

# Conference on Disarmament

English

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## Final record of the one thousand five hundred and ninety-seventh plenary meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Friday, 10 September 2021 at 10.10 a.m.

*President:* Mr. Frank Tressler..... (Chile)



**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I call to order the 1597th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

We turn to the third draft of the annual report of the Conference to the General Assembly of the United Nations, document CD/WP.636/Rev.3, which was distributed by the secretariat on Wednesday, 8 September 2021. Please note that some changes have been made to appendix III: a change to the title of CD/2218 and editorial corrections to the title of CD/2219.

Given that all but one of the paragraphs were provisionally adopted by this Conference last Tuesday, I would like to move on to the last outstanding paragraph, paragraph 23.

Noting that some delegations needed more time and others set out a number of requirements, I will read to you the text that we believe, following arduous discussions yesterday and this morning, could be acceptable to all parties. It is very similar to the version that you have in Rev.3, with only a small correction. Paragraph 23 would read as follows:

(*spoke in English*)

“The fifth President presented a draft decision for a technical/linguistic update of the Conference on Disarmament rules of procedure to reflect that both women and men can equally participate in the work of the Conference on Disarmament. The Conference considered the possibility of that update. Delegations expressed their views on the issue, which are duly reflected in the plenary records (CD/PV.1586). However, the Conference did not succeed in reaching agreement.”

(*spoke in Spanish*)

After discussions with various delegations, we think that this text could enjoy consensus among the delegations. I would like to ask those who have something to say to speak now if they consider that we cannot provisionally adopt this paragraph.

I give the floor to the Ambassador of Kazakhstan.

**Ms. Aitzhanova** (Kazakhstan): Mr. President, since I am taking the floor for the first time under your presidency, I wish to congratulate you on assuming the presidency of the Conference and also thank you and all the Presidents of the 2021 session for their tireless work to bring the Conference back on track.

Mr. President, despite the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic affecting the work of multilateral institutions, Kazakhstan is determined to continue the pursuit of common goals in multilateral diplomacy. In this context, disarmament must be the highest and most urgent priority. Kazakhstan firmly supports the key role of the Non-Proliferation Treaty as the cornerstone of international security and calls for strict compliance by both nuclear and non-nuclear States with their obligations. The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons entered into force in January 2021 and we believe that this multilateral instrument will contribute to the achievement of a world free of nuclear weapons.

Kazakhstan welcomed the agreement between the Presidents of the Russian Federation and the United States to extend the START Treaty and appreciates the dialogue on strategic stability between those two States launched as a result of the bilateral summit meeting held in Geneva in July this year.

On 29 August, the International Day against Nuclear Tests, Kazakhstan celebrated the thirtieth anniversary of the closure of the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site. Our country set an example that was followed by others and eventually led to the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

The pandemic highlighted once again the long-debated issue of the need to create a multilateral body to coordinate the implementation of the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention. The President of Kazakhstan, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, proposed the establishment of a special multilateral body, the International Agency for Biological Safety, to strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention. A concept note on this initiative was sent to States parties to the Convention in May this year and, on 8 September, it was discussed at the Meeting of Experts on Institutional Strengthening of the Convention. A fruitful discussion was held and we look forward to further dialogue and feedback. We propose that, if

conditions permit, a scientific conference should be convened in Kazakhstan during the first half of next year to explore ways to implement the proposal. In our view, the conference might have two objectives: first, to establish a dialogue between all stakeholders in order to achieve mutual understanding, which will further contribute to the development of an atmosphere of trust and confidence; and, second, to exchange ideas on possible ways to create an agency. If this proposal is accepted by the States parties to the Biological Weapons Convention, we will proceed to formulate the conference agenda, the list of participants and other details. We are open-minded, ready to listen to everyone and will keep working in a constructive, transparent and gradual manner.

Mr. President, on 8 September, on the occasion of the fifteenth anniversary of the signing of the Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia (Semipalatinsk Treaty), the regional States issued a ministerial statement in which the representatives of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan reaffirmed their commitment to the Treaty, stressed the importance of the upcoming 2020 Review Conference of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, welcomed the ratification by four nuclear Powers of the Protocol to the Central Asian Treaty, on negative security assurances, and urged the United States to complete the ratification process as soon as possible. The regional States called on all States to support General Assembly resolution 76/91 on the Universal Declaration on the Achievement of a Nuclear-Weapon-Free World, expressed interest in expanding partnerships with other existing nuclear-weapon-free zones and supported efforts to create new nuclear-weapon-free zones in various regions of the world, including the Middle East and the Korean Peninsula.

Mr. President, it is critically important to maintain and strengthen the Conference on Disarmament as the sole multilateral forum for disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. We urge all members to demonstrate political will and overcome differences in order to start substantive work. The core principle of the Conference is consensus. It is only through consensus that we can ensure the universality of our decisions. Nuclear disarmament is the most important objective: the enormous nuclear arsenals make the world less safe and less predictable. The conclusion of a fissile material cut-off treaty will help to minimize the chance of new military programmes being developed, to significantly improve the control of existing material and to reduce the risk of nuclear terrorism.

It is imperative that deliberations on the prevention of an arms race in outer space be stepped up, by involving other relevant international forums. We can use a draft treaty on the prevention of placement of weapons in outer space as a basis for future negotiations. As a party to the Semipalatinsk Treaty, Kazakhstan supports the development of an international, legally binding document on negative security assurances. At the same time, the members of the Conference on Disarmament should not ignore the new challenges to and stresses on international security. In order to revitalize the work of the Conference, we are ready to consider a review of working methods, without prejudice to the principle of consensus. While the current session of the Conference on Disarmament has not resulted in the commencement of negotiations on the core issues of the forum, we note with appreciation the work undertaken by all the Conference on Disarmament Presidents this year to revitalize the substantive discussions. We thank Ambassador Tressler of Chile for steering discussions on the factual report of the Conference and we wish the next Conference on Disarmament President, China, every success next year.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much for your words, Ambassador. I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

**Mr. Aliabadi** (Islamic Republic of Iran): Mr. President, this is the first time that I have taken the floor during your presidency, although we have had several consultations during the past two weeks, so let me put on record my delegation's congratulations to you and to Chile for your presidency. I commend you for your hard work and for your inclusive and transparent consultations throughout.

We regret though that none of our comments concerning the most recent version of paragraph 23 are reflected in the text, apparently due to objections by the sponsors of the paragraph's central idea.

Mr. President, I would like to remind you that Iran found your first draft to be relatively balanced, objective and factual. My delegation was ready to go along with it, despite having some difficulties with a number of paragraphs, and my Ambassador conveyed that to you very clearly during your phone call, a day or two after you had distributed the report. Not all delegations showed the same level of flexibility and cooperation. However, extensive amendments were then made to the original draft report, in response to which my delegation continued to engage constructively with the President and with other delegations in order to accommodate different concerns and bridge our differences. The President can testify that my delegation has never rejected any new idea or proposal outright and has always tried to be helpful, offering alternative formulas to resolve pending issues. We agreed with the wording of paragraph 12, for instance, despite it being unprecedented in the history of the Conference's reporting tradition to refer to the *procès-verbaux* in respect of requests for observer participation. We still hope that the wording of paragraph 23 might be improved in order to factually reflect our debate on the fifth President's proposal. The proposal was not on equality between men and women. That is taken for granted. The proposal was on changing certain words in the rules of procedure. The report should honestly reflect that and avoid misleading narratives.

That said, Mr. President, my delegation proposed the following amendments and would be happy to agree with paragraph 23 if they are included. In the first line of paragraph 23, after the word "presented", the wording "a proposal in the form of" should be inserted before "a draft decision". Then, at the end of the paragraph, we would like to add "on the feasibility of amending the Conference on Disarmament rules of procedure".

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I would just like to clarify with the delegate of the Islamic Republic of Iran whether he agrees with the proposal that I have just read out, which is based on a proposal that he made.

**Mr. Aliabadi** (Islamic Republic of Iran): We would like to add, in paragraph 23 of CD/WP.636/Rev.3, at the end of the paragraph, the words "on the feasibility of amending the Conference on Disarmament rules of procedure".

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much. The representative of Cuba has the floor.

**Mr. Delgado Sánchez** (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, I apologize for taking the floor. I thought that I would not have to at this meeting, but I see that we are moving forward, and not exactly in the direction that our delegation would like.

While I am not an expert in the English language, I believe that I do know a few things about Spanish. I would like to see the latest proposal that you made reflected on the screen because, as I said at the last meeting, in my delegation's view, it is not a good idea to describe the proposal here in paragraph 23 when the same approach is not taken in paragraph 17. In other words, we do not say what the purpose of the programme of work is – whether it is broad, whether it is comprehensive – we say absolutely nothing about that. And yet in paragraph 23 we are attempting to describe the aim of the proposal in one sentence. I also think that it is a bad idea for the language in paragraph 23 to talk about gender equity, or "women and men" as you wish it to be phrased, and then state immediately afterwards that there is no agreement.

I really do not think that this helps the gender agenda at all. On the contrary, I believe that it resolves absolutely nothing, apart from politicizing the matter. I would like to see the text in English, because I was unable to catch the verb that came after "women and men" when you read it out. I do not want the wording to give the impression that there is a proposal to reflect that women do not participate equally in the Conference on Disarmament. I do not know whether the opposite meaning could be inferred. If the text were in Spanish and said that the proposal was to reflect that men and women could, or can, participate equally in the Conference, it would be implicitly saying that that was not currently the case. And my delegation strongly opposes such a discriminatory approach. It could simply be a translation issue, but our delegation does not like the idea of going into the meaning behind a proposal when it is not necessary for the purposes of reflecting a factual event, for the reasons that I have already explained, and I have doubts as to how that could be translated.

Therefore, Mr. President, I apologize; I would simply like you to specify exactly what your proposal is so that my delegation can evaluate it, since we could be heading for something that would be totally unacceptable to my delegation. My colleagues know that we like to speak plainly: we could not accept any language that could in any way be interpreted as meaning that there is gender discrimination in the Conference.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you. We will provide you with the written version that we have, as the secretariat has just made copies of the latest proposal from the presidency, which has been discussed with several delegations. In the meantime, the delegate of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has the floor.

**Ms. Díaz Mendoza** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): Firstly, on behalf of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, I congratulate you, Mr. President, on the transparent and inclusive way in which you have guided our work and for your bold efforts to bring about a common understanding and thus reach consensus on the draft report contained in your revised version of CD/WP.636/Rev.3. We are convinced that, without your dedication, it would have been impossible to find the solutions that are bringing us closer to adopting this draft report.

With regard to paragraph 23, my delegation participated in the deliberations on the draft decision proposed in document CD/WP.635 submitted by the Canadian presidency on proposed linguistic and technical updates to the rules of procedure of the Conference on Disarmament to reflect equality between men and women.

Concerning the matter of equality between men and women, I would like it on record that, as my delegation has clearly stated on several occasions, the position of the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is one of full and unconditional support for equity and equality between men and women, and gender equality and equity.

That said, on that occasion we listened closely to the observations and legitimate concerns expressed by the member States, and we believe that the issue of a linguistic and technical update to the Conference's rules of procedure is not a problem of reflecting equality between men and women. As my delegation has maintained, it is not the review of the rules of procedure and working methods that has stalled the Conference, but rather some countries' lack of political will to move forward on the substantive issues on the agenda. Additionally, at the time we pointed out that, on careful review of the Spanish version of the proposed draft decision on the Conference's rules of procedure submitted by the Canadian presidency, we noted some discrepancies with the English version, highlighting for us the need for caution in this process and in terms of what may need to be changed in the rules of procedure, and with regard to how these technical and linguistic changes would affect the translations in the other five languages of the United Nations.

Moreover, I would like to support the comments just made by the delegation of Cuba: we would like to see the proposal that you have just made. However, we would also like to support the proposals made by the delegation of Iran in relation to paragraph 23.

I would also like to make an additional proposal. Firstly, we should capitalize "Rules of Procedure" in the second line. I do not know whether it is currently capitalized. And secondly, if it would help us to align this paragraph with paragraph 17, we should leave it as it stands, up to the words "Rules of Procedure", and then delete "to reflect the equality of men and women". This would bring it into line with what we already have in paragraph 17, so it would read:

(*spoke in English*)

"The fifth President presented a proposal in the form of a draft decision for the technical/linguistic update of the Conference on Disarmament's rules of procedure."

(*spoke in Spanish*)

It would then continue as presented by the delegation of Iran.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much. I give the floor to the Ambassador of the United States of America.

**Mr. Wood** (United States of America): My apologies, Mr. President, for taking the floor at this point, but, as I mentioned to you at our last session, my delegation referred the draft proposal that you put forward on paragraph 23 to our capital for guidance and I believe that is what you had asked others in this room to do. Since arriving this morning, there have been further proposals to this paragraph. My fear is that, if we continue on this path of further edits, the text will become unacceptable to the United States; but we are willing to accept the proposed language that you put forward at the last session and are willing to take a very close look at the edits that you proposed from the floor this morning. However, if, for some reason, the edits that you proposed this morning are unacceptable, meaning that we cannot garner consensus on them, I think we should revert to the text that you proposed at the last meeting, on which you asked us to seek guidance from our capitals. My fear is that continuing to leave this text open for further edits will lead us back to square one and, as you have said very clearly, we do not have much time at all. I would therefore encourage you, Mr. President, to find out if there is consensus on the language you have proposed this morning. If that is not the case, my recommendation would be that you ask the floor whether there is consensus on the paragraph that you proposed at our last meeting.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Ambassador. Indeed, I agree that we cannot go on editing the text. What I presented this morning was the result of informal discussions held here in the room with various delegations to try to accommodate the interests of the Islamic Republic of Iran. If we do not have agreement on this latest proposal, I will indeed make the decision to put the version contained in document CD/WP.636/Rev.3, as circulated a couple of days ago, to a vote. In the meantime, I will give the floor to the other delegations that wish to speak, but on that understanding; that is, if we do not reach consensus on the latest proposal discussed, which was made following informal conversations here in the room to try to accommodate the latest interests of some delegations that were not satisfied, we will proceed to table the version of CD/WP.636/Rev.3 circulated previously. We do not have much time and we have to determine our course of action if there is no consensus on that version.

The delegate of the Russian Federation has the floor.

**Mr. Belousov** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I would like to speak on the President's new proposal for paragraph 23 of the draft report. First, I would like to thank the Chilean presidency for its unprecedented efforts to achieve consensus on the whole draft report and on paragraph 23 in particular.

We have already expressed our opinion on the proposal circulated under symbol CD/WP.636/Rev.3 and, on the whole, we are prepared to join the consensus, if it coalesces around this wording. Generally speaking, we are happy with the new proposal which we received a few minutes ago but, having listened carefully to the statements of the esteemed delegate of Cuba and the representative of Venezuela, our delegation understands their concern that, in this paragraph, there should be no hint that there is discrimination against men or women in our forum. Therefore, having once again perused this morning's proposal, might I suggest an amendment which could be taken into account by those delegations who raised the question about a hint of discrimination.

Perhaps we could simply delete the word "can" from the first sentence so that, after the term "rules of procedure", the proposal would read "to reflect that both women and men equally participate in the work of the Conference on Disarmament (to reflect the fact that men and women do take part on an equal footing in the Conference's work). In our opinion, that would rule out the possibility of construing this sentence to mean that some kind of discrimination does exist at the Conference against women or men, or generally against any participants in this forum. That is our suggestion at the moment, which I would ask the esteemed delegations to examine carefully.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the delegation of the Russian Federation. I would like to hear opinions from the floor on this latest proposal from the Russian Federation, that is, to delete the word "can". The representative of Cuba has the floor.

**Mr. Delgado Sánchez** (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the delegation of Russia for its proposal, which undoubtedly addresses some of the Cuban delegation's concerns. To avoid delaying things unnecessarily, I would like to say in response to some delegations that

the proposed new wording is totally unacceptable to Cuba. I do not know whether it is the case in English, but what it says in Spanish is that the proposal was intended to reflect that women and men are able to, or could be able to, participate in the Conference on Disarmament. And that, in addition to being imprecise, is totally unacceptable to my delegation, above all because the wording that comes immediately afterwards says that the Conference did not reach agreement. There are three aspects here that I find problematic: we are reducing the question to one of men and women, while the issue of gender is in fact much broader than the concepts of “women and men”. Then we are saying that these people “can” participate in the Conference, which gives the impression that, at the moment, they cannot. And then, immediately afterwards, we end the paragraph by saying that the Conference did not come to agreement on this.

So I truly think that this verges on something that would be unacceptable to my delegation, and I therefore believe that this is not the path that we should follow.

I do not really want to make any more proposals because I also understand those delegations that say that would make things rather complicated, but I would like to see wording along the lines of “to bring neutrality to the language in the English version”. That is what I believe the proposal is aimed at doing. In fact, as I have said, the proposals made by the delegation of Canada, with which Cuba has no issue, do not go far enough when it comes to the Spanish version. That is, in the Spanish version, other rules would have to be changed to achieve neutrality in the language.

So, Mr. President, Cuba does not support the idea of explaining what the proposal from Canada is about. We thought that it was enough to leave the wording as it was but, if people do want to say something about it, I think that we must be very precise and say that the proposed update was intended to make the language of the English version neutral, nothing more than that.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you. I give the floor to the Ambassador of the Netherlands.

**Mr. Gabriëls** (Netherlands): I came to this room to discuss your latest proposal, Mr. President, which you described as a last attempt, based on your consultations. It seems to me that we are repeating our arguments. I am also fully open to discussing the other paragraphs where we made concessions, but this is the last day for us to reach an agreement and I think that, for many delegations, there is no more time to reflect on new proposals nor to consult with our capitals. So I am happy to work on either the proposal we have in the document before us or the slightly altered proposal you made this morning, which garnered quite broad support here in the room. Any other attempts to further change it would put all of us in a difficult position because there is simply no time to consult our capitals. I would like therefore just to say that I fully support the proposal you presented, Mr. President, either in your latest revised version or the one you distributed; it would be very difficult to find consensus on any other proposal.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I think that the Ambassador of the Netherlands has just made an important point, and I remind delegations that paragraph 23 is not an isolated paragraph. It is subject to a delicate balance of other concessions made by delegations in relation to other paragraphs. Further amendments to this paragraph will mean opening up other parts of the text. That has already been stated by some delegations, not only the Ambassador of the Netherlands. You are familiar with the other delegations’ views because we have been here, talking at length, and you know what red lines each delegation has, including your own. Therefore, repeating proposals that you know are not acceptable to other delegations is a never-ending game.

So I suggest that we try to work with the proposals put forward here. There are some delegations that will not have time to consult with their capitals. It is important to try to reach agreement on this now, within the next 30 minutes because, if not, we will have to determine what we will do next, if there is no consensus on either CD/WP.636/Rev.3, which I presented to you and which was discussed at length here, or the version of paragraph 23 that I shared with you this morning.

I am grateful for some delegations' willingness to try to make accommodations in terms of the language, but I think that it would be difficult to amend it further. I would ask you to please focus on that and avoid embarking on further amendments to the language, because you know the positions of everyone here in the room, and I do not need to repeat that some of the proposals made are, essentially, unacceptable to other delegations. You know that. So therefore let us try to work in good faith, transparently, as you have all done, and inclusively, and let us try to decide on either the version of CD/WP.636/Rev.3 that was shared originally, or with the new paragraph 23 that our presidency presented after having consulted with various delegations this morning.

As I have told you, we have until 11.30 a.m. to do that; if we do not, we will then have to determine a course of action, and that also requires a long process of discussion and analysis.

I give the floor to the Ambassador of Spain.

**Mr. Sánchez de Lerín García-Ovies** (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you, Mr. President, for your patience with us and for your strenuous efforts to achieve a consensus. I spent yesterday, a public holiday, garnering the support of my ministry for the proposal that you circulated, and I got that support despite the fact that it contains two elements that are deeply unsatisfactory to my delegation: articles 17 and 24, because there are no substantive references to the debate.

Today we heard again that there are delegations in the room that want to do the same in paragraph 23, using paragraph 17 as an argument. I would therefore like to repeat that we are of the opposite view. If we remove the substantive references from paragraph 23, we cannot reach consensus, because at this rate we are going to end up with a report of the Conference on Disarmament that is just a list of documents and references to the records. In that case, we should just send the records to the General Assembly, because we are incapable of evaluating them.

You thus have my delegation's full support for the proposal that you presented to us, in document CD/WP.636/Rev.3, with the change proposed in the room, on which we had requested consultation. All of the changes proposed today will require further consultation. It seems contradictory not to allow that because, if the previous change did, the new ones will too.

Lastly, I would, however, like to recall that, at least in Spanish, there is discrimination in the rules of procedure. There is discrimination because the positions are constantly referred to in the masculine. English and Spanish are not the same. But I would also like to recall that it was made clear that it was the English version that was under discussion, and that it would be the job of the translators to adapt it to the official languages. And Spain presented a proposal for that purpose, for the Spanish version, to help the translators, not for debate. That is what we are doing. Therefore, my delegation fully supports your efforts, it fully supports the version in document CD/WP.636/Rev.3, with the change proposed in the room, and believes that this is not the time to negotiate further changes.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you. I will give the floor to the delegations that have asked to speak and then, after the last delegation currently on my list has spoken, we will take a decision. I have on my list the Syrian Arab Republic, Mexico, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the United Kingdom, Cuba and China. I ask you to be brief, as we have to identify a way forward if there is no consensus. I give the floor to the delegate of the Syrian Arab Republic.

**Mr. Ali** (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): Mr. President, I wish to thank you for your continuous efforts, which have brought us closer to a consensus. We are all aware that if any delegation continues to have concerns about a paragraph of the draft report, we are compelled to take its concerns and those of others into account on an equal footing until we reach consensus. The wording that you proposed this morning, reflecting the wording submitted by the representative of Iran, is a sound basis for action. I heard two basic amendments that were proposed by the representative of Iran and the representative of Russia, and I believe that the addition of these two amendments to the paragraph that you submitted might achieve the balance that we are all trying to achieve in the interests of consensus. I

agree with you that we should use all the remaining time available to reach agreement on the Conference report as soon as possible.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you. I give the floor to the delegate of Mexico.

**Mr. Martínez Ruiz** (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Firstly, Mr. President, I would like to say that we agree with both the version of the report proposed in document CD/WP.636/Rev.3 and your new proposal. From my country's perspective, although we noted that there was a way to reach agreement by bringing some aspects of paragraph 17 into the wording of paragraph 23, a programme of work is not the same as a draft decision. So we do not need to ensure that the two paragraphs are totally equivalent.

We also listened to the proposal from the Russian Federation, and my delegation's understanding here is that the Conference's rules of procedure are prescriptive. The rules of procedure seek to establish the regulations governing this Conference. So, no, it is not the case that equality would be recognized on the basis of a draft decision to change the rules of procedure. What the rules do is establish the prescriptive nature of participation. In that sense, in English, I believe that the word "can" reflects the prescriptiveness of the rules.

And, lastly, we also heard a proposal to say "did not find it feasible". That proposal was made by my delegation at the time to solve the problem that we had regarding the interpretation of "consensus". That was a long debate, and the delegations stated that they would agree on using the word "agreement", but not "consensus", owing to the connotations of the term because of the way it was interpreted in the rules of procedure.

So it seems to me that bringing that solution from the debate on consensus as a solution now for the word "agreement" is nothing more than creating new obstacles to things that, as stated previously, were acceptable to the delegations.

My delegation is completely willing to work and to find a similar agreement but it seems to me that, as other delegations have said, we are now repeating debates that we have been having for weeks and that this was the agreement that we reached to bring an end to them.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you. The representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran has the floor.

**Mr. Aliabadi** (Islamic Republic of Iran): Mr. President, I have no intention of making your work hard, but we do need to reflect on what happened in the meeting. I was in the meeting when we were discussing this specific issue. No objection was made in the meeting to the equal participation of women and men in the works and deliberations of the Conference on Disarmament, as officers or as president. I did not hear any objection to that from any country. And at that time, my delegation reiterated several times that there was consensus on the equal participation of women and men in the work of the Conference on Disarmament. So there was no problem with that. We clearly said we are actually knocking on an open door.

The issue was that some delegations say that it is better to reflect this reality in the rules of procedure, and it is on that that we have some concerns. I think you are well aware why we have concerns about paving the way for amending the rules of procedure. So it is quite clear what the issue is and what the subject of the discussion was, and our concern in respect of paragraph 23 is that we may misrepresent what happened in the meeting. We need to avoid that because we are not the only people who will read this text: it will be read by the First Committee and by people outside, and it would be a shame for us to give the impression that there is no gender equality in the work of the Conference on Disarmament. You are intending to rectify this deficiency with this paragraph, but there is no consensus on it. So we simply wanted to add some words to clarify that the lack of consensus was on whether it was necessary to update or amend the rules of procedure; it was not on the issue of gender equality. We need to have clarity in this respect. So, in order to make your work easier, we are open to any proposal to help us reach consensus, such as the text you proposed, which is based on the careful reasons offered by the distinguished colleagues of the Russian Federation, Cuba and others.

Perhaps we could work on the proposal that you made here in order to make clear the concern that I raised just now, by amending your proposed wording – “the fifth President presented a draft decision” – to “the fifth President presented a proposal in the form of a draft decision”, continuing with “for a technical/linguistic update of the Conference on Disarmament rules of procedure to reflect the fact that both women and men equally participate in the work of the Conference on Disarmament”. At the end of the paragraph, in order again to indicate that there was no debate on or difference in respect of the equal participation of women and men, we could add “did not succeed in reaching agreement on the feasibility of updating the Conference on Disarmament’s rules of procedure”. Thus, the aim is just to reflect the realities and the facts as they happened during the discussions and avoiding misrepresenting and misleading narratives for the outsider.

So, we could work on your text. In the third line, we could reflect the fact that both women and men participate equally because this is a current practice in the work of the Conference of Disarmament. Then, at “however, the Conference did not succeed in reaching agreement”, we could add “not on the equality of women, but on the feasibility of updating the Conference on Disarmament’s rules of procedure”. I think that this could address the concerns of all the distinguished colleagues.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): Forgive me, delegate of the Islamic Republic of Iran, for sharing some reflections, but I think that I must do because it is late and we are tired.

The poor impression that the Conference on Disarmament is giving and has been giving for a long time is a result not of this, but because it has not reached agreement on a programme of work for over twenty years. So I would not worry too much about that. The Conference is giving a poor impression by trying to agree on language for a paragraph when, really, if we closed the debate on it now, it would not matter. It would matter if we left it open and took it to the General Assembly.

It is very clear, to all delegations and in my own understanding, that the reference to equality between men and women is determined by what it is in principle. We are talking about a technical, linguistic change to the rules of procedure so that they reflect equality between men and women. It is not that there is actual discrimination here. There have been women presidents, there have been women representatives, there is no discrimination of that kind and there never will be. It is very clear in the text here that this is the case. The term “feasibility” was discussed for a long time, and you know that there are delegations that do not agree with that word. As I have told you, we do not have much time. We have to make a decision on what is on the table. In a way, my second proposal was trying to help you, as the delegate of the Islamic Republic of Iran. It used part of your proposal for subparagraph 2. We brought it here and tried to get other delegations to accept it. So I say to you: either we take a decision on paragraph 23 of the original version of document CD/WP.636/Rev. 3, or we take a decision on what I presented as President. As I have said, we do not have much more time, so I ask you to please keep your interventions brief so that we can take a decision on our course of action once the representatives have finished speaking.

I give the floor to the Ambassador of the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Liddle** (United Kingdom): I can indeed be brief because I was going to make a very similar point to the one you have just made, Mr. President. I think the proposals, both the version contained in document CD/WP.636/Rev.3 and the proposal you have made this morning are very clear and a factual representation of what we are talking about. I see the logic and the force in the proposal by the Russian Federation to delete the word “can”. I think that is helpful, but really I do not see any further benefit in tinkering with this language. Time is short. I have consulted with my capital on the version in document CD/WP.636/Rev.3; I am prepared to entertain the proposal that you made this morning, as amended by the Russian Federation, to get us to consensus, but really the time for drafting new language is past. I made my point on Tuesday about the word “feasibility”, which I do not like, and which I do not think can garner consensus. We are running out of time, Mr. President, and I think the path you have set out is the right one.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you. The delegate of Cuba has the floor.

**Mr. Delgado Sánchez** (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, I do not think that it is valid to say that there is no time for consultation with some capitals, particularly when the European countries are in the same time zone as Geneva. Perhaps those of us from the Americas would find it more difficult to wake our capitals up, although we are more than willing to do so. And it is contradictory when I hear delegates say that they do not have time to consult with their capitals, but that they can accept the proposal that you presented this morning. My question is: did they consult with their capitals, or is it that they do not need to consult with their capitals? We should stop going round in circles; I think that we need to concentrate on what we have in front of us and look for a solution.

The rules of procedure of the Conference on Disarmament are not just any old document. It is a policy document. And I am therefore opposed, and I believe that more than one delegation would be opposed, to anyone simply translating the rules of procedure and the document being valid in that language. When I studied Spanish, they always gave us the example of the importance of the use of commas in Spanish, and there was that anecdote of “*matarlo no, dejarlo vivo*” (“do not kill him, let him live”), where, depending on where the comma is placed, the person was either killed or allowed to live. So I do not think that it is valid to say that this is just simply a version in English and that the translators will do our job.

I see two options before you, President, in terms of what you can do. Either you can give in to the temptation, and I think that this would be a mistake, to force a decision on the version contained in document CD/WP.636/Rev.3, which was what we consulted our capitals on. If there is consensus, Cuba would join it, we would have no issue with that. But that would put you in a very difficult situation which, for the sake of transparency and the way in which you have worked, I do not think you deserve, simply because some members of the Conference want to try to force a consensus that does not seem to exist. Or, we face up to it and negotiate in good faith, as our colleague from the United Kingdom has just proposed. I know that we have to draw a line between trying to force decisions and reaching an understanding on something so that other delegations accept it. But I do think that there is some scope for trying to reach an understanding on the language that you are proposing.

We do not have any problem with working with your new proposal, we simply expressed our concern and told you with full transparency why we could not accept it. But we are willing to work with it. I am not going to tell you cynically that I do not have time to consult on it with my capital and that therefore you should not make your new proposal. I believe that, if this new proposal will allow us to reach consensus, Cuba is committed to negotiating with you constructively.

I just want to reiterate that this report does not have to reflect exactly what happened in any discussion. In fact, this report is so limited that it does not even include the names of those who presided over the meetings. So let us stop using unnecessary arguments from one side or the other; let us finalize the document as soon as we can. You have the full support of the Cuban delegation in that endeavour.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you. I give the floor to the Ambassador of China.

**Mr. Li Song** (China): Mr. President, I know that you and the delegations concerned have made intensive efforts regarding this paragraph since the plenary meeting on Tuesday and all the way through to this morning before the meeting. My delegation also participated in the last effort before the meeting on the language of this paragraph. So I can see your sincerity, that of your team and that of all parties concerned in trying to push for an agreement on the content of the paragraph. After listening to all the interventions during today's meeting, I agree with the opinion expressed by some colleagues that we are, to a certain extent, repeating what was said during previous plenary meetings on this issue. I would like to point out to colleagues that everything that has been said, including in today's meeting, has been recorded and will be reflected in the *procès-verbaux* of those meetings. Secondly, I do not believe that we can conclude this issue with this simple paragraph; and, if the issue remains a subject of discussion among Conference on Disarmament delegations in the months to come, I think those discussions will not be based on this paragraph alone, but also on all the

opinions and all the positions expressed in the previous meetings, as recorded in those procès-verbaux.

Today is the last day for us to adopt the report, and I fully support the President's efforts on this paragraph before today's meeting. I also believe that the small amendment suggested by the Russian Federation can help colleagues to come to agreement on the paragraph. On this point, I fully agree with the idea expressed by my colleague from the United Kingdom. So my suggestion is that we should not try to include the whole story in this paragraph; rather, we should continue to seek more understanding among ourselves on how we came to the current wording of the paragraph. If necessary, Mr. President, I believe that you might be willing to suspend our meeting for a brief period so that we can have a look at your latest proposal, together with the Russian modification, with a view to seeking agreement and consensus on this paragraph, so that we can adopt the report today.

I hope that, with all the efforts that have been made, we are very close to conclusion on the report.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you for your proposal. We will continue with the list of speakers and then take a decision. The delegate of Australia has the floor.

**Ms. Hill** (Australia): Mr. President, I just wanted to put my delegation's support behind the proposal that you have circulated in the room today: we would be ready to join consensus on that, but I must emphasize the importance of the word "can" for my delegation. The role of the rules of procedure is to facilitate our work, and this change would demonstrate that men and women "can" equally participate in the work of the Conference. The question of whether they "do" equally participate is a different question, and is not one that we need to answer today. I think our task would not be made easier by delving into that, so I am very happy to support your proposal, but it must include the word "can".

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you. The delegate of Indonesia has the floor.

**Mr. Rosandry** (Indonesia): Mr. President, our delegation fully supports the proposals on the text of document CD/WP.636/Rev.3, including yours of this morning. We are ready to accept the proposal and join the consensus, but we also understand some of the concerns expressed by colleagues regarding the heart of the issue. My delegation would like to suggest that the issue before us is not the importance of equality between men and women, but the possibility of an update to the rules of procedure. The proposed wording is, "the Conference considered the possibility of that update"; we would like to propose additional wording for the last part, given that we did not find agreement on the update. We might, for instance, say something like "However, the Conference did not succeed in reaching agreement on the possibility of the update". I am flexible with whether the text we adopt is that contained in CD/WP.636/Rev.3 or the new proposals, which we fully support; but at least we can simply reflect the reality that the Conference failed to reach agreement on the possibility of the update.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you. The delegate of Canada has the floor.

**Mr. Fetz** (Canada): Thank you, Mr. President, for your tireless efforts in trying to bring us to consensus. I was hoping not to have to take the floor, but I have to agree with the Netherlands, Mexico and China that we are repeating much that has been said before.

You correctly said in your remarks that the two proposals that we have received on paper reflect a very delicate balance, involving compromises struck in other paragraphs, including for Canada, in respect of paragraph 25 and related amendments in the annex.

When Canada, as the presidency, proposed the update to the rules of procedure, we wanted to see a small technical change that could have been adopted in 10 minutes. We have discussed much since then, but what we did not propose in our draft decision is to have a discussion as to whether we have gender equality in the Conference on Disarmament. Of course, Canada agrees that there should be gender equality in the Conference on Disarmament, but we have doubts as to whether there is indeed gender equality in the Conference, given that we are not able to make this update and given what we heard in the room when we had a discussion about the update, when some delegations disagreed with the notion that there is gender equality in the Conference on Disarmament.

We also listened carefully to the discussion we had when you organized a plenary meeting on the role of women. And we heard all about statistics in terms of how women do not participate equally in the Conference on Disarmament, but, as I said, this was not a discussion that we opened up with the draft decision, so our delegation cannot agree with a statement that says there is indeed gender equality in the Conference on Disarmament because this is not what we discussed, and it is not necessarily the conclusion our delegation would reach. We would have to reflect and consult on that further. We fully agree with a statement made by the delegation of Australia that the word “can” is essential, because we can all agree that the standard should be “equality of men and women” – or our preference would be “gender equality” – but the statistics do not back up the assertion that it is actually achieved, including in participation. However, in any case, that is not a discussion that we opened up and it is not a discussion that should be subject to negotiation in respect of these two paragraphs. However, I would just like to underline that the word “can” needs to remain; it cannot be deleted and we would agree with other delegations who say that the two paragraphs currently before us are really the ones on which we need to make a decision. Tinkering around with those two paragraphs by adding new language is just going to take us back to the old debates that we have had for many hours over the past few weeks.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you. Our final speaker, for now, is the delegate of the Russian Federation.

**Mr. Belousov** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. President, we are following the discussion attentively and would like to express some concerns. First and foremost, I would like to say that we are not completely in agreement with the arguments just put forward by the esteemed representatives of Canada and Australia. I think that they are confusing two subjects, two points, two aspects.

The first is that there is a certain statistical imbalance in the presence of women at the Conference, or in the participation of men and women in the Conference’s work, which we can see right now in the room, and the second is the right of men and women to take part in the Conference’s work. On the first, with regard to the imbalance, I am prepared to agree with our esteemed colleagues from Australia and Canada that such an imbalance really exists, but this is an objective reality because the composition of delegations and the appointment of the head of delegation are the exclusive prerogative of the States that put the delegations together. So, the question is, can we, by introducing some amendments into the rules of procedure, interfere with the exclusive privileges and prerogatives of States which, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, have equal rights as Members of the Organization? I think that we here simply do not have the right to encroach on the rights of any State or States or group of States.

With regard to the rights of women to participate in the Conference’s work, we are unable to name any restrictions on those at the moment. Such restrictions simply do not exist and this is substantiated by the Conference’s practice over many years in the course of which women have headed delegations, have been representatives of these delegations and Presidents of the Conference. In other words, no one has ever cast doubt on the possibility of women joining in the Conference’s work or their right to do so, to express a national position or to play a leading role at the Conference. I would therefore ask esteemed colleagues not to confuse the two issues. That is why I suggested that the word “can” be deleted from the proposal put forward by the Chilean presidency.

Furthermore, a very important aspect was raised by our esteemed Mexican colleague. He is really completely right that the rules of procedure are a legal, regulatory document, as was emphasized by our Cuban colleague. We fully agree with that. And that the rules of procedure determine our activity, there is no disputing that, but during the discussions organized by the Canadian presidency, the starting point of which was the Canadian proposal, the majority of delegations spoke of the need to update the rules of procedure in order to reflect the real situation at the Conference, but not of adding some precepts to the rules of procedure in order to secure women some additional prerogatives or rights to participate in the Conference’s work. What we talked about was reflecting reality, of harmonizing the rules of procedure with reality, as was stated by our esteemed colleagues from Canada and Australia, as far as I remember. If we therefore take it that what we have been asked to do is to somehow update the rules of procedure to alter their meaning with respect to the need to

ensure the equal participation of women and men in the Conference's work, we cannot agree with this. We have serious doubts about this, because this would really lead not to amending the rules of procedure linguistically or technically, but to changing their meaning and content. We would like to avoid that because on 3 and 5 August, we really had two days of very serious discussion on the matter.

On another point, I would agree with our Cuban colleague, who completely reasonably commented that what we were talking about was a technical, linguistic update of the English version of the rules of procedure, although the heading and text of the document presented by the Canadian presidency referred to the rules of procedure in general. But, in fact, we cannot talk about this because, unless I am mistaken, during the discussion it was stated that, for example, the Chinese and Arabic language versions of the rules of procedure do not require any updating. So, we can spare ourselves the effort of saying that we were talking about updating or amending all the versions of the rules of procedure in all six official languages of the United Nations. In other words, we were actually talking about specifically updating the English version of the rules of procedure.

In this connection, I would like to make one more attempt to propose what is possibly a compromise solution that would reflect reasonably objectively the discussions that have taken place, the proposal submitted by the Canadians and the results we achieved or did not achieve at the end of the discussion. I will read out my proposal, if you have no objection. Perhaps it will help us to find a way out of the dead end and, after all, not drag out today's debate into the depths of the night.

I suggest the following wording after the word "update":

*(spoke in English)*

"The fifth President presented a draft decision for a technical/ linguistic update of the English version of the rules of procedure in order to make them gender neutral, thereby reflecting the equal participation of men and women in the work of the Conference on Disarmament."

*(spoke in Russian)*

At the end of paragraph 23, in the last sentence, we suggest adding the words "on the update". The sentence would then read:

*(spoke in English)*

"However, the Conference did not succeed in reaching agreement on the update."

**The President** *(spoke in Spanish)*: Thank you. We have several proposals in the room. I will read out each of them and ask whether or not there is consensus in the room so that we can see how to proceed.

Regarding the version of the report contained in document CD/WP.636/Rev.3, which the presidency circulated two days ago, is anyone opposed to consensus on this text? Thank you.

Regarding the proposal that I made as President this morning, which was circulated in writing, is there anyone in the room who objects to this text? Perfect. That is clear.

Regarding the first proposal made by the Russian Federation, in which the word "can" would be deleted, is there anyone in the room who opposes that proposal? Thank you.

Regarding the proposal that would reflect the proposal made by the presidency this morning, with the change made by the delegation of Indonesia, ending "on the possibility of the update", contained in the document circulated this morning, in which the text ends "However, the Conference did not succeed in reaching agreement on the possibility of the update", does anyone oppose that proposal? Perfect.

We have one more proposal, which is the last one submitted by the Russian Federation. We will read it out to see whether anyone in the room is opposed to it.

**Ms. Moraga** (Chile): "The fifth President presented a draft decision for a technical/linguistic update of the English version of the rules of procedure in order to make

them gender neutral, thereby reflecting the equal participation of women and men in the work of the Conference. The Conference considered the possibility of their update. Delegations expressed their views on the issue, which are duly reflected in the plenary records (CD/PV.1586). However, the Conference did not succeed in reaching agreement on the update.”

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): Is there any delegation that is opposed to joining a consensus on this last proposal? We see that there is not. I would like now to suspend the meeting for 10 minutes to discuss what we can now do and see what possible courses of action we have.

*The meeting was suspended at 11.45 and resumed at noon.*

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): Distinguished colleagues, I have a new version of the proposal that I am going to read out. I will then ask whether there is agreement on it.

(*spoke in English*)

The fifth President presented a draft decision for a technical/linguistic update of the Conference on Disarmament rules of procedures to reflect the fact that both women and men can equally participate in the work of the Conference on Disarmament. The Conference considered the possibility of that update. Delegations expressed their views on the issue, which are duly reflected in the plenary record (CD/PV.1586). However, the Conference did not succeed in reaching agreement.

(*spoke in Spanish*)

Do we have tentative agreement on the text that I have read? It seems that there is tentative agreement. Thank you very much. Since there is consensus on this paragraph, I would like to consider it provisionally adopted, taking into account the changes made in appendix III.

I invite you now to consider the annual report of the Conference on Disarmament to the General Assembly contained in document CD/WP.636/Rev.3, with the amendment to paragraph 23 that was read out in its entirety. The report will be adopted in accordance with our obligations under article 46 of the Conference’s rules of procedure. I now invite you to adopt officially the version of the report to the General Assembly that is currently before you. Would any delegation like to take the floor on this subject? I see that there are no requests for the floor and no objections. I therefore take it that the Conference wishes to adopt the report in full.

*It was so decided.*

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I congratulate us all on the adoption of the report on the Conference’s work in 2021.

Does any delegation wish to take the floor during the remainder of our formal plenary meeting? I give the floor to the Ambassador of China.

**Mr. Li Song** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Mr. President, the Chinese delegation, and I personally, congratulate the Conference on the adoption of this year’s annual report under your presidency. We appreciate the leadership and sense of responsibility you have shown in this process.

The report includes appropriate arrangements for the dates of next year’s session. I am confident that the Conference itself and the member States will benefit from these arrangements. In the past two days leading up to today’s meeting, as well as during the meeting itself, the parties concerned have made a very important final effort to complete the report. I think these efforts are a good reflection of the importance we all attach to the Conference and our determination to continue moving the work of the Conference forward.

We will continue to support you as you take charge of drawing up the draft resolution of the First Committee of the General Assembly on the work of the Conference and are committed to ensuring our successful adoption of this draft resolution by consensus.

Next year, China will have the honour of presiding over the work of the Conference as the first of the six Presidents of the session. The annual report that has just been adopted

places a new demand on you and on me personally to look ahead to next year's work and hold consultations with all parties during the intersessional period of the Conference. During this period, my team and I will step up our communication with member States and regional groups and listen to your views extensively.

I hope and trust that, with the joint support of member States and the secretariat, we will be able to steer the work of next year's Conference in the direction of a smooth start and begin substantive work on the various topics.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Ambassador. It has been an honour for this presidency to work with you, and we hope to continue to do so during the process of presenting the resolution.

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

**Mr. Wood** (United States): Mr. President, let me first congratulate you and your team on your successful efforts to bring us to consensus agreement on this annual report. I have to admit I was quite sceptical that it could be done, but with your hard work, your credibility and your willingness to go the extra mile, we were able to achieve a report. So congratulations to you and your team on the excellent work that you have done and the patience that you have shown.

I am also taking the floor, Mr. President, to inform you and colleagues that this Conference on Disarmament meeting is my last, as I will be retiring from the United States diplomatic service at the end of October. It has been both an honour and a privilege to serve my country as Ambassador and Permanent Representative to this august body.

When I arrived in Geneva back in 2014, I never thought I would end up serving seven years here as Ambassador. One of the consequences of having served so long in this position is that I have seen many colleagues come and go. I have seen many programmes of work proposed and then rejected. I participated in many debates that ended up being nothing more than circular discussions. Much frustration has been expressed in the Conference on Disarmament and in many world capitals about the inability of the Conference on Disarmament to carry out its mandate to negotiate disarmament instruments. Like many of you, I share that frustration. However, what has been more frustrating to me is the unwillingness of some in this body to even begin a discussion about what steps we could possibly take to help better position the Conference to eventually resume negotiations, regurgitating the same old positions, such as "balanced and comprehensive" and that the Conference's problems will go away if we immediately begin negotiations, do not move us any closer to breaking the stalemate.

It is critical for this body to begin a serious examination of how to improve the working methods of the Conference. If we cannot even have this type of exchange, does anyone really believe it will be possible to resume negotiations on legally binding instruments? If your answer is yes, then I am afraid to say that you are just kidding yourself. If we do not commence this important conversation, the Conference on Disarmament risks becoming irrelevant to arms control and disarmament. In fact, many observers outside this body unfortunately already consider the Conference on Disarmament irrelevant.

Mr. President, having said that, I nevertheless remain hopeful that Conference on Disarmament members will find a way to get the body back to negotiations. Frankly, international peace and security depend on it. The security of future generations depends on it.

Mr. President, in closing, let me thank all the diplomatic colleagues I have worked with over the past several years for their close cooperation. Let me also thank the secretariat staff for their patience, guidance and support for our work. I also wish to thank the interpreters for their dedication and hard work. They are indeed the backbone of multilateral engagement. And last but certainly not least, let me thank the members of my own delegation.

Mr. President, while I hope to return to government service at some point, I have already been blessed by having had the opportunity to engage with many of the world's best and brightest diplomats in pursuit of making the world a better place for our children and our grandchildren. I wish you and our colleagues much success in all your future endeavours.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Ambassador Wood. We will miss you. These seven years have not been in vain. We are sure that our paths will cross again in this multilateral world of disarmament, perhaps not in diplomacy, but in other areas, and I hope that is the case. I wish you every success going forward.

The delegate of the Russian Federation now has the floor.

**Mr. Belousov** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. President, I would like to say a few words at the end of our work today. First of all, I would like to congratulate the Chilean presidency and all colleagues on the successful completion of the discussion of the final report. Ambassador Tressler has demonstrated brilliant diplomacy aimed at seeking compromises and achieving true consensus. For this, our delegation is very grateful to the Chilean team.

I wanted to say that, as a result of the discussion not only of paragraph 23, but also of the subject that served as the basis of including this item in the final report, several serious issues were raised and a discussion was held of many aspects to which due attention had not been paid during our earlier work. And here I would agree with my esteemed colleague Robert Wood that probably a discussion of the Conference's working methods really is urgent. However, if we are serious about such a discussion, we must be clear on what we are going to talk about, what questions are to be discussed and, principally, what results we want to achieve, to ensure that we do not have a repeat of the experience we had as a result of the discussion of the Canadian proposal on 3 and 5 August this year.

We did not reject a technical update to the rules of procedure in itself and we did not object to it. Nevertheless, discussions during the plenary meetings and the consideration of paragraph 23 revealed so many weak spots, so many procedural subtleties, so many linguistic nuances, indicating that even a small problem, a small issue or a small solution calls for meticulous preliminary study and discussions before it is submitted to delegations for consideration or subsequent approval. This is a lesson to all of us and somewhat of a recommendation for future Presidents that they must take a more painstaking approach to proposals that will be submitted to the Conference.

We believe that our last proposal regarding paragraph 23, which we made a few minutes ago, was optimal and reflected with maximum objectivity what happened on 3 and 5 August. But, seeing that a consensus is taking shape, we have decided not to insist on that proposal and, rather, to join the consensus, in the meaning with which we, the Russian delegation, endow this term, this principle of the Conference's work, this understanding about which we have already spoken at this Conference.

Another point I would like to make is that we welcomed many new delegates to the Conference this year and meetings with those new colleagues, work with them, interaction with them is definitely a good omen for all of us and gives us hope that the revitalization of the Conference will finally enable us to extract it from the situation in which it has found itself for the past two decades. However, the departure of colleagues with whom we have worked here for three, four or more years is always an unfortunate event for us, for the Russian delegation. I would like to single out the departure of the Ambassador of Germany and also that of our esteemed colleague from the United States, Mr. Robert Wood. In him we are losing a strong diplomat, a top professional and a person who really defended the interests of his country, but who was ready for dialogue, to seek common ground, who was always prepared to look carefully at the proposals of his colleagues. I would like to wish him every success in the future in any activities he undertakes after leaving Geneva.

In conclusion, I would like to quote one of the characters from an American action thriller directed by Guy Ritchie. He said, "If you want to get smarter, play a smarter opponent". Our delegation is very pleased that, here at the Conference, we are able to play with stronger contenders, such as Ambassador Wood, and to learn from them.

Once again, I would like to congratulate the Chilean presidency and the entire Chilean team for the close attention it paid to the Russian proposal and for the successful outcome it has achieved from our general discussions and efforts.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much. Unfortunately, I have to tell you that we are going to continue working on the resolution, so you will have to keep

looking at us for a while, at least. Moreover, our success is a result of teamwork. We thank Ms. Moraga and the secretariat, and all of you, because at one point or another all of you have demonstrated flexibility and made constructive contributions.

I give the floor to the delegate of the Syrian Arab Republic.

**Mr. Ali** (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I wish to join previous speakers in congratulating you on the adoption of the annual report of the Conference on Disarmament. Our delegation is convinced that the Conference would not have reached this point without adopting an approach aimed at building a consensus among member States. It was an approach characterized by inclusive consultations, impartiality, patience and the exploitation of every minute of time available to take into account the concerns of all delegations.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you for your words. We now have the delegate of Australia.

**Ms. Hill** (Australia): Mr. President, I would like to take the floor very briefly to join others in passing on my delegation's congratulations to you and your team for all of your efforts to bring us to consensus on the annual report. You have been unrelenting in this task and we thank you for the very transparent and inclusive way that you have led these efforts. I also assure you of my delegation's support in your ongoing task in pulling together the resolution to take to the First Committee.

Finally, I would like to wish all the best to the former distinguished Ambassador of Germany, Mr. Peter Beerwerth; and to Ambassador Wood of the United States, to simply acknowledge that seven years at the Conference on Disarmament is an impressive record, so we would like to convey our best wishes to you for your future endeavours, whatever they may be.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much. The Ambassador of Germany now has the floor.

**Mr. Göbel** (Germany): Mr. President, distinguished colleagues, first of all, I want to join others in congratulating you and your whole team on the tremendous efforts you have made over the past days and weeks to bring us to the adoption of the report today.

Coming to the arena shortly before the game is over is always a little bit difficult and this time I was more a witness to than an actor in this successful end game. Nevertheless, I can assure you, Mr. President, and all the delegations and all the presidencies which will guide us in our work in the next year, of the support of my delegation. To be honest, I was a little bit puzzled by the discussions during the past day, no doubt due to my status as a newcomer. There is no need to go back over the debate we had just now and that you had in August on the technical/linguistic update of the rules of procedure. Allow me just to repeat that, for Germany, this debate was very important, necessary and even overdue, and it is most regrettable in our view that the Conference is not yet able to reach agreement on such a decision. However, I am glad that gender equality is already a reality in this forum, a reality that has not been questioned during this debate, as far as I understand.

To be honest, I was afraid I would have to start my duties here in Geneva with the Conference on Disarmament not agreeing on the report. However, the efforts and seriousness of all the delegations in the room and the guidance you gave, Mr. President, were all very encouraging and I am looking forward to taking this spirit of compromise into the next session.

To those colleagues who will leave us before the next session, I wish you all the best. Mr. President, please rest assured that Germany will continue to contribute its share to help the Conference on Disarmament to meet its challenges in the next year and I look forward to working with you all and hope for a successful Conference on Disarmament session in 2022.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Ambassador. We now have the Ambassador of the Netherlands.

**Mr. Gabriëlse** (Netherlands): Thank you, Mr. President, for your efforts in trying to bridge positions that seemed impossible to bridge; you managed to do so, with your team and supported by the secretariat. I would also like to thank all the previous Presidents. Even

though we could not agree on certain issues, such as a programme of work, there were substantive discussions, and the Presidents from different regions worked very closely together this year, as they did last year, which I think this is a great achievement for the Conference.

Thanks to you and your team, we reached consensus today on the annual report, but unfortunately not on what we think was a simple issue: the technical update of the rules of procedure to make them gender neutral. We listened carefully to the debate and we understand from the incoming President that the issue is not on the table; many speakers argued that this issue can still be taken up, but it is more important to address the substantive issues which are at stake. Several proposals have been made. It will be a challenge, but we know that this challenge has to be met, we know that not only the eyes of the outside world, but also those of our political masters, are on this body. We heard during the high-level meetings the expectations that politicians have of us. We always say that this is a unique body and, if it did not exist, we would have to invent it. So it is up to us to make it the best we can. The Netherlands will always try to do so – we tried with the back-to-basic documents, we tried with taking up responsibility in the subsidiary bodies – and the Netherlands will always take a constructive approach in this body in order to take it forward and to reach consensus on substantial issues.

I also wish to recognize the years of service of our German colleague – after seven years in this body, I believe he deserves the title of honorary dean of the Conference. Everybody listens to his wise words whenever he speaks and he will be dearly missed. I hope that he will continue to share his expertise with us in the future. I would also like to thank all the colleagues who managed to reach consensus, because that is the heart of this body's work, remembering that we must also come to a consensus on the substantive issues.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Ambassador. I give the floor to the delegate of Mexico.

**Mr. Martínez Ruiz** (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Firstly, Mr. President, the delegation of Mexico sincerely appreciates your committed efforts during your presidency. There is no doubt that you, together with your team, assumed your role with responsibility, commitment and transparency in the way in which you conducted the work, particularly with regard to the negotiation of the report.

We also wish to reiterate our appreciation of the close and efficient cooperation between this year's six presidencies and our hope that this will become established as a best practice, which would greatly benefit the Conference on Disarmament in the future. My delegation acknowledges the difficult circumstances arising from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and the significant impact it continues to have on the work of all multilateral forums, including the Conference. Nevertheless, despite these obstacles, we could see from the formal meetings and from the negotiation of the report that the Conference is still lacking the political will that is needed to deliver it from its deadlock of more than two decades. The informal and formal negotiations on the report again highlight the excessive importance that is attached to questions of form, demonstrating how far we remain from the real negotiations that are required by our mandate, and which are particularly important in the current climate of instability and geopolitical confrontation.

The extensive discussion of issues that other bodies accept automatically, such as mentioning the countries that held the presidency or acknowledging gender equality, is a clear example of this worrying situation.

I also wish to state that my delegation has consistently supported both the expansion of the Conference's membership and the full access of observers to its work. The Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament – a document that was supported by all delegations – recognized that ending the arms race and, in particular, holding disarmament negotiations, are in the interest and are the responsibility of the entire international community. We therefore regret that bilateral or regional disputes are brought to the Conference, that this negotiating body is politicized and that, in practice, States Members of the United Nations are being excluded from participating in its work.

Lastly, we would like to recognize the work of Ambassador Wood in this Conference. Although our positions did not always align, and that is evident even in his last words, we have always recognized his talent for diplomacy, his willingness to enter into dialogue and his ability to present his ideas with great clarity. We wish him all the best in his future assignments, whatever they may be.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you. The Ambassador of the Republic of Korea has the floor.

**Mr. Lim** Sang-beom (Republic of Korea): First, I would like to join others in thanking you, Mr. President, and your team for your tireless efforts and patience in achieving agreement on our annual report this year. I also wish success to the incoming President, Ambassador Li of China. We are looking forward to working closely with your delegation for the success of the Conference next year.

And lastly, my delegation wishes to convey our sincere appreciation to Ambassador Wood. His expertise, dedication and commitment have contributed greatly to the implementation of our mandate here in the Conference on Disarmament, and we will miss him greatly. I wish him every success in his future endeavours.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much. I give the floor to the delegate of France, who is participating remotely.

**Ms. Delaroche** (France) (*via video link, spoke in French*): Mr. President, we seem to have reached a historic moment in many respects this morning. I should first like to express my respect for the admirable manner in which you have conducted your presidency as well as the negotiations that led to the adoption of the report today. France welcomes the adoption of the annual report of the Conference for the 2021 session. Congratulations to you and your entire team, as well as to the secretariat. I should also like to take this opportunity to present my regards to Ambassador Wood, who has been a key figure in this Conference, which has long benefited from his professionalism. He will be greatly missed.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the delegate of France for her words and give the floor to the delegate of Canada.

**Mr. Fetz** (Canada): Mr. President, I thank you congratulate you and your team on achieving a consensus report. I know we did not make it easy for you, but you succeeded nonetheless.

As a newcomer to the Conference on Disarmament, I have been privileged to learn from colleagues, including those leaving us, Ambassador Beerwerth of Germany and Ambassador Wood of the United States. I wish all our colleagues departing from Geneva this year all the best and look forward to continued collaboration with all delegations.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much. I give the floor to the delegate of South Africa.

**Mr. September** (South Africa): Mr. President, let me congratulate you on your efforts leading to the adoption of the final report of the Conference on Disarmament, and express my delegation's appreciation for your dedication and constructive leadership throughout this process. It is always a great challenge to conclude the session in the best manner possible and I believe that you did excellent work. My thanks also go to the secretariat for the work that they performed so diligently and competently.

We remain hopeful that the Conference will gain new momentum in 2022 and, we hope, return to negotiations. We should raise the bar and go beyond substantial discussions. We have had substantial discussions for a quarter of a century. Nonetheless, we will seek to be ambitious where we can, as well as being practical and pragmatic. We hope that all delegations will take a similar approach in 2022, inspired by a desire to see the Conference fully accomplish its mandate. We wish the Presidents for 2022 all the best, and assure them of our support.

We also wish all the best to our departing colleagues, including Ambassador Beerwerth and Ambassador Wood. As Ambassador Wood reminded us, we have the responsibility to build a better world for all. South Africa is looking forward to working with

other parties to successfully draw up a draft resolution on the work of the Conference in the First Committee on the basis of the report that we adopted here today, and we stand ready to continue next year to aim for substantive work in the Conference.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much. I give the floor to the delegate of Pakistan.

**Mr. Omar** (Pakistan): First and foremost, Mr. President, allow me to congratulate you and your team on the adoption of the Conference's annual report. We thank you for your leadership, your hard work and the inclusive and transparent manner in which you and your team guided our work. It was an approach aimed at consensus building and was essential in achieving consensus on the report. We also thank the secretariat for their continued hard work in support of the Conference.

Like others, Mr. President, we continue to look forward to your leadership as we work on the resolution for the First Committee, and we remain confident of achieving similar success in that endeavour under your guidance and with the support of all Conference on Disarmament members. We look forward to continuing to work constructively with you and the incoming Presidents and all Conference on Disarmament delegations during the intersessional period.

Lastly, my delegation would like to wish all the best to Ambassador Robert Wood in all his future plans and endeavours.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you. I give the floor to the delegate of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

**Mr. Aliabadi** (Islamic Republic of Iran): Mr. President, allow me to join previous speakers in expressing my appreciation to you and your team for all your endeavours and hard work in bringing us to agreement on the report of the Conference on Disarmament at the end of its work this year. You conducted your work in a very professional, inclusive and transparent manner, and the result was very successful. The work of the first and the last Presidents of the Conference on Disarmament is very demanding. The first President has to conclude the programme of work and the last one has to achieve agreement on the result of the year's deliberations.

Our discussions today have once again shown us how the positions of the member States during the deliberations can be distorted and misrepresented; we were very sceptical from the beginning as to why we were working on some issues of a technical nature, and veering away from the mandate given to the Conference on Disarmament.

In the past, fellows of the Disarmament Fellowships Programme participated in meetings of the Conference. I had the privilege to be a fellow in 2006, at which time consultations were taking place on how to revitalize the work of the Conference on Disarmament; points raised then included the technical issues and some participants emphasized the political nature of the problem. Then we went to New York and we followed the same arguments in the First Committee, in respect of the draft resolution on revitalizing the work of the Conference. One of the delegates mentioned the wise proverb that "a poor worker blames his tools". We see the same thing being done here, almost two decades later, with some delegations or some countries blaming the tools we have for the current stalemate in the work of the Conference on Disarmament. Some refer to the rules of procedure, some to the consensus rule, but we should remember that, even during the very complex security and political situation of the cold war, the Conference on Disarmament and its predecessor actually managed to conclude a very important legal instrument on arms control and disarmament. They should not blame our tools for the political nature of the problems that we have here in this body, which has been unable even to begin negotiations on the instruments that have been mandated. As the previous speaker said, it is for the benefit of our children and our grandchildren. Let us hope that next year we might witness a breakthrough in this respect. We wish the incoming Presidents every success, especially the first President of the Conference of Disarmament, Ambassador Li, who will begin the very demanding work of reaching agreement on the programme of work.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much. I give the floor to the Ambassador of Spain.

**Mr. Sánchez de Lerín García-Ovies** (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, I join the rest of my colleagues in thanking you and your team for the work that you have done to bring us to an agreement.

As we say goodbye today to colleagues with whom we have worked hard, it is clear how valuable their work and contributions have been and how strong their mental health is to have spent seven years fighting in this room. Some of their replacements have already arrived, and we welcome them. And we also welcome the tasks ahead of us, because we have heard colleagues expressing good intentions in respect of the review of our working methods, which I am pleased about. I believe that to be a very necessary debate.

And I have also heard positive comments about continuing our efforts to update the rules of procedure, to make them gender neutral. I have learned that some language versions do not need it, but the Spanish one does. For that reason, I call on the Spanish-speaking countries to work together in this endeavour to create rules of procedure that reflect equality between men and women. And I also hope that the Chinese presidency next year will lead us to our definitive task, which is to adopt a programme of work. So we conclude this year's work in the hope that these new tasks will help us do a better job next year.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Ambassador. We now have the Ambassador of Japan.

**Mr. Ogasawara** (Japan): Mr. President, I join my voice to those congratulating you on the successful adoption of the Conference on Disarmament report. I pay high tribute to you for your excellent leadership and stewardship, which led us to this precious consensus. We are deeply grateful for the tireless efforts undertaken by you and your team in guiding us in a very inclusive way to this agreement, and I would also like to recognize the support provided by the secretariat.

The consensus on the report is all the more valuable because, if I remember correctly, this is the first time we have achieved consensus since adopting the agenda at the very outset of our activities this year.

Mr. President, I am very sad to learn that Ambassador Wood of the United States is leaving us. His contributions over the past seven years, both as a representative of his country and in his personal capacity, were immeasurable. His deep knowledge of the substance of our work and the very skilful way in which he conducted his diplomacy were, in my view, a great asset for this august body. I would like to congratulate him on his retirement and I wish him every success in his new endeavours. I would like to also express my best wishes to Ambassador Beerwerth, and thank him for his friendship.

Lastly, I listened carefully to the statement made by the incoming President, Ambassador Li of China, and found it very encouraging. I look forward to working constructively with him next year.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Ambassador. I give the floor to the Ambassador of Ecuador.

**Mr. Izquierdo Miño** (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you, Mr. President. On behalf of my delegation, I would like to recognize the magnificent work undertaken by you and your team. At the same time, I would like to thank you and congratulate you on your leadership during this session of the Conference on Disarmament. We believe that you have led both the formal meetings and the countless consultations we have had with enormous sensitivity to the member States' positions and, above all, with the correct approach to the application of multilateralism. Thanks to that, and to your exemplary professionalism, we have succeeded in adopting the report, and that path will guide us in the process of drafting the resolution. At the same time, the adoption of the report must spur on the Conference's work over the coming year. That work must lead to a future in which we can define the Conference's greatest responsibility, that is, to initiate substantive negotiations on instruments to strengthen international peace and security, which is the real challenge that we all aspire to take on.

In conclusion, I take this opportunity to welcome the new Ambassador of Germany, and at the same time to congratulate Ambassador Wood of the United States on his work in the Conference and wish him success in his new professional responsibilities.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Ambassador. I also wish you every success, as I understand that you will be sitting in this seat in the same period next year. The Ambassador of India now has the floor.

**Mr. Sharma** (India): Mr. President, my delegation would also like to congratulate you on the successful adoption of the report, made possible thanks to the immense effort of you and your team, as well as the flexibility and collective spirit shown by all delegations in order to reach consensus. I also take this opportunity to welcome Ambassador Li Song of the People's Republic of China as the incoming President, and assure him of the support and cooperation of my delegation, in the hope that we will be able to adopt a programme of work under his presidency.

Before I conclude, Mr. President, I wish to acknowledge the significant contribution of Ambassador Wood to the world of disarmament and international security in his current as well as his previous positions, including in Vienna. He has ably represented his country and led a wonderful team, here in the Conference on Disarmament and in other disarmament forums. We have seen commonalities as well as differences in our national positions, but they were never personal and he always ensured that differences in country positions did not seep into personal relationships, the quality of a true diplomat. We are all birds of passage, yet I am not bidding him goodbye, as no one ever leaves the disarmament world. I am sure we will see him soon in a new incarnation. On that optimistic note, I wish Ambassador Wood and his family all the best in their future endeavours, on behalf of my delegation, as well as of my predecessors, going back to Ambassador Venkatesh Varma, who also had the privilege of working closely with him and has asked me to convey his best wishes.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Ambassador. I give the floor to the delegate of Indonesia.

**Mr. Rosandry** (Indonesia): Mr. President, let me join in congratulating you and your team on your able leadership, which has allowed us to adopt the report, and, in particular, on your relentless efforts in striking the right balance and finding consensus on the draft report. My delegation welcomes the adoption of the report and, as many others, supports the idea that the annual report is factual and reflects the work that is done in our Conference. Indeed, this year too, there are many issues that we have not agreed on, but once again, a spirit of compromise has made the adoption of the report possible.

My delegation looks forward to working with Ambassador Li Song of China and his team during his presidency of the Conference next year, and Indonesia remains committed to supporting the substantive work of the Conference on Disarmament as the single multilateral negotiating forum in disarmament.

Lastly, I would also like to take this opportunity to offer our best wishes to Ambassador Wood of the United States in his future endeavours.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much. I give the floor to the Ambassador of the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Liddle** (United Kingdom): Mr. President, after a difficult year, I am pleased that we are ending in the right spirit, not only with the adoption of the annual report but also with the elegant statements and tributes that we have heard. I thank all the Presidents of the 2021 session and in particular you, Mr. President, and all your team for the skill and patience which you have demonstrated in leading our work, although, as you have noted, your burden is not yet ready to be laid down. I wish the incoming presidencies for 2022, beginning with the distinguished Ambassador of China, all the best and pledge to them the full support of my delegation.

And finally, I want to pay tribute to the service of my friend and neighbour, the distinguished Ambassador of the United States, and wish him all the best for a long, productive and happy retirement. He is a credit to his service and to his country. I have learned a huge amount from him and will miss him greatly, as I know we all will.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you. I give the floor to the delegate of Turkey.

**Mr. Işlak** (Turkey): We would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your transparent and inclusive leadership and the tireless efforts you have made in guiding the member States towards consensus on the final report of the 2021 session of the Conference on Disarmament.

At the beginning of this year, in order to maintain the positive atmosphere of the Conference, we demonstrated our flexibility and remained ready to return to previous practice and accept the list of States requesting observer status as a whole. We hope that all members acknowledge our constructive approach. Although there is no mention in CD/2179, the 2019 annual report of the Conference, in the section on attendance and participation of States not members of the Conference, of the request which was rejected, we have shown flexibility in respect of that section for the sake of reaching consensus for the past two years.

Mr. President, as you said on 3 September, the real problem is that the Conference on Disarmament has not agreed on a programme of work. The most important undertaking for the period ahead is to create an atmosphere of trust and flexibility and show political will in order to reach a consensus on a programme of work in the 2022 session of the Conference.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you. I give the floor to the delegate of Bulgaria.

**Mr. Tomov** (Bulgaria): The Bulgarian delegation would like to commend you, Mr. President, on your unprecedented and hard work, the leadership and the sense of responsibility you have shown, as well as the tireless work of your team. We also highly value the indispensable work of the secretariat, whose members have been working around the clock all year to help us achieve success in our common endeavours.

We would like to echo the words of Ambassador Wood with regard to the impact that our work has on the world that we will leave for our children tomorrow. I cannot overstate how much the Conference on Disarmament will miss the frank, open and sincere approach of the head of the United States delegation.

We think that the difficult endeavour that we have just accomplished in reaching a consensus on the report of the Conference on Disarmament for this year, even though it came right at the end, shows that we are all capable of achieving results and we can only proceed ahead together.

In conclusion, I wish every success to the incoming presidency of China and all the successive presidencies for next year.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you. I give the floor to the delegate of Cuba.

**Mr. Delgado Sánchez** (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, very briefly, I would like to add my voice to the congratulations to you and your team, for your transparent and constructive work. It has been arduous, but today we are even better placed than in previous years after adopting this report. Let me also join those bidding farewell to the Ambassadors of Germany and the United States, with whom it has always been a pleasure to work, particularly when we disagreed. Ultimately, the meetings always ended, some sooner than others, but they always ended. We also wish them and their families success in their future endeavours.

Coming back to the Chilean presidency, I would like to reiterate our sincere wish that, under its leadership, we will produce a draft resolution effectively and quickly, and I hope that same spirit continues into the next presidency, that of China, under whose leadership we hope to adopt a programme of work that will serve as an incentive and hope for those who are leaving today and to those of us who will leave the work of the Conference on Disarmament tomorrow.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you. The next speaker is the Ambassador of Brazil to whom I give the floor.

**Mr. de Barros Carvalho e Mello Mourão** (Brazil) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, I also wish to join, with unequivocal Latin American pride, those who congratulated you and

your team on leading us to this positive result today with the adoption of a report, albeit toothless and pitiful, but nevertheless one that enjoys consensus.

I also join those who gladly wish Ambassador Wood well in his new duties, and I congratulate him on all his work here during his seven years in the Conference on Disarmament. Mr. President, Ambassador Wood's seven years, and the twenty years that the Conference has been inactive in terms of the reason it was created, brought to mind a short story by the great Franz Kafka, in which he tells the tale of a man whose job it was to go out to the train stations at the start of every night to knock on the train windows with a little stick, making sure that they were shut and that they would stay shut all night. The man spent thirty years in his job and never found an open window. We have spent twenty years here, Ambassador, and I am an optimist: I hope that before thirty years have passed we find an open window, we reach consensus on something more than the sterile words that we have used in this final report today that say practically nothing. It would have been better not to adopt a report, it would have been more honest with the United Nations in New York because it would be a reflection of what we have achieved here; the consensus that we have come to here this year – and in previous years – has been a consensus of dissent. There has been no consensus, just constant, never-ending dissent. So I hope, Mr. President, that we do not have to wait thirty years to say that we achieved nothing here. In any case, once again, I thank you for all your efforts and all the success that you have had in obtaining this consensus, in spite of everything, on our report.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you. I give the floor to the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

**Mr. Ju Yong-chol** (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Mr. President, my delegation would like to extend its deep gratitude to you for your dedicated work and the tireless efforts that have enabled us to reach consensus on this annual report of the Conference on Disarmament.

My delegation also is looking forward to working closely with the delegation of the People's Republic of China, who will assume the first presidency next year, and is hopeful that, next year, the Conference on Disarmament will move forward by adopting the programme of work.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much. We have the delegate of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

**Ms. Díaz Mendoza** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, I join those who have already spoken in thanking you and your team for the inclusive and transparent way in which you have conducted our work and for your tireless efforts to reach a common understanding, and thus consensus, on the report of the Conference on Disarmament. I would also like to thank the secretariat for its work, and the interpreters for their excellent work, and take the opportunity to wish Ambassador Wood every success in his new assignments.

Venezuela shares the multilateralist view of international security and believes that peace can be achieved by strengthening the international security, disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation regime. Constructive dialogue and the political will of the member States of the Conference are crucial for repairing the damage that has been done to the international disarmament regime. Against that backdrop, the Conference must make an enormous effort in 2022 to overcome its already historic stalemate. A spirit of fairness in the discussion of all the issues before the Conference must guide our collective and mutually supportive efforts, particularly with the standstill at which the Conference finds itself being made more intractable by the collapse of major agreements on international security, disarmament and arms control.

Venezuela hopes that, in the years to come, the work on the adoption of this report will serve as an example of flexibility and responsibility on the part of the Conference's member States, with a view to negotiating a programme of work that includes a negotiation mandate.

We wish the presidencies of 2022 every success, and in particular we wish success to the Conference's first presidency, that of the People's Republic of China. Ambassador Li, you can be assured of my delegation's full support.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much. The Ambassador of China now has the floor.

**Mr. Li Song** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Thank you, Mr. President. I would like to join you all in expressing our regret at Ambassador Wood's departure, and to wish him all the best in his retirement, which will open an entirely new chapter in his life.

Many colleagues have expressed their support and encouragement for China serving as the first of next year's six Presidents. This has boosted my own confidence and that of my team. Together with the other five Presidents of next year's session, along with the last President of this year's session and the first of the 2024 session, we will contribute our fair share to advancing the work of the Conference.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Ambassador. The representative of the Russian Federation has the floor.

**Mr. Belousov** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Excuse me for interrupting you, Mr. President, at what is probably the most important stage of our meeting. I have a technical question for the Secretariat. We would like to know when the updated version of document CD/2218 will be published in the form which we agreed with the esteemed delegation of Canada.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I give the floor to the secretariat to respond.

**Ms. Day** (Secretary of the Conference on Disarmament): The version as orally amended this morning in paragraph 23 will be circulated as an advanced version, CD/2218.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): The representative of the Russian Federation has the floor again.

**Mr. Belousov** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I would like to clarify that we are talking specifically about document CD/2218, which was submitted by the Canadian delegation and on which we made some specific comments. We supported the adoption of the report with the text included in appendix III to that document, but we would like to be sure that that document will be posted on the Conference website in the form we agreed with the Canadian delegation.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): The secretariat has the floor.

**Ms. Day** (Secretary of the Conference on Disarmament): For that document, with the criteria that you have specified, I think it would have to be Monday 13 September.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you. Now, to conclude, I would like to acknowledge the informal mechanism comprising the group of the six Presidents of the 2021 session, together with the last President of the 2020 session and the first of the 2022 session. I would like to thank Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Cameroon and Canada, as well as the previous Presidents of 2020 and the next President for 2022, for their exemplary collective work. In that connection I also wish Ambassador Li and China success in the work that they will begin next year and assure them of my delegation's full cooperation. I would like to inform you that the secretariat will be in contact with all of you to determine the timetable for initiating the negotiation and presentation of the next resolution.

Before closing, I would also like to thank you all for the flexibility that you have shown during this process. I look forward to seeing you at the next session of the Conference on Disarmament in January 2022.

The session is adjourned.

*The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.*