

Conference on Disarmament

4 February 2014

English

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

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The President: I call to order the 1304th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

In conformity with rule 29 of the rules of procedure of the Conference, I have been involved for several weeks in consultations with a view to producing a programme of work that would enable the implementation of the items on the agenda of the Conference. Allow me at this stage to update you on the results of my consultations and to indicate a possible way forward for our work.

My intention today is to present to you the factual state of affairs based on my extensive consultations. As you all know, we have conducted consultations with many delegations, and as a result three facts are clear. First, due to the divergence of views among the member States, there is no consensus on a presidential programme of work for the year 2014. Second, there is a strong desire among member States to renew the mandate of the informal working group for the year 2014 in order to continue the work that began at the latter part of 2013. Third, in parallel to the renewal of the mandate of the informal working group, there is much support for structured discussions on the framework of a schedule of activities.

Based on those facts, we believe that we need to choose our options for the next phase of our work. Since the inception of our presidency, I have always maintained that our work should be done in full transparency in order to allow as many views as possible to be reflected in the decision-making process of the Conference. I will continue throughout my presidency to do that, as I believe that this process would lend legitimacy to any decision taken by the Conference. In addition, I am of the view that a constructive spirit prevailed last year with the establishment of the informal working group, and that momentum should not be overlooked.

Yesterday, the secretariat circulated a proposal for renewing the mandate of the informal working group for the year 2014. I would like to stress that this proposal was drafted on the basis of the following principles. We wanted to keep things as simple and straightforward as possible. This proposal is identical to the language that was adopted last August by the Conference under the presidency of Iraq. It had enjoyed the consensus of the room at the time, and consequently we believe that it will also enjoy consensus this time. The changes introduced in the text are technical changes that are relevant for the year 2014. Therefore, we did not introduce new elements or new language to the original text. In addition, by renewing the mandate of the informal working group, we shall be echoing the call of the Secretary-General in his speech to the plenary of 21 January.

Following my consultations with delegations, I can reiterate that all have expressed their support in principle for continuing the work of the informal working group. While many have supported this approach, some have expressed the need to further discuss some elements of the proposed text.

In this respect, as I am in the hands of the Conference, I believe that it will be only fair to put in front of you this text and to open a discussion with the intention of moving forward and adopting a new mandate for the work of the informal working group. I therefore open the floor for your remarks and comments.

I will now turn to the list of speakers for today. I now give the floor to the representative of the United States of America, Ms. Rose Gottemoeller, Acting Under-Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security.

Ms. Gottemoeller (United States of America): I am pleased to have this opportunity to address the Conference on Disarmament. To start, I would like to congratulate Israel and Ambassador Manor and his team on assuming the first presidency of the 2014 session of the Conference on Disarmament, and to thank them for their very dedicated efforts in guiding our deliberations. I would also like to extend our best wishes to the other Presidents of the Conference for 2014 — Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kenya and Malaysia. We look forward to working with all of you in the year ahead.

In his 21 January remarks to the Conference, the United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, spoke about the importance of substantive discussion in laying groundwork for future negotiations in the Conference. The United States believes it is crucial for the

Conference to adopt a programme of work, but we also believe we must continue to engage substantively with one another — both about the disarmament steps we are taking and the steps we hope to take next — as we work to break this body's impasse.

As colleagues here are well aware, we stand ready to begin negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty, which is the next logical — and necessary — step in creating the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons. It has been frustrating to watch the Conference remain deadlocked over this issue, but negotiation of a fissile material cut-off treaty is an essential prerequisite for global nuclear disarmament.

In recognition of this fact, action 15 of the action plan adopted at the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons included an agreement that the Conference should begin immediate negotiation of a fissile material cut-off treaty. The United States will continue to urge negotiation of a fissile material cut-off treaty in this body, convinced that such negotiations at the Conference will provide each member State the ability not only to protect but also to enhance its national security.

With that as our guiding conviction, we look forward to engaging fully in the upcoming meetings of the Group of Governmental Experts with a view to providing further impetus to long-sought fissile material cut-off treaty negotiations in the Conference.

As disappointed as we are that a programme of work for the Conference remains elusive, we are not standing still. The United States has slashed its nuclear stockpile by 85 per cent from the top cold war levels. Under the New START Treaty, the strategic nuclear warheads deployed by the United States and the Russian Federation will decline to their lowest levels in over half a century. Recently, the United States-Russian Federation highly enriched uranium purchase agreement culminated with the final shipment of low-enriched uranium converted from the equivalent of 20,000 dismantled Russian nuclear warheads. These now fuel American nuclear reactors. Those former warheads have been providing 10 per cent of all electricity in the United States: one in 10 light bulbs in the United States is lit by uranium from former Soviet nuclear weapons.

Historic efforts like this one reflect the ongoing and significant progress we are making today towards our commitments under article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Here I would add that there are no shortcuts to reaching our shared goal of a world without nuclear weapons. It is necessarily an incremental process that requires hard work by Governments operating in the realm of supreme national and international security commitments impacting regional and global stability. The United States is expending tremendous effort to meet its commitments, and we look forward to continuing to engage with the Russian Federation regarding issues of strategic stability and with a view to achieving further bilateral nuclear reductions.

Like many of you, we are preparing for the upcoming third session of the NPT Preparatory Committee, where we are looking forward to discussing the important roles both nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States play in implementing the 2010 action plan, in anticipation of the 2015 NPT Review Conference. We are also preparing for the fifth conference of the five nuclear-weapon States (P-5), which we thank our Chinese colleagues for hosting this year.

The United States attaches great value to the P-5 process. I would like to stress that the importance of the P-5 process is not what it can produce in the immediate term, but rather what it means for the prospects of multilateral nuclear disarmament efforts in years to come. These conferences are an essential means for laying the foundation for future agreements that could involve parties beyond the United States and the Russian Federation.

Most people understand that we and Russia likely will need to take some additional bilateral steps before our arsenals are to a level where other nuclear-weapon States would be prepared to join us at the negotiating table. The work we are doing now in these P-5 conferences will help to ensure that when that day arrives, we will not be starting from square one, and — may I also emphasize — it is not only in the Conference sessions per se but also in our important intersessional work.

Our partners will have the opportunity to benefit from the experience that we have gained and shared regarding how monitoring activities, like on-site inspections, can be conducted to gain an understanding about the technology required to conduct arms control activities and methods of information-sharing that build confidence that treaty partners are adhering to any agreement.

We also hope this process will lead to cooperative work in addressing the significant verification challenges we will face as we move to lower numbers and categories of nuclear weapons beyond strategic nuclear weapons. The United States and the United Kingdom have begun some of this work on developing verification procedures and technologies, and we have briefed our P-5 partners on the results. The P-5 are uniquely positioned to engage in such research and development, given their experience as nuclear-weapon States. In the context of a P-5 working group chaired by China, we continue to develop a common glossary of nuclear-weapons-related terms. A glossary may not sound important or interesting until you consider that verifiable multilateral nuclear disarmament will require clear agreement on the definitions and concepts for the vital aspects that must be covered in future treaties.

We continue to work to build support for ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, making the case to our citizens in the United States and legislators that the Treaty will serve to enhance our collective security. We ask for support of the international community in continuing to build and maintain the International Monitoring System and on-site inspection regime. As we make the case for the Treaty's verifiability, this support from the international community will be vital.

These are just a few of the practical measures we are taking to advance towards our shared goal of a world without nuclear weapons. We celebrate the progress these step-by-step efforts have achieved, and we know we still have much work to do. We remain committed to fulfilling our obligations and working to take additional practical and meaningful steps.

Like United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, the United States agrees the Conference on Disarmament continues to possess promise. It must surmount its deadlock regarding a programme of work, and in pursuit of that goal the United States is open to renewing the informal working group. At the same time, we believe that Conference member States should foster substantive discussions aimed at future progress with a view to promoting the prospects for work on issues ripe for negotiation, above all a fissile material cut-off treaty. Like the Secretary-General, we hope the Conference on Disarmament helps to build "a safer world and a better future" because we also believe "that is its very mission".

The President: I thank the representative of the United States for her statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair.

I now give the floor to the representative of Japan, Ambassador Sano.

Mr. Sano (Japan): Mr. President, since this is the first time for me to take the floor under your presidency, I would like to extend my congratulations to you on your assumption of the first presidency of the Conference on Disarmament at its 2014 session. I assure you of my full support and cooperation. Furthermore, I appreciate the encouraging message given to the Conference last month by the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, and the commitment of support from our Acting Secretary-General, Mr. Michael Møller, and his team. As one of the six Presidents for the Conference's 2014 session, Japan is determined to strengthen the teamwork within the group of Presidents and work with all member States to push this negotiating body forward.

Despite its mandate and capacity, I do regret that the Conference has not been able to conduct any disarmament negotiation since the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. This does not, however, discourage me from fulfilling the responsibility of a member State in this privileged body.

In order not to lose sight of our direction in this long stalemate, I think it is worthwhile to begin by recognizing where we stand on the path to a secure world free of nuclear weapons.

We should acknowledge that there has been considerable progress to date in the field of nuclear disarmament, despite a reality of increasing diversified nuclear risks which we face. Since the end of the cold war, a significant number of warheads has been decreased through bilateral disarmament endeavours between the Russian Federation and the United States. In addition, unilateral efforts have been conducted by France and the United Kingdom.

These drastic reductions by nuclear-weapon States merit appropriate evaluation. Nonetheless, we are not satisfied. We must intensify our work, since uncertainty lingers in the international arena, and the task to further disarm may become more onerous as the number of warheads decreases. The difficulty of the task should not lead nuclear-weapon States to slow their effort in nuclear disarmament. The nuclear-weapon States have a legal obligation under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons to faithfully negotiate for disarmament, and I would like to see these States move further to fulfil their commitment.

Multilateralism will surely be a way to overcome the difficulties that lie ahead. Demand for pursuing multilateral nuclear disarmament has never been stronger, and this is precisely what characterizes the Conference on Disarmament as unique.

If we look back, all nuclear-weapon States committed themselves to realize important nuclear disarmament measures in 1995 in exchange for the indefinite extension of the Treaty.

Among others, we find such measures as the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, a fissile material cut-off treaty and establishment of a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction.

In spite of the development in global security, these principles and objectives are still valid today and need to be achieved without delay.

After conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, Japan believes the next logical measure should be negotiation of a fissile material cut-off treaty. Although every core issue has its own role and value, Japan favours a programme of work enabling immediate commencement of negotiation on a fissile material cut-off treaty.

We highly appreciate your efforts, Mr. President, as the first President of 2014, to formulate a consensus on a programme of work. Unfortunately, you have found it difficult at this juncture. We support your idea to re-establish the informal working group on a programme of work to continue to pursue an agreement in an open and transparent manner.

I would like to commend the work done so far by the former President, Ambassador O'Brien; the Co-Chair of the working group, Ambassador Gallegos; and the Vice-Co-Chair, Ambassador Woolcott. At the same time, we agree that the Conference on Disarmament should be engaged in a structured and substantive discussion not only to keep momentum but also to maintain our expertise for a possible future negotiation.

Last year, the world was impacted by a wave of appeals stressing the humanitarian aspect of nuclear weapons.

In addition, many heads of State and Ministers voiced their resolve in the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on nuclear disarmament. These wake-up calls signal to us that the Conference cannot stay inactive. Accepting the so-called "dual-track approach" would be a bottom line for us.

In parallel with the effort within the Conference, Japan is ready to participate in the Group of Governmental Experts on a fissile material cut-off treaty, which will start its work next month in Geneva. I am confident that the Group of Governmental Experts will deepen and press ahead with the work on this treaty for future negotiation. Interaction with the Group of Governmental Experts can also be considered to enrich our work in the Conference.

Before I conclude, allow me to present the statement delivered by Japanese Foreign Minister Mr. Fumio Kishida last month in Nagasaki. As the Foreign Minister of a country with a distinct history on nuclear weapons and as a politician from Hiroshima, he is firmly

committed in achieving the same goal which lies before us. He proposed “three reductions” in nuclear disarmament and “three preventions” in non-proliferation. Profiting from this occasion, I invite all colleagues to spare some time for his statement, which is distributed today.

The President: I thank the representative of Japan for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Ethiopia, Ambassador Getahun.

Mr. Getahun (Ethiopia): Mr. President, let me at the outset congratulate you on your assumption of the first presidency of the 2014 session of the Conference on Disarmament. I would also like to thank you for undertaking consultations and on your determination to work on a programme of work. I assure you and the successive Presidents of the Conference of the full support of the Ethiopian delegation.

We thank the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his address at the opening of the Conference’s 2014 session and for encouraging the Conference as the sole standing body on disarmament negotiations to take some concrete measures at its 2014 session. His presence is a sign of his personal dedication as well as the prominence of disarmament on the international agenda.

I would also like to welcome the appointment of Mr. Michael Møller as the Acting Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General, and wish him success in his endeavours. I also pay tribute to his predecessor, Mr. Tokayev, for his efforts to move forward the work of the Conference.

It is regrettable that another year has passed without the Conference reaching consensus on a programme of work, despite the efforts made in 2013. These efforts included the substantive discussions on the agenda items and the establishment of an informal working group with a mandate to produce a programme of work robust in substance and progressive over time in implementation. We commend the outgoing Presidents of the Conference and the Co-Chairs of the informal working group for their tireless efforts to bring an end to the long-standing stalemate in the Conference.

Ethiopia is encouraged that the General Assembly has maintained its strong support for the Conference on Disarmament as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum of the international community with the primary role in substantive negotiations on priority issues of nuclear disarmament. We must underscore the need to redouble our efforts in order to reinforce and revitalize the Conference and preserve its credibility through the resumption of substantive work, including negotiations on nuclear disarmament.

The Open-ended Working Group established at the sixty-seventh session of the United Nations General Assembly in its resolution 67/56, entitled “Taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations”, provided a good opportunity to bring together Member States as well as members of civil society and international organizations to exchange views and ideas that could potentially contribute in breaking the impasse in the Conference. In its resolution 68/50, the General Assembly called upon the Conference to further intensify consultations and to explore possibilities for overcoming its extensive deadlock by adopting and implementing a balanced and comprehensive programme of work at the earliest possible date during its 2014 session.

The sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly also hosted the historic high-level meeting on nuclear disarmament, demonstrating the importance of nuclear disarmament for international peace and security.

We also appreciate the preparations in convening another global gathering in Mexico to continue the discussion on the catastrophic impacts of nuclear weapons on public health, environment and food security, among others.

Ethiopia reaffirms its strong position that the Conference on Disarmament is the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, and nuclear disarmament continues to be our highest priority. As a member of the Non-Aligned Movement, Ethiopia supports the General Assembly resolutions on the total elimination of nuclear weapons based on a specified agreed time frame to reach the goal of achieving a nuclear-weapon-free world

through a negotiated and phased programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, including a nuclear weapons convention prohibiting the possession, development, production, stockpiling, transfer and use of nuclear weapons, leading to the global, non-discriminatory and verifiable elimination of nuclear weapons.

Ethiopia also reiterates its strong support for nuclear non-proliferation, peaceful uses of nuclear energy, the negotiation of a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or for other nuclear explosive devices, a multilaterally negotiated legally binding instrument to guarantee non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of nuclear weapons, the importance and urgency of preventing an arms race in outer space and transparency in armaments.

In conclusion, it is our belief that the many constructive consultations, both in the Conference and in the informal working groups in 2013, and the prompt adoption of the draft decision that you kindly submitted this morning for the re-establishment of an informal working group, could provide the basis for the 2014 session towards finding a consensus on a programme of work.

The President: I thank the representative of Ethiopia for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Slovakia, Ambassador Rosocha.

Mr. Rosocha (Slovakia): Mr. President, since this is the first time my delegation takes the floor at the 2014 session of the Conference on Disarmament and under your presidency, allow me to start by congratulating you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference and by wishing you all success in your endeavours in steering this body. My delegation commends your leadership. I assure you of the support of Slovakia during your presidency.

My delegation starts this year in the Conference on Disarmament, as it does every year, with the hope that we can find compromises that will allow the Conference to resume its substantive work and fulfil its mandate and its *raison d'être*. Your effort devoted to consultations with member States filled us with a belief and trust that no stone rests unturned. I would like to praise you for the entire endeavour you have invested in a successful start of the Conference's work.

Two weeks ago, the Secretary-General of the United Nations reminded us that disarmament and non-proliferation are a leading priority on the United Nations agenda. We believe that carrying out such a priority requires — and must be underpinned by — functional and effective machinery that can deliver with a view to promoting progress while honouring the priority. Stagnation in strengthening and moving forward norms on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation endangers the global security environment and especially the disarmament landscape. Machinery that is not able to secure and strengthen the environment risks changes in the landscape. Here the Conference must reaffirm its relevance and continue its role as a single multilateral negotiating forum for disarmament matters.

In this regard, my delegation regrets that the Conference is still unable to find a consensus on its programme of work, which would enable commencing negotiations and advancing on pressing issues on our agenda.

Last year the Conference established an informal working group with a mandate to produce a programme of work robust in substance and progressive over time in implementation. My delegation appreciates the initial discussion which took place during the meetings of the group last year. As the decision on the establishment of the group was taken towards the end of the last year's session, we did not have sufficient time to explore all possibilities and avenues for the Conference to adopt its programme of work and start substantive work. In this light, while my delegation would have preferred to take action on the programme of work, Slovakia supports the resumption of the work of the group in the 2014 session with the aim of producing an outcome within a limited time frame. We believe that a programme of work should lead to negotiations on agreed issues.

At the same time, while the re-establishment of the informal working group is seen as one track, we understand that there can be value and there is interest in setting up a

schedule of activities for structured discussion on issues on our agenda. We know that there is a lot of scepticism about repeating an exercise which we have tried several times in the absence of the programme of work. We agree that a schedule of activities cannot substitute for real negotiations, but it may be worth trying once again if it can help to understand better the issues and how they could be developed and dealt with further.

Here, we see potential for an active role for the informal grouping of the session's six Presidents. We welcome the joint initiative of the session's Presidents in proposing a substantive schedule of activities as a demonstration of this potential. Enhanced cooperation among a session's Presidents could bring a longer perspective, which is to be pursued beyond a single presidency. We believe that such an approach could create a new dynamism in the Conference in the future.

Binding ourselves with a single approach, whatever high standard it might provide but which would not allow any flexibility, may not take us forward. We need an open mind and an approach which would underline the ultimate goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. It should also ensure progress in developing an appropriate framework of relevant instruments for its achievement.

In this regard, let me reaffirm that my delegation continues to support the immediate commencement of the negotiation of a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons. Indeed, we consider such a treaty as an indispensable and next logical step, which would be part of the architecture of a nuclear-weapon-free world. We believe that such a treaty would be well placed in a comprehensive framework of mutually reinforcing instruments.

My delegation stands ready to work with all partners with a view to bringing the Conference's deadlock to an end and taking multilateral disarmament negotiations forward.

The President: I thank the representative of Slovakia for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Sweden, Mr. Lindell.

Mr. Lindell (Sweden): Mr. President, allow me to begin by commending you and your team on your excellent work and to wish you and the delegations of all this session's Presidents every success as you guide our work. We also want to thank you for the update on, and assessment of, your consultations regarding the programme of work of the Conference on Disarmament, as well as the draft decision for the re-establishment of an informal working group.

Sweden is fully aligned with the statement delivered by the European Union on 21 January, and I can be brief in my comments today.

As several delegations have noted, some success was achieved in our field in a broad sense in 2013, perhaps most notably the Arms Trade Treaty. The international community saw other promising developments, not least in the form of the Geneva Joint Plan of Action concerning the nuclear programme of Iran.

In our Conference, the establishment, towards the end of last year's session, of the informal working group could be seen as a ray of hope and something that should be built upon. As the European Union said in its statement, the informal working group demonstrated a willingness of member States to explore ways to reach a consensus on a programme of work and to unblock the Conference on Disarmament. As we see it, the informal working group got off to a good start, but the time was quite limited. Sweden therefore supports the early re-establishment of this group.

Conducting structured discussions on the substantive points of the agenda could also have value, as was noted by the United Nations Secretary-General in his recent address in this room. A joint effort in this regard by all the six presidencies for 2014 has potential, as it will give the efforts a greater degree of continuity.

We would also like to take the opportunity to briefly highlight another element of the European Union statement: the continued priority attached to early commencement of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty, while remaining ready to begin work on the other issues on the agenda. We look forward to the Group of Governmental Experts on a

fissile material cut-off treaty starting its work later this year, in the hope that it will give further impetus to the Conference.

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

Mr. Mati (Italy): As the next President of this session, let me first thank you, Mr. President, for your strong engagement and for your efforts aimed at exploring prospects for forging a consensus on a programme of work, but also to find other possible ways to put the Conference on Disarmament in a position to overcome its current difficulties.

In our view, the adoption of a programme of work with a negotiating mandate remains the best way to revive the Conference after too long a stalemate and thus relaunch the relevance and credibility of this forum as the single multilateral negotiating body on disarmament.

I already expressed, at the opening meeting, my country's expectations with regard to the activity of the Conference during the 2014 session. The *raison d'être* of this forum is to negotiate, and no effort should be spared in seeking a path towards renewed disarmament negotiations, as the United Nations Secretary-General said in his address to the Conference.

We are aware, however, that this is not an easy task. We need to be realistic, and we deem it appropriate and necessary to look for all possible constructive solutions that could allow the Conference to make progress on all the items on the agenda, in a pragmatic way, while continuing to seek agreement on a programme of work. With such a framework, we consider that the establishment of the informal working group last year was an innovative effort and an encouraging step reflecting the willingness of member States to overcome the current stalemate.

In this vein, Mr. President, we fully agree with your proposal to re-establish the informal working group as soon as we can, on the basis of the decision adopted last August. Unfortunately, the decision came very late last year, and the informal working group did not have enough time to accomplish its work. We hope that this decision will allow it to fully explore its mandate.

In parallel, we are convinced that structured discussions on the topics on the agenda can contribute to lay the foundation for future negotiations. We look forward to the formulation of a schedule of activities, in a spirit of transparency and in close consultation with all regional groups and the active involvement of the whole membership of the Conference.

The constructive spirit and flexibility shown by member States last year is still required to start a fruitful 2014 session.

The President: I thank the representative of Italy for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of the Czech Republic on behalf of the informal group of observer States.

Ms. Sequensová (Czech Republic): Mr. President, I have the honour to speak to you on behalf of the informal group of observer States to the Conference on Disarmament. The observer States would like to congratulate you on assuming the presidency and assure you of our full support. In particular, we appreciate the arrangements made during the first plenary of the Conference, which enabled us to be present for the official address by the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon.

We share the Secretary-General's analysis that the situation existing in the Conference is disappointing. At the same time, we maintain our hope that substantive work will resume.

In this respect, the dual-track approach you proposed seems particularly forward-looking. We therefore support a renewal of the mandate of the informal working group on the programme of work and the adoption of a schedule of activities. The informal group of observer States has shown continuous support to the goals of the Conference and wishes to

contribute to returning the Conference to where it belongs: at the centre of multilateral disarmament negotiations.

The members of the informal group of observer States welcome the opportunity to offer their views with a focus on their core interest, which is the expansion of the membership of the Conference. Given the fact that we keep receiving support from you, Mr. President, from previous Conference Presidents, numerous members of the Conference and also from regional groups and other organizations, we believe that the issue of enlargement is important not only to the Conference but also to the international community as a whole. Expansion could help the Conference to regain its credibility, ultimately dispelling any doubts pertaining to the sheer existence or relevance of the Conference.

The driving force behind our long-standing interest in enlargement of the Conference consists of several components. We believe that the Conference can play a vital role in universal disarmament. Such a universal goal should be addressed by a universally represented body, reflecting developments in the global security environment. Currently, this is not the case. For the past 14 years, no action has been taken on the issue of enlargement, even though rule 2 of the rules of procedure stipulates that “membership of the Conference will be reviewed at regular intervals”.

Moreover, we consider disarmament as one of the main paths to achieve a secure and stable international environment. It is in the interest of all of us present here today to attain such an international setting, and we want to share the common responsibility of achieving disarmament with the current members of the Conference.

In order to commence practical steps, with emphasis on enlargement of the Conference, we propose the following. Firstly, we urge the Conference to appoint a special coordinator or a coordinator or even a “Friend of the Chair” under the responsibility of the President. Secondly, we suggest taking the necessary steps to initiate a structured debate on enlargement, and thirdly to outline possible paths for enlargement. We therefore propose to include the topic of enlargement in the schedule of activities.

Although we are fully aware of the obstacles ahead of us, we offer strong political will and commitment to work closely with the member States on this topic. We are prepared to contribute to the restart of the disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control efforts in the Conference on Disarmament that are long overdue.

The President: I thank the representative of the Czech Republic for her statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Canada, Ms. Anderson.

Ms. Anderson (Canada): Mr. President, two weeks ago we indicated that should consensus on a programme of work not be possible, consideration should be given to renewing the informal working group’s mandate.

We thank you for your committed efforts to consult Conference on Disarmament members on a means to return this body to substantive work. While we regret that you have been forced to determine that a programme of work cannot be agreed, we welcome your efforts to renew the informal working group expeditiously.

Two weeks ago the United Nations Secretary-General encouraged us to run like a blue horse, but running alone is not enough. To win the race, you must know what direction you are running in. You must seek clever options, not become overly buoyed by unrealistic expectations, and remember to focus on the finish line. We hope, therefore, should the informal working group’s mandate be renewed, all delegations will take the opportunity to use this group as an innovative means to assume responsibility for returning the Conference to work. To make progress, all participants in the informal working group must approach its work with a spirit of cooperation and a willingness to work together to achieve a common purpose: returning the Conference to its mandated role as a negotiating body.

The President: I thank the representative of Canada for her statement. I now give the floor to the representative of India, Mr. Vipul.

Mr. Vipul (India): Mr. President, since this is the first time that the Indian delegation takes the floor during your presidency, allow me to congratulate you on your

assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. You may be assured of the full support of the Indian delegation in the discharge of your responsibilities.

India attaches high importance to the Conference on Disarmament as the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, and hopes for the early start of substantive work in the Conference in keeping with its nature as a negotiating forum.

We appreciate your efforts in conducting consultations on drawing up a programme of work for the 2014 session of the Conference. Without prejudice to our principled support for nuclear disarmament, India is prepared to commence fissile material cut-off treaty negotiations in the Conference as part of a balanced and comprehensive programme of work adopted by consensus.

We have listened carefully to your remarks today on your desire to proceed ahead on the possibility of the validation of the Conference's decision on establishing an informal working group.

We have also noted the non-paper containing a draft decision which was circulated by the secretariat yesterday. In this regard, we would like to recall that India joined consensus on the decision to establish the informal working group reluctantly in 2013. We had clearly stated our reservations in this context in the plenary of the Conference held on 30 July 2013 and also at the time of the adoption of the decision on 16 August 2013. We would like to reiterate that it would not be productive for the informal working group to become a platform for reopening long-standing consensus agreements and for endless procedural debates which would take us further away from the prospect of early negotiations in this Conference.

Further, in our understanding, the informal working group cannot take away anything from the responsibility of the President of the Conference on Disarmament under the rules of procedure to draw up the Conference's programme of work and present it to the Conference for consideration and adoption. Thus, any decision on the informal working group cannot deny or dilute the responsibility of the President of the Conference, nor can it deny or dilute in any manner the Conference's rules of procedure, including the rule of consensus.

As far as the issue of revalidation of the informal working group decision in 2014 is concerned, we believe that the draft decision circulated by the secretariat in its non-paper yesterday needs to be amended to the circumstances of 2014.

Last year, the decision was adopted in August, that is, towards the end of the Conference's session. It was for this reason that the decision provided the possibility for informal consultations during the intersessional period between 2013 and 2014 upon agreement by the outgoing and the incoming Presidents of the Conference. We believe that these provisions are not required this year, since the informal working group is being sought to be established at the start of the Conference session. Further, we believe that the decision needs to be put in proper context by including a reference to the agenda of the Conference (CD/1965) adopted earlier under your presidency, as also a reference to the importance of early adoption of a balanced and comprehensive programme of work by the Conference in its 2014 session, which will be in accord with General Assembly resolution 68/64 on the Conference's report.

Mr. President, since India is not prepared to accept the draft as contained in the non-paper circulated by the secretariat yesterday, 3 February, we would be happy to contribute to any discussions that you may wish to organize to enable changes to the draft so that it attracts consensus.

Lastly, as we had conveyed to you during consultations, the Conference on Disarmament may benefit from a structured discussion on the recommendations of the General Assembly to the Conference, as contained in document CD/1964, which was circulated in the first week of the Conference's session this year.

Mr. President, our statement today is with reference to the specific points mentioned by you in your opening remarks, and we look forward to making our general statement at an appropriate time in the coming weeks.

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

Mr. Biontino (Germany): Mr. President, since we have already made our views more broadly known in the first session under your presidency on 21 January, I can be brief and concentrate on the issues that you pose before us here. We note with deep regret that your endeavour to negotiate a programme of work has not been successful. We know the circumstances that led to your report, but we appreciate very much your efforts. I would like to reiterate, however, that 2014 will be again crucial for the work of the Conference on Disarmament. The world around us is changing, and its relevance will be again at stake, so I think we should not be seen idle. The Conference has to move. For that reason, we advocate that we start our work in the informal working group to explore all possibilities to come to a programme of work as soon as possible. For this reason, its mandate should be renewed as soon as possible as well. We, for our part, could live with the proposal you put before us; we would be open to further slight changes, but I think the gist of your decision should be maintained. 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 last year provides a valid basis, and we would like to thank the Co-Chairs of the informal working group very much for having established that.

The substantive schedule for activities should provide, in a balanced way, room and time for a substantive discussion of all core issues on the Conference's agenda. This cannot replace the necessary negotiations that prepare the ground.

I would like to introduce a slight note of urgency into what I am saying right now. I think we are working under time pressure. I think we should proceed, and therefore we hope very much that under your able guidance and chairmanship, Mr. President, we will be able to renew the mandate of the informal working group still this month.

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 Kenya, Ambassador Andanje, you have the floor.

Mr. Andanje (Kenya): Mr. President, since this is the very first time I have the honour to speak in this session of the Conference on Disarmament, I would like to begin by congratulating you on your assumption of the presidency. It is an honourable task; nevertheless, I commend you, and in particular, for the very open and transparent manner in which you have conducted your consultations with the Conference membership and all other interested parties.

Your approach to ensure there is coordination among the session's six Presidents and their Permanent Representatives has been imaginative. Although, as you have candidly stated following completion of your consultations, you have come to the conclusion that it is not possible to forge a consensus on a programme of work, it is my conviction that all is not lost. My delegation believes our quest to produce a programme of work does not rest with any particular presidency. It is a collective effort of each and every one of us. It can only be achieved by working closely together.

Mr. President, my delegation is convinced your proposal contained in the draft decision for the re-establishment of an informal working group which is before us still holds hope. We fully support your proposal and urge the Conference membership to revalidate the informal working group. It is our hope that this time round, the informal working group will have ample time to deliver its mandate.

Finally, Mr. President, I would like to reaffirm the commitment of Kenya to continue working with you and the wider Conference membership.

The President: I thank the representative of Kenya for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of the Netherlands, Ambassador Van der Kwast.

Mr. Van der Kwast (Netherlands): Thank you, Mr. President, for distributing a draft decision for the re-establishment of the informal working group and for all the work done so far.

As we indicated in the first plenary session under your presidency, we fully support the continuation of the work of the informal working group in 2014. The informal working group has met a few times since 2013, and we need to give it more time and explore where it can take us. We think it is worth seriously trying to agree on a programme of work by negotiating one. We very much appreciate that both Ambassador Gallegos Chiriboga and Ambassador Woolcott have indicated that they are willing to continue their chairmanship of the informal working group. We feel the draft you have circulated is a good basis on which we can take a decision on the continuation of the informal working group.

In the meantime, we would like to encourage this session's Presidents to continue their work on putting together a schedule of activities. We think that both the informal working group and a schedule of activities may provide the Conference on Disarmament with the necessary tools to examine if progress on any of the core issues is possible.

I would like to echo the words of my Japanese colleague. Demand for pursuing multilateral nuclear disarmament was never stronger, and in this body many of the colleagues congratulate themselves on representing their country in the sole body that negotiates nuclear disarmament. I must say it is kind of hilarious that we, in this beautiful room, congratulate each other that we are working in the sole body that discusses nuclear disarmament, but the sole body that is doing that is not making any progress. Progress is made outside of this room. I think this gives us reason for some thought.

I would also like to thank the Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, who addressed this body last week. We think this is helpful. We also thank the Acting Under-Secretary for Arms Control, Ms. Rose Gottemoeller, for addressing the Conference this morning.

We hope that other high-level representatives from other nuclear-weapon States and from all other member States will follow this example.

The President: I thank the representative of the Netherlands for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. Would any other delegation like to take the floor? I now give the floor to the representative of Mexico.

Mr. Lomónaco (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I apologize, Mr. President, for my late response, but I was finishing processing the statements we just heard on the specific proposal to consider extending the mandate of the working group.

First of all, we regret that the Conference on Disarmament has once again been unable to reach a consensus on the programme of work and that we are required, or that you, Mr. President, are required, to turn to other means, such as that which has been proposed.

The Conference is well aware of the reservations of Mexico concerning a working group such as the one being proposed, and we will state those same reservations for the record where and when it is appropriate. However, the Conference is also aware that Mexico will not prevent the possible renewal of the mandate of a working group.

In this context, allow me to make a practical suggestion, which is that the President base the text on the wording used for the previous working group. It would be exhausting and largely fruitless for us to commit to renegotiating a text for the renewal of the mandate of a working group that has already been established. It would be an ill omen and a very bad start to the year if, instead of dedicating ourselves to discussing the programme of work, we spend our time negotiating the wording of a relatively simple decision similar to the one adopted last year.

The President: I thank the representative of Mexico for his statement. Would any other delegation like to take the floor? That does not seem to be the case.

We have heard all the relevant remarks and comments, and I would like to thank you very much. The draft is in front of you. Any delegation who wishes to make amendments or changes may do so in writing to the secretariat. The deadline for that would be tomorrow, Wednesday, 5 February, at 5 p.m.

This concludes our business for today. The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held next Tuesday, 11 February 2014, at 10 a.m. Before we adjourn, I would like to give the floor to the Secretary of the Conference for an announcement.

Mr. Fung (Secretary of the Conference): Last week, we circulated a draft provisional list of participants and invited you to send in corrections or amendments. We wish to thank the delegations that have done so, and would like to call on the following delegations that have not yet sent in their amendments to do so: the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Nigeria, Tunisia and Zimbabwe. Please submit any changes that you would like us to reflect on the list so that we can finalize it and have it published.

The President: I thank the Secretary for that useful announcement. The meeting is adjourned.

The meeting rose at 11.10 a.m.