

Conference on Disarmament

3 March 2014

English

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

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Monday, 3 March 2014, at 10.35 a.m.

President: Mr. Vinicio Mati(Italy)

The President: I call to order the 1308th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

Before proceeding to our business, it is with sorrow that I have to inform you of the passing away of Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, former Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva from 1993 to 2002 and Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament.

With your permission, I invite the Conference to observe a minute of silence in his memory.

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The President: I now wish to inform you that one State, Armenia, has requested to participate in our work during the 2014 session as an observer. The request is contained in document CD/WP.577/Add.2, which includes all the requests that the secretariat received up to Friday, 28 February 2014, at 4 p.m. Are there any comments on this request? May I take it that the Conference on Disarmament decides to invite Armenia to participate in our work in accordance with the rules of procedure?

It was so decided.

The President: I would like now to turn to document CD/WP.579, containing the draft decision for the re-establishment of an informal working group. This draft decision was distributed by e-mail by the secretariat on Thursday, 27 February, and has been placed in paper copy in your country's pigeonhole. Additional copies are available here in the chamber at the conference officers' table by the entrance to my left.

During my consultations with Conference on Disarmament members, there was general support to move forward on a programme of work for the 2014 session based on General Assembly resolution 68/64 on the Conference's report, adopted by consensus by the Assembly. This text is the result of an agreement reached during the informal consultations that took place on Monday, 24 February, in the afternoon and, in my opinion, meets the expectations of all delegations.

Before tabling the draft decision for adoption, I would like to ask whether any delegation wishes to take the floor. That does not seem to be the case. It is my pleasure now to formally submit the draft decision for adoption by the Conference. Are there any objections? I see none.

It was so decided.

The President: I thank you for your flexibility and cooperative spirit. The message that we are sending today is clear and is a message of hope. The member States of the Conference on Disarmament, more than ever before, are aware of the urgent need to resume substantive work in the Conference and want to address directly the areas of disagreement that have prevented it from making progress in the past. I hope that the re-establishment of the informal working group will open a new phase for the Conference and will be shortly followed by the adoption of a schedule of activities that would enable, through focused and structured discussions, the elaboration of substantive proposals on all agenda items.

Two member States have asked for the floor. Ambassador Lomónaco, you have the floor.

Mr. Lomónaco (Mexico) (spoke in Spanish): Mr. President, I am taking the floor after the decision was adopted because we did not want to create any obstacle to the renewal of the mandate of the informal working group; however, I do wish to put on record our scepticism regarding the working group.

Firstly, we are not optimistic about its chances of securing agreement on a programme of work while the Conference on Disarmament continues to apply the crippling consensus rule that confers a de facto veto power on all members, some of whom use it as a routine negotiating tactic rather than as a last resort. Secondly, we are concerned that the working group will become an end in itself, that we will forget that our goal is not a programme of work or a working group, and that the working group might be presented as

evidence of progress in the Conference's work when in fact we remain mired in a shameful paralysis.

That said, my delegation will again participate constructively and with commitment in pursuit of an agreement that will enable the adoption of a programme of work for the first time in five years. There is nothing that we would like more than to see the same negotiating creativity applied in substantive discussions as we have seen in relation to a purely procedural matter.

I wish every success to the Ambassadors of Ecuador and Australia, who have accepted this task once again.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Ambassador, for your statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of India, Mr. Varma.

Mr. Varma (India): Mr. President, we would like to begin by congratulating you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. We would also like to convey our appreciation for the wide-ranging consultations conducted by you and your delegation which enabled consensus on the decision just adopted by the Conference. With respect to the document just adopted, my delegation wishes to state the following for the record.

For my delegation, the Conference on Disarmament is a negotiating forum. It has a unique status as the world's single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum. The best way to revitalize the Conference would be to adopt and implement a programme of work such as the one contained in document CD/1864 and adopted in 2009 by consensus.

United Nations General Assembly resolution 68/64 on the report of the Conference on Disarmament, which you referred to in your opening remarks, also links back to document CD/1864, the last programme of work adopted by the Conference.

We have agreed to go along with the decision to set up an informal working group in the hope that this will enable us to begin substantive work in the Conference, including negotiations at an early date. It would be counterproductive if this forum were to become a platform for reopening long-standing consensus agreements or for endless procedural debates which would take us further away from the prospect of early negotiations.

Further, in our understanding, the group does not take away anything from the responsibility of the President of the Conference under the rules of procedure. We are glad that this year's decision on the informal working group makes this explicit.

Lastly, Mr. President, we would like to join you and members of the Conference in conveying our very deep condolences on the passing of Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, the former Secretary-General of this Conference.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the Ambassador of India. Are there any other delegations wishing to take the floor? I give the floor to the representative of France.

Mr. Simon-Michel (France) (*spoke in French*): As I am taking the floor for the first time, Mr. President, I would like to congratulate you and wish you every success in your role as President of the Conference on Disarmament.

I should like very briefly to say that France views the adoption of this decision as proof of the Conference's determination to play its full part and to return to the task of negotiating entrusted to it in its capacity as the sole multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament. This is a sign of hope.

However, France also wishes to recall that it considers the adoption of this decision to constitute a procedural decision intended to allow us to move forward. Its adoption naturally does not prejudice in any way the position of France, which is that, in order to truly perform its role, the Conference should negotiate, and that the only way for it to reach the consensus necessary to begin negotiating is by building on its past achievements.

When we speak of the Conference's past achievements, as recalled in the resolution adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations at its previous session and as

recalled by the General Assembly every year, we are naturally referring to the previous programme of work adopted under the Algerian presidency in 2009 and contained in document CD/1864, which, for France, remains the foundation on which we can build. This foundation is also essential for those of us who are parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), as the priority given to the negotiation of a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons in the Conference on Disarmament, in keeping with document CD/1999, is also clearly reflected in action 15 of the action plan agreed at the 2010 NPT Review Conference.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the Ambassador of France for his statement and for his kind words addressed to the Chair. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor? I recognize the Ambassador of Pakistan.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): Mr. President, as this is the first time that our delegation is taking the floor, I would like to begin by congratulating you on your assumption of the presidency and to assure you of our fullest cooperation.

It was not my intention to speak this morning, but in view of some of the comments that have been made, I thought it best that the position of my delegation be made clear, especially with regard to the work that we have before us.

We in the Conference on Disarmament have to work in accordance with the real world. We have to accept ground realities. This body is not in some different environment which has its own dynamics. The dynamics here are the dynamics of the real world.

The second point is, and as recognized in the Final Document of the first special session on disarmament, we need to work on the basis of equal security, and the security of some cannot be attained at the cost of the security of others. So, the issue of security is paramount when we seek to negotiate a treaty on any of the issues on the Conference's agenda.

It has been said by some of my worthy colleagues that there is a priority to negotiate a fissile material cut-off treaty. That may be a priority for some of us, but not all of us. There are also other issues on the Conference's agenda; and for some there are priorities such as negative security assurances, for us as a delegation, and several others. For the whole of the Group of 21, the priority is nuclear disarmament; and for some others, it is the prevention of an arms race in outer space. The unfortunate fact is that there is no consensus to negotiate on any one of these issues, and the reason is that there are security considerations of States which have prevented this consensus.

The reality that we have to face, and deal with, is that document CD/1864 as a programme of work has now become redundant, and there is no point in our view to try and recreate the same basis. After more than four years, we need to recognize this reality and we need to move on to find a new basis, hopefully a new basis on which we can begin negotiations on any or all of the issues that are before us. As we said when the informal working group was set up last year, and it bears mentioning again now, if the idea is to go back and try to recreate and reinvent the programme of work contained in document CD/1864, then we will be heading down a dead end. We have to think imaginatively about a new contract that can make negotiations and substantive work possible.

In the absence of such an agreement by consensus, we have to engage in the next best alternative, which is substantive discussions on all four issues in a balanced and comprehensive manner.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the Ambassador of Pakistan for his statement and for his kind words addressed to the Chair. I now invite the Ambassador of Australia, Mr. Woolcott, to take the floor.

Mr. Woolcott (Australia): Mr. President, allow me to begin by congratulating you on your extensive consultations and for bringing us to this particular outcome.

I have been in this place too long to have any illusions about the difficulty of the informal working group's task in developing a programme of work, and I am very conscious that the proper role of the Conference on Disarmament is, as we all know, as a

negotiating body, but we will see what we can do. We have a full year ahead of us for consultations.

I look forward to working with all my colleagues here in this room. I particularly look forward to working with Ambassador Gallegos, the Co-Chair, and yourself, Mr. President, and your successors, and I thank you for the confidence you have shown in us.

The President (*spoke in French*): I warmly thank the Ambassador of Australia for his continued willingness to work with the presidency as part of the working group and, in turn, Ambassador Gallegos for his availability. I now give the floor to the representative of the United States of America.

Mr. Buck (United States of America): Mr. President, as this is the first time that my delegation has taken the floor during your presidency, allow me to join others in congratulating you on assuming this important responsibility and assuring you of our full support.

Let me also congratulate you on your having reached a consensus decision to renew or re-establish the informal working group. We very much welcome this in the context of what has been discussed and presented as a dual-track approach in this body for this session. I would here just like to emphasize that, for my delegation, both tracks of this dual-track approach are very important. So we do look forward to continuing to make progress on the second track, that is, a schedule of activities for substantive informal discussions on all agenda items, even as we continue to work on a substantive programme of work which would be aimed at negotiations.

In that context, and with due regard for comments made this morning here in the room by various delegations, I would just like to emphasize: it is, of course, a fact that we all come to the informal working group and will come to the informal working group with our own interests in this body and our own understanding of where the lowest-hanging fruit may be. I would just emphasize that for the United States, we continue to believe that a fissile material cut-off treaty is a very important objective for this body that is reinforced by not only the members of us who are parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons but also an understanding that we came, and have come, very close: we had consensus in 2009 and want to continue to work on that basis to get to a negotiation. We realize there are difficulties, we realize there are security concerns, but we are convinced that this is precisely the body that can address those in an effective manner. It has managed in the past to create major important treaties, where various States had compelling national security concerns. I think we can do it again. So, for our part, we want to maintain the level of our ambition going into the informal working group process. I would also say that, looking ahead to this year and next, we are pleased to be able to engage within the Group of Governmental Experts on a fissile material cut-off treaty and hope that that also will help to inform our substantive informal discussions within the Conference on Disarmament. So again, thank you very much, Mr. President, and we look forward to working with you on both aspects of this dual-track approach.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of the United States for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair.

Allow me to remind everyone that the high-level segment of the plenary meeting will begin at 11 a.m. I now give the floor to the secretariat for an announcement regarding procedural matters.

Mr. Fung (Secretary of the Conference on Disarmament) (*spoke in French*): Thank you, Mr. President. This weekend, we were informed of a number of changes to the programme of the high-level meeting, which will begin shortly at 11 a.m. These changes have no bearing on the substance of the programme, rather they relate to the names and order of speakers who will be taking the floor. Therefore, the meeting schedule remains unchanged.

At 11 a.m., we will begin with the President of the General Assembly of the United Nations, Mr. John Ashe. After that, the programme, such as we sent it to you this morning, will continue with the Secretary of State of Slovakia, the Minister of Argentina and the Secretary of State of Italy. This afternoon, instead of listening to several speakers, we will

have only one, the Deputy Minister of Greece. These are the changes that have been made to the programme that we sent to all delegations last week.

The President: Thank you, Mr. Fung and now, in accordance with the schedule that the secretariat announced to us last week, the meeting is suspended.

The meeting was briefly suspended.

The President: The meeting is resumed. I would now like to extend a warm welcome to our distinguished guest of today, Mr. John W. Ashe, President of the General Assembly of the United Nations.

Your presence in our midst today, Sir, is very much appreciated as we all look forward to the words of wisdom that would constructively impact the work of this Conference. You have the floor, Mr. Ashe.

Mr. Ashe (President of the General Assembly): A pleasant good morning to one and all, and greetings from the entire membership of the sixty-eighth session of the United Nations General Assembly. Today, in this beautiful chamber which has a long history, I am indeed pleased to address the Conference on Disarmament and to convey my respect and admiration for your work.

Let me thank the Ambassador of Israel for extending to me an invitation, and also to congratulate you, Mr. President, for your leadership in conducting the work of this Conference.

This Conference, as we all know, was established in 1979 as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum in the international community. In the past, the Conference and its predecessors have delivered ground-breaking results, including the adoption of landmark instruments such as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Chemical Weapons Convention. In your work, you have advanced the international disarmament agenda and contributed substantially to the maintenance of international peace and security, one of the founding goals of the Charter of the United Nations. You have built trust among States and made our world safer for all. These achievements are important and commendable.

Yet, unfortunately, whoever speaks to this esteemed body — myself included — can only reference its past successes. The last great achievement of this Conference dates back to 24 September 1996, almost nearly 20 years ago, when the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty was negotiated. If the tide does not turn, you risk being defined by your historical achievements.

As President of the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly, I must stress that this body is too valuable to suffer such a fate. In the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, the Assembly recognized the need for a single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum. I can assure you that this collective preference remains unchanged. Please allow me to share with you why I think this is so.

Looking at some of the events and discussions of the current General Assembly session, I see strong support and interest among the United Nations membership for a lively and vital Conference on Disarmament, ready for negotiations.

Last September, the honour was mine to open the first ever high-level meeting of the General Assembly dedicated to nuclear disarmament. Seventy-four statements were made by Heads of State and Government, Ministers and other representatives. I was very impressed by participants' dedication and will to move forward and progress on the issues raised. Among the many topics upon which participants touched were the revitalization of the disarmament machinery and approaches on how to take forward multilateral negotiations to achieve a world without nuclear weapons, including through the Humanitarian Initiative.

In my summary of the high-level meeting, I noted the following: "States expressed serious concern regarding the continued stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament, including its failure to agree on, and implement, a comprehensive and balanced programme

of work.” I also noted that many States reaffirmed the role of the Conference on Disarmament as the single multilateral negotiating body on disarmament, as established by that session; and my summary reflected that States had recalled the importance of multilateralism in advancing nuclear disarmament objectives. States asked for intensified efforts across regional groups in order to move forward beyond old divisions and entrenched positions, and find elements of consensus.

The same sentiments are echoed in General Assembly resolution 66/66, entitled “Revitalizing the work of the Conference on Disarmament and taking forward multilateral disarmament negotiations”. In this resolution, the Assembly called upon States to intensify efforts aimed at creating an environment conducive to multilateral disarmament negotiations. The Assembly also invited States to explore options, proposals and elements to revitalize the United Nations disarmament machinery as a whole, including the Conference on Disarmament.

At last October’s session of the First Committee, intensive discussions among delegations clearly revealed that revitalizing the disarmament machinery — first and foremost, the Conference on Disarmament — was an emerging and pressing priority. The General Assembly recognized the need to conduct multilateral negotiations with the aim of reaching agreement on concrete issues, particularly given tensions in the present international climate and global concerns about proliferation. Yet the Assembly also noted with renewed concern that, despite intensive efforts by States and successive Presidents of the Conference to reach consensus on a programme of work, the Conference had not succeeded in beginning its substantive work.

In this regard, I am extremely pleased to learn that through the efforts of the President and others, just this morning, you decided to re-establish the informal working group with a mandate to produce a programme of work that is “robust in substance and progressive over time in implementation”. I would like to congratulate you for having taken this critical step again, but real progress must now be made. I repeat, this work and its purpose are far too important not to be pursued with vigour until success is achieved. As you move forward, I remind you to stay focused on the bigger picture, overcome your differences and live up to your responsibilities. With so many other sectors and domains evolving and moving forward, we cannot afford a complete stalemate in the Conference year after year. The Conference has an irreplaceable responsibility in the advancement of the international agenda, and you must do your part to ensure progress is made.

Let me now turn to an important issue that is very much linked to my overall theme for the current session of the General Assembly, namely “The post-2015 development agenda: setting the stage”.

Many of you were in New York when I addressed the First Committee of the General Assembly last October. As I mentioned during that address, in one way or the other, each and every item we discuss in the General Assembly reinforces sustainable development. The decisions you make here not only contribute to peace and security but inevitably impact upon other aspects of United Nations work.

The Geneva disarmament community, one of the most respected and knowledgeable communities among us, has unique potential for contributing to a better world for all. Your network, synergies and other services in Geneva, your infrastructure, can and must be used responsibly and productively, not only in this Conference, but also beyond it. Let us not forget that where we put our time, resources and energy is an indicator of what we truly value. When we value education, health care, poverty reduction and sustainable development, our actions and choices must likewise offer proof of that.

I welcome this broader perspective in which the disarmament community is looking at the various challenges it faces. In particular, I note the increasing international focus on the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons. Due to their massive powers of destruction, the use of nuclear weapons would have catastrophic global consequences and would cause severe and long-lasting emergencies: humanitarian, global health, climate, social order, human development and economic impact. Access to social goods and services is predicated on the existence of peace and security. Development goals can only be achieved if we prevent such catastrophes on our planet. I am hopeful about the

potential of the Humanitarian Initiative to accelerate international nuclear disarmament efforts. This must truly be a collective effort, because we face the risks posed by these weapons collectively, not as States with narrow national security interests.

To conclude, let me reiterate that the Conference on Disarmament plays a crucial part in the global disarmament machinery. I urge you to use your time in the informal working group wisely and, despite the absence of a programme of work, to continue your structured dialogue on the issues on your agenda. Spare no effort in your work towards revitalizing the disarmament machinery. We can no longer jeopardize the credibility of this body, and we can no longer wait for lightning to strike.

The dreams of lasting peace and sustainable development globally are ones worth working for. Peace underpins development, and development demands disarmament. That is the goal towards which this Conference must strive, and I wish you every success in your work for the current session.

The President: I thank Mr. Ashe for his statement and also for his kind words addressed to the Chair. I will now briefly suspend the meeting in order to escort Mr. Ashe from the chamber.

The meeting was briefly suspended.

The President: The plenary meeting is resumed. I now welcome our distinguished guest, Mr. Peter Javorčík, State Secretary of the Ministry for Foreign and European Affairs of Slovakia. I have the pleasure and the honour to invite Mr. Javorčík to take the floor.

Mr. Javorčík (Slovakia): Allow me to begin by congratulating you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and by wishing you every success in your endeavours in guiding this body. I would like to assure you of the full support of Slovakia.

We all are aware of the strong accomplishments of the Conference in the past and its valuable contribution to global security. However, we cannot live on past achievements: we must build on them. Slovakia is disappointed that the Conference again failed to establish its programme of work at the beginning of this year. The continued and long-standing stalemate is a matter of concern to us. The inability of the Conference to carry out its mandate has serious consequences and negative implications not only for the Conference itself but also for the disarmament landscape, which underpins international security. The continued struggle of the Conference to find a way to negotiate on issues that would develop and improve the disarmament architecture adds to the frustration of the international community.

We have a saying in my country, Slovakia, which suggests that “those who do nothing cannot spoil anything”. But we do not think that we should follow that path; inactivity cannot provide for stability in disarmament and security.

Slovakia believes that the Conference on Disarmament is a key element of the overall United Nations disarmament system. We are convinced it has the potential to deliver on pressing issues of the disarmament and non-proliferation agenda — a potential which, I am confident, we all are committed to reviving and reactivating. However, we need to act swiftly in order to reaffirm the Conference’s relevance in addressing current security issues and needs.

The continued impasse is unacceptable and unsustainable.

As flexibility inside the Conference on Disarmament is reaching its limits, we need to demonstrate political will to create confidence in the Conference, which would enable it to commence negotiations.

A lot of effort has been invested and many initiatives explored to advance multilateral disarmament negotiations. Nevertheless, we encourage investing the same effort in the Conference with the aim of reaffirming its credibility and bringing negotiations to life.

Two weeks ago, many countries gathered in Nayarit, Mexico, to discuss the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons. Indeed, this issue is certainly an important

element of the complex discourse on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, which includes humanitarian and security considerations. We must work together to prevent the use of nuclear weapons, whether deliberate or accidental. That is why we continue to support the process that would lead to the total elimination of nuclear arsenals, including the reasons for their existence. Slovakia believes that achieving this goal would need the substantive and constructive engagement of nuclear-armed States. Their participation is crucial if a ban is to deliver. Banning nuclear weapons themselves may not guarantee their elimination.

In order to move forward in nuclear disarmament and ultimately to eliminate the risk of catastrophic humanitarian consequences from the use of nuclear weapons, the international community should focus on concrete and practical measures promoting the shared goal of a world free of nuclear weapons.

At the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), we adopted an action plan which includes important steps for progressing with nuclear disarmament. We should work towards its full implementation to build trust across the whole non-proliferation regime and to progress in all its areas. The humanitarian dimension certainly underpins the Treaty and adds to the reasons why we need to move the NPT process forward.

Slovakia believes that in advancing nuclear disarmament we should work towards a framework of mutually reinforcing, legally binding instruments, which would create conditions for achieving and maintaining a world free of nuclear weapons. In this regard, Slovakia continues to support the immediate commencement of negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices. The desire of the international community in this regard has been expressed at various occasions and forums, including in the 2010 NPT Review Conference action plan and through the establishment of the Group of Governmental Experts on such a treaty, which will soon begin its work.

This issue is long overdue. If we are serious about nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation, we cannot delay further the negotiation of this treaty. We are of the view that starting negotiations on one issue will not mean neglecting others that also deserve progress.

In the absence of a programme of work, I would like to welcome the decision of the Conference to re-establish the informal working group in this year's session. I encourage the working group to produce an outcome within a limited time frame and in a way that would lead to negotiations in the Conference on agreed issues.

We also give serious consideration to structured discussion on the items on the Conference's agenda. It seems to us that there is a certain level of scepticism about this exercise. We understand that. While it is not our preference, as we would like to see the Conference negotiating, we think that there could be value in such discussion if it aims at developing the issues further with a view to future negotiations.

I also wish to underline that Slovakia pays due attention to the desire and interest in membership of the Conference expressed by many countries. We believe this issue deserves proper consideration. In this regard, Slovakia recognizes interesting support for appointing a special coordinator on the expansion of the Conference's membership.

Let me also briefly touch upon a few other issues.

I am pleased to announce that just recently the Slovak Government adopted the action plan for accession to the Convention on Cluster Munitions, aiming to deposit the instrument of ratification by June 2015 — next year — and thus becoming a State party to the Convention by 1 January 2016. Let me reiterate that Slovakia has been supporting and actively participating in international efforts aimed at restricting cluster munitions since the very beginning. At the same time, we see the necessity of engaging all countries, including those that produce and stockpile the vast majority of cluster munitions, to universally address concerns about these weapons. Establishing a regulatory regime with the broadest possible membership would be a great accomplishment. That is why Slovakia has also

supported the conclusion of an agreement on cluster munitions in the framework of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, which enjoys wide support.

Last but not least, next month we will mark the first anniversary of the adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty. Slovakia has been a traditional advocate of the norm that would fill the gap in global security through the regulation of the international legal trade in conventional arms, while combating illicit trafficking. It is my pleasure to announce the Arms Trade Treaty will be ratified early this spring by Slovakia. In conclusion, let me encourage all other countries to become States parties to the Treaty.

The President: I thank Mr. Javorčík for his statement and also for his kind words addressed to the Chair. Allow me now to suspend the meeting for a short moment in order to escort Mr. Javorčík from the chamber.

The next speaker is scheduled for noon, at which time we will resume this meeting.

(spoke in French)

The secretariat has just informed me of a change to our programme of work that obviates the need for us to return here this afternoon. The delegation of Greece has kindly agreed for the Deputy Minister to deliver his statement this morning, immediately after Italy. If there are no objections, we can proceed accordingly.

The meeting was suspended at 11.35 a.m. and resumed at noon.

The President: The plenary meeting is resumed. Allow me now to welcome our distinguished guest, Mr. Héctor Marcos Timerman, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Argentina. I have the pleasure and the honour to invite Mr. Timerman to take the floor.

Mr. Timerman (Argentina) *(spoke in Spanish)*: Mr. President, I would like to begin by congratulating you on having assumed the responsibility of leading the Conference on Disarmament and by wishing you every success in your work in the coming weeks. I would also like to express the support of Argentina for your work and that of your successors in the meetings to be held this year.

My presence at this session of the Conference is a renewed expression of the commitment of the Argentine Republic to this body, which remains the sole multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament and nuclear disarmament in particular.

Argentina has traditionally advocated a broad approach to the pursuit of actions and initiatives on disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control, spheres in which it has actively engaged at the regional and global levels, in support of the role of multilateralism in general and of the United Nations in particular. My Government is convinced that the best way to defend national security interests is by commencing substantive negotiations within the Conference on the various agenda items, and that such national security positions may be best defended within the framework of existing bodies.

In 1978, at the first special session devoted to disarmament, the General Assembly for the first time outlined an agreed strategy for comprehensive disarmament and reaffirmed the central role and primary responsibility of the United Nations in the sphere of disarmament. We maintain our belief in the continued validity of those goals.

The Conference on Disarmament will not be revived by concentrating time and effort on the discussion of its rules of procedure or its institutional characteristics, although it should be recalled that these enabled the conclusion of important international instruments. The revitalization of this forum will be achieved through the political will of its members to overcome the present situation. My country would welcome innovative proposals that foster open debate and give rise to creative solutions encompassing various positions, so that the Conference may break out of its impasse. In that context, we support the continuation of the informal working group to produce a programme of work robust in substance and progressive over time in implementation, the efforts of the Open-ended Working Group on nuclear disarmament and the imminent commencement of the work of the Group of Governmental Experts on a treaty banning the production of fissile material.

On this point I wish to stress that Argentina values the creation of flexible mechanisms that provide an opportunity to enrich the debate on disarmament by contributing new perspectives.

At the same time, and notwithstanding the importance that we attach to such contributions, Argentina continues to prioritize the conducting of negotiation processes within existing forums in order to prevent a breakdown in the balance and integrity of the current system over the long term.

Argentina has traditionally given priority to the issue of nuclear disarmament and has taken significant steps in that area, reflecting its clear and sustained commitment to disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation.

In line with that approach, Argentina maintains a vigorous nuclear programme for exclusively peaceful purposes and with the strictest respect for the norms enshrined in the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the standards established under existing non-proliferation initiatives. Within this framework, Argentina develops, uses and exports nuclear technology for peaceful purposes.

My Government notes with concern that four decades of significant progress in the field of non-proliferation, in the 43 years that have elapsed since the entry into force of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, have not been matched by equivalent advances in nuclear disarmament. It believes that the international community could respond more effectively to the challenges it faces if the nuclear-weapon States were to demonstrate their willingness to completely eliminate such weapons.

Argentina considers that existing nuclear arsenals continue to be disproportionately large, constituting a threat to global stability and collective security and undermining the efforts that we are all investing in the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. For that reason, my Government reiterates its support for all measures that promote a dynamic commitment to non-proliferation and the complete elimination of nuclear weapons in accordance with the principles of transparency, irreversibility and verification of nuclear disarmament measures. Accordingly, it advocates the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty as an important tool for preserving the credibility of the non-proliferation regime, which is now at risk. The failure of some States to ratify that Treaty both delays its entry into force and strengthens the argument that the regime is implemented under a double standard.

Argentina particularly supports efforts to articulate a common Latin American and Caribbean position, within both the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL) and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), to promote a new treaty for the total prohibition of nuclear weapons. In this connection, Argentina hosted the last General Conference of OPANAL and a senior officials meeting of CELAC, both in August 2013. On those occasions, the region voiced its concern at the refusal of the Government of the United Kingdom to disclose whether nuclear submarines sent to the South Atlantic carried nuclear weapons, especially in view of at least one precedent in which British nuclear weapons were taken into the zone of application of the Treaty of Tlatelolco — an act that was kept secret until detected and reported by the media.

For all of these reasons, we believe that efforts towards nuclear disarmament should continue.

In that spirit, we participated in the process begun in March 2013 in Oslo — and continued in Mexico this year — to highlight the devastating humanitarian consequences of all nuclear weapons, regardless of who possesses them.

As a member of the first nuclear-weapon-free zone established in a densely populated region, my country supports the creation and consolidation of other nuclear-weapon-free zones that may significantly contribute to international peace and security by closing off certain areas from the use or threat of nuclear weapons.

In particular, Argentina reiterates its appeal for those States that formulated interpretative declarations with respect to the additional protocols to the Treaty of Tlatelolco to withdraw them in accordance with the purpose of the Treaty.

In conclusion, I would like to echo the words of the United Nations Secretary-General in wishing that this year's session be filled with inspiration — making 2014 a year of creativity and action— and that we show signs of responsibility to the international community, as the circumstances demand.

The President: I thank Mr. Timmerman for his statement and also for his kind words addressed to the Chair. Allow me now to suspend the meeting for a short moment, in order to escort Mr. Timmerman from the chamber.

The meeting was briefly suspended.

The President: The plenary meeting is resumed. Now, it is a particular pleasure for me, as the representative of the country holding the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament, to welcome our next distinguished guest, Mr. Benedetto Della Vedova, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of Italy. I have the pleasure and the honour to invite Mr. Della Vedova to take the floor.

Mr. Della Vedova (Italy): At the outset, I wish to reiterate the commitment of Italy to the work of the Conference on Disarmament and congratulate you, Ambassador, for assuming the presidency of this assembly. It was roughly a decade ago that Italy last performed that role. It is a great pleasure for me to address for the first time this Conference which continues to represent the most important multilateral disarmament negotiating forum for the international community as a whole.

Italy attaches great importance to disarmament in its broadest sense and is fully committed to disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation as essential components of its foreign policy. We firmly believe that multilateralism and international cooperation are crucial to effective, concrete and long-term results in these fields. Therefore, Italy will continue to be actively engaged in all multilateral forums, including this Conference, the United Nations, the European Union and the Group of Eight, as well as in the context of major international treaties on both conventional arms and issues related to weapons of mass destruction.

As we are all aware, recent events have clearly shown how important these principles are in the broader context of disarmament. Let me briefly recall two main examples. With regard to conventional arms, the year 2013 marked an important turning point with the adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty by the General Assembly of the United Nations and its formal signature last June. Far from being exclusively a treaty on the arms trade, once it has entered into force the Arms Trade Treaty will be a binding multilateral instrument able to foster respect for human rights. As is well known, it introduced for the first time binding criteria on prevention of gender-based violence, thus including the gender perspective and the concept of human security in the broader context of global security. Much remains to be done, and the entry into force will not happen overnight, but the signing of the Arms Trade Treaty is undoubtedly a multilateral success story.

With regard to disarmament of weapons of mass destruction, the criminal attacks with massive use of chemical agents in Syria reminded us of the catastrophic consequences of any use of weapons of mass destruction. Since the very beginning, Italy has strongly advocated a multilateral response to the use of chemical weapons in Syria with the aim of preventing any further bloodshed or other harmful alternatives. The plan for the destruction of Syrian chemical weapons is the most important multilateral disarmament operation of the last decade, and Italy is actively contributing to the efforts of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons joint mission with logistical, financial and technical support.

In this context, as the Secretary-General of the United Nations rightly mentioned in his remarks to this assembly, it is worth recalling that the Chemical Weapons Convention was negotiated here, within the Conference on Disarmament.

The Conference and its predecessors have had some impressive accomplishments. Other major multilateral arms control and disarmament agreements have been negotiated within this room, such as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Biological Weapons Convention and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

This assembly thus played a crucial role in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation, greatly contributing to make the world safer.

As a matter of fact, the threats and the risks associated with the spread of weapons of mass destruction are incalculable, and it is essential to redouble our efforts to prevent new States as well as non-State actors gaining access to them. This is why the deadlock of the disarmament machinery is no longer acceptable. Italy fully agrees with the words addressed to this assembly by the Secretary-General of the United Nations: “The Conference on Disarmament can be a driving force for building a safer world and a better future. That is its very mission”.

This Conference should resume its work without any further delay. The adoption of a programme of work and the start of effective discussion on key issues should be a main concern, and to this end flexibility will be essential. Therefore, I would like to express satisfaction at the recent renewal of the informal working group as a first concrete step forward.

A constructive and creative approach is needed to face the challenges ahead, and it is our fundamental task to restore the credibility and the central role of this assembly in taking forward effective multilateral negotiations on its core issues: nuclear disarmament, a fissile material cut-off treaty, negative security assurances and outer space. On this latter point, Italy is fully committed together with the European Union in pushing forward negotiations for the adoption of the international code of conduct on outer space activities.

As regards nuclear issues, the coming months will be crucial for both disarmament and non-proliferation. The third session of the Preparatory Committee is approaching, which will be the last one before the 2015 NPT Review Conference; and within the framework of the Conference on Disarmament, the newly established Group of Governmental Experts will soon start its work with the aim of revitalizing the negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices.

Bringing to an end the ongoing stalemate of this Conference will represent a major driving force to boost progress on the challenges ahead. It is therefore of paramount importance to end this continued stalemate to avoid jeopardizing the credibility of the Conference, which still has the potential to play a central role in disarmament negotiations.

The responsibilities of nuclear-weapon States in moving forward on nuclear disarmament remain unquestionable. We welcome the increased transparency shown by nuclear-weapon States as well as the efforts made by the United States and the Russian Federation in implementing the New START Treaty. These represent significant steps in enhancing international confidence-building and transparency measures in the field of nuclear disarmament.

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty continues to represent the essential foundation for the achievement of nuclear disarmament. We want to reaffirm our commitment to creating the conditions for a safer world without nuclear weapons, in accordance with article VI of the Treaty. Some critics argue that the NPT is no longer able to tackle new challenges. We want to firmly stress that the NPT is a tool serving a political will. We should redouble our commitment to achieve progress based on considering the three pillars of the Treaty as mutually reinforcing. Therefore, it is essential to participate constructively and substantively in all relevant discussions on nuclear disarmament, with a clear focus on practical and effective measures.

Italy is also fully engaged in supporting the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which would strengthen the international non-proliferation regime, significantly contributing to the goal of a world without nuclear weapons. The complete ban on nuclear tests is a crucial step. The last nuclear test carried out by North Korea clearly demonstrated the urgent need for this Treaty’s earliest possible entry into

force. The new Executive Secretary of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization recently established a Group of Eminent Persons to help member States to facilitate the Treaty's entry into force.

Within the framework of the Conference on Disarmament, the negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material remain a priority. This treaty would be an instrument able to foster both disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. In May 2013, as a follow-up to General Assembly resolution 67/53, Italy submitted to the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs its views on a fissile material cut-off treaty, addressing five issues: definitions, verification, nuclear fuel, production plants and stockpiles. Keeping in mind the need for maximum effectiveness in the application of a fissile material cut-off treaty, we believe that the agency tasked with verification should be the International Atomic Energy Agency, which already has the necessary operational experience, trained personnel and technical knowledge to this end.

Stockpiles remain the real stumbling block. The views expressed so far in the Conference on Disarmament, unsurprisingly, have been radically different, but in this line of work nothing is ever black or white. Thinking it through should lead to possible compromise solutions.

In the past few months, some tangible results have been achieved on high-priority dossiers. Syria acceded to the Chemical Weapons Convention, and a common understanding on the Iranian programme has been reached here in Geneva. On this latter point, let me reiterate our full support for the role of the International Atomic Energy Agency in carrying out the complex task of verifying the implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

Negotiations are also moving forward on the issue of the convening of a conference on the establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East.

The time is ripe to exploit the progress made so far and redouble our efforts to begin substantive negotiations and achieve mutually reinforcing results in all major disarmament and non-proliferation forums. Italy is fully committed and will not spare any effort in supporting the work of this assembly.

The President: I thank Mr. Della Vedova for his statement and also for the kind words addressed to the Chair. Allow me now to suspend the meeting for a short moment in order to escort Mr. Della Vedova from the chamber.

The meeting was briefly suspended.

The President: The plenary meeting is resumed. Allow me now to welcome our distinguished guest, Mr. Dimitris Kourkoulas, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Greece. I have the pleasure and the honour to invite Mr. Kourkoulas to take the floor.

Mr. Kourkoulas (Greece): Mr. President, at the outset I would like first of all to congratulate you on the assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and to wish you every success. I would also like to take the opportunity to wish every success to the recently appointed Acting Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, Mr. Michael Møller.

It is indeed an honour for me to address this Conference, the single permanent negotiating forum for disarmament, which has during its tenure produced numerous important multilateral treaties that guided the global community through détente to the post-cold-war environment. Today, the Conference is at a crossroads, called upon to find a way to break the long-standing deadlock by restarting negotiations on pivotal issues such as a fissile material cut-off treaty, which is after all the next logical step towards nuclear disarmament, and at the same time to address other pressing issues in the field of disarmament.

With reference to the latter point, it is becoming evident that the Conference is ceasing to be productive and constructive in the critical issue of disarmament and that, although it was the initiator of so many cardinal disarmament institutional actions, important developments in the field of disarmament are finding fertile ground outside this forum, thus widening the gap between the Conference and the rest of the disarmament

machinery. More specifically, the adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty after eight years of very difficult negotiations was indeed a great achievement, which will be complete once the Treaty enters into force. Important developments also include the accession of Syria to the Chemical Weapons Convention and the progress made in the talks of the group formed by China, France, Germany, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States with Iran on the latter's nuclear programme.

Yet, within the Conference progress has been very slow. In our view, the current inertia of this important negotiating forum should take advantage of the important initiatives launched in the First Committee of the General Assembly during the past two years. Greece, along with the rest of the European Union member States, supported resolution 67/53 on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. In this respect, we look forward to the beginning of the work of the relevant Group of Governmental Experts later this year and hope that it will make substantive recommendations to the Conference.

Another important event in this year's disarmament agenda is the holding of the third session of the Preparatory Committee in the framework of the preparations for the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). These two meetings should act as a catalyst in revamping fruitful and constructive discussions in the Conference on Disarmament.

For Greece, the NPT and its three pillars constitute one of the most important foundations of the global security edifice, and thus we look forward to the further implementation of the NPT action plan, stressing particularly the need to promote nuclear safety and security. On this point, the incidents of Chernobyl and most recently of Fukushima have taught us that nuclear safety is by definition a global challenge. Therefore, we all share the common responsibility of bringing nuclear power production in all corners of the planet into compliance with the highest international safety standards.

We also consider the NPT action plan to be the best-suited framework to address the important issue of the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons, an issue which is gaining ground, as the recent Nayarit conference aptly demonstrated. Moreover, in the context of the NPT review cycle, Greece fully supports the ongoing and tireless efforts of the facilitator to prepare the ground for the holding of the conference on a Middle East zone free from weapons of mass destruction as soon as possible.

Allow me now to turn to an issue to which Greece attaches great importance, given that we are the longest-standing observer — since 1982 — at the Conference on Disarmament. I am referring to the question of enlargement, which is foreseen in rule 2 of the Conference's rules of procedure, which states: "The membership of the Conference will be reviewed at regular intervals." We are of the view that there is no reason or justification to exclude United Nations Member States from disarmament discussions, all the more so because of the universal nature of the United Nations. At a time when global challenges require collective solutions through global partnerships, it is indeed an anachronism to restrict participation in negotiations on disarmament issues to only 65 countries. It is equally outdated to hold enlargement hostage to bilateral issues which have absolutely no relevance to the subject matter of the Conference. In this respect, we reiterate our call for the members of the Conference to appoint a special coordinator on enlargement, without prejudice to the final outcome.

In conclusion, given the multiple challenges which the world is facing today in the field of global security, we believe that the Conference on Disarmament cannot afford to remain in constant deadlock and it should finally begin substantive work through the adoption of a programme of work.

Greece stands ready, as a responsible member of the international community which participates in all principal instruments in the field of disarmament, to contribute its share, commensurate with its responsibilities, to bring the deadlock in the Conference to an end and take multilateral negotiations forward.

The President: I thank Mr. Kourkoulas for his statement and also for the kind words addressed to the Chair. Allow me now to suspend the meeting in order to escort Mr. Kourkoulas from the chamber.

The meeting was briefly suspended.

The President: The plenary meeting is resumed. I see that we have some speakers on the list, but the secretariat tells me that we are now faced with the choice of reconvening this afternoon as early as possible or proceeding now without interpretation, because we do not have technical services. Would you like to continue the meeting without interpretation? Or can we reconvene the meeting at 3 p.m. or 3.30 this afternoon? Or tomorrow morning?

(spoke in French)

I recognize the representative of France.

Mr. Simon-Michel (France) *(spoke in French)*: Mr. President, you have set before us a difficult dilemma but, as you know, France has a position of principle on these matters, which brooks no exception. Therefore, we cannot agree for the Conference on Disarmament to operate in a configuration that would run counter to the language arrangements of the United Nations.

The President *(spoke in French)*: Does any other delegation wish to take the floor on this subject? I have taken due note of what was said by the representative of France.

I see that the representative of Ukraine would like to make a statement, and I see that other representatives have asked for the floor. I propose that we listen to the representative of Ukraine and then we can naturally continue the proceedings this afternoon.

I give the floor to the representative of Algeria.

Mr. Khelif (Algeria) *(spoke in Arabic)*: Mr. President, as the Algerian delegation takes an interest in all statements made by delegations that ask for the floor, we wish to support the view expressed by the Ambassador of France regarding the need for interpretation into all the official languages of the United Nations during the remainder of the proceedings.

The President *(spoke in French)*: I thank you very much. In the light of the statements just made, it is my intention to convene a meeting this afternoon at 3 p.m. The meeting is adjourned.

The meeting rose at 1.20 p.m.