

# Conference on Disarmament

English

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**Final record of the one thousand four hundred and twenty-third plenary meeting**

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 20 June 2017, at 10.10 a.m.

*President:* Mr. Fedor Rosocha ..... (Slovakia)

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**The President:** I call to order the 1423rd plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

Excellencies, dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, since our last plenary meeting, we have received a request from a delegation wishing to participate in our work as a non-member State. The list is before you as document CD/WP.598/Add.7, which includes all requests received by 3 p.m. yesterday, Monday, 19 June 2017. Requests that were received after the issuance of the document will be considered at the next plenary meeting. If there are no comments on this request, I take it that the Conference decides to invite the States to participate in our work in accordance with the rules of procedure.

*It was so decided.*

**The President:** Allow me now to suspend the meeting for a brief moment in order to allow the representatives of the non-member States who have just been invited to participate in the work of the Conference to take their seats in the Council Chamber.

*The meeting was briefly suspended.*

**The President:** The meeting is resumed. Excellencies, dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, as we are approaching the finish line of the Slovak presidency and this plenary meeting is the last one that will be presided over by me, allow me to briefly review these past few weeks. To begin with, I would like to thank Mr. Michael Møller, Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, and his team, including Mr. Marco Kalbusch, for the excellent support provided to the Conference and its President. I would also like to thank all delegations for the valuable support rendered to the Slovak presidency and to the Conference. I highly appreciated the professional and constructive engagement and assistance during my bilateral and plurilateral consultations as well as during the plenary meetings.

During the Slovak presidency, we focused our endeavours on two complementary efforts: first, to explore options which could help the Conference to reach consensus on a programme of work; and second, to sustain the working group on the way ahead and support its Chair, Ambassador Htin Lynn of Myanmar. We must admit that one month is not a sufficient period of time during which a presidency can plan and carry out all the steps which are necessary to break the existing deadlock in the Conference. Throughout the past three weeks, we held a number of consultations on various issues, including the state of play in the Conference and a possible programme of work. Unfortunately, despite my efforts and willingness throughout the Slovak presidency to leave no stone unturned and to explore all possible avenues to take the Conference forward to fulfil its substantive mandate, at this point I regret to inform you that there are no satisfactory indications of an emerging consensus on a possible programme of work which would include a negotiating mandate.

Nevertheless, I believe it is important to continue in this effort and to bring this body closer to restarting substantive negotiations. Despite the fact that we are in the last week of our presidency, I plan to continue my consultations all of this week in order to discuss possibilities for a future programme of work for the Conference. I would like to reiterate, once again, that we are open to any suggestions from any member State of the Conference of either a procedural or a substantive nature.

The second strand of activities of the Slovak presidency was aimed at supporting the working group on the way ahead. I am glad that we could actively contribute to the common undertaking during this session of the Conference. I am also very pleased that the Conference found a common understanding and the working group could finally start with scheduled meetings according to the agreed timetable and discuss agenda items. We believe this process will allow us to identify common ground for our future work as we strive to restart negotiations in this body, as it is crucial for addressing current global security needs.

The Conference on Disarmament is designed to fulfil these expectations and we all carry the responsibility to make that happen. Here once again, I would like to express our appreciation to our predecessors in the 2017 session of the Conference — Romania, Russia and Senegal — and to commend them for their outstanding work in steering this body. At the same time, I would encourage you to render the same level of cooperation and dedication as you clearly showed during the Slovak presidency, and I hope that the

forthcoming presidencies of South Africa and Spain will enjoy the same valuable support of all your delegations and achieve even better results for the benefit of the Conference and the international community as the whole.

I would also like to thank Ambassador Lynn of Myanmar for his tireless efforts for the sake of the Conference and its member States. I also thank all Friends of the Chair — Ambassador Biontino of Germany, Ambassador Ambrazevich of Belarus and Mr. Lagos of Chile — for their willingness and readiness to co-facilitate meetings of the working group and lead discussion of the Conference agenda items.

As you know, last week, on 14, 15 and 16 June, we had in my view a very useful, constructive and well-structured discussion on agenda item 3, prevention of an arms race in outer space. It was a very good beginning to the thematic debates in the working group. We look forward to forthcoming thematic discussions.

During the presidency of the Slovak Republic, the Conference held on 13 June an informal plenary meeting on issues related to rule 2 of the rules of procedure of the Conference as contained in document CD/8/Rev.9. The Slovak presidency could not ignore this important topic and the calls from many observer countries as well as Conference members to open and discuss this issue. In my capacity as President of the Conference, I met on 9 June with the United Nations High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Izumi Nakamitsu. As I have already informed you, we discussed the state of play in the Conference, including the developments in the working group on the way ahead.

This concludes my remarks on the Slovak presidency of the Conference over the past weeks. Allow me now to turn to the list of speakers for today. Does any delegation wish to take the floor? I recognize the Ambassador of the Netherlands.

**Mr. Van der Kwast** (Netherlands): Thank you, Mr. President, and thank you for all the work done by your presidency. A colleague once said to me about this room, “It is a beautiful room, but it is so tiring when you look up at the ceiling.” And I look up at the ceiling very often.

For me, today is my last time in this beautiful room, although in the diplomatic world you never know if or when you will come back — it looks as if this is the case, though. In that sense, I would like to share a few things from over the last four years during which I had the pleasure of being here with colleagues.

First of all, one thing is clear and that is that progress on confidence-building and disarmament are crucial to promoting international peace and security. In these troubled times, we should redouble our efforts to lower tensions. If we lose sight of the importance of reducing the role of nuclear weapons in military doctrines, we run the risk of exacerbating international tensions by mirroring the behaviour of others. Security is of the essence. The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and of missile technology is worrying. Multilateralism is important to seek ways to deal with this.

We have to seek ways to strengthen international agreements. We have quite a number of those agreements, such as the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, to mention a few. They need further strengthening and increased participation. The Conference, in my opinion, is and should be a forum to elaborate on all those issues and also on relevant treaties and key issues.

Some say that now is not the time, that it is too difficult, that geopolitical tensions and situations are too complicated. In our profession, “now is not the time” is never an excuse, in our opinion. It is our job to find solutions. Diplomats should be result-oriented. That is what we are paid for. If we disagree on a number of issues, then we can discuss where we can agree. If we finally agree to disagree, then we can work on other issues. In our field, there are too many issues to be explored, including new, up-and-coming issues like cybersecurity, outer space, regional developments and so on.

When I was appointed by the Minister to become Permanent Representative to the Conference on Disarmament, there were several colleagues in our Ministry of Foreign Affairs who made jokes about it. They did so because they knew that I was the one who, in

2009, called for an investigation into the usefulness of having a representative in this body. At that time, I was head of the Department for Non-Proliferation, Disarmament, Arms Control and Weapon Exports. We were doubting whether there was use in keeping an ambassador here, and we wanted to make an assessment of the role and the added value. The conclusion then was that there were still good reasons to have an ambassador here. We changed the title, however, and it became the Permanent Representative to the Conference on Disarmament and Ambassador-at-Large for Disarmament. The justification of the latter part was that more and more disarmament activities were going on outside of the Conference. It was important to have somebody at the ambassadorial level present in those activities. After four years, I have to conclude that our decision then was the right one. There are more and more disarmament activities outside the Conference.

Unfortunately, this trend has become stronger over the last two years. That is why we have no other option than to look for ways to get the Conference to live up to its mandate, that is, to negotiate disarmament treaties. We like to recall that the Conference is the single negotiating body for disarmament. Negotiations start with talks, talks that are result-oriented and that work towards negotiations. It is my strong belief that, in the absence of negotiations, a lot of work can be done in this body by setting up structured and well-organized discussions and working out those discussions. That is exactly what we aimed to do during our presidency of the Conference in 2015. We may have disturbed some colleagues with such a busy schedule, but it did work and we had substantive discussions on key issues as well as on new issues, like gender and disarmament. By inviting experts, our aim was to trigger discussions to find common ground and to lay the foundations for future negotiations. We should stay away as much as possible from the political and focus on the technical part where we can. The political side, of course, is always part of our job and can limit possibilities as well as create new ones, but we should seek this out. I believe progress is possible that way. There is a wealth of knowledge in this body and there is a lot which we can share. If we cannot agree on some issues, then there is reason to talk and compare notes.

The issue of a treaty banning the production of fissile material is long overdue. The Group of Governmental Experts has produced a good report on which we can build. Together with Canada and Germany, we introduced a resolution in the General Assembly that was adopted with 172 votes in favour. The high-level group will bring its results back to the Conference in two years. We are in favour of further discussions in the Conference. If, however, the Conference is — for whatever reason — not able to address this over these two years, the question comes up as to how to move on. It might very well be that the discussion then will be worked out in other forums. The Conference would then lose another opportunity and make itself even more irrelevant.

Power comes with responsibility and great power comes with great responsibility. It is our common responsibility to make this body work, not that of the President of the Conference alone. Political will is required to get to the start and conclusion of negotiations. A special responsibility lies in that regard on the shoulders of those States possessing nuclear weapons. They should lead the way in this forum, which they claim to be the single negotiating body for disarmament and the only body in which they want to negotiate. To them and to other members, I say “Show it!” Especially now, they should find a way to prove that progress — however little — is possible. With the current negotiations in New York on a treaty banning nuclear weapons, a majority of States are giving a signal that the current stalemate in disarmament is unacceptable for a large group of countries. In view of their arsenals, the United States and Russia have a prime responsibility to find new ways for cooperation.

Political will is also required from some States having double agendas. You cannot claim to be in favour of progress on disarmament by advancing efforts in one body at the expense of efforts in another. It is only by trying to advance opportunities whenever they arise that real progress on disarmament will be possible. If States do not see any possible role for this body, it is better to leave this body than try to further paralyse it through their actions.

The working group on the way ahead is a new initiative and we think that Ambassador Lynn of Myanmar is doing a terrific job by searching for a way forward for

the Conference via the working group. I appreciate his “outside the box” thinking to find a way forward for the Conference. It is high time. You will continue to have our full support for your excellent work.

We should also continue to work on improving our methods of work and the enlargement of the Conference. I thank the Slovak presidency for putting this important subject on our agenda again. In view of the state of the Conference, it is remarkable that there are still States that want to become members. A large group of serious States that have been long-time observers of this body deserve to be taken seriously. On this last point, we had a good discussion last week. Bilateral issues should not hold the enlargement of the Conference hostage.

With regard to management, when I came here a couple of years ago, I once asked if I could speak to the Director. I was told that the Director was not in. I asked where the Director was or how I could reach him. I was told that nobody knew and that it was not possible; if I could come back next week, then we might give it another try. I have to say that a lot has improved since then. I was one of the seven Ambassadors who wrote a letter to the High Representative recommending the work that has been done by Mary Soliman and by Marco Kalbusch and others to re-establish this body and strengthen the process. We hope that the work of the secretariat will be further strengthened and also receive the appreciation it deserves.

I am convinced that the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) is key. The NPT has served us well for over 47 years. It is the basis for a political and legal world order that has proven its value. After not being able to reach a consensus outcome at the 2015 NPT Review Conference, taking on the Chair of the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Review Conference was a challenge. We decided that our main aim must be to put the NPT at centre stage again by concentrating on a common way forward and by emphasizing inclusivity and transparency. The NPT belongs to all its members and that is why we organized — together with Senegal, Indonesia and Chile — regional conferences and consultations in Amman, Dakar, Jakarta and Santiago. By consulting with over 100 States parties at the regional conferences and during consultations with regional groups, the ownership of the NPT was underlined. This enabled a good start to the review cycle, and I thank you all for your help with that. As a direct result of the consultations, procedural matters could be dealt with smoothly. The good atmosphere during the meeting allowed for discussions on possible elements for a common way forward. Via the reflections of the Chair, we aimed to create a basis on which the next Chair can build further towards a successful outcome of the 2020 Review Conference. We aimed for a substantive report of the Chair: a report that reflects the richness of the debate in Vienna and a report that is factual and as objective as possible — but, above all, a report that gives a sound basis for debate and actions in the 2017–2020 review cycle. I sent this report to you yesterday, Mr. President, and I hope it will be distributed in this body.

Finally, I want to thank you all for your help and for being colleagues. It was an honour to work with most of you, and I appreciated your professionalism, your commitment and hard work — because there was a lot of hard work. I thank the secretariat also for their contributions and their work. I also want to thank the translators, who, despite the nonsense we sometimes produced, always gave a very professional translation.

In one of my speeches, I said that we, as diplomats, are privileged people, because we deal with issues that matter. Working on security and disarmament issues remains the core of foreign policy and one of the prime tasks of the United Nations and of the Conference on Disarmament. It is also a responsibility and a duty that we have to live up to. We have to respond to our Governments, our parliaments and our peoples. Therefore, doing nothing is not an option. Our responsibility is too serious for that.

With that, Mr. President, I want to thank you again for your presidency. Like you, I am moving to another place and I am very much looking forward to that, but again I want to thank everybody for their work and contribution.

**The President:** I thank the Ambassador of the Netherlands for his statement. I now recognize the Ambassador of the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Rowland** (United Kingdom): Mr. President, thank you for all your efforts over the past month and your continuing efforts this week.

I would just like to say a few words of fond farewell to Ambassador Van der Kwast. I think, Henk Cor, in the four years you have been here, you have made a very good case for the continued Netherlands representation at the Conference on Disarmament. You have been a key member of our community, and you have been very active in this chamber and in the margins and, of course, beyond this chamber, including most recently in Vienna, not to forget your efforts with the Convention on Cluster Munitions last year. We need more diplomats like you who are prepared to take on official roles, step up and try and find a way forward. For my part, you will be missed.

**The President:** I thank the representative of the United Kingdom for his statement. I now recognize the Ambassador of China.

**Mr. Fu Cong** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Mr. President, the Chinese delegation wishes to commend the efforts you have made to move the work of the Conference on Disarmament ahead during your tenure. Under your presidency, the members of the Conference have agreed on a timetable for the activities of the working group on the way ahead, and the Conference is thus steadily pushing forward towards the launching of substantive work. We would like to express our appreciation in this regard.

I, too, would like to take this opportunity to express my words of regret at the departure of Ambassador Van der Kwast of the Netherlands. Ambassador Van der Kwast has been an extremely active figure in the Geneva disarmament community. During his tenure, he worked energetically to revive the work of the Conference and made important contributions in the fields of the Biological Weapons Convention and the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. As the Chair of the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, he led that body to a positive outcome, thanks to his outstanding leadership skills and diplomatic expertise. The Chinese delegation expresses its thanks to him for these efforts.

Ambassador Van der Kwast will soon move on to assume another important post. While we are sorry to see him go, we offer him our heartfelt congratulations and best wishes. We hope that in his new post he will meet with even greater success and we are looking forward to working in close cooperation with his successor.

**The President:** I thank the representative of China for his statement. I now recognize the representative of Guatemala; Ms. Bolaños, you have the floor.

**Ms. Bolaños Pérez** (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, I have the honour to speak on behalf of the group of observer States to the Conference on Disarmament. As this is the last meeting under the Slovak presidency, Ambassador Rosocha, we would like to thank you for your efforts during your presidency and express our gratitude to you, your team and the secretariat for the work done, especially for the announcement that you chaired an informal meeting to discuss expansion of membership of the Conference. We wish you all the best in your new tasks and, once again, we thank you for all the support you have given us.

To Ambassador Henk Cor van der Kwast as well, we wish to express our deep thanks for his work to make the Conference on Disarmament more effective and for his attempts to strengthen and reform this body.

In 2015, under the presidency of the Netherlands, the group of observer States submitted a working paper to the Conference on Disarmament on the expansion of membership, and we had the full support of Ambassador Van der Kwast. We thus would like to wish him all the best in his new endeavours and thank him for his continued support for the expansion of the membership of the Conference.

**The President:** I thank the representative of Guatemala for her statement and for the kind words addressed to the President. I now give the floor to the representative of Canada, Mr. Davison.

**Mr. Davison** (Canada): Mr. President, I as well want to thank you for the hard work of your delegation and yourself during the course of the last four weeks.

To Ambassador Van der Kwast, I wish, first of all, to convey the regrets of my Ambassador who could not be here today. She realized that this was your last plenary, but other duties called. On her behalf and on my own, we want to note our deepest appreciation for your leadership and deft diplomacy throughout the two years that we have worked with you. I do not know if many people know this, but you are an equestrian and you are a sailor. You know how to move a great beast around an obstacle course and how to deal with a ship in irons. I think the Conference on Disarmament is definitely one of those things, or both of them altogether.

I started here in August 2015 and was treated to a spectacle and the ambition of the Netherlands presidency. That set the tone for me. I have to say it has not been exactly brilliant since then in terms of what we have strived to do and what Presidents have been able to deliver — and that is no fault of the Presidents — but you had an objective in mind and you pursued it and it was to the benefit of this body and to the benefit of all the delegations in this room. I just want to wish you the very best on your posting. You will leave a sizeable hole in this body when you leave.

**The President:** I thank the representative of Canada for his statement. I now give the floor to the representative of Germany, Ambassador Biontino.

**Mr. Biontino** (Germany): Mr. President, let me thank you for your efforts on the programme of work to set the Conference on Disarmament back on track. I think you did what could be done and we will continue discussions in the working group on the way ahead. I think that would be very fruitful.

Let me now turn to my friend, Henk Cor. We arrived here together four years ago. Very often, in a diplomat's life, meeting other diplomats is like meeting a ship in the dark. You barely recognize each other and you pass each other. But with some of the ships you get a bit closer. That was the case with Henk Cor. I admire him deeply for what he did with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). He put the NPT process back on track after the failure of the 2015 Review Conference. That was an enormous task and he succeeded brilliantly.

Then, in the Conference on Disarmament, he encouraged us — myself included — to come back out of holiday in the month of August. This is still unforgotten and unheard of, but I think he did whatever could be done to put the Conference back on track to enrich discussions and to see that the Conference does not lose additional relevance. We should take very seriously the words of admonition he just gave to us. I think that we have to undertake additional efforts to make the Conference work again; otherwise, it will indeed continue to lose relevance.

I then had the mixed privilege of succeeding Ambassador Van der Kwast in the presidency of the Convention on Cluster Munitions. That was a daunting task, because he actually managed to negotiate a declaration whereby we would strive for a world free of cluster munitions in the foreseeable future. I am trying to fill his shoes. I will not be able to do so, but I can convey again our appreciation for what he did there. With the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, there again the Netherlands, under his leadership, played an important role to establish viable and sustainable financial backing for the Convention. I could continue into other areas, the Biological Weapons Convention and so on. What I will say right now is that we will miss him greatly. We wish him all the best in his new endeavours and we might even threaten to visit him there, because we like the place.

**The President:** I thank the representative of Germany for his statement. I now give the floor to the representative of the Republic of Korea, Ambassador Kim In-chul.

**Mr. Kim In-chul** (Republic of Korea): Mr. President, first, our congratulations and our tribute to you for the excellent manner in which you have conducted our work during your presidency. I wish you all the best in your new assignment.

Turning to Ambassador Van der Kwast, Henk Cor, I would start by quoting a Dutch saying that goes, "Act normal, because normal is crazy enough." We all know that the

world is crazy enough, and maybe in that saying there is the distilled wisdom that the world, including the disarmament world, is crazy enough. What Henk Cor has done and has shown us is not only a paragon of acting normal but also a paragon of acting wisely. He is wise because he has all the elements that comprise wisdom: he has knowledge, he has experience and he has character. We saw that when he read his reflections at the recent meeting of the Preparatory Committee in Vienna. We also heard it when he read his remarks here just now. We will be left with a big empty space. I do not know how we are going to fill it, but that is life. We will keep going on here. Henk Cor, I wish you all the best in Bratislava and beyond.

**The President:** I thank the representative of the Republic of Korea for his statement. I now give the floor to the representative of Italy, Ambassador Mati.

**Mr. Mati** (Italy): Mr. President, I would like to join the previous speakers in congratulating you on the way in which you have conducted the work of the Conference on Disarmament and your presidency.

Allow me, in particular, to add my voice to those who have expressed their deep gratitude to Ambassador Van der Kwast for the contribution he has made to work not only in the Conference but also in all the activities within the framework of the disarmament machinery. I have truly appreciated his skilfulness, professionalism and leadership capabilities on many occasions, the latest one being, of course, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty presidency, but the list is long and includes not just the Conference but also the Convention on Cluster Munitions. I would like also to mention the gender initiatives on disarmament, which is also a very important issue for us.

Henk Cor was not only a colleague for me but also a friend. Let me also underline that for me he is also a like-minded interlocutor and I cannot but share all the considerations and remarks he made earlier in his farewell remarks. Therefore, let me take this opportunity to bid him farewell. For my part, of course, I am going to miss him and am very sad to see him move to another place, but I wish Henk Cor all the best in his new assignment, where I hope and I am sure he will make the same contribution that he made in the Conference.

**The President:** I thank the representative of Italy for his statement. I now give the floor to the representative of Poland, Mr. Broilo.

**Mr. Broilo** (Poland): Mr. President, first of all let me congratulate you on the way you have conducted your presidency. Despite not reaching a programme of work, it was, in our view, a very successful presidency, so we cordially congratulate you.

Let me address words of great thanks to Ambassador Henk Cor van der Kwast for his tireless efforts in the Conference on Disarmament and for the excellent cooperation during the first stage of the review cycle of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. I would like to thank and congratulate you for your statement, which was true and brave. Mr. Ambassador, you have proved many times that doing nothing is not an option, even when circumstances are not conducive. We wish you all the best at your next posting.

**The President:** I thank the representative of Poland for his statement. I now give the floor to the representative of Spain, Ambassador Herráiz España.

**Mr. Herráiz España** (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, this morning is a morning of expressing appreciation. I would first of all like to express my gratitude to you, Mr. President, for the efforts you have made to move the Conference on Disarmament ahead in its work. I thank also Ambassador Lynn, who has demonstrated his commitment and whose efforts we will continue to be thankful for quite some time. And, of course, I wish to thank Ambassador Van der Kwast, who has been the consummate professional diplomat, but also no stranger to the occasional challenge. Indeed, the more disarmament stood still, the more Ambassador Van der Kwast got moving. I believe that this way of handling challenges is a reflection of his courage, creativity and constructive spirit. Looking to the future, we wish him, with his critical yet always constructive manner, every success in his new posting.

**The President:** I thank the representative of Spain for his statement. I now give the floor to the representative of India, Ambassador Gill.



**Mr. Gill (India):** Mr. President, I would like to join other colleagues in thanking you for your work as the President of the Conference on Disarmament and for your commitment to advancing the Conference's substantive work.

I had not realized that this would turn into a farewell plenary for our dear friend Henk Cor. Henk, I missed your latest exploits, but I am not surprised at all by the fact that so many people from across the spectrum have praised your work and your recent achievements. That is a tribute to your qualities not only as a diplomat but, also and more importantly, as a human being. You will be missed here and I want to wish you and your family all the very best for your next assignment.

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

Excellencies, dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, together with the end of the Slovak presidency of the Conference on Disarmament, I approach as well the final part of my duties as the Permanent Representative of Slovakia to the United Nations and other international organizations in Geneva. I will depart from Geneva in a few weeks to assume my new responsibilities in Bratislava. Although I am leaving, I shall closely follow developments at the United Nations Office at Geneva and the Conference on Disarmament in my new position as Director of the United Nations Department at the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs.

Let me share with you some impressions that were on my mind when dealing with the issues related to the Conference. I started preparations back in my capital for assuming my duties as the Permanent Representative of Slovakia to the United Nations Office at Geneva with a glimmer of hope when the Conference adopted its programme of work in May 2009. However, soon afterwards, even before my arrival in Geneva, I learned that the great efforts invested in the Conference that had led to the adoption of the programme of work had come to nought, as the Conference was unable to carry out the mandate given in the programme. Ever since, we have all tried hard to bring new hope to the Conference and the international community as well. New ideas for work in the Conference have been presented here in this very room. Various efforts have been combined, different avenues explored and it seems that no stone was left unturned and all possibilities have been tried. Despite all these efforts, dedication and determination by esteemed members, we still face a deadlock in the Conference — a deadlock which we cannot afford.

The agenda and issues we are being asked to address by the United Nations General Assembly, the international community, member States and the people themselves are so important that we cannot allow the Conference to continue along this path. We cannot afford for this body to be inactive and to be pushed aside. Despite all these efforts, we cannot find a way out towards negotiations in this august body. It makes me wonder how I should interpret that. Does it mean that the Conference has still not grown up? Or does it mean that the Conference is ready for retirement? I believe neither of the above is true. We know well, as we have witnessed in the past, that the Conference, including its predecessors, is a very mature body festooned with great achievements. Nevertheless, we cannot live in the past. We must look to the future — not to the future of the Conference itself, but to a future framed by the numerous calls being made by the United Nations, the international community and the people. The Conference is capable and should shape the future, hear the wishes of our people and fulfil their expectations. We must revive its potential. I believe that we should still invest in this machinery and not think about its retirement. We should redouble our efforts to create conditions for the Conference to start substantive work and advance negotiations on global disarmament and security instruments. It is worth doing that. It is for the benefit of all.

I wish to thank each of you — the Ambassadors and delegates of fellow member States — for your excellent cooperation. It was a great honour and pleasure to cooperate with you on the issues of our common interest. I will be leaving Geneva in the firm belief that our dedication and willingness will bring back the glimmer of hope I enjoyed before I came here, which will shed instant light on the Conference.

In conclusion, let me thank again the secretariat, led by Mr. Michael Møller and assisted by Mr. Marco Kalbusch, as well as the conference services staff, the interpreters

and many others working behind the scenes. I wish you success in all your endeavours. I will now ask if anyone wishes to take the floor.

Excellencies, dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, as this week is also the last week of the month of Ramadan, I wish all our colleagues who observe Ramadan “*Eid mubarak!*” for those celebrating Eid al-Fitr next Monday.

This concludes our business for today. The next plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament will be held on 27 June 2017, at 10 a.m., under the presidency of South Africa. Please remember that the working group on the way ahead will meet this afternoon at 3 p.m. in the Council Chamber.

*The meeting rose at 10.55 a.m.*