

Conference on Disarmament

28 January 2014

English

Final record of the one thousand three hundred and third plenary meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 28 January 2014, at 10.05 a.m.

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

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The President: I call to order the 1303rd plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

Before we proceed, I would like to extend a warm welcome to the new colleagues who have assumed their responsibilities as representatives of their Governments to the Conference: Ambassador Pedro Motta Pinto Coelho of Brazil, Ambassador Vaanchig Purevdorj of Mongolia and Ambassador Yuriy Klymenko of Ukraine.

On behalf of the Conference and on behalf of my own Government, I would like to take this opportunity to assure you of our full cooperation and support in your new assignments.

Let me now turn to the additional requests from States not members of the Conference to participate in our work during the 2014 session. Since the plenary meeting of last Tuesday, the States that have submitted their requests are Brunei Darussalam, Denmark and Malta. These requests are now before you in document CD/WP.577/Add.1, which includes all the requests that the secretariat received up to yesterday, 27 January 2014, at 4 p.m. Any requests from non-member States received after that date will be presented for your consideration and decision at the next plenary meeting. Are there any comments on these requests? May 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: Let me now update you on my consultations since our last meetings. We all heard the message and the call of the Secretary-General of the United Nations last week in our plenary, which in essence called on the Conference on Disarmament to take action. I would also point out that he described the informal working group as an innovative attempt in order to take modest steps forward, and he also called on the Conference to resume substantive work. I take these two messages of the Secretary-General as my road map, and I plan to execute and fulfil my mandate to the full. In this regard, I am currently focused on presenting the Conference with a programme of work. It is important for me to stress that I am continuing my bilateral consultations with missions, and we have consultations scheduled for this week as well. However, I have to make it also clear that there will be a moment in time when I will have to assess my efforts and decide whether I can forge a consensus on a presidential programme of work. If I realize I am unable to, I will proceed with the extension of the work of the informal working group.

I want to stress to all member States and to all of you colleagues that I have two basic principles. My first principle is credibility and my second principle is confidence. It is important for me to maintain the credibility of the presidency. It is important for me that, if and when I do report to you on my inability to forge a consensus, you will know that I have in fact made every possible effort to forge one; and confidence in myself that I am doing the right thing and that I am convinced that the only way forward to provide this body with a programme of work would be through the extension of the informal working group's mandate. Continuity is important, and the Conference's decision last August under the Iraqi presidency will be the guideline for the text of the decision on the extension of the informal working group's mandate. I am not there yet. I am continuing my consultations, but a decision will have to be made and I can assure you that I will not be dragging my feet on reaching that decision. I heard the message from the Secretary-General and I will heed it.

In parallel with our efforts on the programme of work, we continue — together with this session's other five Presidents — to forge a structured schedule of activities. It is a joint effort and our Permanent Representatives are working together to provide such a schedule of activity that will hopefully pave the way for the Conference to resume substantive work. This is my road map and this is the extent of my update to you this morning.

I will now turn to the list of speakers for today. I now give the floor to the representative of Mongolia, Ambassador Vaanchig Purevdorj.

Mr. Purevdorj (Mongolia): Mr. President, as I am taking the floor for the first time under your presidency, let me extend to you my warmest congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation.

It is indeed an honour for me to address the Conference and represent Mongolia at this esteemed forum. I feel privileged to take up my duties in this new position during this period of renewed hope in the disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control arena. I look forward to working with you and the other five Presidents for 2014 as well as all my distinguished colleagues and delegates to this important body in contributing to a more peaceful, secure and prosperous world.

I also wish to commend your tireless efforts during the first weeks of the 2014 session aimed at securing a positive start to the work of the Conference. The long-standing lack of progress in the disarmament arena has not only prevented progress in the area of international peace and security but has also served to undermine international confidence in the multilateral disarmament mechanism.

If I briefly elaborate my delegation's thoughts on the Conference on Disarmament, I am pleased to note that the high priority attached to the core issues on the Conference's agenda remains the same.

The current standstill in the Conference is not acceptable. Therefore, we welcome the decision to establish the informal working group to produce a programme of work. We maintain hope that it will be a positive step in the right direction and can help lay the foundation for the Conference to resume its forward-looking substantive work. It is also an indication of a shared goal, which is the need to come up with a consensual programme of work as soon as possible.

We believe that a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament would have the authority and legitimacy to comprehensively review the functioning of the entire United Nations disarmament machinery, including the Conference on Disarmament. Accordingly, Mongolia supports the early convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.

We will continue to engage actively in nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation objectives. In this respect, we commend the outcome of the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly last year and the adoption, *inter alia*, of resolution 68/32 welcoming the convening of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on nuclear disarmament on 26 September 2013. We support the maintaining and strengthening of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons regime as a key multilateral instrument in this area. My delegation stands for the early commencement of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty in the framework of a balanced programme of work. It is our view that the future treaty could serve the dual objectives of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

As one of the active members among the non-nuclear-weapon States, Mongolia supports strengthening existing zones and the establishment of new zones. The first comprehensive study on nuclear-weapon-free zones was undertaken 38 years ago, in 1975. We believe that the fact that almost four decades have passed since then and radical changes have occurred, including the end of the cold war, warrants a new comprehensive study. That study would raise awareness of the importance of nuclear-weapon-free zones and might be helpful in promoting the establishment of such zones in problem areas such as the Middle East and north-east Asia.

In 2012 the five nuclear-weapon States signed a joint declaration providing additional assurances concerning the nuclear-weapon-free status of Mongolia. Thus they have committed to respect the status and not to contribute to any act that would violate this status. Mongolia is prepared to work further to institutionalize the status. In General Assembly resolution 67/52, entitled "Mongolia's international security and nuclear-weapon-free status", the Secretary-General and the United Nations were asked to provide assistance to Mongolia in implementing the resolution. Hence, Mongolia will be contacting the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific to jointly organize in Mongolia in 2014 a regional conference on security in north-east Asia, including nuclear security issues. With our experience in ensuring our security primarily by political and legal means, we are prepared to share our experience with others. I hope that the Regional Centre will cooperate with Mongolia.

This would constitute a concrete contribution by Mongolia towards the goal of achieving a nuclear-weapon-free world. Furthermore, Mongolia is also committed to other important issues on the disarmament agenda, such as the prevention of an arms race in outer space, expansion of the Conference's membership and strengthening of the Conference's interaction with civil society.

Mongolia earnestly hopes that the Conference on Disarmament will revitalize its work and once again fulfil its mandated role and resume a primary task of negotiating multilateral disarmament treaties.

The President: I thank the representative of Mongolia for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of New Zealand, Ambassador Dell Higgie.

Ms. Higgie (New Zealand): It is a pleasure to join you, Mr. President, and colleagues here in Geneva, both old and new, as the Conference on Disarmament embarks on a new year. Allow me to congratulate you on assuming the presidency and for the very committed and forthright way in which you have approached your responsibilities. You have my delegation's fullest support. I would also like to take this opportunity to greet again those colleagues I have had the pleasure to work with over recent years in a variety of contexts, as well as in the Conference, and to welcome those new colleagues who have joined us in the Conference since last year. I would also like to congratulate our Acting Secretary-General, Mr. Michael Møller, and to wish him well in his new role.

As my neighbour Ambassador Van der Kwast observed last week, every new year brings with it new hope. New Zealand, of course, shares the hope that this year we may finally see the Conference come to terms with its responsibilities and answer the very many calls for it to get down to work.

Certainly, these calls have become more persistent as the years have passed by. They reveal a deep and growing sense of frustration that the Conference has been unable, for 17 years now, to live up to its mandate — even, indeed, to move much beyond discussions rooted in procedure. There has been no progress in the Conference across any of the items on our agenda. We have not even been able to agree — except for one brief but illusory occasion — on how to translate our agenda into a programme of work.

To the outside observer, this would seem to suggest that the Conference attaches no real significance to the issues on its agenda and is indifferent to developments and the views of those outside it. Such an assessment is not unreasonable. Those of us who participate in the Conference's work may perhaps have a more nuanced view of the reasons for the lack of progress — but that does not change our dismal record.

Against this background, my delegation very much welcomed the message that the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, brought to the Conference last week. It rightfully recognized the potential of this body to be a driving force for building a safer world and a better future, and it recognized, too, the serious efforts that have been made to end the impasse here.

It must be apparent to all of us that the way in which we go about our work has to change if we are to make progress. Greater pragmatism — properly reflective of the priorities of each delegation — is called for. A more open body, with increased membership and the full participation of civil society, would contribute to realizing our goals and ensure that the Conference does not become so far out of sync with the wishes of the overwhelming majority of the international community that it becomes, to all intents and purposes, a dead letter. For what good is an institution that has for so long failed to perform its primary purpose?

The focus for many years in this body has been on agreeing a “balanced and comprehensive” programme of work. Most recently, last year's informal working group commendably sought to facilitate agreement on this but was unable to do so.

New Zealand continues to call for agreement on a programme of work with a clear negotiating mandate on fissile material. We are ready to be flexible about what such a mandate would contain, but if, as seems most likely, there is a continuation of the long-

standing stalemate on this, we will look instead to the meetings of the Group of Governmental Experts on fissile material to advance our work.

At the same time, we would also welcome the Conference turning its attention to issues such as the framework that will be required to bring about nuclear disarmament and to intensifying consideration of the pathway towards the end goal of nuclear disarmament — one to which we are all committed. The paper produced last year by the New Agenda Coalition and introduced here in the Conference by our then coordinator, Egypt, would be one of the useful bases we have for beginning such discussions.

It is indeed difficult not to contrast the dismal lack of progress here in the Conference with last year's significant achievements which occurred outside it. Conclusion of the Arms Trade Treaty was, of course, the landmark achievement. Its standard-setting for the hitherto unregulated transfers of conventional arms will bring about a global improvement in human security.

As to nuclear disarmament, last year's notable successes include the convening of the Open-ended Working Group on taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations; the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on nuclear disarmament; and the growing awareness of the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons. All of these represent progress in the field of nuclear disarmament on which, as Secretary-General Ban said last week, we can build.

New Zealand has been pleased to have contributed to the recent reorientation of the nuclear disarmament debate. It is a reorientation that, in seeking to return human security to the forefront of discussion, was well overdue. The conference to be held in Mexico next month is an important part of this process, and we look forward very much to participating in the discussions there.

Notwithstanding the hope that fills us all in a new year, it is my suspicion that the year of the horse may not be the year in which the Conference's stalemate is ended. But this is not a foregone conclusion and — given the importance for global security of progress being made on the issues on our agenda — we will support all efforts to move forward.

The President: I thank the representative of New Zealand for her statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Brazil, Pedro Motta Pinto Coelho.

Mr. Motta Pinto Coelho (Brazil): Mr. President, as this is the first time I have the honour to speak before the Conference on Disarmament, at the outset I would like to congratulate you on your assumption of the first presidency of the 2014 session. I am confident that under your able leadership every effort will be made to steer the Conference back on track.

It is a privilege and an honour to represent my country in this highly respected body. Brazil continues to attach the utmost importance to the Conference on Disarmament as the single disarmament negotiating forum. We are very concerned that for the past 18 years, the Conference has failed to reach an agreement on a programme of work for the substantive treatment of items on its agenda. In this regard, we must overcome the stalemate that has been preventing the adoption and implementation of a balanced and comprehensive programme of work.

Let me start with a brief explanation of how we see the current impasse in the Conference. We believe that the problems faced by the Conference do not derive from its rules of procedure or from its consensus rule. They are fundamentally political in nature and cannot be disconnected from current challenges of the international peace and security agenda.

In order to overcome this prolonged impasse, we must address the root causes of inaction in multilateral disarmament negotiations. Ultimately, what needs to be addressed is the continuous lack of political will to advance meaningful commitment in this area of nuclear disarmament. Brazil rejects any ultimatum to the Conference. Blaming the Conference or the United Nations disarmament machinery for the absence of concrete results in nuclear disarmament does not serve the purpose of offering solutions to our

collective challenges. The urge to establish an alternative to the Conference would be an easy solution, yet one that — in weakening multilateral disarmament — may have unexpected consequences for our long-term aspirations. Brazil believes that any reform effort should consider the United Nations disarmament machinery as a whole, possibly in the context of a fourth special session of the General Assembly on disarmament.

Brazil has a strong and long-standing commitment to nuclear disarmament. We remain deeply concerned about the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any possible use of nuclear weapons. In spite of the growing international consensus regarding the illegitimacy of the use of nuclear weapons, an estimated 20,000 nuclear devices still exist. The mere existence of nuclear arsenals constitutes a destabilizing element of international peace and security.

Sometimes, big events happen without notice. We can recall the fall of the Berlin wall where they had a revolution. I was in Washington in 1979 when the Iranian revolution occurred. At that time, nobody, in no newspapers — I invite you to have a look at the newspapers in Washington and periodicals in the United States — I was there at that time at the Embassy, and there was no mention of the Iranian revolution. Big events sometimes happen without notice. I think that the concern about what is not happening at the Conference could be explored in the sense of some additional expectations of how we can have trust in the “blue horse” commitment that was spoken of by the United Nations Secretary-General recently.

As long as nuclear arsenals continue to exist, the world will never be free from the risk of a devastating nuclear detonation, be it intentional or accidental. And as long as a limited group of countries consider themselves entitled to possess nuclear weapons, there will always be a risk that other States or non-State actors may try to acquire or develop such weapons. Additionally, the preservation and further development of nuclear arsenals undermine disarmament and non-proliferation efforts and can also encourage an arms race.

Nuclear disarmament is not only a legal commitment already subscribed to by nuclear-weapon States: it is also the most effective measure against nuclear proliferation. As we approach the new review cycle of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), we expect that concrete and meaningful actions by nuclear-weapon States will take place. As we are all aware, preventing the horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons has been a relative success of the NPT regime. However, the same cannot be said of the nuclear disarmament side of the bargain, where the compliance deficit on the part of nuclear-weapon States continues to exist. It is high time for these States to fulfil the nuclear-disarmament-related measures they have agreed to implement under the Treaty and pursuant to the action plans agreed at the 2000 and 2010 Review Conferences.

As a matter of priority, Brazil favours the establishment of an ad hoc committee within the Conference on Disarmament in order to start negotiations on a programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, including a nuclear weapons convention backed by a strong system of verification. However, we are prepared to consider proposals for the commencement of negotiations on any of the core issues of the agenda.

We consider that the Conference should be given political conditions to negotiate an instrument granting non-nuclear-weapon States assurances against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons by nuclear-weapon States. These assurances should be unequivocal, conditional, unconditional and legally binding. Non-binding political declarations are not enough.

We are concerned about increasing signs of an arms race in outer space. In this connection, we support the establishment of a working group to negotiate a treaty banning the placement of weapons and the use of satellites as weapons as well as prohibiting any sort of attack on devices in orbit. Brazil recently took part in the Group of Governmental Experts established by General Assembly resolution 65/68. We are glad that the Group of Governmental Experts recognized that transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities may constitute the basis for future legally binding measures.

Brazil also supports the start of negotiations on a fissile material treaty within the Conference. Brazil is pleased to see that, at the request of the United Nations General

Assembly, a Group of Governmental Experts will soon make recommendations on possible aspects that could contribute to a fissile material cut-off treaty. We stand ready to participate actively in the discussions of the Group of Governmental Experts. As we know, current stocks of fissile material are enough to continue the production of nuclear weapons for centuries to come. In order to have an impact on nuclear disarmament efforts, a fissile material cut-off treaty must deal in one way or another with the issue of past production or pre-existing material.

Brazil is fully aware that achieving a world free of nuclear weapons cannot be done overnight. At the same time, we recognize that there is an urgent need to renew efforts within the multilateral system to achieve that goal. It is high time to adopt some timeline or political horizon, with clear benchmarks, for the elimination of nuclear weapons.

Once again, I would like to reiterate my delegation's full support for your endeavours. We look forward to taking part in the discussions relating to the adoption of a programme of work in order to start negotiations and advance common understandings on the items of the agenda, especially those related to nuclear disarmament.

The President: I thank the representative of Brazil for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Ukraine, Ambassador Yuriy Klymenko.

Mr. Klymenko (Ukraine): Mr. President, distinguished colleagues, thank you for your congratulations and kind words concerning my joining this renowned disarmament forum.

Since this is the first time that I am taking the floor to address the Conference on Disarmament, allow me to start by congratulating you, Mr. President, on the assumption of the post at this crucial juncture for the Conference and wishing every success in your endeavours. Please be assured of the full support and cooperation of my delegation.

It is a great honour and special privilege for me to be present in this chamber and to join the Conference on Disarmament in my capacity as the Permanent Representative of Ukraine. Many years ago disarmament and arms control became a starting point of my diplomatic career.

General and complete nuclear disarmament and strengthening of the non-proliferation regime lie at the centre of the priorities of Ukraine in the sphere of international peace and security. For decades my country has consistently supported and promoted the call for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons as the only genuine guarantee of averting a nuclear catastrophe.

Ukraine demonstrated its active position in pursuit of this goal and took the lead by voluntarily abandoning its nuclear capacity and acceding to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons as a non-nuclear-weapon State in 1994.

Ukraine has reconfirmed its adherence to the enhancing of the non-proliferation regime and supported global efforts on securing nuclear materials from potential dangerous misuse. In 2012 we fully implemented our commitment to renounce the use of highly enriched uranium in civil nuclear research facilities and to get rid of all highly enriched uranium stocks.

On 5 December 2015 we will mark the twentieth anniversary of the Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances. We strongly believe that this historic event should receive appropriate attention from the international disarmament community, including the Conference on Disarmament.

At the same time, two decades after the conclusion of the Memorandum, much still remains to be done to ensure the provision of effective, legally binding security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. The negative security assurances issue is one of the main priorities on the Conference's agenda and constitutes an indispensable block of the disarmament process on the path to "global zero". Numerous international consultations, including discussions in the framework of the Conference on Disarmament, have repeatedly demonstrated the ripeness of this issue for negotiations.

The provision of legally binding negative security assurances would send a strong global message dissuading States from acquiring nuclear weapons, improving mutual confidence and trust, strengthening the non-proliferation regime and fostering a new quality of regional and global security.

We encourage the nuclear-weapon States to reconfirm and legally reinforce their commitments laid out in the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions.

While recognizing difficulties in the implementation of existing international treaties and the bringing into force of new ones, and concerned by the long-standing stalemate in disarmament negotiations, we fully reaffirm our commitment to maintain and to strengthen the Conference on Disarmament as the sole multilateral forum capable of delivering tangible results even in the most challenging context.

With the future of multilateral disarmament negotiations and the disarmament machinery at stake, we see an urgent need in intensifying efforts to effectively revitalize the work of the Conference.

Ukraine is resolved to render all-out support to constructive dialogue aimed at breaking the current impasse and getting the Conference back to effective work by reaching compromise on a balanced and comprehensive programme of work and its subsequent implementation.

However, if the Conference remains deadlocked, we should use every opportunity to establish better conditions for future substantive work. In this vein, the Conference could continue discussions on the core issues and consider undertaking systemic measures with the purpose of improving its functioning along the lines delineated in Mr. Tokayev's package.

Years of discussions have demonstrated that the main stumbling block in efforts to revitalize the Conference has been the irreconcilable positions on a balanced approach towards nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation in general and on the mandate on fissile material cut-off treaty negotiations in particular.

Both disarmament and non-proliferation objectives of the fissile material cut-off treaty should be considered on an equal footing and get the same level of our attention. We believe that all matters, including the issue of existing stockpiles, should be tackled during negotiations, rather than be a blocking point preventing the Conference from substantive work.

Moreover, parallel negotiations on the issues which have evidently proven their ripeness and are widely supported by the international community are the only credible avenue for overcoming persistent areas of discord.

Due to the specific nature of the disarmament agenda and the most pressing issues at hand, namely placing production and stocks of fissile material under a transparent and non-discriminatory, internationally verified regime, as well as providing legally binding security assurances, there is hardly any viable alternative in sight.

In our view, negotiating a fissile material cut-off treaty and negative security assurances in parallel processes will contribute to confidence-building and mutually reinforce each other, providing pertinent support to the complex process of disarmament.

Ukraine welcomed and highly supported the intensified efforts for overcoming the ongoing deadlock during 2013. Although the outcome was rather moderate, Ukraine commends the adoption of the decision by the Conference establishing an informal working group to produce a programme of work. It testifies to the ability of the Conference to adopt consensus decisions, avoiding tensions and finding compromises, and offers an opportunity to consolidate our efforts in elaborating subsequent pragmatic solutions. We believe that the working group's mandate should be reaffirmed for 2014 and further on until meaningful results are achieved and substantive negotiations have commenced.

The President: I thank the representative of Ukraine for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Switzerland, Ambassador Urs Schmid.

Mr. Schmid (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, allow me to warmly congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and to assure you of my delegation's full support in the performance of your duties. I would also like to thank the presidencies that preceded you, in particular Ireland, for so skilfully guiding us towards the adoption of the Conference's report and the related resolution in the First Committee. Lastly, I would like to express my gratitude to the outgoing Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, for his unfailing support of this body, and to welcome his successor, Mr. Michael Møller.

The presence of the Secretary-General of the United Nations last week demonstrates the importance that he continues to attach to this body despite its difficulties. He emphasized his concern about the Conference's paralysis, a concern that we share and have repeatedly stressed. It is for this reason that Switzerland, together with partner States, submitted a draft resolution on the revitalization of the Conference to the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session and has kept the topic on its agenda.

While we intensely regret that the Conference was once again unable to adopt a programme of work last year, we nonetheless find it encouraging that it has deepened the discussion on the revitalization of its work and that a larger number of its members are actively taking part in the discussion. A number of innovative proposals have been made during these exchanges and we welcome the fact that the Conference has taken the decision to give effect to one of these suggestions, namely the establishment of an informal working group tasked with drawing up a robust, substantive programme of work that provides for gradual implementation. This development constitutes an encouraging collective endeavour that illustrates the determination of Conference members to overcome the current impasse.

The adoption and implementation of a programme of work would be the best way to revitalize the Conference. We are, therefore, particularly grateful for your efforts to this end. Should these efforts prove to be unsuccessful, we believe that there should then be three priorities.

Firstly, it would be advisable to renew the informal working group's mandate. The working group had very little time before the end of the 2013 session to fulfil the mandate it had been given. In our view, providing it the opportunity to fully explore its mandate is justified. The working group has begun to look into the way the Conference has approached the programme of work since its establishment in 1978 but was unable to focus the necessary attention on this important subject.

The second obvious priority in the absence of a programme of work would be to initiate a dialogue structured around the topics on the agenda. As underscored by the Secretary-General, engaging in a dialogue to pave the way for future steps forward would be a way to make the Conference more relevant. In order for the dialogue to be as productive as possible, it is important that it not merely take the form of a schedule of activities: it should be appropriately structured. Such an approach should, in our view, include identifying and appointing — for each of the topics to be addressed — a coordinator whose responsibility would be to structure, moderate and lead discussions and then to report back. Interactive exchanges involving external participants, be they experts from capitals or academia, would help to enhance the content of the discussions.

The third obvious priority in the absence of a programme of work would be to deepen exchanges on the revitalization of the Conference. The lively dialogue held in this connection in 2013 resulted in, *inter alia*, three proposals by the Secretary-General of the Conference. While the first of these proposals was acted on through the establishment of an informal working group, it would be expedient for the Conference to consider the other two as well, including the establishment of a subsidiary body tasked with improving the efficiency of the Conference — an exercise that would entail a detailed examination of the Conference's methods of work. Regarding the appointment of a special rapporteur responsible for the issue of opening up the Conference to new members and of expanding civil society participation, we find this proposal equally timely in the light of the imbalance between the global scope of the topics dealt with by the Conference and the Conference's composition.

The Conference's work is closely tied to efforts undertaken by other bodies and procedures. The Conference must take these into account in its activities, including the establishment of a structured dialogue, if it wishes to remain fully relevant.

The implementation of the action plan adopted by the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in 2010 constitutes a vitally important element for most of the Conference's member States and should guide their efforts. The section of the action plan devoted to disarmament contains 22 measures, all crucially important. The Conference has a key role to play in the implementation of several of these measures, but its paralysis could jeopardize their full realization.

The first meeting of the Group of Governmental Experts tasked with formulating recommendations on possible aspects that could contribute to the adoption of a treaty banning the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons, to be held this spring in Geneva, is a major event in the disarmament calendar. This topic remains central for the Conference; therefore, the Conference should think about how it can take advantage of these meetings of the Group of Governmental Experts to deepen its own work in this area.

The issue of the humanitarian dimension of nuclear disarmament should also fuel our discussions. This dimension underpins the NPT objectives of non-proliferation and disarmament alike and is an integral part of the Final Document of the 2010 NPT Review Conference. The conference held in Oslo in 2013 illustrated that the use of nuclear weapons would have devastating effects and that immediate needs in terms of assistance would not receive an appropriate response and underscored the need to pursue discussions and deepen our knowledge of these effects. For this reason, we thank Mexico for organizing a follow-up conference next February. We can already announce that we will take part in this event and hope that all States, international organizations and relevant non-government organizations will make the trip.

The Conference on Disarmament could base itself on other developments to push forward its work in the area of nuclear disarmament. In its resolution 68/46, entitled "Taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations", the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General of the United Nations to transmit to the Conference, for its consideration, the report of the Open-ended Working Group established in 2013 to develop proposals to take forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations for the achievement of a world without nuclear weapons. The efforts of the Working Group resulted in a substantive consensus document containing a significant number of proposals. Reviewing this report will most certainly enrich the Conference's work.

The Conference could also base its work on new developments in areas other than nuclear disarmament. In its resolution 68/50, on transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities, the General Assembly decided to refer the recommendations contained in the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-building Measures in Outer Space Activities in 2012 and 2013 to the Conference and other bodies, such as the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, for their review.

In this context, we also note with great interest the statement made by the Russian Federation last week on its intention of shortly submitting an updated version of the draft Treaty on the Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer space that it is working on with China. In the light of the growing significance and vital role of space applications for a growing number of countries, the security, safety and stability of outer space represents a key issue and we intend to be fully engaged in relevant discussions.

These are but a few examples of the elements that should feed into our work given that developments in the field of disarmament are so numerous. We believe also that the Conference should not preclude itself from looking at new challenges in disarmament matters. The agenda provides for this possibility and only in this way will the Conference be able to restore its relevance.

The President: I thank the representative of Switzerland for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Australia, Ambassador Peter Woolcott.

Mr. Woolcott (Australia): Mr. President, allow me to congratulate you on assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and welcome the proactive and innovative manner in which you are conducting your presidency. You can be assured of my support and that of my delegation.

Australia is determined to see the Conference on Disarmament return to work and fulfil its mandate to negotiate multilateral disarmament treaties. It is for this reason that we will continue to support efforts for the adoption and implementation of a meaningful programme of work across the four core issues. We are only too aware of the problems the Conference has faced in adopting and implementing a programme of work. The impasse in the Conference is a consequence of political realities outside this chamber. That is an explanation, but it should not be taken as an excuse for inaction. If these realities do not shift in a way that will allow the Conference to resume its proper negotiating role, they will sweep the Conference away through its lack of relevance.

There is no doubt the Conference remains at a critical juncture. So we need to be thinking about what we can usefully do in this place over the next year or so. It is the view of Australia that the members of this Conference should continue to press for a meaningful programme of work; but while doing so, we should look for ways to significantly advance the core agenda items and help prepare the Conference for negotiations.

Let me take one aspect of the agenda. Australia has long advocated that the Conference's immediate focus should be on a fissile material cut-off treaty. For Australia, a fissile material cut-off treaty is not only the next logical step in a nuclear disarmament process: it is also fundamental to that process. Fissile material is a raw material for nuclear weapons. Stopping the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons purposes is fundamental to nuclear arms control. We can never reach our shared goal of a world free of nuclear weapons and we cannot maintain such a world without having negotiated stringent controls relating to fissile material for weapons purposes. There is no getting around this, and there is no short cut. There is only highly complex technical work, and the sooner we understand what that entails — as opposed to indulging in theology — the closer we will get to realizing the nuclear disarmament goals we all seek.

Some of you will recall the Australian-Japanese expert side events in 2011 which sought to drill down into issues surrounding fissile material cut-off treaty definitions and verification. These side events sought to foster technical discussions relevant to the treaty. Australia and Japan chaired these discussions, but were ably assisted by the Swiss expert, Dr. Bruno Pellaud, and the discussions were also animated by a range of committed participants. These side events were aimed at building momentum for commencing negotiations and to delving into the complexity of some, and I emphasize only some, of the issues to be negotiated.

We reported the discussions and questions thrown up on definitions and verification to the Conference on Disarmament, but there are numerous other issues which we did not seek to address, including the entry-into-force formula, the status of pre-existing stocks, institutional arrangements, provision for settlement of disputes and provisions for non-compliance.

In 2014, another important opportunity to advance a fissile material cut-off treaty, one endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly, will be provided from the end of March by the Group of Governmental Experts. Australia will be an active and committed member of the Group of Governmental Experts, and we will be working with the Chair and its other members to facilitate future solutions and, importantly, to find a means for the Group to channel its output straight back into the Conference on Disarmament. To be truly valuable, it is vital that the Group's membership and the wider Conference membership interact. The relationship needs to be symbiotic. The fact that many of my Geneva colleagues will also be part of the Group of Governmental Experts will, I hope, make this easier.

Australia recognizes that the Group of Governmental Experts will not negotiate a treaty, but it will provide a crucial opportunity for serious fact-based technical discussion of all aspects of a treaty. It presents the best opportunity since the negotiation of the Shannon mandate for us to explore in a multilateral context the broad range of ingredients that would go into a treaty. The Group of Governmental Experts can take the discussion to a new level. Its outcome can and must be a central reference point for future negotiations, and the Conference should work collaboratively with it so that we as Conference members would be in the best position, the best informed position, to begin negotiations at the earliest opportunity on this essential step towards a world without nuclear weapons.

The President: I thank the representative of Australia for his statement and for his kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Spain, Ambassador Gil Catalina.

Mr. Gil Catalina (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, I wish you every success in the coming weeks and, of course, you may count on the full support of this delegation. I am taking the floor on this occasion to respond on behalf of my delegation to the words that the United Nations Secretary-General addressed to this chamber last week.

The Secretary-General's presence at the opening meeting — against the advice of some of his colleagues, as he himself admitted — is further proof of his faith in this forum and in our ability to overcome our differences and reach a consensus. That faith does him credit.

The Secretary-General made an appeal, and I quote, "to overcome the pervasive cycle of pessimism" that has taken hold of this forum. In my view, those words give a fair reflection of a sad reality. None of us here is immune to a pessimism that stems from over 15 years of failures and disagreements — a pessimism that even suggests to us that the Conference on Disarmament, being constantly entangled in discussions about consensus, rules of procedure, the programme of work and supreme national security interests, is actually little interested in or concerned about disarmament. That is what we sometimes go so far as to think, for the Devil tempts the idle with unworthy thoughts.

As practitioners of diplomacy, all of us wish to see the multilateral negotiating forums fulfilling the role for which they were created. For the reality not to affect us would be akin to saying that we did not care about our work or the time or energy we expend on it. From that perspective, the pessimism of the Conference is, regrettably, completely understandable.

Nevertheless, last year concluded with a glimmer of hope with the setting up of an informal group to design elements and initiatives centred on a programme of work.

Of course, we should not exaggerate the importance of this measure, but neither should we underestimate it. This group has the advantage of being an informal forum: a context in which all delegations have greater freedom to present ideas and solutions without persisting in assumptions or preconceived positions. By their very nature, informal forums are less susceptible to rhetoric and routine, which are the two evils that tend to afflict these plenary meetings. At least, Mr. President, that is what we want to believe, in order to rid ourselves of our pessimism.

It would be unjust to evaluate the usefulness of the informal working group in the light of last year's meagre harvest. The time we had at our disposal was very limited. This delegation is in favour of re-establishing the informal working group without delay once it is ascertained, as I fear will be the case, that there is no consensus on a programme of work.

This delegation is also in favour of the Conference on Disarmament continuing its work in a structured manner through an agenda of discussions on the core issues. Not that we consider that by doing so the Conference would be performing its function. Let it be said once again, categorically: the Conference on Disarmament is a negotiating body and therefore its function is to negotiate multilateral agreements on disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation.

Discussions, however productive, substantive or structured they might be, can never supplant that negotiating role. But in this regard it is also possible for us to be optimistic, as

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon reminded us. If all we can do is to discuss, then let us discuss, in the hope that these discussions will prepare the ground for future negotiations on any of the agenda items. Hope, a Spanish proverb tells us, is the last to die. Yet to know where we are going, Mr. President, we need to know where we come from. To achieve future consensus, we should be able to recognize and not lose sight of past ones. We must be capable of building upon them.

This delegation understands that the consensus reached in 2009 on the programme of work and contained in the often-cited document CD/1864 could still offer a valid template for a new consensus. This, therefore, is our benchmark and our point of departure. Does that mean that we are unwilling to move even slightly away from that consensus? No, quite the opposite. What it means is that, for this delegation, and I sense that for most of those present in this chamber, the negotiation of a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices — a fissile material cut-off treaty — is still the priority, insofar as it would be an essential measure for non-proliferation and ultimately also for disarmament.

We are all aware that many options, relating to scope, definitions and verification, would become available to us if we decided, once and for all, to sit down to negotiate such a treaty. The point of this statement is not to go into those options, but rather to stress that this delegation, like many of those here present, is not prejudging the direction of those negotiations or their final outcome, just as there was no assumed outcome in the so-called Shannon mandate or the aforementioned document CD/1864. It is precisely due to their flexibility and openness to all sensitivities and security interests that this delegation continues to believe that past consensus should be the benchmark for our future work.

I conclude, Mr. President, by referring to the Group of Governmental Experts on a fissile material cut-off treaty, which will soon commence work. I believe that we must pay close attention to what is said in the Group, since it will have sufficient time and resources to achieve something beyond a purely rhetorical exercise on the fissile material cut-off treaty. By lending our ears to what happens there, we will be heeding the words of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon when he asked that we do not let ourselves be swayed by the pessimism that has taken hold of this chamber.

Despite our repeated failures to find consensus, the issues that fall under our competence are too important and too serious for the international community as a whole, and too critical for its future, for us to again allow ourselves the luxury of resignation.

The President: I thank the representative of Spain for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Finland, Ambassador Päivi Kairamo.

Ms. Kairamo (Finland): Mr. President, first of all, let me also congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. I wish you every success in this important endeavour, and you can trust that you will have the full support of my delegation.

As you rightly pointed out earlier, the Conference has been inactive for much too long: 17 years is a long time. Referring to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's address last week, we also consider the Conference on Disarmament a unique disarmament negotiation forum that bears a special responsibility, not only in disarmament but also in broader terms of world peace and security. It is therefore our responsibility to search every avenue that could lead to substantive work in the Conference.

A balanced and a comprehensive programme of work with a negotiation mandate on a fissile material cut-off treaty would be our priority. However, if that is not possible for the moment, we should continue searching for other solutions. Therefore, we would be in favour of continuing the work of the informal working group. This should not be a never-ending exercise, but rather time-limited. Informal discussions should focus on building bridges and exploring all possible means of thinking around the programme of work.

With a view to building a consensus, that would allow substantive work to begin. In the meanwhile, we should take full benefit of the possibilities for a schedule of activities in

the Conference. As the Secretary-General pointed out, structured discussions could lead us towards treaty frameworks or other useful proposals. We fully support this approach.

Mr. President, we stand ready to support your efforts and continue consultations in whatever format necessary.

The President: I thank the representative of Finland for her 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 would like to draw your attention to the letter of 13 January 2014 that I co-signed with the Acting Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, Mr. Michael Møller, and in which we encouraged your Governments to consider addressing the 2014 session of the Conference on Disarmament at the ministerial level. In fact, as in the past, the Conference would benefit from support and advice from all Governments at the highest possible level.

The Conference's high-level meetings this year should help sustain the positive momentum of the 2013 session and in charting a way forward.

This concludes our business for today. The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held next Tuesday, 4 February 2014, at 10 a.m.

Before we adjourn, I would like to give the floor to the Secretary of the Conference, Mr. Ivor Fung, for an announcement.

Mr. Fung (Secretary of the Conference on Disarmament): I would just like to call to the attention of the delegations that you have before you today the provisional list of participants as contained in document CD/2014/MISC.1. Please review this document and notify any changes to the secretariat by Thursday, 30 January 2014, at 4 p.m. We intend to finalize the document, as it is still a provisional list of participants.

Another announcement concerns the e-mail addresses on file with the secretariat. Some of them are no longer valid, as documents sent to them are bounced back to us. If you could please update your e-mail addresses, it would be helpful in reaching you more easily.

The President: I thank the Secretary for this useful announcement, and I join him in inviting all the delegations to indeed update their addresses with the secretariat. The meeting is adjourned.

The meeting rose at 11.20 a.m.