
Conference on Disarmament

English

Final record of the one thousand three hundred and ninety-fourth plenary meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Thursday, 30 June 2016, at 10.10 a.m.

President: Mr. Piotr Stachańczyk (Poland)



The President: I call to order the 1394th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

Excellencies, dear colleagues, Ms. Soliman, ladies and gentlemen, let me first of all express my deepest condolences to our Turkish friends in the wake of the horrible terrorist attack that took place in Istanbul airport.

Ladies and gentlemen, on Tuesday at the 1393rd plenary meeting, I proposed a programme of work contained in working paper CD/WP.595. Several delegations took the floor and commented on the proposal. I have taken those comments into account and held further consultations. I would like to thank everyone for the words of sympathy, encouragement, advice and support for the presidency and for the draft decision we presented. We should remember that this proposal was already broadly known as it had been presented by the United Kingdom delegation in February with a high degree of support. I understand that the proposal does not contain an explicit negotiating mandate but it allows for substantive discussions to take place with the aim of eventually launching negotiations. This is in line with the mandate given to the Conference by the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament and reflects the understanding indicated in document CD/2033, which contains the final report on the work of the informal working group — re-established pursuant to rule 23 of the Conference's rules of procedure — with a mandate to produce a programme of work robust in substance and progressive over time in implementation, which was adopted by consensus in 2015. This understanding was expressed by several delegations at the last plenary meeting.

Let me also draw your attention to the flexibility of this proposal. The mandate of the working group to be established allows States to raise any issues they deem important and necessary, and paragraph 7 clearly states that the positive outcome of the work could lead to possible negotiations in future. Moreover, this proposal does not eliminate other proposals. We still consider that other proposals having a negotiating mandate could be further examined and elaborated in the foreseeable future.

We have duly noted all the remarks presented so far. As far as the content and timing of this proposal is concerned, I would like to say that taking into account the amount of time we have at our disposal, this is the maximum that we can plan for the sessions in August. That is why we cannot concentrate on more than one, very flexible item. In presenting this proposal, we are showing that we care about the future of the Conference.

I would also like to add that our ability to adopt a programme of work for the Conference now may have very important and positive consequences for the United Nations disarmament machinery.

Before submitting working paper CD/WP.595 for a decision, I would like to give the floor to delegations wishing to address the Conference this morning. There is one delegation on the list of speakers. I now give the floor to the representative of Norway, Ambassador Steffen Kongstad.

Mr. Kongstad (Norway): Mr. President, I would like to start by extending my congratulations to you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. I hope that you and your team will enjoy it as much as we did earlier this year. It was indeed a learning experience. We did our best, but that was obviously not enough. As I am now leaving the Conference and Geneva, I will share a few observations.

I have had the opportunity to observe the Conference on Disarmament since 1995. During this period, the Conference has been called different things: from the best club in town to the hall of shame and a relic of the past. I came to Geneva in 1995 as an observer State representative to the Conference, but in the summer of 1996, exactly 20 years ago, the countries of the so-called Group of 23 were graciously allowed in.

Since then, the Conference has not negotiated any treaties. This may be construed as an argument against extending its membership. However, I think this correlation is spurious; there have been other reasons for the enduring impasse. Our national position on the Conference as an institution has for many years been comprised of three points. The Conference should be open to any country wishing to be a member. This has also been voiced by many other members of the Conference and it is about legitimacy. It is about

whether some are more equal than others. Secondly, there is a need to review the rules of procedure. The rigorous application of the consensus rule should be considered and modified. And thirdly, there is a need to be more open towards civil society.

After 20 years of non-productive existence, the time has perhaps come for us to see the writing on the wall. During these 20 years, we have in general experienced good times — and less good times — for multilateral cooperation and diplomacy. We have seen significant achievements in certain weapons-related areas that have had considerable positive humanitarian impact without impinging on national security. To me, it is somewhat thought-provoking that this has not been achieved in the traditional, institutionalized disarmament forum. There is reason to reflect what this means for maintaining the so-called disarmament machinery and architecture and the credibility of the disarmament institutions.

To keep repeating the phrase that the Conference is the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum of the international community does not change realities. The Conference is certainly not the single one, it is not fully multilateral and it is definitely not negotiating. In fact, the most productive and well-functioning part of the so-called disarmament machinery, as it was designed in 1978, seems to be the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR).

If the purpose of the Conference has been to maintain the status quo, one may perhaps say that it has been a success — but that is not a lasting success. If nothing real happens, issues will be taken elsewhere. Irrespective of the different views on the Conference as an institution, if it is to survive, it has to deliver something that is perceived — not least in our capitals — as being useful and relevant.

Mr. President, it has been said that disarmament treaties are just a qualification of the prohibition of already obsolete weapons and practices. That certainly relates to the perception of chemical weapons and nuclear tests at the time when the last two treaties were negotiated in the Conference. This is not an argument against disarmament endeavours, but it says something about the often reactive character of disarmament, especially when it takes place within established institutional frameworks.

National security is imperative to us all. It is probably most effective if it can be translated into collective security for all. In the real world, that is not always the case. Therefore, I, like others, also maintain the right to defend my own country with military means if necessary. At the same time, I think the kind of military means and behaviour that are employed is of relevance. Weapons that cause unacceptable humanitarian harm do not necessarily provide sustainable security and peace.

Sitting in this often dim room, I have sometimes thought of the words of the Canadian poet and singer, Leonard Cohen, which may be perhaps understood in different ways. I quote: “Ring the bells that still can ring, forget your perfect offering. There’s a crack in everything, that’s how the light gets in.” I certainly hope more light will not just get into this room, but that it will shine more strongly on the issues we need to resolve together. I choose to assume that we all share the same basic objectives, namely to enjoy peaceful relations with each other in a world where arms control and disarmament efforts and measures will be more profound and effective.

Finally, it remains for me to express my gratitude for the friendship, kindness and good working relations I have enjoyed with so many of you in this sometimes somewhat odd disarmament community. My best wishes for your future endeavours.

The President: I thank you, Ambassador, for your farewell speech and I wish you the best of luck and success at your next posting. Allow me to personally thank you for your contribution and hard work in the Conference on Disarmament and in the larger disarmament community in Geneva. Your work as the second President of the 2016 session was highly appreciated by, I think, everyone in this room.

Ladies and gentlemen, the floor is now open. Would any other delegation like to take the floor? I give the floor to the Ambassador of India.

Mr. Varma (India): Mr. President, it is not my intention to come in the way of the regular business of the Conference on Disarmament, but I thought it would be remiss on my

part not to add to your voice the voice of the Indian delegation in bidding farewell to the Ambassador of Norway, Ambassador Steffen Kongstad. This is particularly so because we underline and recognize his contribution to the Conference as President and, more broadly, his experience and his expertise over the years, from which we have greatly benefited not just during this tenure in Geneva but in previous postings as well. We wish to join you in wishing him and his family all success.

The President: I thank you, Ambassador, and I now give the floor to the representative of Belarus.

Mr. Nikolaichik (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. President, as this is the first time my delegation is taking the floor under your presidency, allow me to wish you every success in this difficult and responsible time, when decisions are being taken about the programme of work. Before making a series of comments about the draft before us, I would like to express condolences to the Turkish delegation following the terrorist attack on Atatürk airport. The Republic of Belarus categorically condemns any form of terrorism and considers that the international community must not leave the challenge of terrorism unanswered.

About the programme of work, I would like in my personal capacity to note the following. From our perspective, the draft programme of work is not fully comprehensive. It is formulated in such a way that it is not entirely clear which of the items on the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament are covered by the draft. In the absence of such specifics, the Republic of Belarus understands that the mandate of the working group that is to be established will include not only questions of the prevention of a nuclear arms race, but also other related questions. Accordingly, the Belarusian delegation would like to reserve the right to raise questions regarding the prevention of a nuclear war, negative security assurances and other questions on the Conference's agenda, to the extent that they relate to general and complete nuclear disarmament.

In addition, the draft programme of work does not reflect the Conference's testimonials or its desire to respond to contemporary challenges and threats in disarmament and non-proliferation, including those that are of a hybrid or non-traditional nature, for conventional disarmament. In this connection, it is regrettable that the initiative of the Russian delegation, which received rather broad support, was not given its due in the draft programme of work.

Because of the shortcomings in the draft programme of work, we have some apprehension as to whether it will be possible to achieve substantive results in the time remaining before the session ends. At the same time, we realize that at this juncture, the adoption of any programme of work, even one that has not been perfected, will be a breakthrough for the Conference. Therefore, my delegation will not block a consensus on the draft that has been submitted, if one emerges.

The President: I thank the representative of Belarus and now give the floor to the representative of Belgium.

Mr. Dhaene (Belgium): First of all, let me congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament at this critical juncture. I wish you every success in this important endeavour; you may count on the full support of my delegation.

My country attaches great importance to the revitalization of the Conference on Disarmament. Therefore we actively support all efforts aimed at overcoming the present stalemate. We are concerned, however, by the fact that, despite the numerous proposals on the table, we do not seem to be in a position — yet again this year — to reach a consensus on a way forward. Belgium believes that the Conference should start its work immediately on the basis of a substantive and balanced programme of work, ideally including a mandate to start negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty. It has become clear in the meantime, after all the hard efforts by the different presidencies this year, that this does not seem to be within reach.

In February, my delegation already expressed its support for the proposal on a programme of work introduced by the United Kingdom. Belgium welcomed this proposal

because it provided a concrete and realistic way forward. We considered the mandate proposed as appropriate as it provided for a balanced discussion on nuclear disarmament not limited to legal measures only. The rules of procedure proposed were those of the Conference and the participation of civil society was also foreseen. Hence, consistent with what has been our position since February, my country today expresses its support for your decision to reintroduce that proposal as a presidential proposal and to take action on it.

The President: I thank the representative of Belgium and now give the floor to the Ambassador of Japan, Ambassador Sano.

Mr. Sano (Japan): Mr. President, I would like to begin by thanking the Norwegian Ambassador, Steffen Kongstad, for his significant contribution to the Conference on Disarmament and other disarmament forums over the past years here in Geneva.

Mr. President, Japan fully supports your efforts towards the adoption of a programme of work. Taking into account the time remaining in the 2016 session, it is compelling that we should take action as soon as possible. Your proposal contained in working paper CD/WP.595 and based on the United Kingdom proposal has merit in that we will be able to discuss effective measures on nuclear disarmament, including legal provisions and other arrangements, with the participation of that nuclear-weapon State in the working group. The engagement of and collaboration with nuclear-weapon States are essential for advancing nuclear disarmament.

Mr. President, your proposal will give us another chance to deepen the substantive discussions on major issues of nuclear disarmament with the aim of negotiating. The report produced by the working group by consensus will contribute to laying the groundwork for negotiations in the Conference.

We also take note of the programme of work contained in document CD/1864 and adopted in 2009 as a precedent: it refers to the negotiation of a fissile material cut-off treaty. Having said this, our delegation is ready to support your proposal.

The President: I thank you, Ambassador, and now give the floor to the representative of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Deyneko (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. President, on behalf of the Russian delegation I would like to express our profound sympathy to our Turkish colleagues following the horrific terrorist attack at the airport in Istanbul. Our hearts go out to the families who have lost relatives and we wish a speedy recovery to those who were injured. There can be no justification for this terrorist attack on defenceless and innocent people. Furthermore, this barbaric act bears witness to the fact that those who organized and executed it hold universal standards of secular and religious morality in disdain. We are confident that they will eventually be found, wherever they may be hiding, brought to justice and subjected to rigorous punishment. The victims of the terrorist attack in Istanbul were the citizens of many countries. This once again confirms the need for the international community to bring its forces together to fight the global threat of terrorism.

Today, the Conference on Disarmament faces a choice which, without exaggeration, will define its future. We all are faced with a dilemma: do we maintain the Conference as the sole multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament, or do we establish a dangerous precedent by transforming it into a debating club on a single issue, with no guarantee that it can resume negotiation work. On 28 June, during our address to the Conference's plenary, we demonstrated beyond any doubt that the draft distributed by the Polish presidency could be considered neither comprehensive nor balanced. We will not repeat our arguments to that effect. We would just like to once again express our assessment, set out on 28 June, according to which we consider introducing this draft, and all the more so adopting it, to be a mistake. No one has considered the consequences of the draft programme of work; they have not even been discussed. Has anyone even thought about the fact that the document submitted for our approval effectively duplicates the mandate of the United Nations Disarmament Commission, but only on one of the Commission's agenda items, and with a more limited membership? We do not agree with such a future for the Conference. The Russian delegation thus expresses its fundamental opposition in principle to the proposed programme of work.

Of course, we have done and will do everything possible to bring the Conference back to its original mandate of negotiation. We are prepared to work constructively with all delegations specifically for constructive, long-term solutions in the interests of the Conference, not for hasty, half-baked solutions with unforeseeable consequences. Guided specifically by such principles, our delegation proposed that the Conference draft an international convention to combat chemical and biological terrorist attacks. I will not dwell on the details. On numerous occasions, we set out our arguments in favour of negotiating such an instrument at the Conference here in Geneva, and not elsewhere. In the light of the desire of the overwhelming majority of delegations to seek out mutually acceptable solutions for the Conference's programme of work, the Russian delegation has decided to leave the working document of 16 June on the table. We intend in future to work with full transparency, keeping the Conference's participants up to date of our plans and actions. We are open to any constructive proposals that would facilitate finding a solution to our shared task: that of breathing new life into the Conference.

The President: I thank the representative of the Russian Federation and now give the floor to the representative of the Netherlands, Ambassador Van der Kwast.

Mr. Van der Kwast (Netherlands): Mr. President, as this is the first time that my delegation takes the floor during your presidency, please allow me to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency. You will have the full support of my delegation.

Allow me also to extend our most sincere condolences to the Turkish delegation and, in particular, to all the victims and their families of this horrific terrorist attack. Terrorism affects us all and we should stand together to combat it.

Mr. President, I also want to thank the Ambassador of Norway, Steffen Kongstad. He has always been a critical voice in the Conference and, indeed, in the whole disarmament debate. Based on my personal experience of 10 years, I can say that he has been one of the most effective people who have really contributed to disarmament, not just by saying words and mentioning things but by having the guts to tell things as they are. Steffen, I thank you for having done so today again and I hope you will continue to do so. You will find us on your side.

Saying that, however, is not enough. We should seek new ways forward. Those ways are not "hastily constructed proposals", as was just argued by one delegation. It is regrettable that the United Kingdom proposal, which has been on the table for so long, should be qualified as a hastily constructed proposal. It is a proposal that was discussed during the Norwegian presidency in a small group, including all five of the nuclear-weapon States. And let me repeat again that those States have a special responsibility if they really care about this body. There is a lot of criticism of new initiatives along the lines of: "this is not our game — we are not part of it". You cannot continue to do that if you are not willing to engage. Here we have a proposal, and we thank you, Mr. President, for putting forward this draft programme of work that is based on a proposal that was discussed for several months. It has been discussed and it has received support from different delegations, including my own. My Minister, when he spoke in this body a couple of months ago, clearly expressed our support for it, and we think it has the best chances of moving ahead.

Of course we can say that this is only discussion, and I see that point. Yes, we would like to negotiate. And we agree also that the Conference should negotiate. For us, the immediate start of negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other explosive devices remains our utmost priority. After the work that was done in the Group of Governmental Experts last year, where a common report was issued that can serve as a very clear basis for these negotiations, there is a clear basis. On the basis of that report, the international community should forge on and look for possibilities, since the negotiation of this treaty is long overdue and we think that the topic is indeed ripe for the start of negotiations.

We also know that, in this chamber, several members have different priorities and that is the main reason why we are not negotiating. It seems to be impossible for us to say that we will work on two tracks or we will work on three tracks. We continue to be in a deadlock or at a dead end in repeating arguments. In the absence of agreement on what to negotiate, discussions are an important means of searching for common ground to get the

Conference to start negotiations. Discussions are, in our view, an honest and necessary attempt to bring us closer to the start of negotiations on different issues. There is nothing in our rules of procedure that prevents us from having these discussions. On the contrary, we are the masters of our own agenda. If we can agree on substantive discussions to take us forward, that would benefit all of us and we could explore further ways.

With that, Mr. President, I also wish to thank two Ambassadors who said farewell last Tuesday when I was away: the Ambassador of Finland and the Ambassador of Switzerland. Both of them have given a lot of attention to the work in this body and have been constructive in different dossiers. I want to thank them very much for all the hard work they did in bringing forward dossiers which held prospects. Unfortunately, most of those dossiers were not within this body: it was on the Mine Ban Convention and the Cluster Munitions Convention where both of them contributed in several ways. We want to thank them for this and I wish them all the best. And I wish you, Mr. President, every success in this hard debate.

The President: I thank you, Ambassador, for your statement and for the kind words addressed to the President. I now give the floor to the representative of Bulgaria.

Ms. Davidova (Bulgaria): Mr. President, allow me to begin by congratulating you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. I assure you of the full support and cooperation of the Bulgarian delegation. I also wish to join you, Mr. President, in your words of condolence to the Turkish delegation for the heinous terrorist act that took place on Tuesday at Istanbul airport.

Mr. President, I would like to express our appreciation for your willingness to set the work of the Conference on the right track and to start your presidency with a proposal for a programme of work. We already expressed our support for the United Kingdom proposal on a programme of work when it was introduced initially in February. The current stalemate in the Conference is of serious concern to us. And, although the priority for us remains the commencement of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty, we are in favour of every reasonable initiative that is aimed at overcoming the long-standing deadlock. Having said that, we find the proposal on a programme of work presented in working paper CD/WP.595 to have the significant merit of being a well-balanced one that would provide a new and flexible way of dealing with one of the most important topics on the Conference's agenda — nuclear disarmament — while comprehensively discussing its linkages with other issues on the disarmament agenda. Establishing a formal working group and an associated programme of work to identify, elaborate and recommend effective measures on nuclear disarmament in the Conference will provide an opportunity to discuss these issues in an inclusive manner with the participation of the States possessing nuclear weapons. For our part, we are ready to support this proposal for a programme of work. We believe it could provide a good basis for the Conference to resume its substantive work.

The President: I thank the representative of Bulgaria for her statement and for the kind words addressed to the President. I now give the floor to the representative of Canada, Ambassador McCarney.

Ms. McCarney (Canada): Mr. President, as this is the first time I take the floor under your presidency, let me assure you of my delegation's full support for your efforts to advance the work of the Conference on Disarmament and thank you very much for taking on this role. Let me also, on behalf of Canada, extend our deep condolences to the Turkish delegation and the people of Turkey. We, too, thank our colleague, the Ambassador of Norway, for his leadership on so many issues across Geneva and for his wise and frank words to us this morning, as well as those of the Ambassadors of Switzerland, Finland and Israel yesterday.

Canada had hoped that 2016 could see the Conference engaged in actual negotiations on an issue indisputably rooted in its core agenda. I know this is a belief that was shared by many delegations. That hope would appear to have been dashed and, despite our intentions, there is no topic that we can all agree as the one most suited for negotiation. In this predicament we are left to find a less desirable alternative. There is value in the programme of work that was first shaped by the United Kingdom and now put forward by the President. But we admit that, for Canada, this option is only second best. The start of

negotiations at least on a fissile material cut-off treaty had been our goal for 2016, following on the strong support for this expressed at the First Committee last October. We agree with Mexico that the Conference is settling for something less than we should have to. On the other hand, we do want to see the Conference working on matters of consequence, and we believe that it is the issue of nuclear disarmament, in all its forms, that most needs to be addressed at this time. And who knows, perhaps our discussions may progress to something tangible which could have a real impact on global peace and security. So with this in mind and in keeping with the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs' message to us on Tuesday — that we need to show flexibility and compromise in order to keep the Conference relevant — Canada can support the proposed programme of work. While its adoption will likely not stop the pursuit of disarmament initiatives outside of the Conference, failure to adopt this programme will surely only accelerate that pace.

The President: I thank you, Ambassador, and now give the floor to the representative of the Republic of Korea.

Ms. Seo Eun-ji (Republic of Korea): At the outset, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for your endeavours in trying to move forward in this year's session of the Conference on Disarmament. As one of the six Presidents of the 2016 session, my delegation assures you of its continued full support. I also wish the departing Norwegian Ambassador, Ambassador Kongstad, all the best and every success in his future endeavours. Above all, I would like to express my deepest condolences and sympathy to the victims of the terrible attack at Istanbul airport and their bereaved families, as well as the Turkish people and Government.

The first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament gave the Conference a mandate as the single negotiating body on disarmament. According to a strict interpretation of that mandate, every disarmament agreement negotiated outside the Conference should be considered illegitimate. However, we willingly abide by those agreements. That is because we know that — through a process of full discussion — compromise and flexibility have been exercised in reaching those agreements in order to reach the ultimate goal of disarmament, which is fully in line with the ultimate spirit and mandate of that special session.

Likewise, adopting a programme of work that includes a discussion mandate with a view to launching future negotiations is very much in line with the special session's mandate and spirit. In this same vein, document CD/2033, which we adopted by consensus last year, also suggests that we can conduct in-depth deliberations to enhance understanding and common ground beneficial to future negotiations. In fact, the current proposal in working paper CD/WP.595, which is on the table, foresees future negotiations on any issue on the Conference's agenda. In short, better is not the enemy of the best. This is the moment of truth for members to show compromise and flexibility in order to reach the ultimate goal of the Conference. If we really want the Conference to get back to work, we should not hesitate in joining the consensus now. Otherwise, we give proof that our words were indeed empty words. Once again, I would like to reiterate that my delegation is ready to take the decision for this year's programme of work today and looks forward to participating in the working group.

The President: I thank the representative of the Republic of Korea and now give the floor to the representative of Germany, Ambassador Biontino.

Mr. Biontino (Germany): Mr. President, let me begin by expressing our deepest condolences to the Turkish delegation and the people of Turkey for the horrific terrorist attack that took place the day before yesterday at the Istanbul Atatürk Airport. Attacks like this are attacks on the civilized world and on all of us.

Mr. President, we congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency. Your wisdom will guide us through our deliberations. I assure you of the full cooperation of my delegation. We very much appreciate the path you have taken by introducing formally a draft decision for the establishment of a programme of work for the 2016 session. By doing so, you ensure that we will discuss the issue in an open and transparent way. In the end, it is only when we hear all positions clearly and in an unambiguous way that we can come to an appropriate decision.

We can support the draft decision as it stands. Clearly, we do not have much time in 2016 to turn to substantive work. However, we expect that this decision, once taken, will serve as a precedent for 2017 and will enable us to start substantive work early next year.

Let me now turn to the content of the draft decision. Certainly, we all aspire to be able to come to concrete negotiations on the basis of a balanced and comprehensive programme of work. However, this is an aspiration that has eluded us over the last 20 years. I will not dwell on an in-depth analysis of the factors that have led to this very unfortunate situation. However, we have come to a point where the relevance of the Conference on Disarmament as such is in question. What can we do to overcome the stalemate? Over the past two years, we have addressed the core items on our agenda through a schedule of activities, essentially a structured dialogue that has enabled us to get a much better understanding of our positions. We believe that this year it would be time to take the next step: to identify, elaborate and recommend effective measures, including legal provisions and other arrangements, as stipulated in the draft decision, seems to be the right thing to do in order to prepare for substantive negotiations on nuclear disarmament. Indeed, before we can enter into negotiations, preparatory work is urgently needed to define the scope and content of disarmament measures in the nuclear area. Simply calling for negotiations on legal provisions without having explored their implications for and consistency with the existing framework, in particular the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and, secondly, relevant security considerations, would not be appropriate and would jeopardize what has already been achieved in terms of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. This holds true not only for the Conference on Disarmament but for other forums as well, such as the Open-ended Working Group on taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations.

To conclude, the draft decision contains an innovative approach in order to overcome the standstill in the Conference on Disarmament. Blocked consensus on this text would not only confirm the standstill of the Conference for this year, it will most likely prejudice our work for the foreseeable future. This is a heavy responsibility that no one can shoulder.

The President: I thank you, Ambassador, and now give the floor to the representative of China.

Mr. Li Chunjie (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Mr. President, the Chinese delegation would like, through you, to express its condolences to the Turkish delegation and the people of Turkey in the wake of the terrorist attack on Istanbul international airport. According to news dispatches, the attack resulted in an enormous number of casualties and heavy material damage. This once again reflects the grim situation faced by the international community in combating terrorism. The fight against terrorism is an arduous task, laden with responsibility.

Mr. President, the Chinese delegation wishes to congratulate you on the assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and to express its confidence that your rich diplomatic experience and brilliant skill will be able to lead the Conference to make substantive progress in its work. The Chinese delegation will do everything it can to support you in your endeavours.

Our delegation would like to express its thanks to you for the efforts made to bring the Conference to reach agreement on a programme of work. We have consistently maintained that the Conference should agree on a balanced and comprehensive programme of work as soon as possible. In the current circumstances, we believe that the best way forward would involve merging the suggestions put forward by the United Kingdom and the Russian Federation. We hope that all parties will show flexibility and that you, Mr. President, will be able to make full use of the time before the third part of this session to strengthen communication with all the relevant parties so as to conclude a programme of work as soon as possible.

The President: I thank the representative of China and now give the floor to the representative of Spain.

Mr. Herráiz España (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, of course, we first convey our message of sympathy, solidarity and cooperation to Turkey following the horrible attack on Istanbul airport. We would also like to bid farewell to the Ambassador of Norway and wish him well for the future.

Mr. President, in addition to the comments I made at the previous plenary meeting in support of the proposal presented to us, I would just like to summarize very briefly the three reasons why we consider this a positive initiative.

Firstly, as I said last Tuesday, we believe that it is an honest way of trying to do everything in our power to advance the work we are here to do, work that we must certainly approach critically. I think we feel a constant sense of dissatisfaction and, perhaps, a sense that we are failing to fulfil our negotiating mandate. We always have this bad conscience. But the question we ask ourselves is how we can rectify this situation. What are the alternatives? I believe that discussion remains a valid option, because I wonder how else we will one day be able to sit down and negotiate. So the first point is one of accountability.

The second point, or second reason, is, perhaps, to realize that this year — especially this year, in which Geneva is witnessing the convening of an open-ended working group to take forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations, without the benefit of the views and positions of the nuclear-armed States — we should at least for a few days again have the opportunity to hear their viewpoints, which have not been conveyed at the Working Group.

Thirdly, in all likelihood, the discussions we will have in August will not be so empty. I believe that we have something substantial and attractive to discuss. My delegation was slightly surprised to discover at the beginning of this year's session that there was a proposal to embark, in a constructive and flexible mindset, with fresh guidelines, on work towards a possible future treaty on fissile material, which is not being discussed but which could stimulate a substantive, innovative and indeed inspiring debate for the Conference on Disarmament. Of course, we must still bear in mind the invaluable background paper and very useful reference constituted by the report of the Group of Governmental Experts, which last year drew some useful conclusions on such a treaty.

For these three reasons, Mr. President, we reiterate our support for this initiative.

The President: I thank you, Ambassador, and now give the floor to the Ambassador of Venezuela

Ms. Sánchez (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, we would like to congratulate you and take this opportunity to express our support for you and our cooperation.

Venezuela condemns the terrorist acts that occurred at Istanbul airport and we offer our condolences to the victims. We also reiterate our gratitude for the efforts of the preceding presidencies to seek consensus on how we take forward the substantive work of the Conference on Disarmament.

Mr. President, Venezuela attaches the utmost importance to the work of the Conference as the only multilateral negotiating forum for reaching agreements on disarmament. My delegation would like to participate in any effort that seeks to renew the work of the Conference and thus restore it to an active state. This would allow us to maintain the integrity, credibility and relevance of this forum in response to the realities of the contemporary world.

Mr. President, we take note of the working paper circulated during your presidency and thank you for all your efforts. We share the view expressed by the delegations of the Russian Federation and China, among others, that the Conference on Disarmament should take a constructive approach to the consideration of the proposals submitted, including the one submitted by the Russian Federation at the last plenary meeting, held on 16 June 2016.

The President: I thank you, Ambassador, and now give the floor to the Ambassador of Cuba.

Ms. Rodríguez Camejo (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President. As this is the first time I have taken the floor during your presidency, I would like to congratulate you on assuming this role and wish you success in it. I would also like to take this opportunity to join in the words of farewell and deserved commendation for our friend, Ambassador Steffen Kongstad of Norway, who has contributed significantly both to the discussions on disarmament and to the achievement of specific disarmament objectives during the years he has worked in this field. We have no doubt that he will continue this work in his new role.

We also endorse the messages of condolence to the Government and people of Turkey following the recent terrorist attacks at Atatürk airport and reiterate our country's strong condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.

Mr. President, Cuba would be grateful if you could clarify a number of points, either now or at a later time, with regard to your proposal contained in document CD/WP.595.

It is well known that Cuba strongly supports the work of the Conference on Disarmament and its ability to fulfil its negotiating mandate in the field of disarmament. In this regard, we would appreciate it if you could elaborate further on how your proposal might help to fulfil the negotiating mandate of the Conference and what real contribution the proposal would make based on a simple reading. We note that what is proposed in document CD/WP.595 is more or less what is being done, for example, in the United Nations Disarmament Commission, as I believe another delegation has mentioned, or in the General Assembly's Open-ended Working Group taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations, in which all Member States of the United Nations are in fact invited to participate. Each Member State has taken its own decision on whether or not to do so.

Another question on which we would like to hear your assessment is why you have selected a given agenda item. Nuclear disarmament is certainly a very important topic and a priority for many countries, indeed for the large majority of the members of the Conference, Cuba included. There are, however, other relevant issues that have not been included in your proposal, for example the prevention of an arms race in outer space, to name just one. If you could elaborate further on this point, we would be very much obliged.

A third question is why you have prioritized a non-specific proposal among those under discussion during this annual session of the Conference. Your proposal was obviously based on a simple reading of the proposal submitted by the delegation of the United Kingdom. However, other relevant proposals have been ignored or dismissed. I would like you to give us a short explanation of why you decided to reject other interesting proposals that could help the Conference out of its current impasse.

Having raised these questions, may I say that we have listened very carefully to the views of other delegations and once we receive more information and clarification, we will send everything to our capital. We did in fact already send your proposal just three days ago, and once we receive the relevant instructions from our capital, we will communicate them to you and the rest of the members of the Conference. I would also like to take this opportunity to assure you that we will continue to participate actively and constructively in all the discussions that take place in this body, to enable it to emerge from its stalemate and carry out its mandate to negotiate disarmament treaties.

The President: I thank you, Ambassador, and now give the floor to the representative of Italy.

Ms. D'Ambrosio (Italy): Mr. President, as this is the first time that my delegation takes the floor under your presidency, let me congratulate you on your assumption of this responsibility. I assure you of the full support and cooperation of Italy. Secondly, I join other delegations in thanking the Ambassador of Norway and in bidding farewell to him.

Let me also express our deepest condolences to the Turkish delegation for the horrific terrorist attack of last Tuesday. We join you in mourning the lives lost in this unacceptable, barbaric act.

Mr. President, Italy has always attached the greatest importance to the work of the Conference on Disarmament. From our perspective, it is of utmost importance to preserve

and relaunch its primary role as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum of the international community, in line with the words which the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs addressed to us last Tuesday. In this respect, agreement on a programme of work is an essential goal which we need to pursue resolutely. After a long stalemate, we consider the four programme of work proposals put forward in the current session as a sign that delegations continue to invest in the Conference and believe in its capacity to fulfil its mandate.

My delegation has looked with an open mind and a constructive approach at all the proposals that have been advanced and declares its readiness to support any constructive effort aimed at any reasonable and forward-looking agreement. In particular, we appreciated and supported the contribution made by the United States with their proposal for a mandate for the Conference to negotiate a treaty dealing with fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. My delegation, like the overwhelming majority of Conference members, feels the time is ripe to start negotiations on such a treaty. We regret that it was not possible to reach a consensus on that proposal.

We subsequently welcomed the draft programme of work presented by the United Kingdom, which, with its focus primarily on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation issues, was fully in line with our priorities.

Allow me to mention that, in our view, also the proposal put forward by the Russian Federation deserved proper consideration, since it was aimed at dealing with the extremely relevant issue of countering chemical and biological terrorism.

In the light of the above, and at this point in time, we cannot but appreciate your initiative to table for action the draft programme of work contained in working paper CD/WP.595 as an attempt to put the Conference back on track, especially since the time available in the current session is running out.

The President: I thank the representative of Italy and now give the floor to the representative of Finland, Ambassador Kairamo.

Ms. Kairamo (Finland): Mr. President, I just wish briefly to repeat today what I said on Tuesday by expressing our support to you for your efforts. Finland is ready to support the proposal that you have put forward for our consideration and we would very much welcome the adoption of the programme of work as you have presented it to us.

It goes without saying that my delegation as well extends its deepest condolences to Turkey on the terrible attacks at Istanbul airport.

The President: I thank the representative of Finland and now give the floor to the Ambassador of Mexico, Ambassador Lomónaco.

Mr. Lomónaco (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, first and foremost, I would like to express the sincerest condolences of Mexico to the people and Government of Turkey and to the victims of the unacceptable terrorist attack on Istanbul airport.

Mr. President, my delegation has clearly expressed on many occasions, at this and previous sessions, its position on the need for a programme of work that includes a negotiating mandate. The most recent occasion was last Tuesday, 28 June, the day that you submitted document CD/WP.595 to the Conference on Disarmament.

Mr. President, our position has not changed. We are unable to support the current version of the draft programme of work submitted by the presidency. Your initiative is not comprehensive, it is not balanced; it is not even a programme of work.

After listening to the discussion on Tuesday and today, and the objections of many delegations, we cannot fail to conclude — and we are sure that you as a fair President will reach the same conclusion — that there is no consensus on your proposal. It is clear that document CD/WP.595 needs to undergo a broader consultation process that will enable the concerns expressed by several delegations, including my own, to be accommodated in a new version of the document.

Now, in the same vein of questions raised by the Ambassador of Cuba, my delegation believes that your decision, as you said, to choose one of the available options

proposed, was based on the presumption that there was consensus around it and not around the others. Today, we have been able to ascertain that the position with regard to the Polish-British proposal is the same as for the other three proposals. Therefore, we believe that in the interests of fairness, any subsequent consultation should include all four proposals: the proposal of the Nigerian presidency, the proposal of the United States, the proposal of the Russian Federation and the Polish-British proposal. Indeed, Mr. President, two of these four proposals contain a negotiating mandate.

The President: I thank you, Ambassador. Would any other delegation like to take the floor? I recognize Turkey.

Ms. Kasnakli (Turkey): Mr. President, at the outset since this is the first time I am taking the floor under your presidency, let me join my colleagues in congratulating you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and in wishing you success in your endeavours. I thank you also for your efforts to examine whether together we can bring the Conference back to work by presenting working paper CD/WP.595. We appreciate your approach very much and support it.

Last, but not least, I take the floor to thank all the delegations who expressed their condolences to our delegation regarding the heinous terrorist attack that took place in Istanbul two days ago. We are grateful to those who expressed solidarity and condolences. I would just like to say that Turkey will continue its fight against terrorism in all its forms and underlines the importance of international cooperation.

The President: I thank the representative of Turkey and now give the floor to the representative of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Deyneko (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. President, I would like to join those who have wished the Permanent Representative of Norway, Mr. Steffen Kongstad, every success in his new diplomatic post and to express our thanks for his efforts, including in the presidency, to seek a compromise on a programme of work for the Conference on Disarmament.

I note that several delegations and colleagues were not in attendance at the meeting on 28 June and thus were not able to hear the arguments we put forward to evaluate the draft programme of work submitted by the Polish presidency. To avoid any misunderstandings, I should like to repeat a few of the points so that our colleagues can have a better idea of our position. At that time we asked all the delegations at the Conference to consider to what extent the draft programme of work submitted by the Polish presidency met the criteria of comprehensiveness and balance. I should note that such requirements were not drawn up by the Russian delegation, but were included in the consensus decisions of the Conference itself, the final documents of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty review conferences and — and this is not without importance — also in declarations by the five nuclear-weapon States. We believe that a programme of work that shifts the orientation of the Conference's work exclusively to a single item of its agenda, to the detriment of the others, cannot be qualified as comprehensive. The attempt to transform our Conference into a forum for the discussion of a single issue is a contradiction of the spirit, if not the letter, of the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament and will establish an undesirable precedent for the future. In our opinion, the draft of the Nigerian presidency, aimed at discussing the four core issues on the agenda, without any discrimination, is much preferable. What is more, the mandate of the single working group would be exploratory in nature. It would thus not maintain the minimum balance required between the discussion and negotiation elements of the Conference's activity.

I should especially like to emphasize that we are not calling into question the possibility of the Conference holding in-depth discussions of the items on its agenda. We have not said that. We spoke of the need to strike a balance between the negotiation and discussion elements of our work. As a compromise, we could agree to an option whereby the draft programme of work would at the same time envision negotiations under another agenda item of the Conference, and thus would correspond with the Conference's original mandate. Already in February, before the United Kingdom introduced its draft to the Conference, we proposed to the authors that they restore this minimum balance by

introducing an additional item on the negotiation of a legally binding instrument for the prevention of an arms race in outer space. We were careful not to raise the question of negotiations on the joint Chinese-Russian draft Treaty on Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space and of the Threat or Use of Force against Outer Space Objects, out of consideration for the concerns of certain delegations. In this connection, I should like to draw the attention of all participants to the fact that, from the outset, we proposed to balance the draft submitted by the United Kingdom. And now, tell me, has anyone introduced anything or made any proposals to our colleagues from the United Kingdom? Has anyone done anything at all to balance the draft or to make it more comprehensive? That is my first point. For some reason, our colleagues from the United Kingdom were unable to find an opportunity to meet us halfway and to amend their draft programme of work so that it would have another working group, one with a negotiating mandate. They did not put forward any alternatives, let alone constructive ones. This is no doubt understandable. No one was able to propose anything sensible.

In such a situation there was nothing left for us to do but to put forward our own set of proposals, which would do away with the flaws in the draft put forward by the United Kingdom. The main point is that prospects for negotiation would open up for a new initiative, whereby the Conference would draft an international convention to combat acts of chemical and biological terrorism. Our approach was based on the fact that the task of countering the growing threat of terrorists using weapons of mass destruction does not adversely affect anyone's security, and thus by definition should not raise any objections on matters of principle. From the outset, we have worked on our initiative with the utmost transparency. The Russian position is an open one; it is clear and understandable, even to those who disagree with us. What is more, we have often shown flexibility, in a spirit of compromise. We took the initiative to call for the proposal of the United Kingdom to be brought together with our own, and to that effect we presented a working paper that fully reflected the proposal of the United Kingdom, at least in substance. The authors of that proposal thus lost nothing in respect of the integrity of their initiative. Furthermore, the Russian delegation, taking into consideration the fact that a number of delegations were not prepared to begin direct negotiations on a convention, took an additional step to accommodate them, replacing the word "negotiations" with a phrase on the drafting of the key elements of a convention. This is not only known to all; it met with the approval of the overwhelming majority of the Conference's participants. There were hopeful hints of progress towards a compromise that would have met the minimum criteria for comprehensiveness and balance in the programme of work. As you know, further progress became impossible, for reasons beyond our control.

In addition, at the 21 June meeting we put forward the idea of a comprehensive overview of all the proposals still on the Conference's table, to check that they met the criteria of comprehensiveness and balance we just mentioned, and on that basis to come up with the best option. We also spoke about the importance of a common understanding of what final objective we were hoping to achieve at the end of the process aimed at agreeing upon a programme of work. For lack of such an understanding, all our discussions would be in vain.

The President: I thank the representative of the Russian Federation and now give the floor to the representative of India.

Mr. Varma (India): Mr. President, we have listened very carefully to the debate this morning. We had an occasion during the last plenary to express our approach, which essentially is in the direction of supporting your efforts which you had launched. It is unfortunate that we still have gaps that we need to address, and it is our expectation that you would continue to undertake consultations in the intersessional period to see how we can move forward.

While there are a number of proposals on the table, we would like to remind ourselves that the Group of 21 proposals also would need to be taken into account.

Much as we would prefer an agreement on a substantive programme of work that includes negotiations — our principled position on this has been conveyed earlier — we need to account for the possibility that we might return to the third and concluding part of

this year's annual session with the present stalemate still in play. That, of course, would be very unfortunate both as to what we would need to do with the Conference and the signal it would send to the larger international community.

Among the various options, of course, is the one least preferred but, maybe in the circumstances, the one that is most practical, which is reverting back to the structured informal discussions of previous years. We are aware that it is not a proposal that has found strong words of support, even in the past; but having gone through the process for two sessions of addressing specific proposals, and we would like to thank all the delegations who have made efforts in this regard, it is something that we do need to keep in mind.

Mr. President, we would also like to remind ourselves that there are two other issues that we have addressed in the past: improved and effective functioning of the Conference and the issue of expansion of its membership. Though consensus on these two may still elude us, that does not mean that we should not — possibly through special coordinators — see if consultations can be conducted on those two specific topics.

The Secretary-General of the Conference and the Personal Representative of the United Nations, Secretary-General Mr. Møller, organized a Conference on Disarmament/civil society forum a couple of weeks ago, which I think was a useful event to get a sense of where we stand and how the Conference is perceived by the broader disarmament community. I must say it is indeed a sobering experience to come to grips with the views that are expressed concerning the Conference. It is our responsibility as member States to see how much we can do with this Conference and put our best foot forward. So, Mr. President, we would encourage you to conduct this consultation in the intersessional period; you will continue to have the support of the Indian delegation.

Before I conclude, let me join other delegations in conveying our condolences and solidarity with the Turkish delegation on the horrific terrorist attack in Istanbul.

The President: I thank you, Ambassador, and now give the floor to the Ambassador of the United States, Ambassador Wood.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): Mr. President, first let me offer my sincere condolences to the delegation of Turkey for the recent horrific terrorist attacks in Istanbul. It is just another reminder of the importance of international cooperation to fight terrorism. Let me say to the Turkish delegation that the United States Government and people stand with you at this very difficult time and, again, our thoughts are with the families and friends of those who were harmed.

Allow me also to bid farewell to my good friend, the Norwegian Ambassador. I have greatly appreciated his guidance and counsel on a number of disarmament issues. It may be an overused cliché, but you will be sorely missed. I wish you the best in your future endeavours.

Mr. President, your programme of work based on the United Kingdom proposal is, frankly, the last best chance of getting the Conference on Disarmament back to work. While it is not perfect, the text is the best opportunity we have to reach consensus on a programme of work during this session. Therefore, my delegation welcomes your decision to take action at this session on the text as currently drafted.

The President: I thank you, Ambassador. Would any other delegation like to take the floor? As that does not seem to be the case, I would like to say a few words.

The presidency has proposed a programme of work because we believe that it is necessary for the future of the Conference on Disarmament to adopt a programme of work now. We also believe — and this is in answer to some questions — that, taking into account the amount of time we have at our disposal this year, this is the maximum that we can plan for; we cannot concentrate on more than one, very specific but very flexible item. We also think that, before taking the next steps, we should have a clear position about our proposal: a very formal presidency proposal on a programme of work for 2016. With regard to the questions raised, I believe I answered all those questions during my two, quite long opening statements. Accordingly, I would like — as we started with the presidency proposal in a

very formal way — to finish up with this proposal also in a very formal way. I would therefore like to submit the draft programme for formal decision by the Conference.

I recognize the representative of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Deyneko (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. President, I believe the Russian delegation quite clearly expressed its position according to which it has objections in principle to the draft that has been submitted. We thus would like to state that our delegation cannot join in the consensus, for reasons of principle.

The President: I understand the point made by the representative of the Russian Federation, but I think that at this moment it is not a problem to proceed in a very formal way. I understand that our proposal was very formal and, before the second part of our presidency, we would like to have a clear position of all the members of the Conference about our proposal. I think that those positions will be very useful also for the work next year.

So, once again I would like to return to my very formal point of view. I now submit the draft decision for the establishment of a programme of work for the 2016 session as contained in working paper CD/WP.595 for a formal decision. Are there any objections to our proposal?

I recognize the representative of the Russian Federation with objections, so I conclude that our proposal submitted to the Conference has not reached a consensus.

Would any delegation like to take the floor? That does not seem to be the case. I note, formally, and with regret, that the draft decision for the establishment of the programme of work for the 2016 session as contained in working paper CD/WP.595 has not been adopted. The draft is rejected. We remain open for further consultation on the programme of work during the recess.

I recognize the United Kingdom. Ambassador Rowland, you have the floor.

Mr. Rowland (United Kingdom): Mr. President, the proposal that we put forward and that was circulated in document CD/2055 reflected our belief that this community wants to make progress on disarmament and, above all, nuclear disarmament. That progress will most meaningfully be measured by reductions in numbers or changes in the salience of nuclear weapons in the security doctrines of those that possess them. For that progress to be made in those terms, the nuclear-weapon States will have to engage in the discussion.

We put this proposal on the table because we wanted nuclear-weapon States to engage in that discussion in a format that was comfortable for them to engage in but in which we could advance our overall objectives. I understand the reservations of the Russian Federation given that they have been offered further significant reductions — reciprocal reductions — in overall numbers and are unable to respond to that significant offer from the United States. The United Kingdom will continue to work to find a way in which non-nuclear-weapon States and all nuclear-weapon States and all those that possess nuclear weapons can sit down and discuss this in a productive way with a view to finding a meaningful way forward on nuclear disarmament.

The President: I thank you, Ambassador. This concludes our business for today. Our next plenary meeting will be on Tuesday, 2 August 2016, at 10 a.m. in the Council Chamber. I wish you all a good summer break. This meeting is adjourned.

The meeting rose at 11.40 a.m.