

Conference on Disarmament

English

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

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 22 August 2017, at 3 p.m.

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

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The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I call to order the 1425th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

Excellencies, esteemed colleagues, Ms. Kaspersen, ladies and gentlemen, once again welcome to the Council Chamber. As announced this morning, we will resume our formal plenary discussion using the same list of speakers; afterwards, there will be a meeting of the working group on the way ahead, chaired by Ambassador Lynn.

At this time, there are 14 delegations on the list, including two that requested this morning to exercise the right of reply on the understanding that they would have an opportunity to do so at the end of the plenary once the list of speakers had been exhausted. The list currently includes Brazil, Chile, the Russian Federation, China, Finland, Poland, Turkey, Pakistan, Israel, Norway, Bulgaria and Japan, followed by, as I mentioned, the United Kingdom and the United States in exercise of the right of reply. The Netherlands has also been added to the list.

Without further delay, I now give the floor to the delegation of Brazil.

Mr. Clabuchar Martingo (Brazil): Mr. President, let me first congratulate you on assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and assure you of the full cooperation of Brazil in your endeavours.

Let me also extend my country's condolences to your country, Spain, and also to Finland in the wake of the heinous terrorist attacks which occurred this past week.

Mr. President, the Conference on Disarmament is the single multilateral forum exclusively dedicated to disarmament negotiations — an essential cog in the disarmament machinery conceived by the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. However, as a country committed to the success of the Conference and convinced of its importance in overcoming current challenges to global peace and prosperity, Brazil can only echo the general feeling of frustration at the fact that the Conference will likely not fulfil its negotiation mandate for yet another year. In this respect, we commend the work of the Chair and facilitators of the working group on the way ahead, who accepted the “mission impossible” — as Ambassador Lynn has mused — of trying to facilitate agreement on a programme of work. We hope their efforts will bear fruit already next year and urge all delegations to work towards this end.

The deadlock in the Conference on Disarmament signals institutional fatigue, which threatens the organization at a moment when it is most needed. The current crisis in the Korean Peninsula is a stark reminder of the costs of failing to rein in the nuclear arms race. In this regard, Brazil has called on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to fully comply with the applicable resolutions of the United Nations Security Council and to actively engage in the resumption of negotiations. We reiterate our support for the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and discourage any action that would further escalate tensions in North-Eastern Asia.

In our view, some kind of re-evaluation of the tools at the disposal of the Conference is in order. There is a need to change the culture wherein the rule of consensus means an almost automatic right of veto. In stating this, we are not singling out any delegation but pointing to what seems to us an erroneous, albeit pervasive, understanding that the need for consensus is about drawing lines rather than coming together.

In this sense, Brazil welcomes the results of the open-ended working group on the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, which concluded its work last June. The final report called for the fourth special session to review the functioning of the United Nations disarmament machinery with a view to strengthening it, maintaining its relevance and increasing its effectiveness. This is an opportunity to re-evaluate the structuring of the discussions in the Conference on Disarmament and its methods of work. We urge all States to contribute to the early convening of the special session.

Brazil believes that nuclear disarmament must remain the Conference's top priority. The recent conclusion of a treaty on the prohibition of nuclear weapons has set a new paradigm on nuclear weapons and given us a legal and political horizon to strive towards.

Recognizing the relevance of this initiative, which was adopted by roughly twice the number of States that form the membership of the Conference on Disarmament, is of the utmost importance for the Conference to reconnect with contemporary political realities.

Brazil supports the beginning of negotiations on a treaty on fissile materials, which we consider an effective measure for the implementation of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and the universalization of the Mine Ban Treaty. Any such treaty must deal in one way or another with the existing stockpiles. A treaty which neglects this aspect will have no bearing on nuclear disarmament and would not fulfil the Conference's mandate. In this regard, Brazil is actively participating in the high-level expert preparatory group established by General Assembly resolution 71/259 and hopes it will bring about new elements to facilitate an agreement on the beginning of negotiations.

Brazil also supports the negotiation of a treaty to prevent an arms race in outer space. The Chinese-Russian treaty draft could be a starting point for such negotiations, the complexity of which would certainly require extensive work by this Conference. However, we do not believe that this or any other agenda item should be used as a precondition for agreement on other matters.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the delegation of Brazil for its kind words addressed to the presidency and for its statement. I now give the floor to the delegation of Chile.

Mr. Lagos (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation congratulates you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and wishes you every success in this complex responsibility. Your inspiring remarks this morning confirm that you are prepared and determined to achieve your presidency's lofty goals.

We join in the expressions of condolence extended to your country, Spain, and to Finland for the recent terrorist attacks, which we strongly condemn.

Mr. President, we would like to take this opportunity to reiterate our concern at the grave situation in the Korean Peninsula resulting from the persistently defiant stance of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea as manifested in its nuclear and ballistic programmes, which threaten not only the geographical region but also the entire international community. Therefore, we again call on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to abandon that stance and we urge all parties concerned to show moderation in their stances and language in order to reach a peaceful solution to the crisis.

My delegation has listened with great interest to the other delegations' comments regarding the conference to negotiate the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Chile was an active participant in that historic process and welcomes the adoption of the Treaty on 7 July. Not wishing to tax colleagues' patience here in the Conference — as we have already heard quite a deal said on this topic — and considering that the Ambassador of Austria has given a comprehensive presentation on the issue, which we endorse, I would like simply to mention three reasons why we feel this instrument is an event of huge historical importance.

First, this is the first disarmament treaty to be negotiated in this domain in over two decades. Second, the Treaty fills a legal gap: weapons of mass destruction are now not only illegitimate, they are also illegal. Moreover, in a broader sense, this successful negotiation should be seen as a crystallization of democratic multilateralism, since all countries were able to be heard on a topic that had for too long been dominated by a handful of States but whose importance, significance and impact have repercussions for all humankind.

The decision by some States not to take part in the negotiations in no way undermines the legitimacy of the Treaty. While we understand that not all countries are in a position to accede to this instrument, allow me to recall that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), whose members consider it as the keystone of the disarmament and non-proliferation system, took many years to reach its current, near-universal status. In this connection, we fully share the sentiments of the Ambassador of South Africa that the Treaty is an instrument that strengthens, rather than weakens, the NPT. We certainly hope that the few countries that have criticized the Treaty here will sign it in

the future. We commit to working assiduously with civil society to reach this goal, which may appear distant now but which we believe to be of great importance. It is not an impossible goal in our view. Indeed, a few years ago it was said that we would never manage to adopt a treaty banning nuclear weapons and yet we did. This shows that we cannot waver in our ideals, in our efforts or in our immutable objective of achieving a world free of nuclear weapons.

I would also like to briefly touch upon the work of Ambassador Lynn of Myanmar on the way ahead. I had the privilege, as co-facilitator, of leading the discussions on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. I am pleased to note that, irrespective of some significant remaining differences in terms of how to approach the topic, the discussions demonstrated that a large number of delegations share the priority objective of making meaningful progress on the issue. We hope that these efforts will help us to reach this goal and that delegations will take a constructive approach so that we can adopt the recommendations of the Chair of the working group.

Lastly, my delegation joins others in welcoming the Ambassadors of Slovakia and the Netherlands, as well as the new Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference, Ms. Kaspersen. We wish them all the best and may they not falter in their commitment to the work and discussions of the Conference.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the delegation of Chile for its kind words of support and its statement. I now give the floor to the Russian Federation.

Ms. Kuznetsova (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, first and foremost, please allow me to extend, on behalf of the delegation of the Russian Federation, our deepest and sincerest condolences for the reprehensible terrorist attacks that took place last week in the Catalan cities of Barcelona and Cambrils. We share the grief of the Spanish people.

(*spoke in Russian*)

I wish also to offer our sincere condolences to the delegation of Finland in the wake of the terrorist attack in Turku, which resulted in the loss of human lives.

Mr. President, we wish to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and we assure you of the full support of our delegation.

As there have been no plenary meetings of the Conference for the past four weeks, which my delegation finds regrettable, a number of issues have accumulated on which we feel compelled to express our position. My statement will therefore be a bit long.

We share the noble goal of achieving a nuclear-weapon-free world and are fully committed to meeting our obligations in the area of disarmament in accordance with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). For three decades now, we have consistently carried out large-scale reductions in the Russian nuclear arsenal.

The time span of 30 years I have mentioned attests to the fact that there can be no shortcuts to “nuclear zero”. However, this is how we are being asked to proceed by the sponsors and ardent supporters of a ban on nuclear weapons, and at any cost.

We did not participate in the conference to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons. We do not consider ourselves bound by the obligations under the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and do not intend to sign it. There are compelling reasons for our taking such a decision, which we have stated on a number of occasions at the First Committee of the General Assembly itself, where the relevant resolution was adopted, and in other prominent international forums. Given that appeals have continued to be made to us on an all-too-regular basis, we will try once more to clarify our position.

We do not see any legal gaps when it comes to nuclear disarmament. Everything has been laid down in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, and its provisions must be consistently and strictly applied. We believe that the negotiation of the ban treaty was at variance with the agreements reached earlier under the NPT, including the 2010 action plan.

We were discouraged from participating also because, in the course of the negotiations, it was proposed that decisions should be taken by a vote, whereas agreement on such serious matters may only be reached by consensus.

Furthermore, the conceptual framework for the negotiating process was unacceptable to us, as it essentially disregarded the strategic context and approached the elimination of nuclear weapons in isolation from objective realities. A ban would be appropriate at a more advanced stage of the nuclear disarmament process with a view to making it irreversible. In the current circumstances, such a step is clearly premature. As a result, the Treaty as adopted contains several provisions that have the potential to do irreparable harm to the integrity and viability of the nuclear non-proliferation regime.

We believe that attempts to resolve the complex issues involved in advancing towards a nuclear-weapon-free world by means of a single action in the form of an immediate ban are entirely misguided and fraught with new controversies. The division within the international community over this issue is unlikely to have a positive impact on the nuclear disarmament process.

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons adopted on 7 July served only to strengthen our belief that we made the right decision in not attending the New York conference. Incidentally, unlike in Geneva, an earnest debate is under way in Vienna over the place and role of the International Atomic Energy Agency in the context of the ban, and this is bound to fuel controversy in the international community. In other words, the Treaty has not yet entered into force, and is not even open for signature, and negative consequences are already being felt.

For our part, we stand ready to engage in serious dialogue on nuclear disarmament aimed at strengthening international peace and security.

Mr. President, I would like to turn now to the situation on the Korean Peninsula and share some points raised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation in its statement of 17 August.

On 5 August, the United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2371 (2017), which reflected the international community's concern over the continued testing of ballistic missiles by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Russia will continue to fulfil all its international obligations, including the provisions of this new resolution.

Indeed, all Member States of the United Nations are required to implement the resolution fully. Paragraph 28 of the resolution emphasizes the commitment of the Security Council to a peaceful, diplomatic and political solution to the situation and the importance of working to reduce tensions in the Korean Peninsula. There is a need for all the parties concerned to work together and engage in a comprehensive dialogue if the problems of the subregion are to be resolved in an integrated manner.

We call on all countries to show restraint and make genuine efforts to prevent the situation from deteriorating to a "point of no return". In this connection, we are also working within the framework of the Six-Party Talks. Together with our Chinese partners, we maintain that there is no alternative to a peaceful settlement of the set of issues facing the Korean Peninsula. We urge all responsible members of the international community to support the ideas put forward in the Russian-Chinese road map for a solution to the Korean Peninsula issues, the main provisions of which are contained in the 4 July joint statement of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Russia and China.

Allow me, Mr. President, on behalf of the Russian and Chinese delegations to read out the joint statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation on the Korean Peninsula Issues:

The People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation both directly adjoin the Korean Peninsula and developments in the situation in that region affect the national interests of both countries. China and the Russian Federation will closely coordinate to spare no efforts to push forward a package solution to the Korean Peninsula issues,

including the nuclear issue, with the aim of achieving lasting peace and stability in North-East Asia. In a spirit of strategic coordination, the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the two countries (hereinafter referred to as “the Parties”) make the following statement regarding the Korean Peninsula issues:

The Parties express grave concern on the ballistic missile launch announced by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea on 4 July 2017 and consider it a serious violation of the relevant resolutions of the Security Council. They find the missile launch unacceptable and strongly urge the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea to comply strictly with the requirements of the Council’s resolutions.

The Parties also express their grave concern about the developments in the Korean Peninsula and the surrounding region. The escalation of political and military tension in the region may trigger an armed conflict and demands a collective response from the international community for a peaceful settlement through dialogue and consultations. The Parties oppose any rhetoric or action likely to cause tension and aggravate antagonism and call on all the countries concerned to exercise restraint, to refrain from provocative actions and bellicose rhetoric, to demonstrate readiness to engage in dialogue without preconditions, and together to make active efforts aimed at de-escalating tension.

The Parties have put forward a joint initiative, based on the “suspension for suspension” initiative, which is the suspension of nuclear and missile activities by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea and the suspension of massive military exercises by the United States of America and the Republic of Korea, and the “dual-track” approach, which aims to promote parallel progress in denuclearization efforts and the establishment of a peace mechanism on the Peninsula proposed by China, together with the step-by-step conception by Russia to resolve the Korean Peninsula issue.

The Parties recommend that the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea take a voluntary political decision to declare a moratorium on nuclear explosive tests and ballistic missile launch tests and that the United States of America and the Republic of Korea likewise suspend their large-scale joint military exercises. In parallel with this, the opposing parties should embark on negotiations and determine the overall principles underlying their mutual relations, including the non-use of force, non-aggression, peaceful coexistence and a willingness to pursue the goal of denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula with a view to finding a package solution to all the issues, including the nuclear issue. In the negotiating process, the parties should work in a mutually acceptable approach to promote the establishment of a peace and security mechanism for the Korean Peninsula and North-East Asia, ultimately leading to the normalization of relations among the countries concerned.

The Parties appeal to the international community to support the above-mentioned initiative to seek a realistic approach to solving the Korean Peninsula issues.

The Parties staunchly uphold the international non-proliferation regime and are firmly committed to the goal of the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. The relevant resolutions of the United Nations Security Council should be fully and comprehensively implemented. The Parties will work together with other concerned countries to continue their efforts, through dialogue and consultation, to find a balanced approach to address the concerns of all parties.

The Parties reiterate the need to respect the legitimate concerns of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. Other countries should make due efforts to relaunch negotiations and together to foster an atmosphere of peace and mutual trust.

The Parties call on all concerned parties to abide by the commitments set forth in the Joint Statement made on 19 September 2005 and to restart the dialogue process at the earliest possible juncture with the aim of reaching a comprehensive settlement of the Korean Peninsula issue. Military means should not be an option for resolving the Korean Peninsula issue.

The Parties support the North and the South of the Korean Peninsula to carry out dialogue and consultation, display goodwill reciprocally, improve their relations and promote reconciliation and cooperation in order to play their due role in easing tension on the Korean Peninsula and finding an appropriate solution to the Korean Peninsula issues.

The Parties reaffirm the great importance that they attach to maintaining the international and regional balance and stability and stress that the alliances between the relevant countries should not be prejudicial to the interests of third parties. They oppose the enhancement of military deployment and presence in North-East Asia by forces outside the region on the pretext of countering the nuclear and missile programme of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

The Parties reiterate that the deployment of the Terminal High Altitude Area Defence (THAAD) systems in North-East Asia seriously undermines strategic security interests of the countries of the region, including China and the Russian Federation, and will not contribute to the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula or to regional peace and stability.

China and the Russian Federation oppose the deployment of the THAAD systems and urge the countries concerned to stop and cancel their deployment forthwith.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the delegation of Russia for the kind words addressed to my country and the presidency and for its statement. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of China.

Mr. Fu Cong (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Mr. President, the Chinese delegation wishes to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. We will spare no effort in supporting you in your work.

The Chinese delegation condemns in the strongest terms the recent terrorist attacks that took place in Barcelona and Cambrils, Spain; Turku, Finland; and Damascus, Syria. We extend our condolences to the innocent victims of those attacks. The Government of China stands ready to strengthen cooperation with all States to combat terrorism in all its forms.

I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome the newly arrived Ambassadors of the Netherlands and Slovakia and to offer our warm greetings to the new Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference, Ms. Kaspersen.

Mr. President, our Russian colleague has just read out the joint statement by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation and China regarding the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the nuclear question. I would like to draw special attention to the following points in this connection.

On 6 August the United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2371 (2017) on the recent tests of ballistic missiles by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. This resolution calls for the maintenance of stability on the Peninsula and in the region; and it encourages the denuclearization process there and supports the objectives of the international nuclear non-proliferation system. It is in keeping with the spirit of the relevant Security Council resolutions that preceded it, and it reflects the unanimous position of the membership of the Security Council.

At the same time, the resolution states that sanctions must avoid negatively influencing activities not prohibited by Security Council resolutions, such as economic activities and cooperation, food aid and humanitarian assistance. It reiterates the importance of maintaining peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula and in North-East Asia, calls for

a peaceful, diplomatic and political solution to the situation, supports the resumption of the Six-Party Talks and stresses that it is important for all the parties involved to take measures to reduce tensions on the Korean Peninsula. That is essentially the content of the Security Council resolution.

All the obligations set forth in Security Council resolutions must be effectively, comprehensively and strictly fulfilled by all parties. China has always worked tirelessly to push for denuclearization, peace and stability on the Peninsula. It has long held that problems on the Peninsula must be resolved through dialogue and consultation.

To that end, the Russian Federation and China have jointly proposed a “suspension for suspension” agreement whereby the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea would suspend its nuclear and ballistic missile activities and the United States of America and the Republic of Korea would suspend large-scale joint military exercises, with the aim of denuclearizing the Peninsula and setting up a mechanism for peace there by means of a two-track, parallel approach. The Chinese-Russian joint proposal is realistic and viable and is intended as a dual-track solution for providing remedies concurrently and comprehensively. It is our hope that it will elicit a positive response and receive support from the parties involved so as to open up and make use of channels to resolve the problems on the Korean Peninsula, which would be in the spirit of Security Council resolution 2371 (2017). The fundamental aim of Security Council resolution 2371 (2017) is to establish the conditions for a resolution through diplomatic channels of the problems on the Peninsula. At this stage, the situation there is complex and sensitive. China calls on the respective parties to show restraint and to demonstrate the utmost caution in words and deeds, to do everything possible to relieve tensions and build confidence between the parties, and not to take the same old road of continually exacerbating tensions and taking turns in shows of strength.

Regarding a treaty to eliminate and ban nuclear weapons, from the very first day that it possessed nuclear weapons, China has argued for and actively advocated a comprehensive prohibition and the complete destruction of nuclear weapons. At the same time, though, China believes that it is impossible to achieve the objective of nuclear disarmament in a single, isolated action. It is necessary to maintain global strategic stability and respect the principle of undiminished security for all States. The effort must be orderly and gradual, and the procedures in question must support the principle of consultation and consensus. They must be carried out through the existing machinery for international disarmament and non-proliferation.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Ambassador of China for his kind words of support and solidarity and for his statement. I now give the floor to the delegation of Finland.

Ms. Girsén (Finland): First of all, let me join in congratulating you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the Conference on Disarmament presidency. I wish you every success in this important endeavour and you can trust that you will have the full support of the Finnish delegation.

We consider the Conference on Disarmament a unique forum for disarmament negotiations. Besides its special responsibility in disarmament, it also bears a responsibility more broadly in world peace and security.

I wish to thank you all for your thoughtful words regarding the terror attack that took place in Turku last Friday. Your words are truly appreciated. Let me also extend our condolences to our Spanish colleagues. We stay united in fighting terrorism by upholding the values of a democratic and equal society for all.

Concerning the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Finland aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of the European Union. Please allow me to make some additional remarks in a national capacity.

The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea has a history of provocative missile launches in contravention of multiple Security Council resolutions agreed upon unanimously. This needs to stop. The weapons and missile programmes of the Democratic

People's Republic of Korea pose a steadily increasing threat to its own region as well as other continents, including Europe.

De-escalation is needed and it must start from Pyongyang. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea must take the messages coming from the Conference on Disarmament at large seriously. We call on North Korea to urgently rethink its strategy in order to prevent further devastating effects on the country.

These comments on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea would have been more topical a while ago, and Finland regrets that the South African presidency did not convene plenary meetings.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the delegation of Finland for its words of solidarity and support, which my delegation echoes back to Finland in relation to the attacks there, and for its statement. I now give the floor to the delegation of Turkey.

Mr. Ağacıkoglu (Turkey): Mr. President, at the outset allow me to congratulate you on the assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and assure you of our delegation's full support. We wish you every success in your endeavours to advance the work of the Conference.

Mr. President, had we not missed the opportunity to hold plenaries during the previous period, we would not encounter such a heavy programme today. It was an unfortunate period and we hope this will not be repeated again. Given this situation, I will be as brief as possible in my statement.

We condemn in the strongest terms the terrorist attacks perpetrated in Spain and Finland. We extend our deepest condolences and wish fortitude to the families of those who lost their lives. These heinous attacks display once again the brutal face of terrorism and they target all humanity.

The working group on the way ahead concluded its meeting on agenda items last week. We wish to take this opportunity to thank Ambassador Lynn of Myanmar for his tireless efforts to overcome the impasse in the Conference on Disarmament and commend his continuous work as the Chair of the working group. These meetings once again demonstrated the necessity and urgency of resuming substantive work at the Conference on Disarmament.

Turkey also condemns the ballistic missile launches conducted by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on 4 and 28 July. Having conducted two ballistic missile tests within one month, North Korea continues to flagrantly violate United Nations Security Council resolutions and disregard its international obligations.

We call upon the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to abide by Security Council resolutions and to refrain from any action that would lead to further escalation in the region.

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

Mr. Amil (Pakistan): Mr. President, I welcome our new colleagues from the Netherlands and Slovakia. I also welcome Ms. Kaspersen, the Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament. I look forward to working with all of them very closely.

We appreciate the substantive activities undertaken this year by the working group on the way ahead under the leadership of Ambassador Lynn of Myanmar, ably supported by the co-facilitators, the Ambassadors of Germany and Belarus and our colleague from Chile. The discussions on all these agenda items of the Conference on Disarmament were highly useful for deepening our collective understanding and for exploring common ground for further progress. We look forward to the smooth and early adoption of the working group's report.

Mr. President, we welcome the convening of a plenary meeting after an interval of weeks. My delegation is pleased to note that the regular meetings of the Conference on Disarmament and the customary consultations with individual members as well as the regional groups have been resumed. This allows many national delegations and regional

groups that have been waiting to address important issues to do so. We hope that the Conference's established practice of holding at least one formal plenary meeting every week, as well as the weekly meetings of the regional groups, will not be discontinued by any President arbitrarily and, arguably, not in consonance with the rules of procedure and the established practice. While we completely share the common goal of a world free of nuclear weapons, we were surprised by a unilateral decision to set aside the responsibilities of the Conference President.

Despite all our frustrations and disappointment with the slow pace of progress in the Conference on Disarmament and our differences of opinion, we simply cannot give up on this forum. The Conference is a vital and indispensable part of the United Nations disarmament machinery. As the world's single multilateral disarmament negotiating body, operating by consensus with the participation of all the relevant stakeholders, the Conference on Disarmament helps shape the international security architecture in a manner that results in equal and undiminished security for all States. Let us be clear: its unravelling is no solution. Its unravelling is no achievement, regardless of lofty idealism.

Given the course of the discussion this morning, I think it is necessary for Pakistan to reiterate its position, for which I will read from our statement of 7 August regarding the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons:

Pakistan is committed to the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world through the conclusion of a universal, verifiable and non-discriminatory comprehensive convention on nuclear weapons. The Geneva-based Conference on Disarmament, the world's single multilateral disarmament negotiating body, remains the most ideal forum for concluding such a convention.

The United Nations General Assembly, at its first special session devoted to nuclear disarmament in 1978, had agreed by consensus that in the adoption of disarmament measures, the right of each State to security should be kept in mind and, at each stage of the disarmament process, the objective would be undiminished security for all States at the lowest possible level of armaments and military forces.

Pakistan believes that this cardinal objective can only be achieved as a cooperative and universally agreed undertaking through a consensus-based process involving all the relevant stakeholders, which results in equal and undiminished, if not increased, security for all States. It is indispensable for any initiative on nuclear disarmament to take into account the vital security considerations of each and every State.

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, adopted by a vote on 7 July 2017 in New York, did not fulfil these essential conditions, both in terms of process and substance. Treaties that do not fully take on board the interests of all stakeholders fail to achieve their objectives. Pakistan, therefore, like all other nuclear-arms States, did not take part in its negotiation and cannot become a party to this treaty. Pakistan does not consider itself bound by any of the obligations enshrined in this treaty. Pakistan stresses that this treaty neither forms a part of nor contributes to the development of customary international law in any manner.

Pakistan reaffirms its commitment to nuclear disarmament in a way that promotes peace, security and stability at the regional and global levels.

Mr. President, turning to another issue that today's proceedings have been seized of, and which has been addressed by many other delegations today, in reaction to the ballistic missile test conducted by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on 28 July 2017, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Pakistan issued a statement expressing our concern over this action. In order not to waste time, the full text of our unambiguous statement is available on our Foreign Ministry's website. It underscored the importance of maintaining peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula and called on all relevant parties to pursue the path of dialogue and diplomacy to reduce tensions and work towards achieving a comprehensive solution.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Ambassador of Pakistan for his statement. I now give the floor to the delegation of Poland.

Mr. Broilo (Poland): Mr. President, let me congratulate you upon your assumption of your new role as the President of the Conference on Disarmament. Please be assured of our full cooperation.

Please accept also our deepest condolences on the terrible terrorist attacks in Spain. I address my words of deep sympathy also to our Finnish colleagues after the tragic event in Turku.

I wish to thank you, Mr. Ambassador, for distributing a tentative schedule of your presidency as well as for the early distribution of the first draft of the Conference's report. Since it is a very fresh document, we will need more time to analyse it and will provide you with any comments as per your request by the end of this week.

It is a matter to regret that, during the previous four weeks, no plenary meetings of the Conference were convened. Since we all have to admit that the situation in the Conference is not good and that it is difficult, it is all the more necessary to continue our efforts in order to break the stalemate.

We see great value in the working group on the way ahead and we are very satisfied with its conclusions. This is a great common achievement, with a leading role by Ambassador Lynn and valuable support from the Ambassadors of Germany, Chile and Belarus. We are convinced that the final result of the working group should be properly registered as an integral report adopted by the Conference on Disarmament.

Mr. President, let me add that Poland aligns itself with the statement by the European Union on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which covers all our serious concerns with regard to this situation.

I wish to thank the Ambassador of the Netherlands for his kind words addressed to Poland as the Chair of the upcoming second session of the Preparatory Committee for the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference. I would like to assure you and all delegations that we will spare no efforts in order to maintain the high standard in continuing this process and successfully moving it forward.

Let me also welcome to the Conference on Disarmament the new Ambassador of Slovakia.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Ambassador of Poland for his kind words of support and his statement. I now give the floor to the delegation of Israel.

Ms. Yaron (Israel): Mr. President, as this is the first time our delegation is taking the floor during your presidency, please allow me to convey our appreciation for convening this plenary, bringing the Conference on Disarmament back to its customary manner of work, and assure you of our full support in the conduct of your duties.

We would like to express our sadness at the loss of lives and our sincere condolences to the families of the victims of the horrendous terror attacks in Spain and Finland.

Israel holds firm to the view that the Conference on Disarmament remains a singular forum which includes all member States which must participate in non-proliferation, disarmament and arms control negotiations in order to make the outcome meaningful and firmly linked to reality. We, therefore, see great importance in the orderly conduct of the Conference's work, as portrayed in its rules of procedure, and we remain steadfast in our belief that plenary meetings must continue to play an important platform for member States to exchange views and examine the way ahead. In this respect, it is regrettable that the previous Conference President refrained from convening plenaries, despite requests made by several delegations, including our own.

Israel has taken part in the informal discussions of the working group on the way ahead over the past weeks and would like to express thanks for the tireless work done by Ambassador Lynn as well as the Friends of the Chair in leading our work. We are of the view that the discussions held were beneficial in enhancing the Conference's understanding of some of the challenges facing all of us in the arms control domain. We have carefully noted the variety of positions voiced by delegations during the last informal, held on

Thursday, 17 August, regarding the different options for recommendations. It appears to us that some work is still required in order to reach consensus. Israel is happy to continue our discussions until such consensus is reached on elaborating a programme of work or continue in the format of the working group on the way ahead.

With regard to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons adopted recently, we would like to state the following. Israel did not participate in the negotiations which were concluded on 7 July 2017 in New York on the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and it voted against the First Committee and United Nations General Assembly resolutions pertaining to this process. The deep reservations of Israel regarding this initiative were based on substantive as well as procedural considerations. On the substantive side, Israel is concerned, inter alia, by arms control/disarmament processes which fail to give due regard to the security and stability context when drafting disarmament measures. Such endeavours may result in arrangements and agreements which hinder rather than reinforce disarmament processes as well as global and regional security. On the procedural aspect, Israel firmly believes that such negotiations should be undertaken in the appropriate forums, under the appropriate rules of procedure, which would not undermine national security considerations.

It should be emphasized that the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons does not create, contribute to the development of or indicate the existence of customary international law related to the subject of or the content of the Treaty. Moreover, the Treaty does not reflect legal norms that apply to States that are not party to the Treaty and it does not alter in any way existing rights or obligations upon States that have not joined this treaty.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the delegation of Israel for its words of solidarity and its statement. I now give the floor to the delegation of Norway.

Ms. Cervenka (Norway): Mr. President, first, my delegation would like to congratulate you on assuming the role of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament.

In the absence of a substantive programme of work, meetings in plenary provide us with an opportunity to exchange views and deliberate on matters related to the Conference agenda. We appreciate the reports on the substantive discussions which have taken place within the working group on the way ahead within the Conference. These exchanges demonstrate that there are a number of areas of convergence but also differences. We regret that the informal consultations have so far not been able to bridge some of these critical differences. Yet, we must pursue efforts to find common ground. That is an important function of the Conference. If there had been no division, the task would have been far more simple, of course, and we probably would have landed important arms control instruments a long time ago.

Finally, Mr. President, let me reiterate our deep concern about the nuclear weapons and missile programmes of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We have condemned the violations of international law by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on a number of occasions. We support efforts to find a peaceful, diplomatic and political solution to this situation. While all parties must contribute to this end, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea must demonstrate genuine commitment in seeking a political solution to the crisis.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the delegation of Norway for its statement. I now give the floor to the delegation of Bulgaria.

Ms. Davidova (Bulgaria): Mr. President, let me first congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and assure you of our full support. We also welcome Ms. Kaspersen as the new Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference as well as the new Permanent Representatives of Slovakia and the Netherlands.

I join others in conveying our deepest condolences to the Spanish and Finnish delegations for the victims of the deadly terrorist attacks that took place last week. I would like to express our sincere solidarity and support. I extend also our condolences and sympathy to all other States whose nationals were among the victims of those attacks.

Mr. President, I would like to say some words about the working group on the way ahead. We express our appreciation for the serious efforts invested by Ambassador Lynn in the group's work and for his genuine will to steer that work towards identifying common ground for a programme of work with a negotiating mandate for the Conference. We also value the efforts of, and thank very much, the Friends of the Chair, who facilitated the discussions on the different topics from the Conference agenda: Ambassador Biontino of Germany, Mr. Lagos of Chile and Ambassador Ambrazevich of Belarus. The discussions further deepened the debate on core issues and are undoubtedly contributions to a better understanding of the different positions, points of view and possible grounds for convergence. We would like to see the working group's report pave the way for agreeing on a programme of work next year for the Conference on Disarmament.

Bulgaria has always sought to be constructive and we are ready to support any proposal aimed at ending the deadlock in the Conference and that is able to command consensus.

Finally, I would like to say a few words on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Bulgaria fully aligns itself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union and, in a national capacity, I would like to make the following remarks. These remarks are based on the statement issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 31 July this year, which we were not able to present earlier due to the lack of plenary meetings.

Bulgaria strongly condemns the recent ballistic missile launches by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Such actions, which are in direct violation of multiple United Nations Security Council resolutions, only lead to the escalation of tensions on the Korean Peninsula. We continue to call upon the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to abandon once and for all its nuclear and ballistic programme in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner, to fully comply with its international obligations and to commit to a meaningful and constructive dialogue with the international community in order to find a peaceful solution to the situation.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the delegation of Bulgaria for its words of solidarity and support and for its statement. I now give the floor to the delegation of Japan.

Mr. Takamizawa (Japan): Mr. President, at the outset my delegation congratulates you on your assumption of the last presidency of the 2017 session of the Conference on Disarmament. Also, I would like to welcome the lively resumption of the Conference plenaries after a two-month absence. If meetings had been conducted as planned, many substantive statements and discussions could have been made in a timely manner. I respect and look forward to your hard work, rich schedule and sincere leadership for the coming months. I assure you of my delegation's utmost support and continuous cooperation during your tenure the rest of this year and for 2018.

Also, I would like to extend our deepest condolences and solidarity to those who were affected by the horrific terrorist attacks last week. In the time since I arrived here, I have seen so many terrorist attacks. We have to be united to fight against these horrific acts.

Mr. President, I echo the positions and statements made by many countries with regard to the provocative actions of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. I think that more than 30 or 40 countries have expressed concerns, but I would like to point out one additional and very important point.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea, in spite of the repeated strong calls from the international community and in clear violation of a series of United Nations Security Council resolutions, has conducted, in our count, 14 ballistic missile launches this year alone, including 2 launches during the absence of Conference plenaries. The ballistic missile that was launched on 28 July landed near Hokkaido within the exclusive economic zone of Japan, threatening and endangering our fishing activities as well as the safety of navigation.

Japan welcomes the new Security Council resolution 2371 (2017), which was adopted unanimously on 5 August. This resolution contains robust and strong sanction measures against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We condemn the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in the strongest terms and strongly urge it to immediately and

fully comply with and implement relevant resolutions. In this context, Japan places emphasis on the importance of close cooperation with the United States and the Republic of Korea and also with China and Russia.

We strongly call on the international community to redouble its efforts to ensure the sustained, comprehensive, thorough and effective implementation of relevant Security Council resolutions in all ways.

Finally, I would like to talk about the Conference on Disarmament. As I think I mentioned the first time I took the floor, the Conference continues to face serious challenges due to its two-decade stalemate. In this regard, Japan welcomes the substantive and interactive discussions held this year in the working group on the way ahead. I also highly value the untiring efforts by Ambassador Lynn as the Chair of the working group to finalize the report of the working group as well as his strong will and sense of urgency to advance the Conference on Disarmament.

I believe that political attention is genuinely important. Given the fact that the Conference is working very hard, I feel that there is strong attention and a strong will to focus on the Conference. In that regard, a delegation from the Japanese Diet will be meeting with the President; I think it is indeed good to draw the attention of politicians to the Conference on Disarmament.

In order to revitalize or innovate or rejuvenate the Conference on Disarmament, it is essential for all of us to continue and deepen the discussions held this year. My delegation will spare no effort to work closely with all delegations in this direction. In that connection, I am very thankful for the strength of the disarmament community in Geneva; that should be respected and we should respect that kind of power. I therefore hope that lively discussions will continue to be conducted here in the Conference plenary as well as in the informal working group.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the delegation of Japan for its kind words of solidarity and support to Spain and the presidency and for its statement. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of the Netherlands.

Mr. Gabriëlse (Netherlands): Mr. President, I apologize for taking the floor again, but I will be brief.

First, I want to echo others in congratulating Anya Kaspersen upon taking up responsibilities as the Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament.

Second, I would like to make some remarks on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in a national capacity, in addition to the statement by the European Union. The Netherlands strongly condemns the missile launches by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on 4 and 28 July. The ongoing missile launches and the nuclear tests performed by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea severely destabilize the region and are a threat to global peace and security and should be ceased immediately.

We call upon the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to halt its ongoing provocations and to re-engage in a meaningful dialogue with the international community. To ensure this, the international community has the obligation to fully implement a sanctions regime as imposed by the United Nations Security Council, for it is only through persistent joint efforts by all that these sanctions will be effective.

To this effect, the Netherlands continues to work with and through the United Nations and the European Union to make sure that the international community takes united and effective action.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the delegation of the Netherlands for its statement. I now give the floor to the delegation of Belgium.

Ms. Marchand (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, allow me, first, to congratulate you, as my colleagues have done, on assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. I also wish to welcome our colleagues from the Netherlands and Slovakia, as well as the Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference.

Allow me also to express, on behalf of the Government and people of Belgium, our most heartfelt condolences for the recent attacks against your country and Finland. We stand together with the victims and their families.

The delegation of Belgium endorses this morning's statement by the European Union and wishes to underscore a few issues from a national perspective. Belgium strongly condemns the ballistic missile launches by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on 4 and 28 July. These intercontinental launches constitute yet another violation of the relevant resolutions of the United Nations Security Council. By such highly destabilizing actions, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea continues — inadmissibly — to defy the authority of the Security Council, threaten regional and international security, and undermine disarmament and non-proliferation efforts. Belgium once again calls on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to refrain from any further provocation and to fulfil its international obligations with a view to creating the necessary conditions for restoring dialogue.

Belgium finds it regrettable that no plenary meetings of the Conference were held under the previous presidency. It is important, in our view, that States who wish to express themselves are given the forum to do so. We hope that this practice will not set a precedent.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the delegation of Belgium for its support and solidarity and for its statement. I now give the floor to the delegation of Hungary.

Ms. Kroll (Hungary): Mr. President, first of all we would like to wish you every success in your presidency. We are more than glad to see the Conference on Disarmament back at work.

Secondly, we wish to express our deepest condolences in relation to the terrorist attacks in Barcelona and in Turku.

Thirdly, Hungary fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by the European Union this morning.

Fourthly, regarding the lack of plenaries and the role of the presidency, we would like to share our disappointment that the Conference did not meet in plenary for four weeks. Without going into the legal details of the question, let me reiterate that it would be very useful to turn to the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs to seek legal advice in light of the rules of procedure regarding the role, rights and responsibilities of the Conference President. This will not change the past, but it might be helpful for avoiding such a situation in the future.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the delegation of Hungary for its kind words of condolence and support and for its statement. I now give the floor to the delegation of Slovakia.

Mr. Šefčík (Slovakia): Mr. President, on the issue of the latest ballistic tests by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Slovakia aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union, but let me add a few remarks in a national capacity.

Slovakia condemns the Democratic People's Republic of Korea for yet further ballistic tests conducted on 4 and 28 July. We categorically reject such irresponsible and repeated provocative acts by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which clearly represent a flagrant violation of its international obligations. These acts constitute a serious threat to regional stability and to international peace and security. Slovakia strongly disapproves of and resolutely condemns the trajectory of this approach and provocations through which Pyongyang has flagrantly and repeatedly ignored the calls and concerns of the international community.

We call upon North Korea to abandon its nuclear weapons and missile programmes in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner. It must cease all related activities and comply with all its international obligations, including United Nations Security Council resolutions.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the delegation of Slovakia for its statement. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of the United Kingdom in exercise of the right of reply.

Mr. Rowland (United Kingdom): Mr. President, I shall be brief. The head of the South African delegation questions my use of the term “hypocrisy” with respect to her statement earlier this morning. To my mind, bemoaning the lack of a programme of work at the Conference on Disarmament when, as President, you have held no consultations on such a programme of work is hypocrisy. Similarly, saying that States should not pick and choose between multilateral forums — when, again, you as a President with the responsibilities that entails clearly chose not to hold Conference plenaries in the face of numerous requests to do so — is also hypocrisy.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the delegation of the United Kingdom for its statement. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of the United States in exercise of the right of reply.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): Mr. President, I apologize for taking the floor but I have to say that I was frankly shocked by the very undiplomatic language used by the Ambassador of South Africa this morning and that was levelled at my counterpart from the United Kingdom. That type of language in this chamber, in my view, is inappropriate and it only widens and deepens the divisions that already exist in this chamber. I hope that we do not have a repeat of this type of language, because it serves no other purpose, frankly, than to drive us farther apart.

Previously, all Governments — minus one — who have served as President in this chamber, regardless of the degree of disappointment with the pace of nuclear disarmament, have still found a way to carry out their presidential responsibilities to pursue a programme of work. That is because they take the responsibility seriously and have not tried to use their presidency to promote some unattainable political objective. The refusal to hold plenaries is a slap in the face of this body and its members, and my Government will not accept this.

Instead of disrupting the convening and work of the Conference, there is the option of exercising an individual State’s right not to engage in a body it feels is not fulfilling the required mandate.

If I may, I would like to turn to comments made by representatives of the Russian and Chinese delegations with regard to the so-called “freeze for freeze” proposal. This proposal unfortunately creates a false equivalency between States that are engaging in legitimate exercises of self-defence and who have done so for many years with a regime that has basically violated countless Security Council resolutions with regard to its proscribed nuclear and ballistic missile programmes. That is a false equivalency that we cannot accept and will not accept.

I will stop here, Mr. President, but I am sure I will have more to say with regard to North Korea in future plenaries.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the delegation of the United States for its statement. I now give the floor to the Republic of Korea in exercise of the right of reply.

Ms. Seo Eun-ji (Republic of Korea): Mr. President, I have requested the floor in response to the statement by the representative of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea.

What I heard from the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea is a mere repetition of the familiar threat to continue to build up its nuclear capability and to really use it, which means it will continue to break the United Nations Security Council resolutions unanimously adopted by the international community. I urge the delegation of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea to rethink what it has heard here in the Conference on Disarmament. It is our foremost responsibility, as responsible members of the Conference, to respect the rules and laws commonly agreed by the international community. The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea can have no pretext for breaking the agreements or their solemn commitments.

Regarding the Republic of Korea-United States joint military exercise, as already mentioned by the United States delegation, it has been conducted annually for several decades to respond to the clear and present military threat from North Korea and it is defensive in nature. These exercises have been conducted in a transparent manner as well, with advance notification to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and under the observation of the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission.

Therefore, there is no equivalency and it is a non-starter to link the stopping of illicit provocations by North Korea and the stopping of the annual Republic of Korea-United States joint exercise, which is defence-oriented, transparent and conducted in accordance with international law.

In a nutshell, we support that the North Korean missile and nuclear programme issue needs to be ultimately resolved in a peaceful and diplomatic manner. However, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea should keep in mind that the door for dialogue remains open whenever it chooses to give up its nuclear weapons and make the right decision.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the delegation of the Republic of Korea. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of China in exercise of the right of reply.

Mr. Fu Cong (China): Mr. President, in response to the remarks of the Ambassador of the United States and the representative of the Republic of Korea regarding the “freeze for freeze” proposal which China has proposed, I just want to say that we are not creating an equivalency between anything. We are just making a proposal to facilitate dialogue and reduce tension. We need a starting point to really launch the dialogue. If they have other, better ideas, please put them on the table so that we can study them. We are open to all kinds of proposals, equivalency or not.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the delegation of China. I now give the floor to the delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in exercise of the right of reply.

Mr. Ju Yong-chol (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Mr. President, whenever the United States stages nuclear war drills in South Korea, they portray it — a drill which is annual — as defence-oriented to cope with the so-called threat from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, even against serious concerns from neighbouring countries. This is no more than a deceptive excuse to shift the blame for the tense situation on the Korean Peninsula to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and justify their aggressive war plan.

To make it clear once again, the root cause of the current situation on the Korean Peninsula is the hostile United States policy and nuclear threats against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. However, some countries — those countries that made statements in this chamber today — make the absurd argument that the escalation of tension on the Korean Peninsula is due to nuclear tests and missile development by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and that that self-defence measure of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is a threat to the world.

The self-defensive steps taken by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea have nothing to do with their security. These countries are siding with the hostile United States policy towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which is aimed at stifling the Democratic People's Republic of Korea at all costs. If those countries are really concerned about the current situation of the Korean Peninsula, they should urge the United States to give up its hostile policy and nuclear threats towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which is the main cause of tension, rather than taking a one-sided stance, which will be of no help for easing tension.

I wonder how these countries would react if they were exposed to a direct and constant threat and military provocations from a country that possesses a large nuclear arsenal. I am also curious to know whether these countries would sit with their arms folded if their adversary conducted large-scale military exercises aimed at a surprise nuclear attack on the doorstep of their territory.

Many delegations in this chamber mentioned the recent United Nations Security Council sanctions resolutions against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea has on various occasions stated clearly that it has never recognized Security Council resolutions against it and it categorically rejects them as they are a product of the double standards of the Security Council under the manipulation of the United States.

The United States should clearly understand that military threats and pressure are only serving as momentum that pushes the Democratic People's Republic of Korea further into developing and strengthening nuclear deterrence. As a piece of advice to Japan, it should not make noise about the self-defensive measures of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to use them as an excuse for its ambition of militarization. And South Korea should make a U-turn in its policy of relying on outside forces and demand that the United States stop the military exercises and withdraw its troops from South Korea. South Korea has no qualification to talk about the nuclear issue, because it should be resolved between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States. Concerning the dialogue which was mentioned by South Korea, dialogue and the pressure which they are talking about are not compatible.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea for its statement.

Does any other delegation wish to take the floor? I recognize the delegation of Iran.

Mr. Heidari (Islamic Republic of Iran): Mr. President, like previous speakers, let me congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and pledge the cooperation of my delegation during your tenure in office.

We, too, condemn in the strongest terms the terrorist act that happened in your country and we express our condolences to the victims. We also express our condolences to Finland for the recent terrorist attack.

While I have the floor, I wish also to welcome the new Ambassadors of the Netherlands and of Slovakia.

Due to other obligations, I was not able to be present at the heated discussion earlier today related to the convening of plenaries, but I have listened carefully to the statements made and I felt obliged to express some comments of my delegation in this regard.

So far as the convening of plenaries is concerned, our understanding is that the rules of procedure — in particular with regard to the role of the President — are such that the President has a margin of presidential prerogative to the extent that the President could make an appreciation of the current situation and differences between the delegations as to the possibility of convening meetings or otherwise calling urgent meetings.

Having said that, we believe that the Conference on Disarmament has been engaged in polarization for 20 years. We have been involved in negotiating on what to negotiate in relation to a programme of work. Intervening in this dispute about the rules of procedure or micromanaging in other ways the role of the President would not help very much. Therefore, we believe that all colleagues should exercise self-restraint and not create further polarization of the Conference based on different interpretations of the rules of procedure.

As we know, South Africa — the previous President — is a country with a great reputation for pursuing nuclear disarmament and we know to what extent they have been very adamant at the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty review conferences to pursue nuclear disarmament. We understand that the prerogative they exercised during their presidency was based on the understanding that the Conference on Disarmament — with regard to nuclear disarmament or other issues — was polarized. We have also seen during previous presidencies that, even though we held a plenary meeting, the Presidents did not have any consultations, due to the fact that they had evaluated the context and differences between delegations.

In our understanding, we should not make this issue into a big issue to further polarize the Conference or an issue for further grappling. The main *raison d'être* of the Conference on Disarmament is nuclear disarmament. In New York, my delegation made a

lot of effort to come up with a resolution that would create a body based on consensus. Unfortunately, our effort failed, and the result was frustration at a conference that ended differently. We are very sorry that the conference was convened in a way that the nuclear possessors could not participate.

Regarding the ban treaty, we already gave our position when we had the discussion. We were very pleased that during the chairmanship of Ambassador Lynn of Myanmar, in the absence of any plenary, we had very in-depth discussions on a variety of issues in the Conference which gave further understanding of the different positions. Therefore, as I said, we should not let this issue further polarize the Conference inasmuch as, in terms of substance, it has already been polarized for 20 years.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the delegation of Iran for its statement and for its kind words of solidarity and condolence to Spain and to the presidency.

Does any other delegation wish to take the floor? That does not seem to be the case. I will now request the secretariat to make a few announcements.

Ms. Mercogliano (Acting Secretary of the Conference on Disarmament): Mr. President, the secretariat has asked for the floor to inform delegations that the revision of the yellow book has been issued and is available in each delegation's pigeonhole on the first floor, just to the right of the Council Chamber. At the same time, we encourage you to empty your boxes, since you will be going there for the yellow book.

We also need to inform you that the United Nations Office at Geneva Security and Safety Service will hold a security exercise in the Council Chamber and in front of the Council Chamber on 29 August at 9 a.m. This exercise is scheduled to end at 9.45 a.m.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): As mentioned earlier, at the end of the formal part of our meeting, and following a short break, the working group on the way ahead will hold an informal meeting chaired by the very capable Ambassador Lynn. Regarding upcoming plenary meetings, the delegations will be informed in a timely manner of the possibility of holding a plenary meeting this Friday, 25 August, at 10 a.m. in the Council Chamber. The secretariat will notify you of this eventuality as soon as possible. If the plenary meeting does not take place, the next one would be on 29 August at 10 a.m. This concludes our work for today. The meeting is adjourned.

The meeting rose at 4.45 p.m.