful uses of nuclear energy. As a responsible nuclear-weapon State, the United Kingdom continues to work with international partners towards creating the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons.

However, we will not sign the treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons. As we have previously made very clear, we do not believe that this treaty will bring us closer to a world without nuclear weapons. This treaty fails to address the key issues that must first be overcome to achieve lasting global nuclear disarmament.

It will not improve the international security environment or increase trust and transparency. The unpredictable international security environment we face today demands the maintenance of our nuclear deterrent for the foreseeable future; and we cannot rule out further shifts in the international security context which would put us or our North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies under grave threat.

This treaty also risks undermining and weakening the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) which has played an unparalleled role in curtailing the nuclear arms race. The NPT continues to make a significant contribution to the strategic stability

that the international community requires. We must uphold and strengthen the NPT because of — not despite — the complex security challenges we all face. It remains the right framework for progress across all three, mutually reinforcing, pillars, including disarmament.

The United Kingdom firmly believes that the best way to achieve a world without nuclear weapons is through gradual, multilateral disarmament negotiated using a step-by-step approach, within existing international frameworks. Productive results can only be achieved through a consensus-based approach that takes into account the wider global security context. It is only through building the necessary mutual trust between States and through putting in place the key international architecture to help build the conditions for further disarmament that we can make progress on a realistic and effective route towards our shared goal of a world without nuclear weapons.

The United Kingdom has not taken part in the negotiation of the prohibition treaty and does not intend to sign, ratify or become party to it. The treaty will therefore not be binding on the United Kingdom. Furthermore, the United Kingdom would not accept any argument that this treaty can constitute a development of customary international law binding on the United Kingdom or other non-parties. Importantly, States possessing nuclear weapons have not taken part in the negotiations. As has been made clear, the United Kingdom, as a nuclear-weapon State, has been pursuing a step-by-step approach to nuclear disarmament consistent with the NPT and its other treaty commitments.

The United Kingdom will continue to work with partners across the international community to press for key steps towards multilateral disarmament, including the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the successful negotiation on a fissile material cut-off treaty in the Conference on Disarmament. And we will continue to play a leading role in disarmament verification.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of the United Kingdom for his kind words and for his statement. I now give the floor to the representative of France.

Ms. Guitton (France) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, at the outset, allow me to offer my sincere condolences to you and to the victims and families of victims of the heinous terrorist attacks committed in Barcelona and Cambrils last week. France strongly condemns those attacks and wishes to express its deepest sympathy and solidarity with Spain. We stand alongside the Spanish people and their Government in this tragic ordeal. France remains fully committed to fighting terrorism relentlessly.

Mr. President, allow me also to congratulate you and wish you every success in the discharge of your responsibilities. You may count on the full support of the French delegation and the constructive commitment of France to the adoption, under your presidency, of the annual report of the Conference on Disarmament, which I hope will reflect a balanced approach that is acceptable to all.

France welcomes the Conference's resumption of its work in plenary after a summer break that was, regrettably, longer than usual. In that connection, I would like to stress that the proper functioning of multilateral institutions is crucial. The Conference, as one such institution, should be able to hold meetings in accordance with the relevant texts and established practice. We are all responsible for making sure that the Conference is effective and fully operational.

Mr. President, France associates itself fully with the statement made by the Ambassador of the United States on behalf of the United Kingdom, the United States and France concerning the adoption of a treaty on the prohibition of nuclear weapons on 7 July 2017 in New York. I would like to complement that statement with a few points that were made by the spokesperson for the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs on 7 July with regard to this matter.

A treaty on the prohibition of nuclear weapons was indeed adopted on 7 July in New York. That instrument, however, is ill-suited to the current international security situation, which is marked by growing tension and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, as illustrated, in particular, by the North Korean nuclear threat. France did not take part in

the negotiation of that treaty and does not intend to become a party to it. We are not bound by that treaty or by any new obligations thereunder. The fact that many States — nuclear weapon possessors and non-possessors alike, but in Europe and Asia especially — decided not to participate in the negotiations is a clear indication of the differences that exist.

France, like its allies and other close partners, pursues a defence and security policy that relies on nuclear deterrence. Deterrence is aimed at protecting our country from any assault on its vital interests mounted by a State, no matter where it may come from or what form it may take. Given the current state of international affairs, weakness is not an option. A treaty banning nuclear weapons could therefore have an impact on the security of the Euro-Atlantic area and international stability. It is also likely to weaken the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which is the cornerstone of the non-proliferation regime.

Nuclear disarmament cannot be decreed; it must be accomplished step by step. France, for its part, remains committed to taking the next practical steps towards nuclear disarmament, in accordance with its obligations under the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Our next priorities in terms of nuclear disarmament are to negotiate a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and the prompt entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Another important objective is the reduction of Russian and American nuclear arsenals, which account for 90 per cent of global nuclear weapon holdings.

France has already taken some important and specific steps towards nuclear disarmament: it has halved the size of its nuclear arsenal, stopped all nuclear tests, ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and shut down its facilities for the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons in an irreversible manner. It is also working to strengthen international stability and security, including as part of efforts to impede the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

Mr. President, allow me to associate myself with the statement that will shortly be delivered on behalf of the European Union regarding the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and to add some remarks in a national capacity.

France strongly condemns the intercontinental ballistic missile launches carried out by North Korea on 4 and 28 July. These launches show that the North Korean regime is determined to defy the international community and to threaten global security; and they announce a critical new stage in the illegal, destabilizing development of that country's ballistic missile programme, which is a direct — and inadmissible — threat to all of us. The increase in North Korean nuclear and ballistic activity and the alarmingly rapid progress being made in these programmes show that these events are more than mere provocation. It has become clear that North Korea is not seeking to influence negotiations that it has persistently refused to take part in. The situation has changed: North Korea is trying to become a nuclear-weapon State and this threat concerns every one of us.

France therefore calls on its partners to collectively step up the pressure in order to establish the conditions that are needed for negotiations on the nuclear and ballistic programmes of North Korea. We must all demonstrate a firm, visible and long-term commitment to ensuring the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

In that regard, France welcomes the unanimous adoption, on 5 August 2017, of Security Council resolution 2371 (2017), which condemns the nuclear and ballistic activities of North Korea and increases the sanctions against that country.

France once again urges North Korea to comply immediately with its international obligations and to dismantle its nuclear and ballistic programmes in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner, and reiterates its commitment to achieving this outcome.

I apologize for the length of my statement, Mr. President, but we have not held a plenary session for quite some time.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of France for her statement and for the kind words of solidarity and condolence addressed to the presidency. I

now give the floor to the delegation of Sri Lanka, which will speak on behalf of the Group of 21.

Mr. Aryasinha (Sri Lanka): Mr. President, I am speaking in my capacity not just as Sri Lanka, but I am representing the Group of 21 and will be presenting one of our statements on behalf of the Group. Before that, Mr. President, let me congratulate you on the assumption by Spain of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. Let me also express the deep condolences of Sri Lanka on the carnage which took place in Barcelona last week. Sri Lanka is a country which not too long ago went through similar situations, almost on a daily basis, and we fully understand the immense suffering which your people are undergoing. Our condolences, thoughts and prayers are with them.

We also wish to welcome the Ambassadors of the Netherlands and Slovakia to our midst and, as well, the Deputy Secretary-General, who joins us today.

Mr. President, I have the honour to deliver — on behalf of the Group of 21 — the following statement on the prevention of an arms race in outer space:

At the outset, the Group congratulates you on the assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and expresses its appreciation for the open, transparent and efficient manner in which you are guiding the proceedings of the Conference.

The Group of 21 believes that space technology has indeed become an indispensable and integral part of our daily lives. Never before have information, communication, banking, economic transactions, navigation and even political and strategic decision-making been so dependent on space-based technologies, which are themselves witnessing rapid growth.

The Group reiterates that outer space and other celestial bodies are the common heritage of humankind and must be used, explored and utilized for the benefit and interest of all humankind in a spirit of cooperation. The Group reaffirms that the exploration and use of outer space and other celestial bodies shall be for peaceful purposes only and shall be carried out for the benefit and in the interest of all countries, irrespective of their degree of economic or scientific development.

The Group stresses that the growing use of outer space requires all States to take action to ensure greater transparency, confidence-building measures and better information. The Group believes that all States with major space capabilities have a special responsibility to contribute actively to the objective of the peaceful use of outer space and of the prevention of an arms race in outer space. All States should refrain from actions contrary to that objective and to the relevant existing treaties in the interest of maintaining international peace and security and promoting international cooperation.

The Group recognizes that the prevention of an arms race in outer space would avert a grave danger for international peace and security. The Group emphasizes the necessity of undertaking further measures with appropriate and effective verification provisions to prevent an arms race in outer space in all its aspects.

The Group emphasizes the importance and urgency of preventing an arms race in outer space and the paramount importance of strict compliance with the existing legal regime concerning the use of outer space. In this regard, the Group is deeply concerned over the increasing threat of weaponization of outer space, including the negative implications of the development and deployment of anti-ballistic-missile defence systems and the pursuit of advanced military technologies capable of being deployed in outer space, which have, *inter alia*, contributed to the further weakening of an international climate conducive to the promotion of disarmament and the strengthening of international security.

The Group stresses that all States bear a responsibility to refrain from activities that could jeopardize the collective goal of preserving outer space free from weapons of mass destruction and all other forms of weaponization so as to ensure that its benefits are available to all.

The Group considers that the multilateral disarmament agreements provide mechanisms for States parties to consult one another and cooperate in solving any problems which may arise in relation to the objective of, or in the application of, the provisions of the agreements and that such consultations and cooperation may also be undertaken through appropriate international procedures within the framework of the United Nations and in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

The prevention of an arms race in outer space has assumed greater urgency because of legitimate concerns that existing legal instruments are inadequate to deter further militarization of outer space or prevent its weaponization. The Group further reaffirms its recognition that the legal regime applicable to outer space does not in and of itself guarantee the prevention of an arms race in outer space. For that purpose, the Group stresses the need to consolidate and reinforce that regime and enhance its effectiveness.

In this regard, the Group reaffirms that the Conference on Disarmament is the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum of the international community, which has the primary role in conducting substantive negotiations on priority issues of disarmament. The Group, therefore, believes that the Conference on Disarmament should start negotiations on matters related to the prevention of an arms race in outer space without delay.

While welcoming the adoption of resolution 71/31, entitled “Prevention of an arms race in outer space”, by the United Nations General Assembly, the Group recalls that the resolution made the following observations with regard to the Conference on Disarmament:

“(a) The Conference on Disarmament has the primary role in the negotiation of a multilateral agreement or agreements on the prevention of an arms race in outer space in all its aspects;

(b) The Conference on Disarmament should establish a working group under its agenda item entitled ‘Prevention of an arms race in outer space’ as early as possible during its 2017 session.”

The Group of 21 takes note of the completion of the work of the Group of Governmental Experts and the adoption of the study on outer space transparency and confidence-building measures as requested in General Assembly resolution 65/68 on transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities, which was adopted by consensus at the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly. The Group, while stressing the priority of negotiating legally binding instruments for reinforcing the international legal regime on outer space, recognizes that global and inclusive transparency and confidence-building measures reached through broad international consultations could be important complementary measures. The Group recognizes the value of transparency and confidence-building measures, including a non-legally binding code of conduct, in promoting trust among States. However, such voluntary measures cannot be a substitute for a legally binding treaty on prevention of an arms race in outer space.

The Group welcomes the updated draft treaty text submitted jointly by the Russian Federation and China on the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space, the use or threat of use of force against outer space objects to the Conference on Disarmament in June 2014. This initiative was a constructive contribution to the work of the Conference and is a good basis for discussions towards adopting an international binding instrument.

The Group also welcomes the adoption of resolution 71/32, entitled “No first placement of weapons in outer space”, by the General Assembly on 9 December 2016. The Group takes note of the substantive and interactive informal discussions on the prevention of an arms race in outer space held in the Conference from 11 to 13 June 2014 pursuant to the schedule of activities of the 2014 session contained in document CD/1978; on 13 and 20 August 2015, pursuant to the schedule of activities of the 2015 session as contained in document CD/2021; and from 14 to 16

June 2017, under the working group on the way ahead established by the decision contained in document CD/2019.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Ambassador of Sri Lanka for his statement and for the words of solidarity addressed to the presidency. I now give the floor to the representative of Pakistan, who will also speak on behalf of the Group of 21.

Mr. Amil (Pakistan): Mr. President, before I deliver the statement on behalf of the Group of 21, let me first express my country's solidarity with the Government and the people of Spain and Finland following the horrific terrorist incidents in both Barcelona and in Turku. Our thoughts and prayers go out to the bereaved and the victims of these senseless acts.

I also take this opportunity to congratulate you on assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. We appreciate the bilateral informal consultations that you have undertaken and you can rest assured of our delegation's full support and cooperation as we wrap up this year's session.

I will now read out, on behalf of the Group of 21, a statement on negative security assurances:

The Group of 21 reaffirms that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. The Group remains convinced that, as long as nuclear weapons exist, the risk of their use and their proliferation persists. Therefore, as reflected in the Group's statements delivered by Nigeria on 17 March 2017, the Conference on Disarmament should start negotiations on a phased programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, including a nuclear weapons convention prohibiting the possession, development, production, acquisition, testing, stockpiling, transfer and the use or the threat of use of nuclear weapons, as mandated by the General Assembly of the United Nations in its resolution 68/32, leading to agreement on the global, non-discriminatory and verifiable elimination of nuclear weapons, within a specified framework of time.

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, irrevocable and legally binding instrument to effectively assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use of or threat of use of nuclear weapons under all circumstances as a high priority, as called for in General Assembly resolution 71/30. Such an instrument should be clear, credible, without ambiguity, non-discriminatory and should respond to the concerns of all the parties. The Group stresses, in particular, that the negative security assurances provided under a legally binding instrument should be without any conditions.

The Group reaffirms the right of non-nuclear-weapon States not to be attacked by or threatened by the nuclear-weapon States with the use of nuclear weapons and strongly calls upon the nuclear-weapon States to refrain from any such action or threat, whether implicit or explicit.

The Group underlines the unanimous conclusion of the International Court of Justice that there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and to bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control.

The Group recalls the convening of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on nuclear disarmament on 26 September 2013, which demonstrated that this issue remains a major international priority, and it supports and calls for the full implementation of its related resolutions 68/32, 69/58, 70/34 and 71/71 to follow up to this meeting.

The Group also highlights the importance of the commemoration of 26 September as the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons devoted to furthering this objective, and welcomes the decision to convene, no later than 2018, a United Nations high-level international conference on nuclear disarmament.

The Group highlights the objectives laid down in General Assembly resolution 71/60, entitled “Promotion of multilateralism in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation”, which, among other things, reaffirms multilateralism as the core principle in resolving disarmament and non-proliferation concerns.

The Group underscores the need to eliminate the role of nuclear weapons in strategic defence doctrines, security policies and military strategies, which not only set out rationales for the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, but also maintain unjustifiable concepts on international security based on promoting and developing military alliances’ nuclear deterrence policies.

The Group believes that, pending the total elimination of all nuclear weapons, the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones, taking into account the provisions of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, is a positive step and an important measure towards strengthening global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. In this context, the Group welcomes the nuclear-weapon-free zones established by the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Bangkok, Pelindaba and Semipalatinsk and the nuclear-weapon-free status of Mongolia. The Group of 21 welcomes General Assembly resolution 69/66, in which it was decided to convene the Third Conference of States Parties and Signatories to Treaties that Established Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones and Mongolia as a one-day conference in New York, in 2015, under the leadership of Indonesia, and notes with appreciation the various efforts deployed in this regard to produce concrete results.

The Group reiterates that, in the context of nuclear-weapon-free zones, it is essential that nuclear-weapon States provide unconditional assurances against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons to all States of the zones. In this context, the Group urges nuclear-weapon States to withdraw all reservations and interpretative declarations to the protocols of nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties.

The Group welcomes the formal proclamation, for the first time in history, of Latin America and the Caribbean as a zone of peace on the occasion of the Second Summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), held in Havana, Cuba, on 28 and 29 January 2014, which includes the commitment of all States of that region to further nuclear disarmament as a priority goal and to contribute to general and complete disarmament. Hopefully, this proclamation will be followed by other political proclamations of zones of peace in other regions of the world.

The Group welcomes the Political Declaration of Quito, adopted at the Fourth Summit of CELAC, held in Quito, Ecuador, on 27 January 2016, which reaffirms the commitment of CELAC to the preservation of peace and international security, political independence and nuclear disarmament conducive to general, total and verifiable disarmament. The Group also welcomes the Political Declaration of Punta Cana, adopted at the Fifth Summit of CELAC, held in the Dominican Republic on 25 January 2017, which reaffirms the commitment of CELAC to achieve the total prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons. CELAC reaffirms its commitment to the consolidation of Latin America and the Caribbean as a zone of peace and highlights its character as the first-ever zone free of nuclear weapons, established by the Treaty of Tlatelolco. The Group welcomes the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Treaty of Tlatelolco on 14 February 2017 in Mexico in the framework of the twenty-fifth session of the General Conference of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The Group reiterates its strong support for the early establishment in the Middle East of a zone free of all nuclear weapons. To this end, the Group reaffirms the need for the expeditious establishment of such a zone in response to resolution 487 (1981) and paragraph 14 of resolution 687 (1991) of the Security Council and the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly.

The members of the Group of 21 that are States parties to the Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) express their disappointment and deep concern that three States parties, including two States that bear special responsibility

as NPT depositaries and co-sponsor States of the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons resolution on the Middle East, blocked consensus on the draft outcome document of the ninth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, including the process to establish a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and of all other weapons of mass destruction, as contained in the 1995 resolution on the Middle East. This could undermine efforts towards strengthening the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons regime as a whole. The members of the Group of 21 that are States parties to the NPT reaffirm that the 1995 resolution on the Middle East continues to constitute the basis for the establishment of such a zone and that the 1995 resolution remains valid until fully implemented. The members of the Group of 21 that are States parties to the NPT also express their serious concern over the lack of implementation of the 1995 resolution and, in accordance with paragraph 6 of this resolution, call upon States parties to the NPT, and in particular the nuclear-weapon States, to extend their cooperation and exert their utmost efforts with a view to ensuring the early establishment by regional parties of a Middle East zone free of nuclear and all other weapons of mass destruction, and reaffirm that the co-sponsors of the resolution must take all the necessary measures to fully implement it without further delay. The members of the Group of 21 that are States parties to the NPT express their utmost concern that the persistent lack of implementation of the 1995 resolution, contrary to the decisions made at the relevant review conferences of the parties to the NPT, erodes the credibility of the Treaty and disrupts the delicate balance among its three pillars, taking into account that the indefinite extension of the Treaty is inextricably linked to the implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East.

While the Group believes that nuclear-weapon-free zones are positive steps towards strengthening global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, it does not subscribe to the arguments that declarations that have been made by the nuclear-weapon States are sufficient, or that security assurances should only be granted in the context of nuclear-weapon-free zones. In addition, given their geographical limitations, security assurances guaranteed to States members of nuclear-weapon-free zones cannot substitute for universal, legally binding security assurances.

The Group recalls that the demand for security assurances was raised by the non-nuclear-weapon States in the 1960s and it crystallized in 1968 during the concluding phase of the negotiations for the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. The response of the nuclear-weapon States, however, as reflected in resolutions 255 (1968) and 984 (1995) of the Security Council, was incomplete, partial and conditional. The demand for assurances therefore persists.

The Group accepts that, while various approaches exist, efforts to conclude a universal and legally binding instrument on negative security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States should be vigorously pursued. The Group considers that the conclusion of such an instrument would be an important step towards achieving the objectives of arms control, nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation in all its aspects.

The Group takes note of the substantive and interactive informal discussions on negative security assurances held in the Conference from 18 to 20 June 2014, pursuant to the schedule of activities of the 2014 session contained in document CD/1978; on 27 August 2015, pursuant to the schedule of activities of the 2015 session contained in document CD/2021; and from 28 to 30 June 2017, under the working group on the way forward established by the decision contained in document CD/2090.

In thanking you, Mr. President, for your patient hearing, I will request to take the floor again in my national capacity with a much smaller statement.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of Pakistan for his kind words of solidarity and for his statement. I now give the floor to the representative of Cuba, who will also speak on behalf of the Group of 21.

Ms. Pérez Álvarez (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, Cuba also wishes to convey its condolences to the countries that have been victims of terrorist acts.

I will now read out the statement of the Group of 21 on the subject of follow-up to the 2017 high-level meeting of the General Assembly on nuclear disarmament.

(*spoke in English*)

Mr. President, I have the honour of delivering the following statement on behalf of the Group of 21:

The strong support of the international community for taking urgent and effective measures to ensure the total elimination of nuclear weapons was amply demonstrated at the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on nuclear disarmament held on 26 September 2013, when Heads of State and Government, foreign ministers and other high-level or senior government officials expressed their unambiguous position and policies for nuclear disarmament, in response to the decision adopted in General Assembly resolution 67/39.

Subsequent to this high-level meeting, the General Assembly adopted resolutions 68/32, 69/58, 70/34 and 71/71, entitled “Follow-up to the 2013 high-level meeting of the General Assembly on nuclear disarmament”. These resolutions called for the urgent commencement of negotiations in the Conference of Disarmament for the early conclusion of a comprehensive convention on nuclear weapons to prohibit their possession, development, production, acquisition, testing, stockpiling, transfer and use or threat of use and to provide for their destruction.

The resolutions also requested the Secretary-General to seek the views of Member States with regard to achieving the objective of the total elimination of nuclear weapons, in particular on the elements of a comprehensive convention on nuclear weapons and to submit a report thereon to the General Assembly and to the Conference on Disarmament.

The General Assembly also decided to convene a United Nations high-level international conference on nuclear disarmament, no later than 2018, to review progress made in this regard.

The Group stresses the importance of the commemoration of the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, which falls on 26 September. In this regard, the Group expresses its appreciation to Member States, the United Nations system and civil society, including non-governmental organizations, academia, parliamentarians, the mass media and individuals that developed activities in promotion of this international day, through all means of educational and public awareness-raising activities about the threat posed to humanity by nuclear weapons and the necessity for their total elimination, in order to mobilize international efforts towards achieving the common goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world. The Group invites all stakeholders to continuously promote the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons.

The Group welcomes the formal proclamation of Latin America and the Caribbean as a zone of peace on the occasion of the Second Summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), held in Havana, Cuba, on 28 and 29 January 2014. The 33 member countries of CELAC declared to promote nuclear disarmament as a priority goal as part of the progress towards general and complete disarmament in order to promote the strengthening of trust among nations. CELAC once again reiterates its standing commitment to continue working for Latin America and the Caribbean to remain and be strengthened as a zone of peace, thereby contributing to regional and international security.

The persistent existence of nuclear weapons poses a grave threat to humanity and all life on Earth, and the only defence against the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of a nuclear detonation is the total, irreversible and legally binding elimination of nuclear weapons and the maintenance of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

Nuclear disarmament is the highest priority of the Conference on Disarmament. The Group reaffirms that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against their use or threat of use. The fulfilment of nuclear disarmament obligations and commitments will mutually reinforce non-proliferation. Nuclear disarmament has to be pursued in a comprehensive and non-discriminatory manner.

The Group of 21 is mindful of the solemn obligations of States parties undertaken in article VI of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), in particular to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and calls for urgent compliance with the legal obligation of the fulfilment of the commitments undertaken in this field.

We acknowledge the significant contribution made by a number of countries towards realizing the objective of nuclear disarmament through the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones, as well as by voluntary renunciation of nuclear weapons programmes or withdrawal of all nuclear weapons from their territories, and strongly support the speedy establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.

We are deeply concerned by the persistent reluctance of nuclear-weapon States to approach their treaty obligation as an urgent commitment to the total elimination of their nuclear weapons by providing pretexts that are unacceptable due to the urgency of taking concrete actions to avert the adverse consequences of nuclear weapons.

In this connection, we recall the unanimous conclusion of the International Court of Justice in its 1996 advisory opinion that there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control.

It is the firm belief of the Group that the time has come to put words into action. Accordingly, the Group of 21 takes this opportunity to call for the implementation of General Assembly resolutions 68/32, 69/58, 70/34 and 71/71. In this connection, the Group of 21 calls for the urgent commencement of negotiations on nuclear disarmament in the Conference on Disarmament, in particular on a comprehensive convention on nuclear weapons to prohibit their possession, development, production, acquisition, testing, stockpiling, transfer and use or threat of use and to provide for their destruction.

The Group of 21 takes note of the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons on 7 July 2017 at the United Nations conference to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 71/258 and held in New York from 27 to 31 March and from 15 June to 7 July 2017. The Group hopes that this instrument would contribute to furthering nuclear disarmament leading towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

We therefore request you, Mr. President, to take into account in your ongoing consultations how to take forward the mandate given to the Conference by the General Assembly on this important issue, and call upon members of the Conference to support this important initiative.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of Cuba for her statement and for the expression of support to the presidency. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of India.

Mr. Gill (India): Mr. President, my delegation congratulates you upon your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and assures you of its full support in the discharge of this important responsibility.

I would like to join other colleagues in conveying our condolences on the loss of life in the terrible terrorist attacks in Barcelona and Cambrils last week. Our condolences also extend to our Finnish colleagues on the terror attack in Turku. My country condemns terrorism without reservation and reiterates its call for all material, moral or diplomatic support to terrorism in any form to end immediately.

I would also like to join other colleagues in welcoming our new colleagues from the Netherlands and Slovakia, who have already made an important contribution to our discussions in the Conference today. Let me also welcome Ms. Anja Kaspersen, who is taking over the leadership of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs branch in Geneva. She brings rich experience and a very impressive set of skills to this job. My delegation looks forward to working with her on the range of disarmament issues that are worked on daily in Geneva.

My delegation believes that at this time, when progress is so difficult and there are new challenges to international security, there are shifts in power and there are shifts in technology, now is not the time to reduce resources or de-emphasize in any manner the disarmament function of the United Nations. In fact, now is the time to work — in each and every forum that we have — with patience and perseverance and not to abandon them or reduce our commitment to them out of frustration.

Mr. President, as is obvious from the long list of speakers today, there has been pent-up demand in the Conference for a plenary session, so I beg your indulgence and the indulgence of colleagues in addressing a couple of important issues.

First of all, I would like to take this opportunity to read into the record of the Conference the response by the Official Spokesperson of the Government of India to a media query on 18 July regarding the view of India on the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons adopted in New York on 7 July this year:

In response to a query regarding the view of India on a treaty to ban nuclear weapons, the Official Spokesperson said that India continues to attach priority to and remains committed to universal, non-discriminatory and verifiable nuclear disarmament. India, however, did not participate in the negotiations on a treaty on the prohibition of nuclear weapons, which were concluded in New York on 7 July 2017. Also, none of the other States possessing nuclear weapons participated in the negotiations.

These negotiations were conducted under the General Assembly's rules of procedure pursuant to Assembly resolution 71/258 of 23 December 2016. India had abstained on this resolution and provided a detailed explanation of vote. India had further expressed its position on the issue of its non-participation in these negotiations at a plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament on 28 March 2017.

India therefore cannot be a party to the treaty and so shall not be bound by any of the obligations that may arise from it. India believes that this treaty in no way constitutes or contributes to the development of any customary international law.

India reiterates its commitment to the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world. India believes that this goal can be achieved through a step-by-step process underwritten by universal commitment in an agreed global and non-discriminatory multilateral framework. In this regard, India supports the commencement of negotiations on a comprehensive nuclear-weapons convention in the Conference on Disarmament, which is the world's single multilateral disarmament negotiation forum working on the basis of consensus.

Mr. President, I would also take this opportunity to read out another statement by the Official Spokesperson on 7 July on the concern of India about the recent missile tests by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea:

The continued pursuit of nuclear ballistic missile programmes by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and its proliferation links pose a grave threat to international peace and stability. They have also adversely impacted the national security of India.

India calls upon the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to refrain from such actions that undermine international peace and stability. We also urge the international community to work together to hold accountable all those parties that have supported these programmes.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of India for his kind words, his call for international cooperation in the fight against terrorism and for his statement. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Colombia.

Ms. Londoño Soto (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to begin, Mr. President, by conveying my heartfelt condolences to Spain for the terrorist attacks that took place last Thursday, 17 August 2017, in Barcelona and Cambrils, and to Finland for the terrorist act perpetrated in its territory. Colombia reiterates its condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, and it expresses its solidarity with the people and Government of Spain and with the people and Government of Finland.

As this is my first time taking the floor under your presidency, allow me to congratulate you on your assumption of this important office and to wish you success in your endeavours. Our delegation remains committed to making progress towards achieving the goals of the Conference on Disarmament. My delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered earlier today by the Group of 21.

The draft report that you have presented to us provides an opportunity to reflect on how we might focus our efforts in the near future and how we might achieve a breakthrough in multilateral negotiations on nuclear disarmament through the adoption of a comprehensive and balanced programme of work. We have little choice but to confront the realities prevailing outside the Conference on Disarmament. The adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons on 7 July 2017 at the United Nations conference mandated to negotiate such an instrument undoubtedly gives us cause to discuss the object and purpose of our work.

While it is perhaps a little early to make assessments, what is certain is that, in order to make them accurately, it is essential to consider the panorama as a whole. In this connection, I wish to refer to the document bearing the symbol A/71/371 and entitled “Report of the Open-ended Working Group taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations”. As you will recall, the Open-ended Working Group met in 2016 and adopted a set of agreed conclusions and recommendations of which only one has been implemented — and that, in record time — namely, the recommendation relating to the negotiation of an instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading to their total elimination. None of the other agreed conclusions and recommendations have been implemented. Allow me to point out that every one of them is relevant to the mandate of the Conference on Disarmament. The Government of Colombia therefore respectfully suggests that the Conference endorse the document and urgently implement the outstanding recommendations, in particular the one relating to additional efforts to devise effective and specific legal measures, provisions and standards, the adoption of which will be necessary to achieve and maintain a world free from nuclear weapons.

It should also be recalled that General Assembly resolution 70/33, which established the Working Group, requested the Secretary-General to transmit its report to the Conference on Disarmament. Given that our delegation participated in the work of that Working Group and has also helped take forward multilateral negotiations on nuclear disarmament, Colombia is aware that it is not easy to bridge the gap between clearly divergent positions or to ignore the fact that some countries have chosen to remain on the periphery of the discussion. However, acknowledging unequivocally the distance that separates two positions is the first step towards reducing it. The report in document A/71/371 accurately defines the distance that we must reduce. We know that, although the majority of divergent positions relate to matters of sequencing and timing, one matter on which positions do not diverge is the goal of eliminating nuclear weapons. As long as the existing disarmament architecture remains in place and the Conference on Disarmament is mandated to act as the sole forum for negotiating multilateral disarmament instruments, it has an obligation to play its full role. The matters addressed in the aforementioned report should be the subject of discussion and be resolved swiftly within the framework of the Conference, as a failure to do so may result in it becoming obsolete.

In this regard, Mr. President, my delegation wishes to point out that making rational use of the resources generously made available to the Conference, including the right of States to take the floor during the time allotted to deliberations, is a responsibility entrusted

to us by all the United Nations Member States for the sole purpose of taking effective measures to preserve the very existence of the planet. The financial constraints faced by other disarmament instruments that are making tangible contributions in this sphere should give us pause for thought.

Before concluding, I would like to thank Ambassador Lynn of Myanmar and the facilitators of the working group on the way ahead for the useful discussions that they organized and for the document before us. The group's work definitely constitutes a step in the right direction.

In line with my statement, Mr. President, I would like to emphasize the sense of urgency that should drive the work related to items 1 to 4 of the Conference's agenda.

We cannot continue to ignore testimonies such as those delivered by the youth communicators for a world without nuclear weapons who were with us here earlier today and who travelled all the way from Japan to present to the Conference more than 210,000 signatures from individuals ardently devoted to this cause.

Lastly, I would like to welcome the colleagues from Slovakia and the Netherlands, who have joined us here in the Conference on Disarmament, as well as Ms. Kaspersen, as they take up their new assignments.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Ambassador of Colombia for her statement and for her kind words of support to the presidency. I now give the floor to the delegation of Estonia, which will speak on behalf of the European Union.

Ms. Salsa-Audiffren (Estonia): Mr. President, I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The following countries align themselves with this statement: Turkey, Montenegro, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ukraine, Republic of Moldova and Georgia.

Let me start by congratulating you on your assumption of the presidency and offer our sympathy and solidarity to all those affected by last week's terrorist attacks.

Since our last meeting, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has continued to accelerate its nuclear and ballistic missile programmes, notably with the launches of ballistic missiles of intercontinental range on 4 and 28 July. The European Union strongly condemns these actions, which constitute outright violations of the international obligations of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea as set out in several United Nations Security Council resolutions and which represent a serious threat to international peace and security.

The European Union very much welcomes the unanimous adoption of Security Council resolution 2371 (2017). The European Union urges the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to comply without delay, fully and unconditionally, with its obligations under all relevant Security Council resolutions and to refrain from any further provocative action that could increase regional and global tensions.

The European Union supports diplomatic efforts with our partners aimed at de-escalation of the situation and achieving the complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula through peaceful means. The European Union highlights the importance of maintaining unity of the international community in addressing the challenge. Close engagement with all the European Union's key partners in the region and worldwide is essential in this respect.

As stated in the European Union Foreign Affairs Council conclusions on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea of 17 July, the European Union supports the leading role and call of the Republic of Korea to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to engage in a credible and meaningful dialogue, including through confidence-building measures, in order to defuse tension and to enable steps aimed at pursuing the complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and the full implementation of all Security Council resolutions. The European Union is ready to support such a process in consultation with key partners.

Mr. President, the actions of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea undermine the global non-proliferation and disarmament regime which the European Union has

steadfastly supported for decades. They underline the centrality of upholding and enhancing the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and the necessity of universalization and the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the delegation of Estonia for its statement and for its words of support to the presidency. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Austria.

Mr. Hajnoczi (Austria): Mr. President, I wish to congratulate you, Ambassador Herráiz, on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. You can count on my delegation's full support, but it is also my sad duty to express the condolences of Austria to your country and the families of the victims of the abhorrent terrorist attacks last week. Equally, our thoughts are with our Finnish friends after the stabbings in Turku. On a more positive note, I want to welcome our new Deputy Secretary-General and the new colleagues from the Netherlands and Slovakia.

Mr. President, Austria condemns the latest ballistic missile launches by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in the strongest possible terms and is fully aligned with the statement just delivered on behalf of the European Union.

We urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to immediately refrain from any further breaches of international law and cease all provocations. It is high time to leave the path of confrontation and to embark on cooperation.

We urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to demonstrate its willingness to assume its responsibilities as a member of the international community.

The quest by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to develop nuclear weapons is a severe threat to regional and international peace and security, including its own national security. Peace and security cannot be built on weapons of mass destruction. Peace and security cannot be sustained by the threat of razing cities and regions to the ground, causing senseless suffering for vast numbers of civilians and triggering a possible retaliation that would eradicate parts of their own population and country and, in extremis, all humankind. Mutually assured destruction has become an anachronistic concept. Even more so as the world has become multi-polar and is facing, in particular, security risks of a nature that cannot be confronted by nuclear weapons. Weapons of mass destruction should have no place in the twenty-first century. It was the indiscriminate effects and unacceptable humanitarian consequences of chemical and biological weapons that led to their total ban by the international community. History shows that the first step to eliminate weapons of mass destruction is to prohibit them through legally binding instruments. The international norm against the use of these weapons shows its effect goes also beyond the States parties to these conventions.

Finally, today, we can say that after more than 70 years since Hiroshima and Nagasaki, also the third category of weapons of mass destruction will be unequivocally outlawed. We can be proud that on 7 July 2017, the international community adopted the text of a treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons. The unequivocal message is that nuclear weapons are illegal and illegitimate and will be unconditionally stigmatized as weapons prohibited under international law. The new treaty prohibits the development, testing, production, manufacturing, possession and stationing of nuclear weapons. It is open to all States: non-nuclear-weapon States, countries currently hosting nuclear weapons and nuclear-weapon States. The treaty provides flexible pathways for accession and allows for the input of nuclear-weapon States on important subjects like verification and related measures. It lays the foundation for further progress in multilateral nuclear disarmament and towards a world free from nuclear weapons — an objective to which all of us have committed ourselves.

The new legally binding instrument is based on the severe concern about the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons as embedded in the preamble to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and recognized by the 2010 Final Document. The facts-based discussions in Oslo, Nayarit and Vienna made a compelling case that the broad range of humanitarian consequences and intrinsic risks are even graver than previously understood. This cognizance was reinforced by the realization that no adequate national or

international capacity exists to deal with such consequences. In the past, humankind has been very lucky, on several occasions, when we witnessed close calls to unintended nuclear-weapon explosions. To put our luck to the test for more years, or even generations, would be irresponsible. As the former Foreign Minister of Australia, Gareth Evans, said, it is sheer dumb luck that since 1945, no further nuclear weapon explosions have happened. But statisticians tell us that the probability of such an event is increasing over time. Deliberately exposing its own population and, in extremis, all humanity to the risk of extinction is an ultimately irresponsible gamble that runs counter to all our national security interests. As my President said in his speech at the United Nations General Assembly: “If we do not eliminate nuclear weapons, they will eliminate us.” Austria is proud to have been, for many years, a co-leader of the efforts to demand urgent action to move beyond nuclear weapons.

Mr. President, all approaches to nuclear disarmament share the agreement on the general and logical necessity of a prohibition. To achieve and maintain a world without nuclear weapons, these weapons of mass destruction need to be indeed prohibited under international law. However, some would have preferred to negotiate a treaty at a later stage. As we have seen in so many instances, there is never a consensus on the right time in the view of all States. We strongly encourage all States to make use of the broad and practical opportunities provided for in the new treaty and to sign and ratify it. We believe it is time to turn the page and move past the discussion of the opportune moment, and look into substance in order to achieve progress in nuclear disarmament, which remains the number one piece of unfinished business in global disarmament efforts.

As long as nuclear weapons exist, the risk of their use — by design, miscalculation or accident — or of their falling into the hands of terrorists remains real. We hope that the current momentum can serve as an impetus to speed up nuclear disarmament. Now that we have concluded the nuclear-weapon prohibition treaty, we have to work strenuously towards the total elimination of these weapons. Further effective measures to reduce and ultimately eliminate all types of nuclear weapons, deployed and non-deployed, including through unilateral, bilateral, regional and multilateral measures, need to be taken with urgency. Equally, risk-reduction measures are called for as an interim step. The international disarmament and non-proliferation architecture consists of mutually reinforcing elements. The new legal instrument on the prohibition of nuclear weapons was a missing piece in this puzzle. Strengthening one of them equals strengthening the whole architecture. Leading up to the fifteenth anniversary of the entry into force of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, it is good news that finally a major contribution to the long overdue implementation of the disarmament pillar was achieved. We strongly encourage all States to take further measures to strengthen it, including by its full implementation and striving for its universality.

The nuclear weapons and missile programmes of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea continue to be of gravest international concern. Austria calls on all the remaining annex II States to take decisive action towards the ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. We hope that soon we will be able to build upon the work of the high-level fissile material cut-off treaty expert preparatory group and start negotiating the treaty.

The year 2017 has been a promising year in multilateral disarmament efforts — a year that proved that, even after decades of standstill, progress is indeed possible. After 20 years of stalemate in multilateral nuclear disarmament, the treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons — a treaty that has been called for since the very first United Nations General Assembly — was finally negotiated, adopted and will soon be open for signature. Let us seize this occasion to overcome decades of self-blocking and manoeuvring in order to make further progress. Instead of simply bemoaning the increased tensions in the international security environment, let us recall that it was precisely in such times that major nuclear disarmament treaties were achieved. What is needed is action, and not criticism of progress and further inaction.

A glimmer of hope was given when the United Nations Disarmament Commission this year finally elaborated an outcome. The Conference on Disarmament is called upon to

end its self-instilled blockage so that it can again discharge its mandate to negotiate disarmament instruments.

Let me close, Mr. President, by reiterating the strong commitment of Austria to multilateral cooperation in the field of disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation, as well as our full support for your efforts.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of Austria for his statement and for the words of solidarity addressed to the presidency. I now give the floor to the representative of Peru.

Ms. Masana García (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to begin, Mr. President, by congratulating you on your assumption of the responsibility of guiding the Conference on Disarmament through the final portion of its 2017 session. You may rest assured that you will have my delegation's full support in your endeavours.

I wish to convey our deepest condolences to the Governments and people of Spain and Finland. Peru rejects and strongly condemns the heinous terrorist attacks that occurred recently in Barcelona and Turku.

Mr. President, notwithstanding the stalemate that has marred the Conference on Disarmament for the past 21 years, we still believe that it has an essential part to play in the maintenance of peace and global security. Let us not forget that the Conference is the sole multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament and it provides us with an appropriate platform for ongoing dialogue and exchanges of views among members. We trust that the efforts to align positions and to conclude agreements of global significance within this forum will yield a positive outcome in the near future. In that regard, we are pleased to note that, under your presidency, the customary plenary meetings will once again take place; we hope that we will not be deprived of this useful and valuable forum.

During the break in the Conference's plenary meetings, the world witnessed new ballistic missile launches conducted by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The repeated testing of these ballistic missiles is a flagrant violation of international law and resolutions of the United Nations Security Council. My Government therefore once again urges the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to cease these launches, abandon its nuclear programme, accede to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and cooperate with the International Atomic Energy Agency in the inspection of its nuclear facilities.

Peru reaffirms its commitment to the implementation of resolutions adopted by the Security Council, of which it will be a non-permanent member starting in January 2018. As part of that commitment, we will make every effort to maintain peace and international security. Dear colleagues, let us not forget that we have the great responsibility of taking care of our planet in order to pass it on to future generations in the best possible state.

Mr. President, we greatly appreciate the valuable work carried out by Ambassador Lynn of Myanmar in his capacity as Chair of the working group on the way ahead, not to mention the work of the co-facilitators. We hope that the discussions held within the working group will find proper resonance and continue next year, as you yourself just said, so that we can start the next session by adopting a programme of work with a negotiating mandate that takes into account the sensitivity of the issues that we address, in addition to the efforts and priorities of the international community.

Lastly, I would like to welcome the Ambassadors of the Netherlands and Slovakia, as well as Ms. Kaspersen, who have recently joined us here at the Conference on Disarmament.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Ambassador of Peru for her statement and for her kind words of support to the presidency. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Italy.

Mr. Mati (Italy): Mr. President, at the outset I would like to congratulate you on your assumption of your mandate and assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation.

Let me also join previous delegations in expressing our deepest condolences for the horrific attack in Barcelona as well as our most sincere solidarity with the families of the victims and injured. I would also like to express our condolences and solidarity to our Finnish colleague and to the people of Finland for the attack in Turku.

Let me also welcome, on a more positive note, as my Austrian colleague said earlier, the new Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference as well as the new Permanent Representatives of the Netherlands and Slovakia to the Conference on Disarmament.

Mr. President, Italy aligns itself with the statement delivered by the European Union on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. I would like to join other delegations in reiterating, with utmost determination, my country's strong condemnation of the ballistic missile launches conducted by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on 4 and 28 July, further clear violations of the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions.

The frequency of these repeated ballistic missile tests, including those having a potential intercontinental range, and the constant development of the relevant technologies are a source of serious and growing concern. The missile and nuclear programmes of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea represent a severe threat to global non-proliferation policy, as well as to international peace and security. For these reasons, we welcome the unanimous adoption by the Security Council of resolution 2371 (2017). The Security Council has sent, once again, an unequivocal message to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea: the international community is united in condemning the increasing provocations by North Korea and is determined to confront this new level of threat by taking further action.

We reaffirm that the Security Council's concern is directed towards the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and not its people, who continue to suffer as resources are diverted away from economic development towards military, nuclear and ballistic missile programmes. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea must abide by all its international obligations and make credible progress on its obligations to denuclearize, thus enabling negotiations leading to a peaceful solution, as stated at the European Union Foreign Affairs Council on 17 July.

Mr. President, the current crisis in the Korean Peninsula adds a sense of urgency to our work and is one of the reasons why we welcome the resumption of the Conference's plenary meetings under your presidency. Even if we fully understand and share the sense of frustration stemming from the long stalemate in the Conference's work, we consider that not convening plenary meetings cannot be beneficial to the Conference on Disarmament or to the progress of disarmament. Furthermore, we maintain some reservations as to whether not convening the Conference — despite the explicit request of a relevant part of its membership — is among the presidency's prerogatives according to the rules of procedure. Therefore, Mr. President, I would like it to be placed on the record that, for Italy, as a Conference on Disarmament member State, this does not constitute a precedent for future sessions of the Conference.

At the same time, we look forward to a constructive and positive outcome of the working group on the way ahead, to which we are determined to make meaningful contributions in order to favour a concrete, productive and ambitious way ahead for the next Conference session. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Ambassador Lynn for the constructive way in which he is conducting our work.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of Italy for his statement and for his kind words of support. I now give the floor to the representative of Switzerland.

Mr. Masmejean (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, like the other members of the Conference on Disarmament, we wish to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency and assure you of our full support in the performance of your duties. We would also like to extend a warm welcome to the newly accredited Permanent Representatives to the Conference and the new Deputy Secretary-General.

We offer our deepest sympathy and solidarity to all the States that have recently been the victim of terrorist attacks, not least your own, Mr. President.

We are taking the floor today in response to the announcement by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea that it carried out intercontinental ballistic missile tests in July 2017. Switzerland strongly condemns these acts. As part of the nuclear programme of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, these tests not only violate several Security Council resolutions but also constitute a threat to peace and security in the region and undermine the international community's efforts to ensure the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Switzerland is also concerned by the escalation, especially the verbal exchanges, that followed these acts. The statements made by several States regarding the potential use of nuclear weapons subvert the discourse that underpins the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation process, at a time when that process already faces major obstacles to its advancement.

Switzerland urges the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to return to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, to abandon its nuclear weapon and ballistic missile programme and to resume the implementation of its safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency. Switzerland firmly believes that the nuclear and security problem in the Korean Peninsula can be resolved only through diplomatic negotiations and encourages all States to do their utmost in that regard.

Mr. President, I would like to take this opportunity also to comment on the progress of work in the Conference, especially the activities of the working group on the way ahead. First, we would like to thank the Chair of the working group, Ambassador Lynn, for the way in which he has approached this task. We are particularly grateful to him for his tireless efforts to ensure that the working group achieves tangible results.

We believe that the added value of the working group will hinge largely on its ability to reach agreement on points that will guide our future work. We have a number of options. We can continue to operate as we have done for over 20 years now, that is to say, by starting from square one again at the opening of the Conference's 2018 session in the hope that the existing obstacles will suddenly vanish and we will be able to agree on a programme of work that includes one or more negotiating mandates. Alternatively, we can adopt a more pragmatic approach and strive to establish some sort of continuity in our work, build progressively on our previous discussions and offer guidance on the way ahead to future presidencies. In our view, this second approach is more likely to bear fruit than the approach we have taken for the past 20-odd years.

With that in mind, if the 2017 session is to make a contribution towards revitalizing the work of the Conference, the working group on the way ahead must achieve tangible results, even if those results are limited in scope. For the Conference to function properly, there needs to be continuity in its work. This applies not only to the substantive work of the Conference but also to its working methods. Regular plenary meetings and regular consultations among each session's six Presidents are essential if the Conference is to operate effectively.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of Switzerland for his statement and for his kind words. I now give the floor to the representative of Indonesia.

Mr. Sidharta (Indonesia): Mr. President, first allow me to join other delegations in congratulating you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and to wish you every success in performing your responsibilities. Rest assured of my delegation's full support for the success of your tenure.

We also extend a warm welcome to the Ambassadors of the Netherlands and Slovakia and wish them success in their assignment here in Geneva.

Allow me to extend our sincere condolences to your delegation and to the Government and people of Spain, as well as to the Government and people of Finland. Our heart goes out to all the victims and their families. We condemn such heinous acts and stand ready to work together with the international community in combating crime.

My delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered by the delegates of Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Cuba on behalf of the Group of 21. Indonesia reiterates that the total

elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. Indonesia reaffirms its principled position on nuclear disarmament, which remains its highest priority. Pending the achievement of total global disarmament, and as a State which has renounced nuclear weapon options, we would like to emphasize that our demand for security assurances remains prevalent.

On the issue of a fissile material treaty, Indonesia is highly committed to advance a balanced fissile material treaty which addresses the concerns of nuclear-weapon States as well as non-nuclear-weapon States. My delegation is of the view that the treaty should be non-discriminatory, multilateral, effectively verifiable, and address its eventual scope.

The Conference on Disarmament recently concluded its deliberations under the framework of the working group on the way ahead. We believe that the substantive discussion conducted in the working group contributed to confidence-building measures among member States and lay a foundation for our efforts to produce a balanced and comprehensive programme of work. We thank Ambassador Htin Lynn of Myanmar for his utmost efforts as the Chair of the working group. Our gratitude also goes to all the facilitators for stepping up and steering discussions on the core issues of the Conference.

Our 2017 session of the Conference has almost come to its conclusion. We are looking forward to a more productive year with outcomes that are acceptable to everyone. With that in mind, we need to always reflect on the rationale of our deliberations over all these years. The responsibility which the Conference undertakes is, however, too critical to be disregarded. Progress in the Conference will undoubtedly contribute to the pursuance of the noble cause of international peace and security, eliminating threats posed by nuclear weapons to the existence of humankind. The continued existence of nuclear weapons influences regional and global security. We believe that the international security environment and nuclear disarmament are mutually reinforcing. Therefore, we need to create an environment which is conducive to the promotion of international commitments on arms control and disarmament. We cannot simply blame the unfavourable international strategic environment for the lack of progress of our common endeavour.

I believe that any progress made in the Conference would be in everyone's interests. The agreement reached in the Conference should not reflect the interests of specific countries or groups of countries, but rather the common good and collective international interests. In the effort to move our process forward, we should be more transparent and inclusive by engaging international organizations and civil society in our deliberations.

Mr. President, let me conclude by reiterating the commitment of Indonesia to support your presidency and engage constructively in the Conference's endeavour to fully undertake its mandate. I look forward to working closely with all Conference member States, observers, civil society and other relevant stakeholders.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of Indonesia for his statement and for his words of support. I now give the floor to the representative of Sweden.

Mr. Makarowski (Sweden): Allow me to begin, Mr. President, by congratulating you on your assumption of the presidency and assuring you of the full cooperation of the Swedish delegation. I would like to welcome the new Ambassadors of Slovakia and the Netherlands, as well as the new Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, Ms. Kaspersen. The Swedish delegation looks forward to working together with you.

I would like to extend sincere condolences to Spain and Finland for the loss of lives in the recent terrorist attacks.

Mr. President, I would like to direct our thanks to Ambassador Lynn of Myanmar and the co-facilitators for their work in the working group on the way ahead. Sweden would like to encourage Ambassador Lynn to continue his efforts to reach agreement on the recommendations of the working group. We had substantial discussions on the issues on the Conference agenda. We are today not yet at the point where we can begin negotiations on disarmament instruments, which after all is the main purpose of the Conference. That is regretful. It is even more regretful that this situation has prevailed during the past two decades. It does not mean, however, that we should not continue our efforts to reach

agreement on a programme of work with a negotiating mandate — or mandates — however dire the situation may seem today. The prospect of putting all the work we have done into a drawer, and trying to reinvent the wheel again at the beginning of the next session of the Conference, is even more dire. We have to continue to build on the work already done.

Mr. President, continuity is the key word. It is therefore with regret that we note the lack of continuity in holding plenary meetings of the Conference lately.

Lastly, Mr. President, on the situation on the Korean Peninsula, the views of Sweden have been expressed in the statement of the European Union.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of Sweden for his words of support and for his statement. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Kim In-chul (Republic of Korea) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to begin by congratulating you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. I would add that we, the members of the Conference, also have cause to be glad in that after such a long hiatus — for which the reason for the unreason weakens my reason, and I thank Cervantes for allowing me to put it so eloquently — we are finally meeting again to discuss the many issues that relate to the work and mandate of the Conference which warrant our attention.

Let us remember that tradition and custom are the best interpreters of rules; and, in this process of interpretation, Mr. President, you have my delegation's full support and cooperation. As you have mentioned Francisco de Vitoria, I would like to draw attention to the mural that appears on the ceiling of the Council Chamber, *El Pacto de Salamanca* [The Salamanca Pact], by José María Sert, another famous Spaniard. It is my hope that the Conference will move forward wisely and find solutions to our problems under your leadership, as symbolized by the mural.

We also extend a warm welcome to Ambassador Gabriëlse of the Netherlands and Ambassador Podhorský of Slovakia, and to the new Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference. We are confident that we will benefit from the same friendship and cooperation that we enjoyed with their predecessors.

Above all, I join my voice to those condemning in the strongest terms the barbaric terrorist attack that took place in the heart of the city of Barcelona. This heinous crime against all of us cannot be justified under any circumstances. We convey our deepest condolences and solidarity to the innocent victims and their families and to the Government and people of Spain. Terrorism must be halted, and we will continue to be part of the international community's efforts to that end.

With reference to the greatest threat to peace and international security, which you, Mr. President, mentioned at the outset, I would like to reiterate the international community's strong condemnation of the launch of two long-range ballistic missiles in July by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which were unanimously rejected and condemned by a new Security Council sanctions resolution. There is no doubt that violations of Security Council resolutions and threats to peace and international security will only be met with increasingly robust responses from the international community. I echo the call for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to recognize that there is no alternative but to cease all provocations and to return to the discussion table. I wish to be clear that we have never threatened to attack the Democratic People's Republic of Korea nor have we advocated the use of force against that country for any reason. There is still time for them to choose the right path, as the Republic of Korea cannot and will never be anything other than a free and democratic nation that contributes to peace and international security and where the rights and well-being of every individual are guaranteed.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Ambassador of the Republic of Korea for his statement, for reminding us that the ceiling of this chamber depicts the Salamanca Pact and all that this represents, for his words of solidarity in the wake of the attacks in Barcelona and for having done so while demonstrating, as always, his excellent command of the Spanish language.

I now give the floor to the delegation of Australia.

Ms. Wood (Australia): Mr. President, I congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and assure you of the cooperation and support of Australia. I also offer my country's condolences to the victims of the terrorist attacks in Barcelona and Finland last week. Our thoughts and prayers are with the families and friends of those injured and killed. We condemn in the strongest possible terms these brutal and cowardly attacks.

Mr. President, we regret that plenary meetings of the Conference on Disarmament have not been held in recent weeks. It is our expectation that the responsibility of the Conference President is to hold plenary meetings to allow those Conference members who wish to address the plenary to do so. We do not see recent practice as creating a precedent for the Conference's operations.

Mr. President, reports that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has acquired the ability to develop a miniaturized nuclear device are deeply unsettling, as are the recent ballistic missile tests. The instability and current tension on the Peninsula are the result of the illegal actions by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in violation of numerous United Nations Security Council resolutions. Australia welcomes the new Security Council resolution 2371 (2017), which takes aim at the provocative behaviour of North Korea. The Foreign Minister of Australia has also agreed to designate additional individuals and entities for targeted financial sanctions under my country's autonomous sanctions regime. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea has shown that it has no regard for the welfare of its own population, no regard for the security of and good relations with its neighbours, and no regard for international law. Its long-term interest would best be served by ceasing its nuclear and ballistic missile programmes and engaging positively with the international community. Australia calls on all countries to step up their efforts to implement unanimously agreed Security Council sanctions against North Korea to press upon it that its current path is unacceptable. We will continue to work with partners to uphold global peace and stability.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of Australia for her statement and her words of support. I now give the floor to the representative of Canada.

Mr. Davison (Canada): Mr. President, we wish to congratulate you on the assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and to assure you of our complete support. We also wish to welcome Ms. Kaspersen to her new role here in Geneva.

With regard to the extended vacation of the Conference on Disarmament over the last few months, we would like to express our regret that the Conference did not meet in plenary for the past four weeks of this session. This gap was unfortunate, especially as there was a specific request on behalf of the Western Group for a plenary to be held in order that some Conference members could speak.

With regard to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea,
(*spoke in French*)

Canada remains very concerned about the continuing destabilizing activities of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, namely, the recent intercontinental ballistic missile tests and its irresponsible threats to use nuclear weapons against States in the region and around the world. Now more than ever, a firm and concerted response by the international community is needed to counter this growing threat. Canada is also concerned about the capabilities of other weapons of mass destruction of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the fact that it allows other actors to benefit from its technology and expertise in this sphere.

The prompt and effective implementation of Security Council resolutions is the best way to convince the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to rethink its current position. Canada undertakes to work with its international partners to outline a path towards political dialogue and a peaceful solution.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of Canada for his words of support and for his statement. I now give the floor to the representative of Ecuador.

Mr. Avilés (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, the delegation of Ecuador congratulates you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and assures you of its full support in ensuring that your presidency is a successful one.

Ecuador also welcomes the presence with us earlier today of the Director-General of the Conference on Disarmament and of the Deputy Secretary-General, to whom we wish every success in her work.

Ecuador extends its heartfelt condolences to Spain, the Spanish Government, the Spanish people and the victims and the families of the victims of the heinous terrorist attack that occurred only a few days ago in Barcelona. Ecuador condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and, once again, calls upon the international community to cooperate more closely in the fight against this global scourge.

Ecuador aligns itself with the statements delivered earlier on behalf of the Group of the 21.

Allow me also to welcome the new Permanent Representatives of the Netherlands and Slovakia and to express appreciation for the stimulating visit earlier today by the group of young Japanese students. Such a group visits the Conference on Disarmament each year to deliver signatures and, this year, it is my understanding that more than 200,000 signatures have been collected from individuals in support of the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

Ecuador wishes to express its gratitude to all the Conference Presidents for their work in 2017 and, especially, to Ambassador Lynn for his work at the helm of the working group on the way ahead, not to mention the facilitators from Germany, Chile and Belarus for their important work.

Ecuador wishes to take this opportunity to reaffirm its ongoing commitment to peace and disarmament, the strengthening of multilateralism, the United Nations and, naturally, the Conference on Disarmament itself. Ecuador is a party to all international conventions and treaties on disarmament. It is also a party to the Treaty of Tlatelolco, which established in the early 1960s the world's first nuclear-weapon-free zone in a densely populated area, prior to the signing of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. We can therefore proudly say that the Treaty of Tlatelolco formed part of the legal precedent for the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. At the regional level, we moved forward at the Second Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States by declaring Latin America and the Caribbean a zone of peace. Our countries and our leaders had the foresight to voluntarily renounce nuclear weapons as they considered that nuclear energy should be used by countries primarily for peaceful purposes and that nuclear weapons had no place in a peaceful world — in a world that must be built and attained for the benefit and development of peoples and peace for all generations.

My country's position on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) is clear. Naturally, we support it and consider it a cornerstone of disarmament. It is our hope that the efforts, particularly those of the facilitators, to convene, as soon as possible, a diplomatic conference to negotiate the establishment of a zone free from nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East will bear fruit. In our view, that mandate, which was adopted at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference and subsequently confirmed at the 2010 Review Conference, is a part of the agreements under the Treaty, and its implementation will be crucial to the success of the 2020 Review Conference.

Ecuador advocates the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. It maintains that there is no place for nuclear testing at this point in the history of humankind and it condemns the conduct of any nuclear test anywhere in the world. As to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which was adopted on 7 July 2017 in New York as the outcome of a process that emerged from the Oslo conference or perhaps earlier, of the three conferences on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons and of the two working groups convened in Geneva to take steps towards nuclear disarmament, we believe that the Treaty is evidence of real and effective progress on the path towards nuclear disarmament.

The Conference on Disarmament has made significant contributions in the past. It was here that the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty were negotiated. In our opinion, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is a further important achievement on the path to disarmament and we see it as complementing the NPT and adding value to its article VI. The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons has the merit of placing nuclear weapons under the same treatment as chemical and biological weapons by declaring them unlawful and illegitimate.

Ecuador has always contributed to the work of the Conference on Disarmament and has expressed strong and unreserved support for its activities. We believe the Conference to be the ideal forum for negotiating disarmament treaties. Unfortunately, on account of differences which are well known to all of us, for 20 years it has proved very difficult to adopt a programme of work. We need to work towards a convergence of different States' positions and show flexibility and political will at the highest level in order to garner consensus on a programme of work; in this regard, the working group on the way ahead, on behalf of which Ambassador Lynn has worked so diligently, has much to contribute. The commonalities and elements identified within the working group could form a suitable basis for designing a programme of work.

Ecuador believes that all the matters discussed and proposals made by delegations at the Conference on Disarmament are deserving of due attention and consideration. We are convinced of the importance of cybersecurity and radiological weapons and of the need to combat chemical and biological terrorism. While we feel that these items should remain on the Conference's agenda and should continue to be the subject of discussion, we also feel that, in order to break the current deadlock, the Conference should take a more pragmatic and concrete approach. Efforts could be focused on preparing a proposal for a programme of work that includes a negotiating mandate on three issues, which, if delegations show the necessary flexibility and political will, could be adopted by consensus: the prevention of an arms race in outer space, negative security assurances and the negotiation of a treaty on fissile material. By showing flexibility and political will, the Conference could achieve consensus on a programme of work structured around these three issues and, naturally, nuclear disarmament. Thought could be given to the possibility of establishing a subsidiary body or a working group with a pre-negotiating mandate to work on the content of or preconditions for a future comprehensive treaty on nuclear weapons.

In concluding, Mr. President, I would like to express my delegation's view that we must all work to strengthen multilateralism, political dialogue and diplomatic negotiations at the highest level so as to disarm minds and arm hearts with emotional intelligence if we wish to achieve a world free from nuclear weapons.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of Ecuador for his kind words of support and for his statement.

Now, distinguished delegates, I see that there are still 11 delegations on the list of speakers and that, although the time is 12.55 p.m., one delegation has requested to speak in exercise of the right of reply. On the understanding that we will continue our plenary meeting in the afternoon, I now give the floor to the Ambassador of South Africa.

Ms. Mxakato-Diseko (South Africa): Mr. President, we are encouraged at the list of speakers. I do not recall in recent times such an animated discussion in the Conference on Disarmament. Forgive me for asking for the floor for the second time. We thank those delegations who engaged with the point that we raised in our statement about the need to animate and reinvigorate the Conference on Disarmament. I am responding to a departure from diplomacy by the Ambassador of the United Kingdom in directly attacking the Republic of South Africa, accusing us of hypocrisy.

Let me address that, Ambassador Rowland. Tell me which aspect of abandoning the nuclear option is hypocritical. Tell me who in 2015 walked into the United Nations General Assembly solemnly to break consensus on the outcomes of the 2015 Review Conference. You pick and choose which aspects of multilateralism you want to respond to, and then you dare to seek to bully us. We are no longer a colony of the United Kingdom. It might be that you did not understand my speech because I am an African, and I read it an accent that is not typical of the United Kingdom. If that is the case, I will reread it again. From beginning

to end. It is the attack on the Republic of South Africa that has nothing to do with the content of what we said. It was self-righteous with a misplaced arrogance and duplicity to count. This is what I said. It is not my understanding that we judge statements of each country. But I could come back to your statement and judge it, line by line. Going back to the statement that South Africa made, I would read it back from beginning to end, slowly, just in case my African accent confuses you:

Mr. President, let me take this opportunity to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency. Before I go further, let me convey my deepest condolences to Spain, Finland, the Russian Federation and other countries in the house and beyond who have witnessed the wanton destruction of life that is becoming the norm.

Presumably, that is devoid of substance, or, apparently to the United Kingdom delegation, that is “devoid of substance”. How insensitive.

Kindly accept my assurances of our cooperation in support of your efforts to guide us through this final phase of the 2017 session of the Conference on Disarmament. I would also like to extend a warm welcome to Ambassador Rob Gabriëls of the Netherlands and Ambassador Podhorský of Slovakia, and to congratulate the Deputy Secretary-General Ms. Kaspersen on her appointment.

So we are going to mark the statement made by South Africa, line by line.

In addition, we welcome the youth communicators for a world without nuclear weapons from Japan, who are here to bear witness to the workings of this august body, the Conference on Disarmament, whose founding ideal and promise — as expressed in its mandate — we fully share, South Africa, as a country.

Mr. President, South Africa would like to reconfirm its unwavering commitment to the ultimate goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. My country's credentials are well known in the area of non-proliferation, disarmament and arms control. We are the only country to have voluntarily dismantled its nuclear weapons programme, and woven into the DNA of our democratic State is the commitment to a world free of weapons of mass destruction on a par with respect for human rights, justice, democracy and sustainable development. Our democratization process was symbiotically linked to our denuclearization. In short, critical to the rebirth of South Africa led by former President Mandela, was relinquishing the nuclear option militarily in all its aspects. It is for this reason that, as my country was being born — reborn as a democratic State, leaving behind its colonial past — we joined the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and immediately exerted efforts to ensure its indefinite extension. Since then, we have spared no effort in ensuring that the NPT review conferences yield outcomes on the peaceful uses of nuclear weapons, nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. We were also part of the community of nations that finalized the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which is as yet to enter into force — unless I am wrong; it might have entered into force. We are part of numerous initiatives, such as the high-level fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT) expert preparatory group, which are all striving for nuclear disarmament. Most recently, we participated in the negotiations that culminated in the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons on 7 July.

For South Africa, all of these are a part of an integral chain of instruments that should lead us to a world free of nuclear weapons. The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is a logical part of this chain that forms the framework of a safer world. In our view we do not have the luxury to pick and choose which of these instruments will assure the world that we are all committed to a world free of nuclear weapons. Therefore, as a responsible global player whose commitment is incontestable, South Africa is not selective and choosy on which instruments to join as long as they fit into the larger scheme of things and contribute towards a world free of nuclear weapons.

I am hoping that, my African accent, you can follow it.

What is of grave concern to South Africa are premeditated actions to debilitate structures meant to further nuclear disarmament. The collapse of the NPT Review

Conference in 2015 created an urgency for the Conference on Disarmament to work and break the 21-year deadlock on the programme of work.

Mr. President, there was a reason that the founding fathers of the United Nations decided to establish a single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum at the first United Nations special session on disarmament to ensure that there is no repetition of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This is the vision that South Africa believes in and cherishes. My delegation would like to place on record that South Africa is committed to a functioning Conference on Disarmament — true to its mandate, a functioning Conference on Disarmament.

It is therefore regrettable that even though we are the body that is mandated to negotiate multilateral disarmament instruments, it has not discharged its basic mandate for 21 years. What do we tell our visitors, as to the reason we could not discharge this mandate? How do we account to the world for this protracted deadlock? We therefore urgently need to attend to the current state of the Conference on Disarmament. In the view of South Africa, the continued impasse in the Conference is not only unsustainable but it increasingly affects its relevance and therefore erodes international confidence in the Conference as a multilateral disarmament negotiating forum. We would do well to remind ourselves that, while the Conference maybe recognized as the multilateral institution responsible for the negotiation of international disarmament agreements, it is not the Conference's limited membership that bears the cost of the United Nations resources that are being expended while the deadlock in the Conference continues. On the contrary, it is the entire United Nations membership, namely, Conference members as well as those Members that have not been included in the Conference's membership, which through their assessed contributions to the United Nations budget have to foot the bill for what has now become the Conference's continued inactivity for 21 years.

All United Nations Member States therefore have the right to hold the Conference accountable for its failure to move forward on negotiations that have been identified by the international community as a whole, and to hold the Conference responsible for the resources that have been committed to sustain the functions of the Conference. It is our firm belief that these resources could have been used in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and other national programmes aimed at eradicating poverty and would have achieved a lot of good.

Mr. President, South Africa remains committed to multilateralism and will do what is necessary to strengthen multilateralism, especially in the field of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. In addition, we will pursue possible options for taking multilateral disarmament negotiations forward with the aim of achieving our goal of a world free from nuclear weapons. But if the Conference on Disarmament cannot agree on a programme of work for the past 21 years, who can blame us if we go outside?

This is the question that is being asked. It concerns us as South Africa that issues are being spun out of the Conference. Why can we not do the work inside here?

South Africa looks forward to the completion of an accurate and balanced report, failing which, we are not going to agree to a report — in case that was not clear to you.

Now, Mr. President, I do not want to go on further and further and further. We will give, we will send the statement to the British Government in London and we will deliver it through our mission in South Africa and hope it is read as I understood it. We may be limited in English, but if that is the case, we cannot be blamed. We blame our former colonial masters, they did not do a good job in teaching us English if they do not understand it. But we will see.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Ambassador of South Africa for her statement.

There are only three minutes remaining in our extension to 1.10 p.m. with interpretation and verbatim records. I will give the floor to the delegation of the Democratic

People's Republic of Korea in exercise of the right of reply, but the delegation has the option of continuing until 1.10 p.m. or of taking the floor this afternoon, as it sees fit.

Mr. Ju Yong-chol (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Mr. President, I join others in congratulating you on your assumption as President, and I sincerely express my condolences and sympathy to the victims of the latest terrorist attacks which took place in Europe.

I have taken the floor in order to exercise the right of reply to the lengthy statements made by some countries, including the United States, against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea just now.

Mr. President, there are several nuclear-weapon States in the world, but the United States is the only country that poses a constant nuclear threat to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The measures taken by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to strengthen its nuclear deterrence and develop intercontinental rockets are justifiable and a legitimate option for self-defence in the face of such an apparent and real threat. It is to protect the country's sovereignty and right to existence from the extremely hostile policy and nuclear threat posed by the United States that has lasted over half a century. In spite of this, countries which have a record of numerous nuclear tests and intercontinental ballistic missile launches have fabricated illegal and unlawful sanction resolutions against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea self-defensive right as a global threat. This is an extreme manifestation of double standards. The United Nations resolution is, to all intents and purposes, an outcome of sinister attempts of the United States to isolate and stifle the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and constitutes a flagrant infringement upon its sovereignty and an open challenge to it.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea therefore condemns in the strongest terms and categorically rejects the recent United Nations Security Council resolution and my delegation also strongly rejects the politically motivated allegations made by the United States and other countries, including Western countries. As my Government made clear in its statement on 7 August, as long as the hostile United States policy and nuclear threat remains unchallenged, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will never place its self-defensive nuclear deterrence on the negotiating table or step back one inch from the path it has taken to bolster the national nuclear force.

Mr. President, the root cause of the nuclear issue and the vicious cycle of tension on the Korean Peninsula are attributable to the United States hostile policy and its nuclear threats against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. In order to ease tension and prevent potential armed conflict on the Korean Peninsula, the United States should first make the right choice and prove it in action, because it is the United States that has caused all the trouble and provoked the Democratic People's Republic of Korea by deploying a huge strategic military hardware around the Korean Peninsula. As we all know, yesterday the United States and South Korea began another joint military exercise code-named Ulchi Freedom Guardian. It mobilizes huge military and paramilitary forces and lethal equipment of United States forces both on the mainland and in the Pacific region with the participation of seven other satellite States. The exercise is conducted under Operations Plan 5015, an aggressive war scenario to carry out a pre-emptive strike against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea that concentrates on a "beheading" operation and secret operations to remove the leadership. The ongoing military adventure would certainly add fuel to the fire, driving the current tense situation to further deterioration. And no one can guarantee that such huge forces will not go into actual war at the time when brass heads, that is, the United States military chiefs, flee to South Korea to discuss war plans. However, those countries who described the self-defensive measures of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea as the greatest threat to the world did not say a word about the provocative behaviour of the United States that drives the situation to such an extreme level.

The United States is advised to think with reason and make a proper judgment on which side is more favourable to them. Under the current situation, the best option for the United States is to take a bold decision to immediately abandon its hostile policy and nuclear threat towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Those countries who are blindly following the hostile policy of the United States against the Democratic

People's Republic of Korea should drop their bad habit of criticizing the self-defensive right of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and rather speak out and demand that the United States halt its reckless provocative action against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which will lead the tension on the Korean Peninsula to the brink of explosion. If South Korea truly desires peace and security on the Korean Peninsula, it should refrain from siding with the reckless military provocations of the United States, which will only aggravate tensions and force a military confrontation.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the presidency.

I also appreciate the flexibility and generosity that the interpreters have shown in granting us additional time.

With this statement and on the understanding that the delegations that have requested to exercise their right of reply will be able to do so this afternoon at 3 p.m. in our resumed plenary meeting, this concludes our business for this morning. We will continue to work through the list of speakers; and the plenary, which will resume at 3 p.m., will be followed by another meeting of the working group on the way ahead.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.