

# Conference on Disarmament

English

---

**Final record of the one thousand four hundred and seventh plenary meeting**

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 21 February 2017, at 10.05 a.m.

*President:* Mr. Alexey Borodavkin.....(Russian Federation)

GE.17-11459 (E) 191017 241017



\* 1 7 1 1 4 5 9 \*

Please recycle 

**The President** (*spoke in Russian*): I call to order the 1407th meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

Excellencies, dear colleagues, Mr. Møller, Ms. Soliman, ladies and gentlemen, it is an honour for the Russian Federation to preside over the Conference on Disarmament.

Allow me to give the floor to Mr. Møller to express his condolences on the occasion of the untimely passing of the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation, Ambassador Churkin. Mr. Møller you have the floor.

**Mr. Møller** (Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva): Mr. President, I just wanted to say a few words of condolence on my own behalf and on behalf of my colleagues here at the United Nations Office at Geneva for the untimely passing of your colleague, Ambassador Churkin, who was a giant among diplomats and who will be missed very much by all of us and all of my colleagues in New York.

**The President** (*spoke in Russian*): Thank you very much, Mr. Møller. I would also like to take this opportunity to convey my gratitude to all the diplomats who have expressed their condolences to the Russian Federation and to my colleagues in Moscow and New York on the occasion of the passing of Vitaly Churkin. He was indeed an outstanding Russian diplomat. His departure from this life is an irreplaceable loss for all of us. I will convey the condolences and words of sympathy which I received yesterday by telephone and in messages yesterday and today to Ms. Churkin and to his family and close friends and to colleagues in Moscow and New York. I thank you very much.

Since our last plenary meeting, we have received a request from a delegation to take part in our deliberations as a non-member of the Conference. This request is contained in document CD/WP.598/Add.5, which includes all the requests received up to 3 p.m. yesterday, Monday, 20 February 2017. Requests from non-member States received after that date will be submitted for consideration and decision at a subsequent plenary meeting. Are there any comments on these requests? May I take it that the Conference decides to invite this State to take part in our work in accordance with our rules of procedure? If there are no comments or objections, the decision is adopted.

*It was so decided.*

**The President** (*spoke in Russian*): Allow me to suspend the meeting for a few minutes to enable the representative of the observer State to take his seat in this chamber.

*The meeting was briefly suspended.*

**The President** (*spoke in Russian*): The meeting is resumed. I would now like to make a statement in my capacity as President of the Conference on Disarmament.

I will present briefly the plans for the four weeks in which the Russian delegation will preside over this forum. First, however, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my predecessor in this high-level position, the Permanent Representative of Romania, Mr. Adrian Vierita. By taking an innovative, proactive approach, he managed to formulate a widely acceptable draft decision on the setting up of a working group on the way ahead and to secure its adoption by consensus.

The working group has been called upon to provide added input to the quest for a compromise on the programme of work that would enable the Conference to emerge from a stalemate which has lasted for many years. In this connection, we have already held a meeting with the Chair of the working group, the Ambassador of Myanmar, Mr. Htin Lynn. We agreed in principle on how to divide up work between us and also to work in extremely close cooperation in order ultimately to try to come up with a practical result that everyone is happy with. At the organizational level, we agreed to arrange the work of the Conference and its subsidiary body in such a way as to avoid overlapping and duplication.

I am of the firm view that the launching of the working group is not a reason for the President of the Conference to sit back and twiddle his thumbs. To the contrary, we cannot forget that our main goal is to try as quickly as possible to agree on a programme of work and get down to negotiations in accordance with the Conference's mandate. It was not for

nothing that many delegations in their statements rightly referred to rule 29 of Conference's rules of procedure, according to which drawing up the programme of work is the duty of the President of the Conference. More importantly, we must not allow any dissipation of the positive momentum which emerged at the last session of the Conference, when the President and numerous delegations made unprecedented efforts to revive it.

The Russian delegation, acting as President of the Conference, intends to give priority attention to endeavours to draw up a well-balanced programme of work for the Conference. In doing so, we will act with the utmost transparency and on the basis of the strict observance of the principle of consensus. Bearing in mind the positions of many delegations, to which reference has already been made, today we will conduct informal consultations on the programme of work after the plenary meeting, time permitting, of course. We look forward to active participation by delegations in the debate. Feasible fresh ideas are as necessary as air to our forum.

As you know, one of the key events during the Russian presidency will be the high-level segment of the Conference, which will take place the week of 27 February. We and the Conference secretariat will make every effort to ensure the high-level segment's maximum success. I, for my part, can announce that the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Mr. Gennadiy Gatilov, will address the Conference.

Also during our presidency, as already announced, a thematic meeting devoted to the 110th anniversary of the Second Hague Peace Conference is scheduled to be held on 22 February at 3 p.m. It will be attended by officials, representatives of academia and of civil society and it will be covered by the media. I would especially like to express my gratitude to the Permanent Representative of the Netherlands and to the Conference secretariat for their invaluable assistance with the organization of this event.

The Presidents of the Conference who preceded me, including Mr. Vierita and the colleagues who headed our forum in 2016, set a high standard for the quality and effectiveness of our work. I will do my utmost, as President, to maintain that level and will do everything possible in the interests of the Conference as a unique, multilateral forum in which a robust series of international legal instruments have been drawn up over time. They now form the "gold reserve" of the international community as far as promoting progress with arms control and disarmament is concerned. I will cooperate closely with this session's five other Presidents, the regional groups and all delegations. I count on your support and assistance.

I would now like to move on to the list of speakers for today. The first speaker on the list is New Zealand. New Zealand, you have the floor.

**Ms. Higgie** (New Zealand): Mr. President, my delegation welcomes today's opportunity to congratulate the Russian Federation on its assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament at this first meeting during its tenure. May I take this occasion also to echo our Secretary-General's comments and convey the condolences of New Zealand at the very sad and sudden passing of Ambassador Churkin in New York. I wish also to convey my country's appreciation for the efforts of Romania during its presidency to ensure that the Conference began the year in a positive way. I would like to congratulate Ambassador Vierita on the adoption last Friday of the proposal contained in document CD/WP.599/Rev.1 for the establishment of a Conference working group on the way ahead.

Google tells me, Mr. President, that the characteristics of this new year in the Chinese calendar — that of a fire rooster — are a "strong sense of time-keeping and of responsibility at work". This might seem to augur well, then, for the efforts of the Russian presidency and those of our subsequent Presidents for 2017 to build on document CD/WP.599/Rev.1 and bring the Conference back to work. Fire roosters come about, I am told, only once in every 60 years. So, we can hope that such a year will prove propitious in overcoming the 21-year stalemate in the Conference. But, as others here said last Friday, only if the working group on the way ahead is able to pave the way for the adoption of a programme of work and the initiation of negotiations in the Conference can it be adjudged useful or successful.

The measure used by New Zealand for success in this body mirrors that of many others here. We do not look for negotiations to get under way on just anything. If the Conference is to regain its reputation and credibility and to justify the considerable resources expended on it, it — like any international organization — will need to be engaged on issues that meet the priority concerns and problems facing the global community. This requires that the Conference again fulfil its negotiating mandate on a relevant and significant disarmament issue and not on one, for instance, that is already served by existing legal instruments or that is better addressed in alternative forums.

I have referenced issues and problems facing the global community, Mr. President. My delegation continues to believe that global concerns warrant global engagement. Accordingly, we fail to see the justification for the limited membership of this body and its exclusion of States that seek the opportunity to work on the issues under its purview.

I would like now to take the opportunity to briefly survey a number of the key issues on which my delegation will be actively engaged during this “fire rooster year”. New Zealand welcomes the opportunity given us all by United Nations General Assembly resolution 71/258 to move forward now on the architecture essential for nuclear disarmament. We look forward to the nuclear weapon prohibition negotiations which will get under way next month at the United Nations in New York, but are surprised by the criticism from some quarters that these negotiations — this exercise in architecture — should be rejected on the basis that they will not bring about the actual elimination of any nuclear weapon. Actual elimination of nuclear weapons has, obviously enough, never been within the gift of we non-possessors of nuclear weapons. But we are certainly able to play our part in meeting the obligation upon us all, as acknowledged unanimously by the International Court of Justice in 1996, to take part in nuclear disarmament negotiations and to create what the International Committee of the Red Cross has termed the “indispensable building block” for a world free of nuclear weapons. Our constructive participation in these negotiations is not the only way in which New Zealand will seek to strengthen the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and advance a nuclear-weapon-free world in 2017. This year marks the commencement of the review cycle that will culminate in the 2020 Review Conference — the fiftieth anniversary of the entry into force of the Treaty. Both nationally and through our membership of the New Agenda Coalition, the De-Alarming Group and the Vienna Group of Ten, New Zealand will work actively to ensure that this cornerstone of our global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime is stable and strong.

Just as New Zealand remains steadfast in our support for the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, so too are we committed to ensuring success in newer regimes. As the Arms Trade Treaty enters its third full year of operation, we are pleased to see continued growth both in its membership and with regard to implementation measures. It is clear, of course, that many challenges remain, including the need to achieve full compliance with, and universalization of, the Treaty and in ensuring that all States parties are able to participate fully in the intersessional processes which have recently been established. Against this backdrop, New Zealand is proud to have been able to provide an early contribution to the Treaty’s Voluntary Trust Fund. We are confident that the Fund will be a valuable tool for States to identify for themselves the priority areas where assistance is needed in order to achieve full implementation. We will be encouraging our Pacific Island neighbours to apply to the Fund, and we are certainly delighted that the Fund has already attracted significant support from donor countries.

New Zealand continues in the role of Coordinator for National Implementation Measures under the Convention on Cluster Munitions. This important instrument, and the strong international humanitarian law standard it sets, remains a priority for New Zealand. We are deeply appreciative of the strong leadership shown during 2016 by the Netherlands as President of the Convention and again by this year’s President, Germany. At a time when international humanitarian law is being flouted in an appalling manner in a number of brutal conflicts, it is encouraging that the strong normative impact of the Convention on Cluster Munitions — and its sister convention, the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Treaty — continues to grow.

The imperative of improving the protection of civilians in situations of armed conflict was properly in focus at last December’s Review Conference of the Convention on

Certain Conventional Weapons. New Zealand welcomed the decision to move forward on the issue of lethal autonomous weapons systems and the recognition given there to other pressing humanitarian issues, including the use of explosive weapons with wide-area effects in densely populated areas and the question of incendiary weapons. While regretting that more progress was not able to be made at the Review Conference, we retain our commitment to working with others to assist the Convention in remaining relevant in its response to the challenges posed by contemporary conflicts.

I am confident, Mr. President, that this survey of the key topics on which New Zealand will be engaged over coming months reveals that, notwithstanding the ongoing impasse in this body, there is a pressing agenda of relevant issues under consideration in other forums. But it remains the hope of New Zealand that, in this “fire rooster year”, you and your fellow Presidents can ensure that the Conference builds on the decision taken in document CD/WP.599/Rev.1 and not only takes stock of the existing impasse within the Conference but plots a way through it.

**The President** (*spoke in Russian*): I thank the Ambassador of New Zealand for her statement and for the warm words addressed to the Russian presidency. I appreciate the sympathy you expressed in connection with the passing of Ambassador Churkin.

I now give the floor to the representative of Chile.

**Mr. Lagos** (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, as this is the first time my delegation is taking the floor under your presidency, allow me to assure you of our full willingness to cooperate actively with you in order to achieve our shared goals. I also take this opportunity to reiterate the condolences of Chile for the sad and untimely death of Ambassador Vitaly Churkin, whose iconic diplomatic presence will no doubt be missed not only in New York but in the diplomatic community as a whole.

I would like, as well, to highlight the efforts of the Ambassador of Romania to ensure that we make headway with regard to the future work of this body, which must address significant issues that are associated with major global challenges, in accordance with its negotiating mandate. In this connection, we fully endorse the comments made just now by the Ambassador of New Zealand.

Mr. President, my delegation would also like to bring up a matter that is of concern to the entire international community. I am referring to the recent launch of a medium-range ballistic missile by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea near Banghyon in the Province of Pyongyang. The actions of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea threaten the stability of the Korean Peninsula, cause tension in the Asian region and undermine international security. Similarly, they constitute a flagrant violation of United Nations Security Council resolutions, in particular resolutions 1718 (2006), 1874 (2009), 2087 (2013), 2094 (2013), 2270 (2016) and 2321 (2016), which prohibit the country from carrying out nuclear tests and any launch using ballistic missile technologies.

Chile joins the international community in urging the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea to refrain from belligerent actions that jeopardize peace and to return to the path of dialogue in the framework of the Six-Party Talks. Chile further reiterates the call for that country to regularize its status as a non-nuclear-weapon State under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to place all its nuclear facilities under the supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Mr. President, Chile believes that the possession of nuclear weapons cannot be a source of pride or prestige for any country. Here today, we have voiced our concern over the latest actions of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, but we must not lose sight of the fact that the only sustainable way to deal with the nuclear threat is through the prohibition and elimination of all nuclear weapons.

**The President** (*spoke in Russian*): I thank the representative of Chile for his statement and for his readiness to work constructively with the presidency of the Conference.

I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Austria.

**Mr. Hajnoczi** (Austria): Mr. President, at the outset let me congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. We would like to assure you of our engagement and reiterate the long-standing commitment of Austria to the Conference on Disarmament. I also want to express our sincere condolences on the untimely passing of Ambassador Vitaly Churkin in Washington.

Like New Zealand before us, we would like to express our concern over the ongoing state of the Conference.

This year marks the twenty-first year of the deplorable stalemate. The international community created the Conference in the late 1970s and was well aware of possible challenges: some of them were even quite similar to those we have to face now two decades later. The importance of the Conference, but also the challenges, are reflected in the large personnel, financial and administrative resources allocated to the body. Last week's consensual adoption of the decision presented by the Romanian presidency — which has earned our gratitude — should be the first step in the process leading to negotiations.

We congratulate Ambassador Htin Lynn on his chairmanship and assure him of my delegation's full support in this challenging task. With flexibility and maybe sometimes some creativity, we hope that we can jointly deliver results and finally overcome the long-standing stalemate in the Conference. However, as expressed by other colleagues before me, the establishment of the working group can never be a substitute for substantive work and for the Conference fulfilling its mandate, namely, to negotiate.

Austria remains firmly committed to its priority of taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament. It is in the interest of the very survival of humanity that nuclear weapons are never used again under any circumstances. The catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapon detonations — whether by accident, miscalculation or by design — would affect us all.

Austria has welcomed cuts in the nuclear weapon arsenals in the past, but in recent years progress has slowed down and modernization programmes are being undertaken. Global nuclear arsenals remain at a level sufficient to destroy humanity many times over. At the same time, proliferation poses a top security threat. It is only logical that nuclear disarmament urgently needs a strong new impulse. All efforts must be exerted to eliminate the threat of these weapons of mass destruction. Hence, Austria is strongly engaged in the disarmament efforts currently taking place. We continue to be a strong supporter of the early commencement of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty. We are looking forward to the High-Level Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty Expert Preparatory Group delivering tangible results and to examining its report in the Conference.

Whereas other weapons of mass destruction have been prohibited, the world is still waiting for the prohibition of the most dangerous class of weapons of mass destruction. The strong wish to achieve this objective is reflected in the large number of co-sponsors of General Assembly resolution 71/258, as well as in its adoption by a large majority of United Nations Member States. This General Assembly resolution mandates the first inclusive multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations in decades. The date of 27 March marks the beginning of negotiations on a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons leading towards their total elimination.

The only absolute guarantee against the threat posed by nuclear weapons is their prohibition and their total elimination. Although the nuclear-weapon States bear the ultimate responsibility to completely eliminate their nuclear arsenals, it is a shared responsibility of all States to prevent the catastrophic humanitarian consequences related to these weapons of mass destruction. The negotiations on the legally binding instrument will be conducted in an open, transparent and inclusive manner. Participation in these historic negotiations is a unique opportunity to contribute to shaping the way towards a world free of nuclear weapons. The General Assembly resolution thus encourages all Member States to participate in the conference.

Mr. President, this year also marks the beginning of a new Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) review cycle. Austria is fully committed to the NPT as the cornerstone of the international nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime. We

believe that the same is true for the solid majority of the United Nations Member States that voted in favour of resolution 71/258. The language in paragraph 6 of this resolution is very clear and therefore I cite it: “Reaffirms the importance of the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the commitments made therein, and considers that the pursuit of any such measures, provisions and norms should complement and strengthen the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime, including the three pillars of the Treaty”. Let me emphasize here, once again, the firm commitment of Austria to fulfil and implement all our obligations and commitments contained in the NPT and established by the review process. It is of key importance for the credibility of the NPT that all pillars of the Treaty are continuously worked on and assessed.

In this regard, it seems valuable to briefly address the relationship between the NPT and the forthcoming treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons. The prohibition treaty initiative is based on the fact recognized, for example, in the Final Document of the 2010 NPT Review Conference that nuclear weapon explosions would have catastrophic humanitarian consequences. The only reliable protection lies in the elimination of nuclear weapons altogether, an objective that is reflected in the preamble of the NPT and underlying its article VI. This clearly demonstrates that a future treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons is firmly rooted in the NPT and disarmament regime and will, above all, contribute to implementation of article VI and thereby strengthen the NPT. The lack of progress in nuclear disarmament has been the subject of in-depth discussions in the NPT framework for many years. Diverging positions are not new but have, rather, accumulated over decades. The forthcoming negotiations cannot be blamed for this state of affairs. They rather could be used as an opportunity to re-establish much needed dialogue among all States which presupposes a willingness to engage on an equal basis.

The treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons will lay the basis for further steps to reach out common aim of a world free from nuclear weapons, as agreed in the NPT 2010 action plan.

According to the resolution’s mandate, further active steps towards full elimination will be needed. In this regard, Austria believes that further legal and practical measures will have to follow to address issues such as verification. As experience from chemical and biological weapons has shown, the first step in eliminating a whole class of weapons of mass destruction is a legal prohibition.

International security today faces serious challenges. This is exactly the reason why it is urgent, not just to talk about nuclear disarmament, but to negotiate and achieve results. In this regard, we highly appreciated the Secretary-General’s message to the opening of the 2017 session of this body, and let me quote:

Disarmament can play an important role in ending existing conflicts and preventing the outbreak of new strife. Disarmament and arms control processes provide the breathing space for confidence to be built, stability to be strengthened and trust to be established. This was true during the cold war and it is true now. The need for a breathing space is urgent. Global tensions are rising, sabres have been rattled and dangerous words spoken about the use of nuclear weapons.

Austria shares the concerns expressed by the United Nations Secretary-General. The world of the twenty-first century is different from the past century. To live up to new challenges, we need to revisit some of the concepts valid decades ago. The coming negotiations on a treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons offer the chance to lay the legal basis for a world free from nuclear weapons.

**The President** (*spoke in Russian*): I thank the Ambassador of Austria, first, for his statement and, second, for his words of congratulation addressed to me and for his condolences on the passing of Ambassador Churkin.

There are no more names on the list of speakers. Does anyone wish to take the floor? I recognize Ambassador Fu Cong of China.

**Mr. Fu Cong** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Mr. President, I should like at the outset to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on

Disarmament. The Chinese delegation will actively support your work in order to contribute to promoting substantive progress in the work of the Conference.

I also wish to take this opportunity to express our deep sorrow at the untimely passing of Ambassador Churkin, Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations. His passing is a great loss, not only for Russia but for the entire international diplomatic community.

Mr. President, last week the Conference successfully adopted a decision on the establishment of a working group on the way ahead. Allow me to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to your predecessor, Ambassador Vierita of Romania, for the efforts he made to secure the adoption of that decision. I also extend my congratulations to Ambassador Lynn of Myanmar, who is serving as Chair of the working group.

As the sole multilateral disarmament negotiation mechanism, the importance of the Conference on Disarmament is self-evident. Against the increasingly complex and grave background of the international security situation, the importance of the Conference is not shrinking but rather growing. Regrettably, however, it has now been 21 consecutive years that the Conference has performed no substantive work. Finding a way to break this deadlock and breathe renewed vitality into the Conference is the shared hope and responsibility of the international community. Against such a backdrop, establishing a working group to carry out a comprehensive assessment of the work of the Conference, as well as to sort out and analyse long-standing problems and explore ways to break out of the impasse, is both timely and necessary.

In this regard, China has a few preliminary thoughts that we would like to share.

First, we should seek common ground in the face of differences and work to achieve consensus. As the international situation evolves, the thinking of the international community on related issues is also deepening; the military strategies of the major Powers inevitably spawn changes. All of this will have a direct or indirect influence on the work of the Conference. For example, consensus continues to grow around the issue of negative security assurances. The possibility of further discussions and even negotiations on this is also growing. With regard to outer space issues, the draft Treaty on Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space proposed by China and Russia has gained broad support in the international community, which has also begun preliminary discussions around the draft International Code of Conduct for Outer Space Activities initiative of the European Union. Consensus on the issue of transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space is also increasing among the major Powers. We are of the view that although parties differ in their positions and approaches with regard to outer space issues, they all have a positive willingness to start working on these issues nevertheless. As long as all sides work together, progress is not out of reach.

Second, we should keep pace with the times and constantly update the disarmament agenda. The agenda set out at the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament in 1978 is the foundation and guide for the work of the Conference on Disarmament. Objectively speaking, the topics determined by our predecessors 40 years ago were not only comprehensively balanced, but were also highly forward-looking; as a result, the traditional agenda of the Conference is not yet outdated even now. However, no one could have predicted the enormous changes in the international situation and the rapid development of science and technology over the past 40 years. For that reason, although the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament indicated the general direction of the work of the Conference, it could not completely predict the new problems and challenges we face today. We should therefore approach the agenda of the Conference in a spirit of continuity and innovation. By continuity, I mean we should comprehensively carry forward the spirit of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament rather than mechanically interpret the words written 40 years ago, clinging to outdated stereotypes and dragging our feet. By innovation, I do not mean abandoning the traditional topics, but rather fully tapping their potential and continually endowing them with new content in line with the characteristics of the times. For example, disarmament and non-proliferation are mutually complementary; most of the treaties negotiated in the Conference in the past have been disarmament — and at the same time non-proliferation — treaties. There are a number of issues to be addressed in the non-proliferation sphere: the various mechanisms are not coordinated, they lack universality and inclusiveness, double



standards are commonly applied and there is the emerging threat of terrorism, all of which places serious constraints on advancing the Conference agenda. We are fully capable of working on the establishment of an international non-proliferation governance mechanism that meets the needs of the new situation within the framework of a comprehensive disarmament programme. Another example is the major threat to global strategic balance and stability presented by cyberweapons, lethal autonomous weapons systems and new biotechnologies. These emerging issues may be even more important and urgent than the traditional issues, and they are also much easier to make progress on. If we can make a timely start on working on these problems in the new weapons of mass destruction framework and carry out preventive arms control, not only will this enable us to prevent disasters before they occur, but it will also create favourable conditions for resolving old problems.

Third, we should open our hearts and continuously broaden the universality of the Conference. As everyone knows, the Conference was established during the cold war; its original membership was the product of compromise between the Eastern and Western blocs. Although its membership was expanded several times during the last century, the Conference continued to display clear vestiges of the cold war. Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, the international situation has seen sweeping shifts. The democratization of international relations is deepening, global security governance is in the ascendant and participation in the work of the Conference has become a general expectation of most countries. It is clear that the current membership structure of the Conference is seriously out of line with international political and security realities. In our view, allowing all members of the United Nations to take part in the work of the Conference as formal members could be seen as a good way out. Doing so would have many advantages. First, it would help to smooth out regional differences and put an end to the long-standing problem of expansion of the membership; second, it would broaden democracy and reflect international consensus to the greatest possible degree, thus obviating any need to abandon the Conference in order to start over from the beginning; and third, it would inject new dynamism into the Conference, which could perhaps enhance decision-making efficiency and help to break the deadlock and stimulate the vitality of the Conference.

These are some initial ideas from China, which we hope will attract further valuable contributions and provide some positive energy for the work of the working group. In the next stage, China will continue actively to take part in related discussions; while listening carefully to the views and advice of all sides, China will further set forth its positions and proposals. We are ready to work together with all parties to promote substantive outcomes from the working group.

**The President** (*spoke in Russian*): I thank the Ambassador of China for his statement, congratulations and readiness to cooperate with the presidency of the Conference. I am also grateful for his condolences on the untimely passing of Ambassador Churkin.

I now give the floor to the Permanent Representative of Myanmar, Mr. Htin Lynn.

**Mr. Lynn** (Myanmar): At the outset I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament at this important juncture. I assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation in discharging your mandate. Allow me also to join previous speakers in expressing our deepest condolences on the untimely demise of one of the greatest sons of the Russian Federation, Ambassador Vitaly Churkin. My appreciation also goes to your predecessor, the Ambassador of Romania, for paving the way for us to embark on substantive work this year in the Conference.

Mr. President, I would like to inform you — and, through you, the membership — of how I will be trying to fulfil my mandate as the Co-Chair of the working group in the coming weeks. During this week, I intend to invite you all to an informal consultation so that delegations can express their priority issues for substantive work under the agenda contained in document CD/2085. This will be at 10 a.m. this Friday, 24 February 2017, here in this room.

Notwithstanding the informal meeting, Mr. President, that you are going to hold following this plenary meeting, I believe that the more we meet with each other and the

more chances we have to express ourselves, the better will be the understanding we can establish among ourselves as to the priorities of work in the Conference. Next week, which is the last week of February, most of us will be busy in the first few days with the high-level segment. However, I will meet with all like-minded groups to listen to their respective group priorities and positions on the agenda items. During the first week of March, I intend to conduct bilateral consultations with all the interested delegations. There will be a time slot made available for such consultations. I hope that I will also be receiving their views and position on their priority issues.

My delegation will inform you of the time and place of the bilateral consultations after checking the availability of a venue with the secretariat. At the same time, beginning from today, any delegations wishing to indicate their views on their priority issues — and I have heard some views already from the delegations which took the floor before me — can do so either in person or in writing to my delegation, and they are most welcome to do so.

After completing the first round of consultations as outlined, I will work closely with the President of the Conference for a possible next step. This step could take the form of a non-paper containing reflections on the consultations that have taken place that far.

Mr. President, dear colleagues, I hope that together we will be able to do something meaningful this year in the Conference.

**The President** (*spoke in Russian*): I thank Ambassador Lynn for his statement, congratulations and his readiness to cooperate, and I appreciate his condolences on the untimely passing of Ambassador Churkin.

I now recognize the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

**Mr. Han** Tae-song (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Mr. President, my delegation would like first of all to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and assure you of my delegation's full support in fulfilling your responsibility.

As regards the lengthy remarks by the delegation from Chile, my delegation cannot but interpret them as an expression of an attitude that blindly follows the hostile forces against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea with no clear knowledge about the essence of the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula. The position of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on self-defensive measures is well known and I have expressed it on several occasions, so I will not repeat it again.

**The President** (*spoke in Russian*): I thank the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea for his statement and now give the floor to the representative of Chile.

**Mr. Lagos** (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, I apologize for requesting the floor again. In truth, it was not my intention to do so, but the statement just now by the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea sadly leaves me no choice. I would simply like to say that Chile has always denounced violations of relevant Security Council resolutions. I also wish to say that we are not applying double standards; this has been my country's consistent position. We consider that no one should possess nuclear weapons, as I pointed out in my previous statement. Lastly, we reiterate our call for the resumption of dialogue and for every effort to be made to find a peaceful solution to the problem of the nuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

**The President** (*spoke in Russian*): I thank the representative of Chile for his statement.

Does anyone else wish to take the floor? I recognize the representative of Belarus.

**Mr. Nikolaichik** (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. President, I would like to begin by expressing our deep sympathy on the passing of the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, Vitaly Ivanovich Churkin. The delegation of Belarus mourns this great loss.

Mr. President, I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate you upon your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. You may count on

our delegation's support to make substantive progress in the Conference's work. I also wish to congratulate Ambassador Vierita and Ambassador Lynn on setting up the working group on the way ahead. We hope that this arrangement will help us to overcome the Conference's deadlock of 20 years.

As you know, one of the foreign policy priorities for the Republic of Belarus is full, universal nuclear disarmament. We have emerged over time as a leader in this matter in that we renounced the possession of a nuclear arsenal and have ever since then been advocating the gradual reduction of nuclear arsenals and a transition to a non-nuclear world.

In that connection, allow me to take this opportunity to invite all those present — members of the Conference and observer delegations — to attend the commemorative event that the Belarusian delegation is organizing jointly with the Geneva Centre for Security Policy as a side event to the high-level segment of the Conference. This event will take place at 1 p.m. on 1 March, on the premises of the Geneva Centre. We would be happy to have you join us for discussions related to nuclear disarmament issues.

**The President** (*spoke in Russian*): I thank the representative of Belarus for his congratulations and his readiness to work with the presidency. I also appreciate your condolences to the Russian presidency on the passing of Ambassador Churkin. I thank you as well for the invitation you have just extended to the event jointly organized by the Belarusian delegation and the Geneva Centre on nuclear disarmament issues.

The list of speakers has come to an end. Does anyone still wish to take the floor? If that is not the case, I would once again like to remind all delegations that tomorrow, 22 February, at 3 p.m., in the Council Chamber there will be a thematic meeting of the Conference, which will be devoted to the 110th anniversary of the Second Hague Peace Conference. Delegations are informed that, although this will be an informal meeting of the Conference, the event will be open to the public.

As I said at our last plenary meeting on 17 February, I intend to make the most efficient use of time possible and, today, will start informal consultations on the programme of work immediately after this plenary meeting. Thus, after the closure of the formal plenary meeting, we will recommence work in an informal setting after a five-minute break.

With this, today's official business is completed. The next plenary meeting will be held at 3 p.m. on Monday, 27 February, during a week in which the Conference will be addressed by a number of high-ranking officials. The secretariat will provide additional information in due course.

If there are no other questions regarding the agenda or requests to take the floor, the meeting is adjourned.

*The meeting rose at 11.10 a.m.*