

# Conference on Disarmament

21 January 2014

English

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**Final record of the one thousand three hundred and second meeting**

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 21 January 2014, at 10 a.m.

*President:* Mr. Eviatar Manor..... (Israel)

**The President:** I call to order the 1302nd plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

As all of you may already know, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, will be addressing the Conference this morning at about 10.30 a.m. Before the arrival of the Secretary-General, I propose that, while waiting, our work should focus on two areas: adoption of the agenda and approval of the requests for observer status to the Conference at this session. Irrespective of whether we finish work on these two points or not, I intend to suspend our work at 10.25 a.m. so that I may go and welcome the Secretary-General at the Salon Français next door. It is my understanding that the Secretary-General will not have much time to spend with us, so, after he delivers his speech, I will again suspend the meeting to allow for his departure from the room. We will resume thereafter to continue our business of the day.

I would like to invite you now to consider the draft agenda for the 2014 session of the Conference. This draft is contained in document CD/WP.578 that is before you. I propose that the agenda be accompanied by a presidential statement, which is the same as in previous years and reads as follows:

In connection with the adoption of the agenda, I, as the President of the Conference, should like to state that it is my understanding that, if there is a consensus in the Conference to deal with any issues, they could be dealt with in this agenda. The Conference will also take into consideration rules 27 and 30 of the rules of procedure of the Conference.

Does any delegation wish to take the floor at this time? I take it that the Conference is ready to adopt the draft agenda as contained in document CD/WP.578, followed by the statement I have just read out.

*It was so decided.*

**The President:** The agenda will be issued as an official document of the Conference by the secretariat.

Let me now turn to the list of requests from States not members of the Conference to participate in our work during the 2014 session. If adopted, these States should be able to sit in the room already this morning during the speech of the Secretary-General of the United Nations. The States that have submitted requests are: Albania, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Dominican Republic, Estonia, Georgia, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Holy See, Jordan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Montenegro, Nepal, Oman, Philippines, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Moldova, Serbia, Singapore, Slovenia, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, United Arab Emirates and Uruguay.

The requests are now before you in document CD/WP.577, which includes all the requests that the secretariat received up to yesterday, 20 January 2014, at 4 p.m. Any requests from non-member States received after that date will be presented for your consideration at the next plenary meeting. Are there any comments on these requests? I take it that the Conference decides to invite these States to participate in our work in accordance with the rules of procedure.

*It was so decided.*

**The President:** I invite all the observer delegations to take their seats in the room.

Allow me now to suspend the meeting to accompany to the podium the Secretary-General of the United Nations. The meeting is suspended.

*The meeting was briefly suspended.*

**The President:** Prior to giving the floor to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, to address the Conference, I would like to observe one minute of silence in honour of the victims of the terrorist attack that took place in Kabul last Friday and that killed citizens of at least nine nationalities, including four United Nations staff members.

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**The President:** Mr. Secretary-General, it is my honour to give you the floor.

**Mr. Ban Ki-moon** (Secretary-General of the United Nations): Let me begin by wishing you all the best for a happy new year. In my part of the world, the year 2014 has been designated as the “year of the blue horse”. A horse represents, of course, vigour and speed — and a blue horse, of course, is an animal of imagination. I hope this august forum — as the sole standing body on disarmament negotiations — will take inspiration and make 2014 a year of creativity and action. However, I will be very frank. This is my fourth appearance before the Conference on Disarmament, but the first in my second term. When I considered addressing you once again today, some of our senior advisers counselled against it. They said there is little prospect for progress this year. They wondered about the point of taking time out of a very busy schedule already full on the eve of the Geneva Conference on Syria. But I decided to come and meet you. Why? Because I am a strong believer in multilateralism. I want you to know that I have not given up hope on this noble body. I want to encourage you to live up to the international community’s expectations. Even though your mandate is to disarm, today I say, “Arm yourself! Arm yourself with the spirit of the blue horse and run. Run fast and run far.”

Since my last visit to you in 2011, the Conference on Disarmament has remained unable to begin substantive negotiations. But the world has not waited. Last year, the international community reacted in horror to the atrocious use of chemical weapons in Syria. In one voice, we condemned these acts as an outrageous violation of international humanitarian law and a war crime. The abhorrent use of chemical weapons was a stark reminder of the need to confront the dangers of all weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons. We cannot wait for new catastrophes to act.

The Chemical Weapons Convention is your legacy. The Conference on Disarmament brought it to life. The presentation of the Nobel Peace Prize to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons is recognition of the importance of disarmament and non-proliferation for world peace. I hope you will be inspired by this.

My message is clear. Do not wait for others to move. Be the first mover. Do not hide behind the utopian logic which says that, until we have the perfect security environment, nuclear disarmament cannot proceed. That is old-think. That is the mentality of the cold war era. We must face the realities of the twenty-first century. The Conference on Disarmament can be a driving force for building a safer world and a better future. That is its very mission.

As you all know, I have placed disarmament and non-proliferation as a leading priority on the United Nations agenda. A functional machinery can and must contribute substantially to international peace and security. Savings in weaponry can contribute to development and improve global well-being. Your work can make a significant contribution as the international community strives hard to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and craft a solid post-2015 development agenda. There is progress on which to build. The open-ended working group convened last year in Geneva generated some new thinking on the way forward.

The high-level meeting of the General Assembly on nuclear disarmament demonstrated that this issue remains a major international priority and deserves attention at the highest levels. There is a growing understanding of the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons. I recognize and welcome the serious efforts you have made to end the impasse. While there was no breakthrough, a constructive spirit prevailed last year. The various presidencies engaged in active consultations. The informal working group represented an innovative attempt to take modest steps forward. Yet the pervasive cycle of pessimism in this body must still be overcome, or else the Conference on Disarmament will be overtaken by events.

I have also come to share with you my thoughts on a possible way forward. While you continue to seek a path towards renewed disarmament negotiations, it is important that you develop treaty frameworks and proposals through structured discussions. Laying such a foundation for future negotiations would be a concrete first step towards revalidating the

relevance of the Conference. I hope the Conference can make good progress before this spring's third preparatory meeting for the 2015 Review Conference on the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. This will significantly boost morale for this important event. I am committed to doing all I can to assist you to launch negotiations on the important items on the agenda of the Conference.

Excellencies, I take this opportunity to formally present to you Mr. Michael Møller, whom I have recently appointed as the Acting Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and my Personal Representative to the Conference. Many of you know him already, and he brings long experience to this role.

I leave you today with the hope that the progress of the past session, your previous successes and a renewed sense of commitment will serve as a stepping stone towards resuming substantive work. I wish you success in your proceedings and in keeping pace with the blue horse.

**The President:** I thank the Secretary-General of the United Nations for his speech. Allow me to take this opportunity to convey to you, Mr. Ban, our appreciation for your continuing support of the Conference on Disarmament. The meeting is suspended.

*The meeting was briefly suspended.*

**The President:** The meeting is resumed. Before we proceed with our activities for the day, as you all know, a number of our colleagues left us during the intersessional period last year and the Conference has not had the time to bid them a proper farewell. Among them is the former Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, who has offered very useful suggestions aimed at the resumption of substantive work in the Conference, including the establishment of the informal working group. At the same time, allow me to welcome the new Acting Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Michael Møller, and to assure him of our efforts in support of the Conference.

On our collective behalf, I also would like to bid farewell to our most distinguished colleagues and wish them well in their respective new duty stations: Ambassador Antonio José Vallim Guerreiro of Brazil, Ambassador Alicia Victoria Arango Olmos of Colombia, Ambassador Wafaa Bassim of Egypt, Ambassador Gerard Corr of Ireland, Ambassador Juan José Gómez Camacho of Mexico, Ambassador Luvsantseren Orgil of Mongolia and Ambassador Mykola Maimeskul of Ukraine. At the same time, it is my pleasure to extend a warm welcome to the new colleagues who have assumed their responsibilities as representatives of their Governments to the Conference: Ambassador Patricia O'Brien of Ireland, Ambassador Vinicio Mati of Italy, Ambassador Toshio Sano of Japan and Ambassador Jorge Lomónaco Tonda of Mexico. On behalf of my own Government and on behalf of the Conference, I would like to take this opportunity to assure you of our full cooperation and support in your new assignments.

Allow me at this stage to make a statement in my capacity as the President of the Conference on Disarmament. At the outset, I would like to express my sincere sense of pride in assuming the role of President of the Conference on Disarmament. I assume this role with pride but at the same time with the necessary humbleness at the privilege and the responsibility given to me to be in the service of all member States of the Conference. This is the second time — after 11 years — that Israel assumes the presidency, yet it is the first time that our presidency is charged with the responsibility of opening the year of work for the Conference. Every new year brings with it new hopes as well as new opportunities, and I do hope that we can build on the positive momentum that began last year and bring about a change in the Conference this year.

At this time, I would also like to convey my sincere thanks and appreciation to my predecessor, Ambassador Patricia O'Brien of Ireland, and her team for their excellent work during the last presidency of 2013, as well as for their valuable assistance and advice given to my team in preparing our presidency. I would also like to extend my warm congratulations to my fellow Conference Presidents for this year: Ambassador Mati of Italy, Ambassador Sano of Japan, Ambassador Tileuberdi of Kazakhstan, Ambassador Andanje of Kenya and Ambassador Muhammad of Malaysia. We strongly believe that the way to go forward is through a joint effort by the six Presidents and you, the member States, to do our

utmost to achieve a significant change in the Conference's work. It is my intention as President to work closely with my five colleagues towards achieving this objective.

For over 17 years, the Conference on Disarmament has been unable to engage in substantive work. Yet, those 17 years have shown that the challenges to global security and stability have only increased. We are constantly reminded of the growing armed violence in several regions of the world. The last few days have only been a stark reminder of how unsafe the world continues to be. The terrorist attack in Kabul that claimed the lives of over 20 people, among them United Nations personnel and other internationals, casts a dark and ever-growing shadow over the prospects of our future generations. The Conference has a role to play and a responsibility in this respect to contribute towards changing this reality. However, its inability for over 17 years and more than 100 presidencies to address the long-standing stalemate is raising many questions. Israel values the Conference on Disarmament and its role as the single multilateral negotiation forum on disarmament, and it wishes to contribute to the Conference's work. We hold the view that this body is unique, as it represents the only international body — after the Security Council — that includes all the relevant States that not only are significant military Powers but can indeed contribute to a meaningful outcome, thus contributing to global security and stability. Bearing in mind those principles, the Israeli presidency has already conducted many meetings with a majority of the members of the Conference on Disarmament. The aim was to find the right way to achieve a programme of work. We take our presidency with a sense of realism, or as our Jewish sages have said in a proverb: "It is not up to you to complete the duty, but nevertheless you are not at liberty to shut it away." Therefore, we, together with the other five Presidents for this session, will be exploring options to find ways leading to the fulfilment of the Conference's objectives, serving as the international community's single negotiating forum on disarmament, as stipulated in the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. The Israeli presidency will work together with member States and the other five Presidents of this session to look for the right formula for a programme of work robust in substance and progressive over time in implementation. We shall consider also with all member States the renewal of the informal working group's mandate and explore the possibility of establishing a structured schedule of activities, in order to enhance substantive and in-depth work on all agenda items that we have adopted in previous years.

Once again, I would like to reiterate my commitment as President to explore every possibility and would like to thank you in advance for the support given to me and to wish us all a successful and fruitful year. In addition, I would like to underline the crucial role of my colleagues, the other Presidents of the Conference this year, to enhance our mutual and joint efforts to achieve a substantive programme of work.

At this time, I would like to turn to the list of speakers for today. I now give the floor to the representative of Greece, Mr. Andras Kos, on behalf of the European Union.

**Mr. Kos** (Greece): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union, Mr. President. The following countries align themselves with this statement: the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Iceland, Serbia, Albania, Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia.

Mr. President, let us first congratulate you on the assumption of the post as the first President of the Conference on Disarmament during the 2014 session. It is a challenging time for the Conference, and we would like to assure you that we will fully support you in your efforts to achieve a successful start of this session. We would also like to take this opportunity to thank the outgoing Presidents, Ambassadors Corr and O'Brien of Ireland, for their untiring efforts in leading the Conference to the adoption of the last session's report to the United Nations General Assembly.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the United Nations Secretary-General for addressing the Conference today and for his commitment and interest in the work of the Conference. We have heard again his urgent appeal to this Conference to commence substantive work and start long-overdue negotiations. We fully support and endorse this appeal, and we will work to see effective follow-up to it.

Let us also extend our warmest welcome to the newly appointed Acting Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and Personal Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General to the Conference, Mr. Michael Møller, and assure him of our full support in his endeavours.

We are pleased that this new year has started with a positive development. On 10 January 2014, the group formed by China, France, Germany, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States reached with Iran a common understanding on the implementation modalities of initial measures as set out in the Geneva Joint Plan of Action of 24 November 2013 concerning the Iranian nuclear programme. Thanks to this agreement, the foundations for a coherent, robust and smooth implementation of the Joint Plan of Action over the six-month period have been laid. Those States and Iran started the implementation of the first step yesterday, 20 January 2014, and the Council of the European Union suspended certain European Union restrictive measures against Iran for a period of six months.

One of the guiding principles of the European Union in the field of disarmament is effective multilateralism. We would also like to reiterate the long-standing commitment of European Union member States to the enlargement of the Conference. We underline the importance of continuing consultations on the expansion of the Conference's membership, and we strongly support the appointment of a special coordinator on the expansion of the Conference membership.

We are deeply troubled by the continued dysfunction of a crucial part of the disarmament machinery caused by the ongoing stalemate in the Conference. In its resolution 68/64, the United Nations General Assembly once again called upon this Conference to intensify further consultations and explore possibilities for overcoming its ongoing deadlock by adopting and implementing a balanced and comprehensive programme of work at the earliest possible date during its 2014 session.

The Conference on Disarmament, in accordance with its mandate, has the crucial role to negotiate multilateral treaties. It is the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum of the international community. Its inability to fulfil this role leaves a considerable vacuum in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation. Adopting and implementing a programme of work is extremely urgent, as we are running out of time. The informal working group established under document CD/1956/Rev.1 last year demonstrated the willingness of member States to explore ways to reach a consensus on a programme of work and to unblock the Conference at last.

For the European Union, the immediate commencement and early conclusion of the negotiation in the Conference on Disarmament of a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, on the basis of document CD/1299 and the mandate contained therein, remains a clear priority. Such a treaty constitutes an urgent necessity in the nuclear disarmament field as a complement to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. National security concerns, while legitimate, can and should be addressed as part of the negotiation process rather than a prerequisite.

We call on all Conference member States to start negotiations on such a treaty without delay and to begin work on the other issues on the agenda in a manner consistent with document CD/1864, which was the most recent programme of work adopted by the Conference. We believe that confidence-building measures can be taken immediately, without the need to wait for the commencement of formal negotiations. We therefore call on all States possessing nuclear weapons to declare and uphold an immediate moratorium on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. We are looking forward to the meetings of the Group of Governmental Experts established by resolution 67/53 of the General Assembly this year and in 2015.

We remain ready to engage in substantive discussions on the other items included in document CD/1864, that is to say, on practical steps for progressive and systematic efforts to reduce nuclear weapons with the ultimate goal of their elimination, including on approaches towards potential future work of a multilateral character; on all issues related to the prevention of an arms race in outer space; on effective international arrangements to

assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or the threat of use of nuclear weapons; as well as on the other issues on the Conference agenda.

Consistent with our engagement with civil society, we are looking forward to enhanced interaction between civil society and the Conference, thus strengthening the contribution of non-governmental organizations and research institutions to the work of this Conference.

It is clear that the adoption of a programme of work will require sustained political efforts from all of us. It is in the hands of all members to restore the Conference to the central role it can play in strengthening the non-proliferation regime and multilateral disarmament. This year should be used effectively to put the Conference back on track. We cannot afford another fruitless year.

Mr. President, we will spare no efforts to work with you to achieve this goal, and we urge all member States of the Conference to engage constructively to this end.

**The President:** I thank the representative of Greece speaking on behalf of the European Union for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of the Russian Federation, Ambassador Alexey Borodavkin.

**Mr. Borodavkin** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. President, allow me first of all to welcome you in your capacity as the first President of the 2014 session of the Conference on Disarmament and wish you success in the work before us. All the Presidents for this session can, of course, count on the support of the Russian delegation. Allow me also to congratulate Mr. Møller on his appointment as the Acting Secretary-General of the Conference.

We are grateful to the Secretary-General of the United Nations for speaking to us and sharing his ideas about ways out of the current impasse and about starting the practical work of the Conference. The thoughts he expressed are of great interest and we will give them very careful consideration.

I would like to consider a number of the most important questions on the international disarmament agenda that are directly relevant to the Conference.

First of all, I would like to welcome the agreements reached on the issues relating to the Iranian nuclear programme and the chemical weapons disarmament of Syria. We are satisfied that these agreements are being successfully implemented. The Russian Federation will continue to participate actively in implementing these and subsequent agreements on the Iranian nuclear programme and the destruction of Syrian chemical weapons.

The priority for us is undoubtedly to strengthen the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and to make it universal. We look forward to a successful outcome for the third and final session of the Preparatory Committee for the Review Conference in the spring, which will be crucial in preparing for the 2015 NPT Review Conference.

With regard to nuclear disarmament, we attach particular importance to the implementation of the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) between the Russian Federation and the United States of America on the further reduction and limitation of strategic offensive weapons.

The agreement on the New START Treaty in 2010 predictably aroused new expectation in the world community about nuclear disarmament, which many States consider is proceeding too slowly. However, the two leading nuclear Powers are undoubtedly meeting their commitments, not only in words but in deeds, on the first part of article VI of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. On the other hand, the second part, which provides for negotiations on general and complete disarmament, is often completely overlooked. In our view, that approach is hardly in line with the spirit and the letter of the Treaty.

It is very important to make the point that Russia fully shares the noble aim of freeing the planet of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons. But, to carry out this ambitious task, we will need to establish what the real priorities are and work out a

proper, balanced approach. For example, for Russia, the catastrophic nature and the unacceptability of any use of nuclear weapons is self-evident and needs no further discussion. For that reason, it is of paramount importance that any talk of the humanitarian aspect of the use of nuclear weapons should not distract attention from the aim of creating the appropriate conditions for further reductions of nuclear weapons. But in fact, what we are seeing is just the opposite: the question of the humanitarian consequences of the use of nuclear weapons has come to the fore and the strategic imperatives have been sidelined. As a result, the most difficult problems have been largely reduced to banal public statements, while the most important principle of phasing in nuclear disarmament is simply ignored. I should like to emphasize that, for us, the road map of nuclear disarmament remains the Final Document of the 2010 Review Conference, which was adopted by consensus.

The experience of Russia and the United States in reaching a whole range of agreements on reducing nuclear arsenals illustrates the fact that there is no short cut to the attainment of our common objective. Moreover, the current world situation, most regrettably, is not at all favourable to the achievement of new agreements in the field of nuclear disarmament. Negative factors undermining strategic stability are gathering strength. The greatest challenge on the way to a nuclear-free world lies in the unilateral plans to establish a global missile defence system. In their current form, they have the potential for destabilization, since they contradict the basic principle that it is unacceptable for a State to strengthen its own security to the detriment of the security of other States. The failure to observe this principle, bearing in mind the close connection between strategic defensive and strategic offensive weapons, may have extremely negative consequences, including for the disarmament agenda.

In addition to missile defence systems, a real challenge is posed by plans to put into action the concept of the “prompt global strike”, by the imbalances of conventional weapons, by the insufficient progress towards the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and so on. We are confident that all States with military nuclear potential will gradually join efforts to achieve nuclear disarmament.

Yet another important factor that makes it difficult to move towards new agreements on nuclear weapons has to do with the growing risk that outer space will become a scene of armed confrontation, owing to the fact that there is no legally binding prohibition on this.

That is why the main priority for the Russian Federation at the Conference on Disarmament is to prevent an arms race in outer space. Interest in this question is growing, in view of its obvious relevance. The evidence for this is the broad support enjoyed by the resolution on the issue at the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly.

The reasons for the negative attitude of most States to the prospect of the placement of weapons in outer space are entirely understandable. Above all, such weapons could strike anywhere in the world, have a high level of preparedness for use and are able to launch an undetected attack against space or terrestrial objects. All this will increase suspicion among States and undermine strategic stability.

We believe that the treaty drafted by Russia and China for consideration by the Conference as long ago as February 2008 could be useful not only in prohibiting the placement of weapons in outer space but also in ensuring predictability in the strategic situation in the world overall. We would like to inform the Conference that the draft Treaty on the Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space and of the Threat or Use of Force against Outer Space Objects has undergone some changes in the light of proposals and observations made by a significant number of States and the conclusions of the work of the Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-building Measures in Outer Space Activities.

The draft Treaty is thus becoming the product of a collective effort by the international community. The revised version of the Treaty is currently being finalized and will be submitted to the Conference in the very near future.

The measures developed by the Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-building Measures in Outer Space Activities could, in our view, form an important component of the Russian-Chinese draft Treaty. We rely on close cooperation

between member States of the Conference on the question of the ways and means by which such measures could be put into practice.

A significant step forward towards ensuring security in outer space and taking an effective preventive measure could be the imposition of an obligation on States not to be the first to deploy weapons in outer space.

As you will know, the States members of the Collective Security Treaty Organization have assumed this commitment. Russia has signed similar bilateral statements with Brazil, Indonesia and Sri Lanka. In view of the importance and relevance of the issue, we intend to introduce a draft resolution at the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly on no first placement of weapons in outer space. We look forward to close cooperation with member States of the Conference in this matter and an active discussion of the issue as one of the thematic discussions at the Conference.

The Russian delegation has said on a number of occasions that it supports the opening of negotiations on the fissile material cut-off treaty as part of the global balanced programme of work of the Conference and on the basis of the Shannon mandate. We continue to believe that the comprehensive discussion of a possible agreement should take place only within the Conference and with the participation of all the countries that currently have a nuclear weapons arsenal. Any other approach will greatly reduce the effectiveness of work on the treaty and is unlikely to provide any added value.

An extremely important challenge facing all of us is the continuing stagnation of the Conference. And today, opening the 2014 session, we are again, like last year, forced to address the question of its future prospects.

I should like here to confirm our basic position: in our view, the way out of the current impasse is not to attempt to break up the United Nations disarmament mechanisms but to show political will, to be patient and to undertake the painstaking work needed to overcome objective conflicts and seek a compromise.

It is in the interests of the international community to preserve the Conference, which is the most important multilateral negotiating forum in the field of disarmament. For that reason, we call for the utmost responsibility and creativity in seeking a common denominator for the earliest possible start of substantive discussions on the Conference, as soon as the conditions for that are right.

Significant damage has been done to the highly regarded United Nations disarmament mechanisms and to the Conference itself by decisions that, in practice, have led to a number of issues on the Conference agenda being distributed to various discussion platforms. Attempts to hand these questions over to the General Assembly, with its principle of the non-consensual adoption of decisions, will give only the appearance of progress, while in fact they could well lead to even greater division and sharper conflicts. Clearly, problems affecting the vital interests of the national security of States, including nuclear disarmament, cannot be resolved simply on the basis of votes.

As a temporary transitional measure, the Russian delegation has put forward the idea of agreeing on a programme of work for the Conference providing not for negotiations but for extensive discussion of the four key issues on the agenda of the Conference. This was the idea behind the joint statement delivered to the First Committee in support of the Conference on Disarmament by a group of interested States at the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly. Sixteen countries, representing various groups and continents, associated themselves with the statement.

We are sure that the adoption of the so-called simplified discussion-focused programme of work for the Conference would be a step in the right direction. It would open up the opportunity for all interested States to join in the formal structured and results-oriented discussion of the key questions on the agenda, which could lead to multilateral negotiations and, ultimately, legally binding agreements.

I should like to emphasize that we are deliberately going along with the discussion mandate on the issue of preventing an arms race in outer space, even though we are ready to start negotiations immediately on the question of weapons in outer space.

Mr. President, as the first President of the 2014 session of the Conference, you have taken on the difficult task of setting the tone for the practical work of the Conference. Allow me, once again, to assure you of our readiness to engage in constructive cooperation.

**The President:** I thank the representative of the Russian Federation for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Italy, Ambassador Vinicio Mati.

**Mr. Mati (Italy):** Mr. President, at the outset let me congratulate you on the assumption of this important responsibility. We wish you all the best in carrying out your task, and we assure you of the full support of this delegation.

Speaking as the country that will serve as the next President of the Conference on Disarmament, we are convinced that the full and coordinated engagement of all six Presidents will be a key factor in the Conference resuming its activities. There is an urgent need to bring the Conference back to work, as strongly reiterated by the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, in his statement this morning, to which Italy fully subscribes. I would also like to welcome and express my congratulations to Mr. Michael Møller on his appointment as the Acting Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament. I am sure that his personal capabilities and outstanding competencies will be of great help for our work.

Italy aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier on behalf of the European Union. There are some issues we would like to recall from a national point of view.

We continue to believe that effective multilateralism is crucial in the field of disarmament and, in this context, the role of the Conference as the single multilateral negotiating body on disarmament remains of paramount importance. We strongly believe that the ongoing stalemate undermines its credibility. The Conference should resume its work without any further delay. We hope that this will be the case in the current annual session. In this framework, the adoption of a programme of work should be, of course, our main concern, and all of us should be deeply engaged in reaching this goal. To this end, all delegations should show flexibility to the maximum extent possible. That is why we supported last year the proposal of the Conference's previous Secretary-General, Mr. Tokayev, to establish an informal working group with a mandate to produce a programme of work robust in substance and progressive over time in implementation.

Unfortunately, the discussions conducted in the framework of the informal working group showed that further negotiations are needed for a programme of work to be adopted. In the meantime, we stand ready to support any constructive solution that can allow the Conference to carry on its activities.

We should not spare any effort in going the extra mile to meet the expectations that led the international community to create this forum. We have an immense responsibility. Let us show that we are worthy of the trust that has been placed in us. I can assure you, Mr. President, that my delegation is willing to participate actively in this endeavour.

**The President:** I thank the representative of Italy for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair.

At this point, it is my pleasure to extend a warm welcome to our new colleague, Ambassador D. Bala Venkatesh Varma of India, who has assumed responsibilities as representative of the Government of India to the Conference on Disarmament.

I now give the floor to the representative of the United States of America, Mr. Christopher Buck.

**Mr. Buck (United States of America):** Mr. President, I am pleased to congratulate Israel — and you personally — on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament as we begin the 2014 session. The challenges the Conference will confront this year are no less difficult and no less important than those this forum faced in 2013, and you can count on the full support of the United States in your efforts to guide the work of the Conference. I am pleased also to congratulate Michael Møller on his assumption of his duties as the Acting Secretary-General of the Conference. Allow me also to express our

appreciation for United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon joining us this morning and underlining the importance of our work.

Much has, and has been and will be said about the current deadlock of the Conference on Disarmament and the pressing need to return this body to its abiding vocation, which is to negotiate disarmament treaties. The Conference and its predecessor bodies have a long history of delivering landmark agreements, all of which were contentious in their own right and took years to complete. Mindful of that legacy and the Conference's unique and enduring potential, the United States certainly shares the growing impatience of many in the international community to end the impasse of the Conference.

In confronting the current impasse, it is essential to avoid any temptation to lower the level of our collective ambition. We take this view against the backdrop of the ongoing ambitious United States agenda to eliminate the threat of nuclear weapons. Working with our partner Russia, no country has taken deeper and broader reductions to reduce its nuclear arsenal. The United States has reduced its nuclear weapons stockpile by 84 per cent since its highest levels during the cold war, and this work continues. The daily intensive implementation of the New START Treaty, including the exchange of over 5,600 treaty notifications and a total of more than 100 on-site inspections conducted by the United States and the Russian Federation since its entry into force nearly three years ago, is on track to cut American and Russian deployed strategic nuclear warheads to their lowest levels since the 1950s, and even as this vital implementation work progresses on schedule, the United States is seeking to negotiate further nuclear reductions with Russia.

This steady, necessarily painstaking step-by-step process of nuclear disarmament has ensured continued strategic stability at dramatically lower levels of nuclear weapons. It has also produced methodologies and habits of cooperation that are essential to our achieving transparency and required confidence in security frameworks at increasingly lower levels of nuclear arsenals going forward. Indeed, we are proud of this progressively evolving United States-Russian legacy of verified nuclear disarmament, which we are convinced will provide valuable impetus and useful tools for multilateral nuclear disarmament approaches in the future. In recent years these bilateral efforts have been complemented by a very active agenda in the conference of the five nuclear-weapon States (P-5), including the ongoing development of a common reference for nuclear-disarmament-related definitions in a P-5 working group led by China, and other efforts by the United Kingdom and France to promote transparency and to further develop verification methodologies.

In the meantime, we believe the next logical — and indeed necessary — step to achieve our shared nuclear disarmament goals is the negotiation of a fissile material cut-off treaty. The fissile material cut-off treaty is an absolutely essential step that all States could contribute to achieving immediately. Simply stated, we cannot get to the end if we do not start at the beginning. A verifiable ban on the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons is necessary if we are to create conditions for a world without nuclear weapons.

In approaching this objective, the United States continues to view the Conference on Disarmament as the preferred forum for negotiations of a fissile material cut-off treaty. Because the Conference operates by consensus, ensuring equitable protection of national security interests in a negotiation, it is uniquely situated to negotiate such a treaty. In the year ahead, we look forward to the upcoming meetings of the Group of Governmental Experts on a fissile material cut-off treaty, which can usefully complement — but cannot supplant — our efforts to promote negotiations of a fissile material cut-off treaty in the Conference. It is time to advance this core international goal, which must be integral to any programme of work for the Conference.

We do not discount the importance of other core issues on the Conference's agenda: nuclear disarmament, negative security assurances and the prevention of an arms race in outer space. We are willing to engage in substantive discussions on each of these issues in the Conference as part of a consensus programme of work. At the same time, the United States has taken practical steps to advance each of these issues. We are pleased to support the United Nations Group of Governmental Experts' study of transparency and confidence-

building measures in outer space activities, and to co-sponsor United Nations General Assembly resolution 68/50, which allows for further consideration of the study's recommendations. There are important, pragmatic, bilateral and multilateral measures that States can take to enhance space security, such as the completion and implementation of an international code of conduct on outer space activities.

The United States also continues to support the extension of negative security assurances through protocols to nuclear-weapons-free-zone treaties. In that regard, we are consulting with the parties of the Central Asian zone to resolve outstanding issues, and we remain committed to signing the protocol to the South-east Asia nuclear-weapon-free zone as soon as possible. I would emphasize also that the United States continues to work determinedly with Ambassador Laajava and the co-conveners to create the conditions for a conference on a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction. We are committed to holding a meaningful conference that includes all States of the region, and we continue to encourage the States of the region to engage directly with each other in order to bridge remaining differences so that a conference can be held at the soonest possible time.

In looking to the year ahead in the Conference on Disarmament, it is important to recall that the 2013 session of the Conference did in fact achieve a noteworthy consensus late in the year. While it was not an agreement on a programme of work, the decision to create an informal working group with a mandate to develop a programme of work robust in substance and progressive over time shifted the dynamic of the conversation, providing for more interactive exchanges regarding the obstacles and opportunities facing the Conference's member States as we try to get the Conference back to work. Should a viable programme of work remain elusive as we proceed with our deliberations this year, the United States would be open to reviving the informal working group at an appropriate point with a view to testing that format further as a mechanism for overcoming the current deadlock and achieving a programme of work that responds fully to the Conference's vocation and potential at the current juncture in multilateral disarmament. At the same time, we hope that the tools offered by the Conference for substantive engagement on important issues will be deployed to provide for fruitful and productive discussions on items before the Conference.

Mindful of all that the Conference has accomplished in the past years and of its tremendous potential, the United States looks forward to working creatively and persistently with the Conference's member and observer States to advance our shared interests and common security.

**The President:** I thank the representative of the United States of America for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Mexico, Ambassador Jorge Lomónaco.

**Mr. Lomónaco (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*):** Mr. President, as I am taking the floor for the first time before the Conference on Disarmament, I would like to assure you of my delegation's support in the discharge of your duties and my readiness to collaborate with the members of the Conference and the community in Geneva.

Recent events in the disarmament sphere have shown that the international community is eager to make progress on this issue. A high-level meeting on nuclear disarmament was held in conjunction with the General Assembly of the United Nations last September. Prior to that, the General Assembly had adopted resolution 67/56 on taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations; pursuant to that resolution, it established an open-ended working group which has yet to yield its full results.

Meanwhile, the accession of Syria to the Chemical Weapons Convention on 17 September 2013 was an important step towards the universalization of that instrument, which had been negotiated by the Conference. These events and the well-deserved Nobel Peace Prize awarded to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in 2013 show the value of diplomacy and international law as tools for the prohibition of inhumane weapons and the importance of rigorous multilateral verification systems.

In the area of conventional weapons, Mexico welcomes, in particular, one of the greatest arms-related successes at the multilateral level in recent years: the negotiation and

adoption by the General Assembly of the Arms Trade Treaty, which was opened for signature on 3 June 2013. Mexico was the seventh country to ratify this Treaty and has issued a declaration of provisional application with the hope that it will enter into force as early as possible.

The existence of nuclear weapons has been a source of great concern ever since the man-made disaster caused by the atomic explosions at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The preamble to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons reflects this concern. It was also the theme of the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, which established this Conference in 1978 and in which the General Assembly expressed its belief that nuclear disarmament was essential for the strengthening of international peace and security and for the economic and social advancement of all peoples.

We know that a nuclear explosion, whether deliberate or accidental, would have huge and long-lasting global consequences. That is why delegations from 128 countries met in Oslo in March 2013 to discuss these matters with representatives of international organizations and civil society. Those very useful discussions enabled us to estimate the impact of a nuclear explosion and revealed that, in reality, no country or international organization would be able to cope with the horrific consequences of an atomic explosion in today's world. We must continue such discussions in order to back up our concerns with hard data.

With that in mind, Mexico will host the second international Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons in Nayarit on 13 and 14 February 2014. We encourage all States Members of the United Nations and, especially, all members of the Conference on Disarmament to attend the Nayarit conference and to delve more deeply into this issue, which should be a central focus of all our discussions.

It is worth recalling that concern about the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons is what led the Conference on Disarmament to negotiate a nuclear test ban and it should continue to drive our work to achieve non-proliferation. The possibility of a humanitarian disaster should be considered reason enough to overhaul the disarmament process and relaunch multilateral negotiations to continue building the international legal framework that is needed for a nuclear-weapon-free world.

In this day and age, a global security system that ensures international peace and security can no longer be based on arms, threats, damage, destruction or weapons having an uncontrollable or indiscriminate impact of this kind.

My country has offered its full support to this forum and its predecessors, for they were established to achieve what Mexico considers to be a goal of the utmost importance. That is why — as we have mentioned so often — the lack of substantive work in the Conference is unacceptable to us.

My delegation was, of course, delighted by the presence of the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, this morning and even more so by his words to us. I am referring to his interest in the Conference, his assessment of the situation and his concerns, which are shared by my delegation, and above all, his proposals on how to break this unacceptable deadlock. My delegation is willing to give serious thought to the approach outlined here this morning by the Secretary-General.

As always, Mexico will participate constructively in this session and will contribute fully, once again, with the hope of making progress on the disarmament agenda. We are nevertheless aware that the motivations that led to this impasse are as powerful today as they have been for years and that, unless we change those motivations, no progress can be made. We continue to urge members that share our point of view and civil society representatives to support our efforts in this regard.

**The President:** I thank the representative of Mexico for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Belarus, Ambassador Mikhail Khvostov.

**Mr. Khvostov** (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. President, allow me, on behalf of the Belarusian delegation, to congratulate you on your election to the position of President of the Conference on Disarmament. You can count on the full support of our delegation in carrying out your mandate.

We welcome the address just given on the work of the Conference by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Ban Ki-moon. It should undoubtedly be taken into account by all delegations as an important signal for the activation of efforts to restore the Conference to full health.

The Republic of Belarus considers the Conference to be the sole multilateral negotiating body of global significance in the field of disarmament and arms control. Belarus is in favour of the Conference resuming its substantive work.

Please allow me to share some thoughts on organizational aspects of the Conference's activities at the current session.

Belarus will be prepared to support enlarging the membership of the Conference, on condition that the widest possible consensus among delegations is achieved on this issue.

We support the idea of involving civil society more extensively in the work of the Conference.

As we know, there are serious differences of opinion among delegations on what are the root causes of the crisis affecting the Conference. Some delegations consider that the obstacle to the start of negotiations within the Conference is the existing rules governing its work. Our delegation, on the contrary, believes that the existing rules of procedure are balanced. The principle of consensus set out in the rules of procedure in respect of all decisions taken by the Conference constitutes a guarantee that the highest national security interests of member States are taken into account and ensures that any instrument produced by the Conference will be inclusive and universal in nature.

Belarus is in favour of retaining the existing procedure for the appointment and rotation of Presidents of the Conference. We consider that this is a democratic formula for the rotation of Presidents, since it allows each delegation in turn to preside over the Conference.

In our view, the Conference is failing to perform its negotiating functions as the result of an imbalance between States' interests and their different approaches to ways and means of ensuring national and regional security. To put this right and to seek an international consensus requires time and substantial efforts, particularly on the part of the permanent members of the Security Council.

The Conference must continue to seek a compromise decision that is targeted at a start to negotiations.

I should like to share with you some thoughts about the substantive questions relating to the activities of the Conference.

We support the "traditional" agenda, on the principle that the current agenda provides every delegation with the opportunity to express its opinion on practically every aspect of disarmament issues.

We are definitely in favour of resuming the negotiating process in the Conference this year. Belarus does not set any prior conditions on the adoption of the Conference's programme of work or its implementation.

We will be ready to support the adoption of a negotiating mandate on any of the core issues, such as nuclear disarmament, fissile material, the prevention of an arms race in outer space or negative security assurances.

From our national point of view, our priority remains the prohibition of new types of weapons of mass destruction.

In the event that the achievement of an "optimistic negotiating scenario" proves impossible, our delegation will be ready to support the adoption of a discussion-focused programme of work for the Conference.

We will not object to the re-establishment of an informal working group this year to seek agreement on the Conference's programme of work.

On the basis of an analysis of the whole range of opinions that have been expressed in recent years, we can say that in this chamber not one delegation has declared opposition in principle to the start of a negotiating process in the Conference. This means that the Conference retains the requisite potential for the resumption of substantive work and we must continue to search for compromise options and outcomes. It is obvious that we must consult one another more — not only here in the Conference on Disarmament but also in other forums. And in that context, the role and the good offices of the five nuclear-weapon States take on greater importance, since they can play a significant part in achieving progress in the complicated international relations we face today.

I repeat once again that, in our view, the Conference remains the sole multilateral negotiating body in the field of disarmament and arms control in which all the world's key States participate. We must not forget that the principal task of our Conference is to uphold the interests of the whole of humanity, where disarmament is concerned.

**The President:** I thank the representative of Belarus for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Germany, Ambassador Michael Biontino.

**Mr. Biontino (Germany):** Mr. President, I would like to align myself with the statement just made on behalf of the European Union.

Let me congratulate you, Mr. President, on the assumption of the first presidency of the Conference on Disarmament during its 2014 session. We hope that you will be able to guide us in our attempts to overcome the Conference's stalemate, which has been overshadowing our work since 1996. But things have started moving. Already in last year's session, we were able to register progress. Here our special thanks go to the outgoing Presidents and the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament at the time, Mr. Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, who laid the foundation for these advances.

I also would like to assure the newly appointed Acting Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, Mr. Michael Møller, of the unfailing support of Germany. We wish him a warm welcome and look forward to fruitful collaboration.

Allow me also to express my Government's deep appreciation to the Secretary-General of the United Nations for honouring the Conference with his presence today. We take this as a further sign of his deep and continued commitment to the Conference here in Geneva and to disarmament issues in general. Indeed, in order to overcome the stalemate we have to explore new avenues and be open to new ideas. Germany for its part has consistently advocated the long-overdue expansion of the Conference and a measured revision of its working methods.

Mr. President, in the light of the state of affairs we now face in the Conference, we believe that you, together with the Ambassadors of Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan and Kenya, as forthcoming Presidents of the 2014 session, will have to shoulder a great responsibility. A holistic approach is needed to accelerate progress towards a balanced programme of work based on document CD/1864 as well as the commencement of the negotiation of a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear devices on the basis of the mandate contained in document CD/1299. Let me assure you of my delegation's full support for your important and difficult task.

As this is the first meeting of this year's session, allow me to offer a brief review. The past year can indeed be qualified as a good year for disarmament. Progress is possible if we do not give up too soon.

The adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty after some eight years of difficult negotiations was indeed a remarkable achievement. And we have reason to believe that this milestone treaty will obtain further acceptance in the future.

With the accession of Syria to the Chemical Weapons Convention in September 2013, a solution was finally found to deal with the threat posed by chemical weapons in this country. It is deplorable, however, that this move only came after chemical weapons had

been used in the Syrian Arab Republic. It proved as well that arms control and disarmament treaties remain an essential element of international humanitarian law and security policy in today's world. The absolute ban on chemical weapons is a lesson for the future.

The successful talks of the group formed by China, France, Germany, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States with Iran about the Iranian nuclear programme led to a common understanding on how to implement the Geneva Joint Action Plan of last November. After many years of challenging negotiations, it was possible to reach a solid agreement including verifiable steps concerning the Iranian nuclear programme. Here in the Conference on Disarmament we were able to make some progress, albeit limited.

We sincerely hope that the establishment of the informal working group tasked with producing a programme of work that is robust in substance will change the dynamics of our discussions towards making them more transparent and vivid.

This said, we are all aware of the fact that the run-up to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference will be challenging. We hope that progress with respect to all three pillars of the Treaty can be made. The NPT action plan provides us with an indispensable road map. In this context, we welcome the proposal made by President Obama in Berlin to initiate negotiations with the Russian Federation on new cuts beyond the New START Treaty. We also continue to support the efforts of the facilitator to prepare the ground for the conference on a zone free from weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East.

Going into 2014, we have to be aware that the changing disarmament environment will substantially affect our work in the Conference on Disarmament. To be clear: the relevance of the Conference will be put to the test.

In 2014 the Group of Governmental Experts for a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other explosive devices will start its work. We expect this Group to make substantive recommendations on possible aspects of such a treaty. Ultimately, the Conference should be in a position to integrate these recommendations into its work.

Moreover, at its sixty-eighth session the General Assembly took a number of decisions with immediate relevance for the Conference. The year 2014 will be a critical stage in the preparations for the 2015 NPT Review Conference. Progress in the Conference on Disarmament will be essential for a successful NPT review conference.

For all these reasons, we believe that 2014 will be critical for the Conference on Disarmament as well. Our relevance will be further questioned if we do not succeed in coming to an agreement on the most urgent issues before us.

Consequently, we should — without further delay and after deciding on our agenda — start our work in the informal working group to explore all possibilities to come to a programme of work. For this reason, its mandate should be renewed as soon as possible. We believe that the informal working group is, for the time being, the most promising approach to overcome our inability to reach consensus on a programme of work.

Secondly, we advocate that, as a result of the first round of discussions of the informal working group in 2013, a substantive schedule of activities should be agreed upon for 2014. We believe that the approach developed in the informal working group provides a valid basis. The substantive schedule of activities should provide, in a balanced way, room and time for substantive discussions on all the issues on the Conference's agenda. This cannot replace the necessary negotiations but should prepare the ground.

In the light of the above, I would like to underline again the need to come to a coherent approach for 2014 in order to further accelerate progress towards a balanced programme of work. Coordination among all the Presidents of the Conference for the coming year is essential to achieve this. Let me assure you that the German delegation is prepared to support you in every conceivable way. After all, we have no time to lose.

**The President:** I thank the representative of Germany for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Canada, Ms. Kelly Anderson.

**Ms. Anderson (Canada):** Mr. President, it is a pleasure to see Israel take up the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament, and on behalf of the Government of Canada, let me congratulate you on your assumption of this duty. You can be assured of our delegation's full support in assisting you to fulfil the functions the Conference has entrusted to you. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for having joined us today.

Israel faces the same challenge that every recent incoming President of the Conference has confronted since the negotiation of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty: finding the most effective means to return this Conference to its mandated role as the world's single multilateral nuclear disarmament body. Canada is confident that Israel will do its utmost to seek to identify the components of a programme of work that might command consensus. However, we are very aware of the obstacles that may well prevent you from being successful in this endeavour.

In this regard, we greatly appreciate the Secretary-General's emphasis on ensuring that this body finds a positive way forward. It is not the first time the United Nations Secretary-General has exhorted us to return this body to substantive work. It is now up to all States to exercise the necessary political will and give serious consideration to the best interests and expectations of the international community, alongside our own national interests, in the true spirit of compromise and consensus.

Canada would like to see progress on the core issues identified and a return to substantive negotiation, beginning with the negotiation of a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. The work of the Group of Governmental Experts on such a treaty will begin in the near future, and we hope it will be able to make a modest contribution to advancing deliberation on this issue. It will not, however, replace what is truly required: negotiation of a treaty in the Conference on Disarmament, which has been repeatedly called for by the United Nations General Assembly.

Canada was pleased to join consensus in 2013 on the creation of an informal working group of the Conference. Our hope had been that the informal working group would offer an innovative means for all delegations to assume responsibility for returning the Conference to work, and not leave this solely to the current President and the other five Presidents. Unfortunately, this was not possible in 2013, and not all States approached the informal working group with the requisite spirit of cooperation and a willingness to work together to achieve a common purpose. However, the informal working group was ultimately not afforded sufficient time to work in 2013, and we believe, should traditional efforts to achieve a programme of work again fail, consideration should be given to renewing its mandate.

**The President:** I thank the representative of Canada for her statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Ireland, Ambassador Patricia O'Brien.

**Ms. O'Brien (Ireland):** Mr. President, let me take this opportunity to congratulate you on the assumption of your role as President of the Conference on Disarmament. My delegation would like to express its appreciation for the work which you have already undertaken since assuming office, including of course the adoption of the agenda for 2014 already this morning, and we would like to assure you of our cooperation.

My delegation fully aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union. We welcome the address of the Secretary-General of the United Nations to the Conference, and we fully share his disappointment that the Conference did not resume its substantive work in 2013. We also support his exhortation to us that we overcome the pervasive cycle of pessimism and that we move forward in a positive and constructive spirit.

I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome the Acting Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Møller, and to assure him of my delegation's full support. I also

wish to convey the gratitude of my delegation for the support and assistance rendered by the Deputy Secretary-General, Mr. Sareva, and his team throughout the course of the Irish presidency.

My delegation would like to express again its appreciation to all members of the Conference for the flexible and cooperative spirit shown in the finalization of the annual report of the Conference for 2013 and the resolution thereon at the General Assembly. The willingness to explore new ways in which to get the Conference back to the vital and substantive work that it has been charged with by the international community was evident in the work of the informal working group which was so ably led by Ambassadors Gallegos and Woolcott.

During consultations on the resolution for the General Assembly on the Conference's annual report, and during the thematic debate on the disarmament machinery at the First Committee, there was an overwhelming expression of appreciation for the vital role that the Conference has carried out in the past year: that of the negotiation of multilateral legally binding instruments in the field of disarmament. There was also an equal expression of a shared desire by the international community that the Conference should resume this vital role.

It is the firm belief of my delegation that, acting collectively as a conference, we can again live up to the trust placed in the Conference on Disarmament to negotiate. It is the equally firm belief of my delegation that, in order to live up to this expectation, each of us will need to think creatively and be prepared to make accommodations.

**The President:** I thank the representative of Ireland for her statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of the Netherlands, Ambassador Henk Cor van der Kwast.

**Mr. Van der Kwast (Netherlands):** Mr. President, first of all, let me congratulate you on your assumption of the first presidency of the Conference on Disarmament for this year. We think that, with you, we are in excellent hands for managing what will not be an easy task. Let me therefore assure you that you can count on the full support of this delegation.

I would like also to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his excellent and inspiring speech. His message was clear and well understood. The Conference on Disarmament cannot afford to waste another year. The world demands more progress in multilateral nuclear disarmament. There is work to do.

As the Secretary-General said in his address at the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on disarmament, the General Assembly — in its very first resolution — identified nuclear disarmament as a leading goal of the United Nations. The objective of general and complete disarmament remains a top priority. Failure carries a heavy price. As we will discuss in Mexico, the humanitarian consequences of the failure to further disarm are too costly. It is up to all of us to make further disarmament happen and to get the Conference on Disarmament back to work.

I also would like to take this opportunity to warmly welcome Mr. Michael Møller, our newly appointed Acting Secretary-General. We wish him every success in his new functions and we are looking forward to working with him.

We align ourselves with the European Union statement and would like to make some additional remarks. Every new year comes with new hope, hope that we can realize things we could not realize last year. We need this hope to keep searching for new solutions to old problems. The new year so far looks promising with the understanding reached by the group made up of China, France, Germany, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States and by Iran on the Iranian nuclear programme. Talking about hope, we indeed hope this understanding will prove to be the foundation on which further progress can be built.

Our hope is that this year we may find a solution to end the stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament. That is a big hope, and I do not want to be naive about it. However, rather than starting with endless speeches about stagnation in the Conference on

Disarmament, we think it is important to talk about a possible solution, and we want therefore to start on a positive note. How can we move forward? Finding agreement on a programme of work at this moment may prove to be a bridge too far. However, in our view we have an obligation to ourselves, to the importance of our work and to the outside world to keep on trying. To this end, we would be in favour of continuing the work of the informal working group in 2014. We thank Ambassadors Gallegos and Woolcott for the work done so far. The informal working group met a few times in 2013, and we think it is worthwhile to continue and to see whether we can agree on a programme of work by negotiating one in this working group.

We ended 2013 with floating the idea of a schedule of activities prepared by the six Presidents of the session. This is not our preferred option. As is well known, we would rather start with the immediate negotiation of a fissile material cut-off treaty, as tasked to us by the Secretary-General on several occasions. However, we think the idea could and should be seriously considered of working on the basis of a schedule of activities. We think there could be merit in discussing our core items in expert panels led by appointed coordinators to see if progress on those issues is possible.

The informal working group and the schedule of activities can be a pragmatic start that can provide us with the spark to get a fire burning, and that is exactly what we have been asked to do.

The Secretary-General talked about blue horses. In the Conference, the horses have for too long behind the carriage. Let us now put them in front to pull the Conference towards real progress.

**The President:** I thank the representative of the Netherlands for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of France, Ambassador Jean-Hugues Simon-Michel.

**Mr. Simon-Michel** (France) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, as I am taking the floor for the first time this year, allow me to begin by congratulating you on assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and warmly wishing you and the delegation of Israel every success. Let me also take this opportunity to congratulate Mr. Michael Møller on his appointment as the Acting Secretary-General of the Conference.

France naturally aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union. Like most member States, France would like the Conference to find a way out of the current impasse and fulfil its core mandate of negotiating, as recalled by the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

To achieve this, we would do well to keep in mind the progress made in recent years. One major accomplishment was document CD/1299 and the mandate that it contains; another was document CD/1864, which remains a key reference. We must do all that we can to build on these achievements, rather than go back on them.

In 2013, an informal working group was established by the Conference. The negotiations held by this group have shown that member States are eager to reach a consensus on a programme of work that will enable us to break the current deadlock. This is an extremely positive development.

Looking ahead, the opening of the 2014 session is an opportunity for me to outline the issues on which France wishes to focus this year. The negotiation of a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices — or fissile material cut-off treaty — in the Conference is a long-standing commitment of the international community and, as you know, a priority for France and for all States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Action 15 of the Final Document of the 2010 NPT Review Conference establishes this priority, which is in full accordance with document CD/1864, the last programme of work adopted by the Conference in 2009 under the Algerian presidency. Launching these negotiations, pursuant to document CD/1299 and the mandate contained therein, is the next logical step towards nuclear disarmament.

Having limited improvements to weapon quality by banning nuclear tests, we must now limit increases in quantity by focusing on the inputs used in making nuclear weapons, namely fissile material. When it comes to nuclear disarmament, we feel it is essential to take substantive and progressive action, without straying to pursue worthy but unrealistic goals.

The resolution that established the Group of Governmental Experts on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices was adopted at the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly of the United Nations by a majority of 166 Member States, which illustrates the strong commitment of the international community to this initiative. Without waiting for the Conference to start negotiations, France stopped producing fissile material for nuclear weapons and dismantled its production facilities at the Pierrelatte and Marcoule sites in a fully transparent and irreversible fashion. Representatives of member States of the Conference were invited to visit the facilities during their dismantlement in 2008 and 2009.

France will therefore participate actively in the work of the Group of Governmental Experts. However, as emphasized in General Assembly resolution 67/53, it remains necessary for the Conference to agree on a programme of work that includes the immediate commencement of negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

Of course, there is also much work to be done in other disarmament forums in 2014. Allow me, in this regard, to highlight two particular challenges. The first relates to the most recent Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. During that meeting, on the initiative of France, a mandate was adopted on lethal autonomous weapons systems. The informal meeting of experts to be held from 13 to 16 May will be an opportunity to clarify and broaden our understanding of this subject, taking into account the technical, legal, ethical and operational aspects. These developments show that the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons remains a unique and relevant forum in which to discuss emerging issues.

Lastly, after the successful adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty in 2013, France hopes that 2014 will see the entry into force and implementation of this instrument. The Arms Trade Treaty will go down in history as the first major universal treaty of the twenty-first century in the field of international security and arms control. I am therefore delighted to announce that, on 23 December 2013, the President of the French Republic promulgated the act that enables France to ratify the Arms Trade Treaty. My country's instrument of ratification will be deposited as soon as the legal procedures of the European Union have been completed.

Mr. President, you have the difficult task of preparing and submitting to us a programme of work. I understand how much of a challenge that will be. Now more than ever, it is urgently necessary for the Conference to focus on its original mandate. I know that you will make every effort to foster consensus on a programme of work and to enable the Conference to resolve this regrettable situation that has lasted for too long. You have my full support and that of my delegation.

**The President:** I thank the representative of France for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. Would any other delegation like to take the floor? That does not seem to be the case. I will now hand the microphone over to the secretariat, which would like to make a few comments.

**Mr. Fung** (Secretary of the Conference): More so than comments, I would just like to share some information relating to documentation. You have before you this morning the following documentation: the draft agenda, which is contained in document CD/WP.578; and the note by the President contained in document CD/WP.577 and issued in English only, containing the requests by non-member States to participate in the work of the 2014 session. We have also placed before you today a copy of the United Nations Office of Disarmament Affairs publication entitled "Programmes financed from voluntary contributions, 2010-2013".

I would like to remind you that you should check the pigeonholes, where you will find additional documents if you have not already done so. The additional documents which have already been circulated include document CD/INF.66 — that one is in English only — and the letter of the Secretary-General of the United Nations to the Conference contained in document CD/1964. All of these have been distributed to your pigeonholes; please check those boxes regularly, as some of them are overflowing.

**The President:** This concludes our business for today. The next plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament will be held on 28 January 2014.

*The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.*