

Conference on Disarmament

English

Final record of the one thousand four hundred and fortieth plenary meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 13 February 2018, at 3.15 p.m.

President: Mr. Ravinatha Aryasinha(Sri Lanka)

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The President: I call to order the 1440th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. Distinguished colleagues, at the outset I wish to return to the list of requests from States which are not members of the Conference and wish to participate in our work during the 2018 session. At the last plenary meeting, the secretariat circulated document CD/WP.604/Add.3 containing the request for participation by one non-member State. A decision on this was deferred upon the request of one delegation. May I take it that the Conference decides to invite this non-member State to participate in our work in accordance with its rules of procedure? I see no objection.

It was so decided.

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

The meeting was briefly suspended.

The President: Distinguished colleagues, last week I shared with you my observations on an evolving programme of work. Those observations were based on your thoughts and ideas as I had captured them in the Conference during formal and informal meetings and during bilateral consultations. Following my observations last week, I have listened carefully to your comments in plenary session. I have also conducted further bilateral consultations and continued to consult with the six Presidents of this session. On the basis of these consultations and the comments received, I have developed a draft decision, contained in document CD/WP.605, that was circulated yesterday to all delegations by the secretariat. The draft decision is the result of a delicate balancing between diverging and sometimes opposing views on the modalities for taking our work forward. This is not a proposal that the President has come up with and presented to the Conference. As I explained last week, Sri Lanka, as the current President of the session, has taken this course of action to present a draft decision in response to the will of the Conference, as expressed by delegations over the last three weeks; the decision is therefore one that has evolved through this Conference.

We are conscious that this decision is not the end of our collective efforts; rather, it is the beginning of a path towards building convergence for a programme of work with a negotiating mandate. Therefore, if the Conference agrees on the draft decision and the subsidiary bodies continue with substantive work, focused consideration should also be given to working on a programme of work. Having consulted with the other Presidents of the session a short while ago, I am glad to say that there is general support from them as regards the direction taken in the text. I submit this draft decision for your consideration and I am looking forward to hearing your views. It is my intention to table this for approval, once we have had sufficient time to reflect on the proposals, to consult and to reconcile any difficulties that may arise.

With that, let me turn to our list of speakers. Today I have on my list the Ambassador of Argentina, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Cima (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): First, I would like to convey my condolences and sympathy to the Government of Russia and to the families of the victims following the air accident that occurred at the weekend.

Mr. President, during these weeks, many delegations have, in keeping with the wishes of the Secretary-General, highlighted the need to examine new approaches and constructive ideas that will allow us to adopt a programme of work. At the same time, a large majority of States have articulated the need for the Conference on Disarmament to return to dialogue not only because of the difficulties presented by the current international context, but because of the need to legitimize our mandate in the eyes of other forums that are addressing issues specific to the Conference.

The experience of the working group on the way ahead left us, on the one hand, with the impression that the substantive discussion was very constructive, and on the other, with the feeling that more time was needed for discussion. In that context, and taking into account the Conference's failure over the past two decades, Argentina considers that your proposal is an excellent alternative that can lead us back to dialogue.

Likewise, we consider that now is an opportune moment to highlight two issues with a view to improving our working methods. Firstly, substantive dialogue is fundamental to the Conference and needs to be clearly reflected in the rules of procedure. Secondly, striving for the programme of work to contain a mandate that would address the agenda items with the same degree of ambition is not realistic and, in short, hinders any kind of progress towards common goals on any of the agenda items.

In that sense, we agree with the approach set forth in the proposal to establish an initial substantive discussion with a broad scope. We consider that the substantive dialogue should not necessarily conform to a mandate of negotiating a legally binding instrument, since the main agenda items have different degrees of maturity and levels of consensus. We should guide the future work of the subsidiary bodies based on that premise.

Mr. President, we are convinced that the continuing substantive discussions that you propose will nourish the Conference and allow it to reclaim its mandate. We also believe that it would be constructive for the Conference to adopt a sustainable approach to the substantive work it undertakes in the future, so that every year we find ourselves in a better position than the year before, and not in a stalemate. We agree with the idea put forward by the presidency concerning the rollover of work from one session to the next.

Accordingly, we believe that, with the adoption of a sustainable approach, the programme of work would not necessarily be discussed at the beginning of each session. Having the same programme of work for future sessions would facilitate the continuity of substantive discussions on the basis that dialogue is a priority for finding the consensuses that will enable us to move forward towards more realistic and gradually more ambitious mandates, in line with the international security context.

We also believe that, in adopting this approach, we should begin with the premise that every year, technical discussions and areas of consensus should in principle be at a better level than the previous year.

Lastly, Mr. President, we think it helpful that the proposal should include the possibility of the subsidiary bodies convening formal and informal meetings. However, we must work to ensure that informal meetings are an exception rather than the rule for the subsidiary bodies.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Argentina. Are there any other delegations wishing to take the floor? I see the delegation of Hungary.

Ms. Kroll (Hungary): Mr. President, at the very beginning of our working session, in one of the informal meetings, I was advocating the adoption of a purely procedural document in order to start substantive work as soon as possible. The President's proposal which is now on the table differs from this approach in two senses: one of them is that it is more comprehensive and has a multi-annual nature.

We would like to thank you for this proposal, which we find acceptable. In our view, there are three important conditions to be fulfilled. One of them is that we have to take into account the work done in the past, without repeating it, as we did last year. We consider that your proposal meets this condition. The second condition is that we have to make progress. We believe that reaching an understanding on the areas of commonalities, deepening discussion and progressively broadening areas of agreement would fulfil this condition. The third condition is that the document should not prejudice the final outcome and this is also tackled by your proposal. So, in summary, we would like to thank you very much for this proposal. We are very happy to accept it and we hope that it will attract general agreement.

The President: I thank the delegation of Hungary for its statement. Next on my list is the Ambassador of Italy.

Mr. Incarnato (Italy): Mr. President, at the outset, let me commend you for all your efforts to find a way forward for the Conference on Disarmament, and thank you for the draft decision you circulated yesterday. We believe that this document contains a reasonable proposal. It captures the points of convergence among the various suggestions and ideas presented by delegations, including mine, during the discussions which took place under your guidance over the previous weeks.

Mr. President, we are convinced that we need a certain degree of ambition to overcome the current deadlock in the Conference; but, at the same time, we are aware that we should be realistic. A programme of work with one or more negotiating mandates would be highly desirable and by far the best option for us. However, if consensus cannot be reached on this option, we will have to explore other possible alternatives. A programme of work can rightly include discussions on all items on the Conference on Disarmament agenda, as well as on any issue related to disarmament and non-proliferation. These discussions should not be a simple repetition of well-known positions. On the contrary, they should set the stage for serious engagement by all Conference on Disarmament member States aimed at enhancing mutual understanding and favouring the emergence of common ground.

In the light of the above, we believe that the establishment of subsidiary bodies to deal with different items on the agenda, as envisaged by your proposal, is a viable step forward. We also see value in your phased approach, based on the idea that the goal of negotiations can be reached through subsequent stages of substantive work. We welcome the provision contained in the draft decision that the subsidiary bodies can meet formally. We believe that a proper mix of formal and informal meetings will allow us to keep a record of the work of the subsidiary bodies, while leaving enough room for delegations to engage in more frank and free exchanges. We also value the idea that, once adopted, this decision could be reconfirmed as appropriate at the beginning of the subsequent annual sessions of the Conference, providing a basis for continuity should we deem this useful.

In our view, these elements would enhance the value of our debate and its impact in paving the way for consensus on the start of negotiations. To conclude, Mr. President, we support your proposal and we look forward to its endorsement by the Conference.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Italy and I now give the floor to the delegation of China.

Mr. Ji Haojun (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Thank you, Mr. President. First, the Chinese delegation would like to express our sincere appreciation for the positive efforts you have made in preparing this draft decision. You have been engaging in broad consultations with all sides for some time now, so I can understand that the current text of the draft decision was not arrived at easily. Although China is not completely satisfied with the text, we are willing to offer our positive support. Because Beijing is currently in holiday mode, I'm afraid that my colleagues there have not yet had time to issue instructions to us here. However, they have two points they wish to make at the outset: the first was that the five subsidiary bodies we will be setting up should be treated in an equal and balanced manner. Secondly, regarding the issue of the participation of representatives of civil society and non-governmental organizations, we are of the view that expanding the Conference on Disarmament to allow more or even all Member States of the United Nations to participate in the work of the Conference, and thereby make the Conference a more democratic, universal and inclusive mechanism, is a far more important and urgent priority for us than allowing the representatives of non-governmental organizations to take part in our work. Of course we do not oppose inviting relevant experts and representatives of non-governmental organizations to do so, but we must strictly observe our rules of procedure. It is my understanding that the participation of any such experts or representatives of non-governmental organizations must be fully agreed upon by consensus among us. Moreover, the applications must be reviewed and agreed upon one by one, case by case, person by person; organizations that have displayed a very arrogant attitude to our work in the Conference in the past should not be included among those whom we invite. On that understanding, my delegation can accept or agree with this draft decision as it stands.

The President: I thank the delegation of China for its statement and I now give the floor to the delegation of Norway.

Ms. Evenesen (Norway): Mr. President, we would like to thank you for the draft decision which you circulated yesterday. Norway has on a number of occasions emphasized the need for all Conference on Disarmament member States to show sufficient flexibility to allow the Conference to get back to work. No one can claim that the current proposal is ideal, but it will allow us to work in a far more substantive and structured manner than we have for many years. It is obvious that we need more deliberations on the core issues if we are ever going to be able to commence negotiations. We believe that the current proposal

will let us start such a process and hopefully enable us to progressively broaden the areas of agreement.

The President: I thank the delegation of Norway and I now give the floor to the delegation of Pakistan.

Mr. Jadoon (Pakistan): Mr. President, we thank you very much for circulating the draft decision, the fruit of the very extensive consultations that you have undertaken, in this form. We agree with your opening remarks that it is a balanced reflection of all the viewpoints and concerns expressed here this year. It does not meet all our priorities, but that is the whole point of this proposal: to avoid the polemics and come to a realistic, practical and, most importantly, pragmatic proposal, which provides a framework for substantive discussions, without any preconditions concerning all agenda items on an equal footing.

We are particularly pleased that a dedicated subsidiary body will be established to consider new and emerging contemporary issues. It is also important, as noted in the draft decision, that all of these subsidiary bodies should have an equal allocation of time. It is our understanding that, as per the rules of procedure of the Conference and established practice, we can only take this decision for the present session of the Conference, without any automatic rollover to next year or subsequent sessions. If there is the will and support for re-establishing such subsidiary bodies next year, we would need a fresh decision by the Conference on Disarmament.

Mr. President, we are ready to support your proposal as it currently stands and go along with the consensus on its adoption.

The President: I thank the delegation of Pakistan for its statement and I now give the floor to the delegation of Indonesia.

Mr. Sidharta (Indonesia): Mr. President, allow me at the outset to commend you for your efforts towards the establishment of a programme of work for the Conference. The Indonesian delegation welcomes and supports the President's draft decision contained in document CD/WP.605, as circulated by the secretariat yesterday.

Indonesia believes that the establishment of subsidiary bodies is one viable solution in accordance with the rules of procedure that will enable us to focus and better structure our efforts and to maintain a positive momentum in the Conference on Disarmament. At this juncture, Indonesia strongly believes that any disagreement with the establishment of subsidiary bodies as a part of the Conference's programme of work is intended to prolong the impasse in this body. Nevertheless, my delegation would like to emphasize that future deliberations under these subsidiary bodies should not distract, undermine or even slowly make obsolete our responsibility to resume negotiations on the core issues of the Conference.

In the same vein, my delegation would like to make some additional suggestions on the future work of the subsidiary bodies: firstly, the deliberations within the subsidiary bodies should be structured to avoid them becoming distracted by political statements, a situation that repeatedly occurs here. Secondly, the result of the deliberations within the subsidiary bodies should be recorded and reflected in the annual report of the Conference on Disarmament. These records will be invaluable for our future reference as well as for ensuring the transparency of our work in the Conference. Thirdly, although all core issues in the Conference are complex and interconnected, their consideration has reached different levels of maturity. In this regard, the acknowledged linkage between issues shall not be a barrier for substantive progress on a particular issue. On the other hand, their interconnectedness means that all items on the Conference agenda have to be given equal attention. Finally, Indonesia believes that the subsidiary bodies should be established and start their work in 2018. To that end, Mr. President, you can count on the Indonesian delegation's continuous support and commitment.

The President: I thank the delegate of Indonesia for his statement. I now give the floor to the delegation of Bulgaria.

Ms. Davidova (Bulgaria): Mr. President, let me first express my appreciation for your genuine efforts to truly advance work in the Conference on Disarmament. We would prefer the Conference to be able to start negotiations according to its mandate. Concerning the lack of consensus on the programme of work, we share the view that we need to adopt a

realistic and pragmatic approach that would allow us to further broaden the areas of commonalities.

As you said the last time, Mr. President, there are various proposals for a programme of work, and converging elements exist among them that need to be further developed and looked into in a detailed manner in order to prepare the ground for future negotiations. We therefore find the proposal that you have put on the table today, a proposal that suggests phased substantive work to be done in subsidiary bodies, as a good and constructive one that would facilitate efforts towards a programme of work, and we can support it.

Finally, we noted the reference made in operative paragraph 3 of the draft decision to informal and formal discussions. Like the delegation of Italy, we hope very much that an appropriate balance will be found to allow for a free exchange of views and to keep formal track of deliberations in this body.

The President: I thank the delegation of Bulgaria for its statement and I give the floor to the delegation of Chile.

Mr. Lagos (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, we thank you for submitting this draft decision. My delegation regards the proposed document as a balanced text that adequately reflects the discussions of these first weeks. Nevertheless, we certainly share the desire of the vast majority of the members of this body to adopt a programme of work with a negotiating mandate as swiftly as possible.

We understand that the conditions for this aspiration to become a reality unfortunately do not exist. For that reason, we support your draft decision on the understanding that the proposed steps do not replace the need to adopt the programme of work, but that they constitute gradual progress, and also on the understanding that the decision is not intended to replicate exercises carried out in previous years – including the work of the working group on the way ahead – but rather seeks to build on those efforts through a gradual, pragmatic and constructive approach that may allow us to achieve the desired consensus so that the commencement of urgent negotiations is not an unattainable ideal.

The draft decision is certainly not perfect. Neither my delegation nor yours, Mr. President, nor any other member of this body considers it to be so; however, it brings together the main proposals that in recent weeks have been put forward in these interesting discussions. In that regard, we would especially like to highlight the proposal to facilitate the participation of experts and representatives from civil society, who we think may make worthwhile contributions to the technical discussions of the subsidiary bodies.

Mr. President, we reiterate our recognition and appreciation of your valuable work, which has enabled the submission of the proposal that we are adopting today, and we reaffirm our commitment to work towards achieving our common goals.

The President: I thank the delegation of Chile for its statement and I now give the floor to the delegation of Australia.

Ms. Wood (Australia): Mr. President, thank you for the draft decision and for all of the work that you have been doing to bring us to this point. We support the draft decision; it represents a genuine, practical step towards focussing on substance. It recognizes the reality that we need to progressively advance with our work in fulfilment of our mandate. We welcome the intention to deepen technical discussions, including through the participation of relevant experts, in accordance with the rules of procedure.

We consider that “effective measures” includes options beyond “legal instruments”, although legal instruments are specifically included as well. We welcome the innovation in operative paragraph 5, which could allow us to roll over the decision at the beginning of each year, as appropriate. In our view, this would not detract in any way from the role of the presidency as outlined in rule 4 of the rules of procedure, but would allow us to use the limited time that we have to focus on substance.

Mr. President, we are encouraged by the views we have listened to in this room during your presidency. This decision ties those threads together, leverages the desire for productive work and dialogue and recognizes the operating constraints at this time. I particularly liked the comment by the representative of Argentina about how each year we should aim to be in a slightly better position than we were the year before. I think that is

important. I hope this is something that we can all work with, in the interests of strengthening international peace and security.

The President: I thank the delegation of Australia for its statement and I now give the floor to the delegation of South Africa.

Mr. Mahomed (South Africa): Mr. President, I would first like to thank you for your efforts to advance the work of the Conference and for proposing this draft decision. As this is the first part of the 2018 session, South Africa considers that it would have been preferable for the President to table a draft programme of work that would have included negotiations on one or more items of the Conference agenda. Following discussions on your compilation document over the last two weeks, we were hopeful that a programme of work could have been proposed, possibly building on document CD/1864, which was discussed in a positive light by many delegations. Nevertheless, in the absence of a proposal or a consensus on a programme of work that would allow for the resumption of substantive work – that is, negotiations on a legally binding instrument – the creation of subsidiary bodies to further discuss the items on the agenda may well be the only proposal that stands a chance of being adopted. In the view of South Africa, however, repeated such activities in the past have not brought the Conference closer to a programme of work: a decision such as this should have been a fallback option for later on in the session, rather than the first option.

With regard to the content of the draft decision, it is noted that some elements give the notion of some rollover of the work of the subsidiary bodies into the next session of the Conference. The reference to the subsidiary bodies being chaired by coordinators appointed annually and the draft decision being reconfirmed at the beginning of subsequent annual sessions of the Conference on Disarmament is probably meant to reassure us that it is a sustainable proposal. However, this is likely to cause more problems than it will solve. These elements should be removed, as the rules of procedure of the Conference make it clear that the Conference adopts its agenda and programme of work for the current session.

As I said, a draft programme of work would have been the first preference for South Africa; however, since we are taking this decision, it is proposed that we leave the door open for the next President to propose a programme of work. Therefore, concerning the inclusion of a provision similar to that in the document containing the decision on a working group on the way ahead adopted last year and in other United Nations resolutions dealing with disarmament, we could include wording along the lines of “should the Conference on Disarmament agree upon a programme of work with a negotiating mandate, all activities mandated by the present decision shall conclude”.

We thank the delegations that have shared their initial thoughts with us here today and we trust that this will lead to an optimal decision by the Conference.

The President: I thank the delegation of South Africa for its statement and I now give the floor to the delegation of Mexico.

Ms. Ramírez Valenzuela (Mexico): Mr. President, at the outset, please allow me to thank you for all your efforts made during your presidency, the intense consultations that you have held and the draft decision that you asked to have distributed yesterday afternoon. My delegation sent the draft decision to our capital and at this moment we have only some preliminary, general comments to present. In general terms, let me reiterate that the expectation of Mexico is that the President of the Conference, particularly the first one of the session, should exert every effort to present a programme of work with a negotiating mandate; we believe that is his or her responsibility under rule 28 of the rules of procedure. Also, we do not consider that there is a possible substitute for negotiations in the framework of the Conference’s work, nor that the presidency should be aiming for second best.

Mexico believes that deliberations on disarmament affairs are useful, but that there are other forums in the disarmament machinery for that purpose. Let us recall that the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament expressed an urgent need for the existing disarmament machinery to be revitalized and forums to be appropriately constituted for disarmament deliberations and negotiations with a more representative character. It also stated that, for maximum effectiveness, two kinds of bodies – deliberative and negotiating – are required in the field of disarmament and that all Member States

should be represented on the former whereas, for the sake of convenience, the latter should have a relatively small membership.

Also according to the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, the General Assembly “has been and should remain the main deliberative organ of the United Nations in the field of disarmament”. “The Disarmament Commission shall be a deliberative body, a subsidiary organ of the General Assembly, the function of which shall be to consider and make recommendations on various problems in the field of disarmament and to follow up the relevant decisions and recommendations of the special session devoted to disarmament.” That is why, if the Conference on Disarmament, as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum established by the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, is not negotiating, it is failing to fulfil its mandate and, if it is focusing merely on deliberations, it is indeed duplicating the functions of other forums in the machinery.

As the former Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, reminded us in his message on 20 January 2015, the effectiveness of the Conference will ultimately be judged on a single criterion – its ability to conclude disarmament treaties. Our position in principle is well known and we are sure that nobody in this room will be surprised to hear that, after more than 20 years since the conclusion of the last instrument negotiated and adopted in this forum, the establishment of another deliberative exercise which seeks to understand and discuss well-known national positions in a global context that desperately needs progress in disarmament falls below the expectations of my delegation.

Mr. President, my delegation understands that you are trying to explore ways to get the Conference to return to substantive work and we are grateful for that. However, in our opinion, the current proposal is not ambitious enough to fulfil the Conference’s mandate and to allow progress to be achieved in the disarmament agenda. Also, we believe that the draft decision should clarify that it is not a substitute for the programme of work that the President should present for the consideration of the membership and that, if a programme of work is adopted, the subsidiary bodies will conclude their work in order for the programme of work to be implemented. Although we are convinced that the way to go is to adopt a programme of work which will allow us to negotiate new multilateral instruments that will contribute to the disarmament regime, my delegation, in a constructive effort, is currently waiting for instructions from its capital to present specific proposals relating to the draft decision contained in document CD/WP.605 which could help to address our concerns. We will present these proposals as soon as we receive them.

The President: I thank the delegation of Mexico for its statement and look forward to receiving its specific proposals. Let me now give the floor to the delegation of Turkey, followed by the Ambassador of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Ağacikoğlu (Turkey): Mr. President, we would like to join others and commend the efforts that you have made throughout your presidency. We believe that the draft decision that you have recently tabled reflects the discussions we have heard since the beginning of the 2018 session of the Conference and most of the expectations of the delegations. We are on the right track to finding a common understanding towards our common objective – to commence the substantive work of the Conference.

In this vein, I would like to highlight some of the strong sides of the draft decision once again. The decision envisages the establishment of five subsidiary bodies, each chaired by a coordinator. The allocation for the subsidiary bodies will be even. There will be a possibility to consider emerging and other issues relevant to the Conference, such as developments in science and technology. The Conference will try to find areas of commonalities, deepen and broaden the discussions and consider measures, including possible legal instruments. With these efforts, we will have the chance to take a further step forward on the basis of what we achieved last year with the working group on the way ahead.

Having said that, we would like to propose an amendment to operative paragraph 1, which reads “agenda items 5 (five), 6 (six) and 7 (seven), which could also consider emerging and other issues relevant to the substantive work of the Conference”.

The President: I thank the delegation of Turkey for its statement and I have taken note of the proposal for an amendment to operative paragraph 1. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Rowland (United Kingdom): Mr. President, I too thank you for all your efforts on the draft decision we have before us. We have an open mind about this approach and at this stage we have one small amendment that we would like to propose. The amendment is to the final sentence of operative paragraph 3. We would like it to read: "In accordance with paragraph 24 of the rules of procedure, the subsidiary bodies may meet formally as well as informally, as required." We are proposing this amendment in order to follow the rules of procedure more closely. Rule 24 explains that a subsidiary body can decide if it will meet formally or not, but it is the default position that it will meet informally. By having "shall meet formally", we imply that there must be some formal meetings, which we believe contradicts rule 24.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of the United Kingdom and now give the floor to the delegation of Switzerland.

Mr. Masméjean (Switzerland): Mr. President, we would first like to express our appreciation for the manner in which you have discharged your mandate and in particular for your efforts aimed at enabling the Conference on Disarmament to move forward. The discussions at this start of the 2018 session have been particularly constructive. Many proposals have been put forward for overcoming the stalemate that has long held the Conference back. We believe it is particularly important to capitalize on these developments and to push for the positive momentum needed to put the Conference back on track.

In this context, we welcome the draft decision that you have circulated. The operational part of the draft decision encapsulates the core elements of our debates and provides a good overview and structure for the proposals and ideas put forward; it gives them a practical form. You have already held many consultations, including some with the six Presidents of the session, on the ideas contained in it. For our part, we cannot but support the direction taken by the draft decision. It is both balanced and exhaustive, elements essential to any decision on the organization of the work of the Conference. This is fully reflected through the establishment of five separate subsidiary bodies covering each of the items on the agenda, and by the fact that these bodies will have an equal time slot.

The key concept of the draft decision is its progressive nature. The current conditions are not right for starting negotiations and, if we were to take that route alone, we would be unlikely to make any progress this year. If we look at the different issues on their merits, make progress in technical discussions and find ourselves at the end of the year in a position to reflect the content of these exchanges in the annual report of the Conference in order to build on developments from year to year, that would seem to us to be an eminently practical approach. This is in fact how the Conference worked until the middle of the 1990s; it allowed the groundwork to be prepared for negotiating treaties that played a critical role in global security.

At the same time, it is particularly interesting to note that the draft decision makes it possible to open up new perspectives on issues that the Conference should address, such as emerging threats to international security. It also touches upon the type of instruments that the Conference should, or could, negotiate. Politically binding instruments, such as the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, play a key role in global security. If such an option would enable the Conference to return to work and to contribute effectively to international security, there is no reason not to pursue it.

The final point that I would like to make is that the draft decision is distinct from what for many years the Conference has interpreted as a programme of work, since it does not include a negotiating mandate. The first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament stated that the Conference constituted a negotiating body. It is authorized to hold negotiations, unlike other bodies in the disarmament mechanism. While the Conference is authorized to conduct negotiations and evidently must work towards that objective because it has to do so, there is nothing requiring it to negotiate all the time, or that a programme of work should include a negotiating mandate. The Conference has

decided to adopt that approach, but it can also revise it if other options prove more conducive to progress.

Until the middle of the 1990s, the Conference operated differently. It worked on the substance; the programme of work was no more than a schedule of activities without any negotiating mandate. Decisions were taken, often in the course of the year, to adopt a negotiating mandate on a specific issue when the work had reached an appropriate stage of development and when political conditions allowed. The draft decision submitted by the President broadly suggests returning to that approach, which is perhaps more pragmatic than the one we have followed for a number of years. The draft decision, if adopted, will enable the Conference to move forward gradually on the substance and adopt a negotiating mandate on a specific matter at any time during the year.

To conclude, allow me once again to thank you for all your efforts and to underline the Swiss delegation's full support for the direction taken by the draft decision.

The President: I thank the delegation of Switzerland for its statement and I now give the floor to the Ambassador of the United States of America.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): Mr. President, let me first salute you and your team for all the efforts that you have put in to producing this draft decision. I know it has not been easy and it has taken a lot of consultations and productive work on your part, so I really want to salute you for the efforts that you have made.

Let me just make some preliminary, and by no means our final, comments on the draft decision. From the perspective of the United States, much of the language in the preamble is unnecessary and could be deleted without changing the decision. Unfortunately, the current preambular text quotes selectively from the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament and takes its language out of context. So, for the United States, the third preambular paragraph is unacceptable in its current form. Rather than selectively picking and choosing language from the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, we propose that this paragraph be deleted.

My second point refers to paragraph 1 (b) and follows on from comments made by our distinguished Chinese colleague: in the operative paragraphs of the draft decision, there are also two areas where the text appears to mischaracterize the Conference on Disarmament's rules of procedure. To avoid having the subsidiary bodies bogged down in unnecessary procedural discussions in the future, we would propose the following changes: we would frame paragraph 1 (b) as "Deepening technical discussions and progressively broadening areas of agreement, including through the participation, in accordance with the rules of procedure, of relevant experts". We think that when you look at rule 22 of the rules of procedure, it refers to experts, but not to representatives of civil society. So it is not clear to the United States delegation what the actual difference is between these two groups and why it is necessary to add that new category.

My last point is to second the proposal made by the distinguished Ambassador of the United Kingdom. We can certainly support the wording in that last part of the sentence that the subsidiary bodies "may meet formally" as well as informally, but we would add at the end the words "as agreed" as opposed to "as required". Those, then, are our preliminary remarks and we look forward to working further with you to make this a text that we think everyone can support.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of the United States for his suggestions which we could consider in the process of further working on this proposal. Are there any other delegations wishing to take the floor? I see the delegation of Egypt, followed by the delegations of Iran and the Russian Federation.

Mr. Atta (Egypt): Mr. President, allow me at the outset to express my sincere appreciation for all the strenuous efforts you have been making to resume the substantive work of the Conference. We take note of the draft decision which the secretariat has circulated. It represents an indicator of your commitment to the work of the Conference.

I would like in this connection to offer my delegation's preliminary views on the work of the Conference so far, as well as on the draft decision. Egypt considers that the utmost priority for the Conference on Disarmament, at the beginning of its annual session, is to adopt a balanced and comprehensive programme of work. The responsibilities

entrusted to the President under the rules of procedure, in particular rule 29, are beyond any doubt. We take note of the wide consultations you have conducted so far on this issue, but regret to note that the Conference is not ready to adopt a balanced and comprehensive programme of work with a negotiating mandate.

The Conference on Disarmament has on its agenda a number of issues of paramount significance for negotiations with the aim of concluding legally binding instruments. While we appreciate the view that the items on the agenda should be pursued equally and possibly simultaneously, we would like to underscore that the four core agenda items are of the utmost priority for the Conference. In this context, it is highly relevant to refer to the conclusions of the final report on the work of the informal working group established in 2015, as contained in document CD/2033, according to which the focus of the Conference should remain the core agenda items and the primary objective should remain the negotiation of legally binding instruments. The Conference should not lose focus of its primary objective.

Mr. President, while we value the proposal that you have submitted, we would like to make the following observations: the preambular paragraphs do not reflect the priority of adopting a balanced and comprehensive programme of work, nor do they reflect the responsibility of the President to submit a programme of work in accordance with rule 29 of the rules of procedure. We would also be cautious about prioritizing what is called the “progressive approach” as if it is the only relevant approach to fulfilling the mandate of the Conference in a balanced and comprehensive manner. The first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament called for concurrent or parallel measures, the ultimate objective of which should be to lead to general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control. It further stressed that effective measures relating to the cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament were urgently required. We strongly advise the inclusion of these elements in the preamble to the decision.

Mr. President, we welcome the fact that your proposal opens the door to conducting the work of the Conference in a formal manner, with the participation of civil society. This will bring richness to the discussions as well as preserve the records of any substantive progress that the Conference might reach. It will also ensure continuity in the work of the Conference, should these records be used to reach a balanced and comprehensive programme of work.

We take note as well of the reference to the consideration by the Conference of effective measures, which include possible legal instruments for negotiations. We would prefer it if this language were strengthened to reflect the fact that negotiating legally binding instruments is the primary objective of the Conference, as agreed by the consensus reached in document CD/2033. It would also be relevant to have a discussion on the fate of the subsidiary bodies established under this decision, should the Conference agree upon a programme of work with a negotiating mandate.

Mr. President, we would like to reiterate our appreciation of your efforts and we stand ready to engage with the members of the Conference on Disarmament in a constructive and interactive manner to resume the substantive work of the Conference.

The President: I thank the delegation of Egypt for its statement and proposals and suggested amendments. I now give the floor to the delegation of Iran.

Mr. Heidari (Islamic Republic of Iran): Mr. President, like other delegations, we value your hard efforts to produce something to ensure that, in this year’s session of the Conference on Disarmament, we will do substantive work. We have always been of the view that the priority for the Conference and in particular for the first presidency in accordance with the rules of procedure is to come up with a programme of work. We have already sent this draft decision in the format that you gave in your statement to our capital, but due to the holidays, we have not received any detailed comment on it. Some parts of the draft decision, and specifically the fact that it has some pros and cons, have already been touched upon by other delegations. The very important element that is missing from it is any reference to a programme of work. As you mentioned, it is to be a proposal by the six Presidents. Therefore, maybe it is not a good procedure for the way forward. For example, even last year in the course of discussions on the way ahead, the working group on the way ahead was considered as a pilot project and each President was mandated to follow up on

the issue of the programme of work. So one of the difficulties with this draft decision is that it would allow other Presidents who might feel that, because of the draft decision, we can consider that the Conference is working on substantive matters, and so they do not have to follow up on the very important element of the rules of procedure which is the programme of work.

The working group on the way ahead was considered provisional, in that the President could have come up with a programme of work with a negotiating mandate. Like other delegations, whatever I say is preliminary: my delegation is waiting for the capital to consider the draft decision. As other delegations have pointed out, there is new text in the preambular part of the decision that I could not find elsewhere. Just to give you an example, in the second preambular paragraph, you note that the Conference provides its member States with a platform to engage in negotiations, on the basis of the rule of consensus, with the objective of enhancing security. That is fine, but then you have qualified what kind of security each State might have at the lowest necessary level of armaments and military forces. What we are discussing here is disarmament, which would guarantee the world's security; so maybe there is no need to qualify this.

I hesitate to comment further on the other operative paragraphs, but further discussions are needed for the further improvement of this draft decision. Having said that, Mr. President, I should conclude that I recommend that we should not be hasty in adopting this draft decision and should let delegations continue their consideration, having carefully listened to all the comments related to it that have been made today.

The President: I thank the delegate of Iran for his statement and suggestions. I can assure him that we will not be acting in haste in trying to adopt this draft decision. We have a whole week to go. Let me now give the floor to the delegation of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Davydov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. President, on behalf of the Russian delegation, I would first of all like to express our gratitude to you and your colleagues at the Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka for your energetic and sustained efforts to restore the capacity of the Conference on Disarmament.

In this regard, the ideas set out in your draft seem useful and timely, giving the participants in the Conference every opportunity to determine their position regarding the best ways of moving forward. It is important that you have defined the mandate of the Conference's subsidiary bodies on the basis of its agenda, namely the consensus document CD/2116, and not on the clearly problematic core issues.

Of course, for us, as for other delegations, the prompt adoption of the Conference's programme of work is a key priority. The Russian proposals on the matter are well known, and we will not insist on them. The Russian delegation adopts a constructive approach and is prepared to support your draft, if a consensus emerges around it.

The President: I thank the delegation of the Russian Federation and I now give the floor to the delegation of China.

Mr. Ji Haojun (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Mr. President, I understand that your draft decision that we are currently addressing has been broadly discussed by all sides, but I am quite astonished that so many delegations are suggesting so many revisions today, suggestions that I feel they could well have made much earlier. I have the impression that they are not particularly supportive of your efforts. Some of them seem to want to drag things out excessively, thereby delaying our current discussions. Considering that your term as President is already almost at an end, and furthermore that our Chinese Lunar New Year will arrive this coming Thursday, we wish that all parties proposing revisions to the draft decision would exercise some restraint. If you want to talk about revising it, our delegation has many revisions of its own to propose, including in the preamble; for example, in the paragraph starting with "*Cognizant* of the complex nature of the issues under its purview, the wide range of perspectives thereon, including on the levels of maturity of their consideration," we would like to have the last phrase, "including on the levels of maturity of their consideration", deleted entirely. But this is simply an example; I'm not actually making the proposal as such. I just wish that every delegation would show more respect for the President's efforts, and for our imminent Chinese Lunar New Year. Thank you.

The President: I thank the Chinese delegation for its statement and I have noted the suggestions made. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Brazil.

Mr. De Aguiar Patriota (Brazil): Mr. President, I would also like to once again thank you for your far-reaching efforts to move forward with this draft decision, which I think captures at least a large number of the comments made since the Conference on Disarmament session started in 2018. If we achieve an agreement on this, I think that would represent quite an important step forward in terms of what the Conference on Disarmament has been doing for the last 20 years.

No agreement on this would bring us back to the absence of any agreement and to a lack of structure and of a pathway towards substantive work and agreement. So, if this is a possible step forward, we should take this step. You have been very open-ended and have gone quite far with your consultations, you have clearly made an effort to accommodate the proposals brought to your attention from many different corners of this room. I am happy to see that most of the reactions to the draft decision have been positive and, once again, I would like to reiterate that my delegation is fully supportive of this course of action and of the draft text.

Having said that, some suggestions have been made, and my delegation would have the latitude to accommodate some proposals, but would rather not have yet another round of negotiations. We would rather maintain the same course of action and leave it to you to sort out what you believe would be a balanced approach towards accommodating the different comments made during today's session. In fact, some of the many amendments are not compatible with each other. Some might perhaps unbalance the text and lead us backward, not forward. However, since you have been diligently holding these consultations and you know the different takes that different countries have on the text, I would propose that we continue to leave it in your hands for the time that remains of your presidency, and allow you to make a judgment as to the amendments that might be acceptable, without hurting the prospect of agreement on a draft text such as the one you have proposed.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Brazil for his statement and I have taken note of his suggestion. I now give the floor to the delegation of Morocco.

Mr. Boutadghart (Morocco) (*spoke in Arabic*): Mr. President, as this is the first time that I have taken the floor under your presidency, I would like to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. I am pleased that Sri Lanka, a member of the Group of 21, is presiding over our work and that the Conference will be led by an Ambassador with extensive experience and with the diplomatic acumen and flexibility required to perform this complex task. I would also like to express our full support for your efforts and to commend the transparent and inclusive manner in which you have conducted the proceedings, as well as your endeavours to build a consensus conducive to a comprehensive and balanced programme of work.

In this context, the Kingdom of Morocco welcomes the draft decision submitted by the presidency, which expresses determination to move forward and bring the Conference back on track. The importance of this draft lies in its timing and content, as it is the outcome of weeks of intense formal and informal discussions and consultations, and therefore reflects the upper limit that can be proposed as a balanced perspective, taking into account each party's priorities and constraints. The proposal comes at a time when the Sri Lankan presidency of the Conference on Disarmament is coming to an end, which raises the need for more time to complete this serious and arduous work. The Indian proposal to extend the term of office from four to eight weeks is thus entirely valid and credible. However, the goal of restoring the vitality of the Conference and its role in promoting peace and security in the world calls for a comprehensive review of the Conference's operating procedures with a view to safeguarding and maintaining the principle of unanimous decision-making, which guarantees the rights of all members. Perhaps the first step should be to seriously consider expanding the membership of the Conference on Disarmament and appointing a special coordinator for the purpose, since expansion of the membership would help to revitalize the negotiating platform by generating new ideas and enhancing transparency and democracy.

Mr. President, the participatory approach adopted by the current presidency in dealing with member States and with future presidencies, and the constructive and objective discussions that have taken place, suggest that we are in the process of undertaking gradual and cumulative work that will hopefully involve all member States and those mandated to preside over our work, particularly in the coming weeks and months. The discussions have

also produced new ideas and constructive proposals which, alongside the approach adopted during the Sri Lankan presidency of the Conference and the proposal for the development of five subsidiary bodies, can be built upon with the aim of gradually delving deeper into the basic and critical components of the agenda adopted at the first meeting of this session. The proposals have the potential to constitute acceptable and constructive elements for reaching agreement on a comprehensive and balanced programme of work capable of meeting the aspirations of all member States, in line with the rules of procedure, and of revitalizing the Conference on Disarmament as the single multilateral negotiating platform on disarmament.

I wish to reaffirm, in conclusion, that Morocco is willing to support any compromise formula, both on this proposal and on any programme of work, a goal which, in our view, remains a top priority. Morocco is willing to cooperate and remains open to the proposals made by more than one delegation in recent weeks.

The President: I thank the delegation of Morocco for its statement and I now invite the Ambassador of the Netherlands to take the floor.

Mr. Gabriëlse (Netherlands): Mr. President, as I mentioned last week, my delegation is very appreciative of all your efforts in moving us forward. You have been engaged in intense consultations and many delegations have made valuable and constructive suggestions based on your earlier reflections. My delegation was and is ready to be part of consultations with the President, if needed.

The decision that you have circulated today captures different elements which have been raised. This can bring us further, taking into account the diverging positions. For my delegation this might not be the optimal solution, but in the current difficult situation it seems to be the most realistic approach. It is balanced, realistic and will carry our work forward. We can agree with the proposal contained in the draft decision to establish subsidiary bodies to discuss the different agenda items. I would recommend that we give it a fair try, building on the constructive discussions we had last year in the working group on the way ahead. Let us not focus too much on process and technicalities, but concentrate on delivering on substance. The decision is solid and a first step towards that end, and it is encouraging that so many voices have been supportive of your proposal today; we believe it deserves a fair chance to succeed.

I agree with Brazil that we should leave it to the President to accommodate the different proposals and the different suggestions being made. However, if we all believe that this is a balanced approach, we should also exercise some restraint and avoid making too many proposals and suggestions for changes to the text; changing one part would unbalance the rest. So I would urge all of us to have some restraint in order to give it a fair chance and at least to allow us to work further. I agree with you, Mr. President, that we still have the whole week in front of us. So let us use it productively and let us try to find a solution this week.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of the Netherlands and I now give the floor to the Ambassador of France.

Ms. Guitton (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to join everyone before me in commending your tireless efforts to consult and move towards a proposal that can garner consensus. The text you have submitted has, from the point of view of the French delegation, a number of significant merits. Firstly, it allows us to resume the substantive discussions that we would have liked to continue from last year with the start of the working group on the way ahead. Secondly, as I have already noted, it creates continuity in our substantive work and discussions, which is essential to achieving further progress. Lastly, it fosters real inclusiveness and openness by mobilizing experts alongside the member States of the Conference on Disarmament.

It is true that we could seek certain improvements to the draft decision. Bringing it more into line with the rules of procedure, as proposed by the United Kingdom, makes sense. The aim is also, primarily, to retain the possibility of gaining consensus around a proposal that is intended simply to allow the Conference to carry out its work and to contribute to the technical discussions that are essential to establishing a programme of work at the appropriate time. For all these reasons, I would like to offer the support of the French delegation for the draft decision that you have put before us.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of France for her statement. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Spain.

Mr. Herraíz España (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you, Mr. President. Having already had the opportunity last week to convey our thanks for your efforts, we must now also express our gratitude at seeing this draft, which we believe provides a constructive, reasonable and realistic solution that will allow us, during this session, to engage in substantive discussions that may lead us to a possible programme of work.

I would just like to remind the Conference on Disarmament that its true vocation must be to negotiate treaties: that is its mission, its vocation and the mandate that it has received. Therefore, I believe that, when it comes to implementing this draft decision, the intention that should undoubtedly prevail is not that technical discussions should result in a programme of work this year – since such a process would most likely be extremely difficult and may lead us to conclude that we have failed – but rather that all the technical discussions that we hold should be geared towards that direction: towards the careful achievement of common ground from which we can actually secure the programme of work with a negotiating mandate that is our ultimate obligation.

With regard to the amendments that have been presented here in this room today, as the Ambassador of the Netherlands rightly said, we still have the whole of this week to carry them forward. Moreover, I believe that, in becoming accustomed to proposing, negotiating and deciding amendments, this Conference will be usefully practising and gaining knowledge of what it means to negotiate and to reach consensus, something which I believe we can do this week, in keeping with our vocation.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Spain for his statement. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Sweden.

Ms. Bard (Sweden): Mr. President, my delegation would like to thank you for your efforts to bring the Conference on Disarmament back to work again. We, like so many voices heard today, believe that the draft decision you have circulated is a solid foundation for our further work. I say that in the knowledge that next week I will be sitting in the President's chair. I would be very happy to continue the work you have initiated. Sweden is in general agreement with the draft decision and is able to support it.

As the next State to hold the presidency of the Conference, we are very much in a listening mode. We note the arguments and suggestions made by delegations and we will do our utmost to continue the efforts towards a successful continuation of the results achieved during your presidency.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Sweden for her statement and her assurances and I now give the floor to the delegation of Germany.

Mr. Pilz (Germany): Mr. President, my delegation would also like to express its gratitude for your tireless efforts to take forward our work here at the Conference on Disarmament.

Having listened carefully to the statements made here, I am reassured in my conviction that the draft proposal that you put forward is indeed the lowest common denominator that we have in this Conference and constitutes a viable road forward. It contains some key elements that distinguish our work from previous sessions – continuity, focus, flexibility and progress on technical substance. By engaging on substantive discussions on these elements, I think we will move closer to our final objective, which is negotiations on the core agenda items, but we will also safeguard the integrity of this esteemed body. In addition, I think that we will make a positive contribution to improving trust and cooperation at the global level. So I think that we have a chance to move forward to bring this Conference back to work. Let us use it and let us adopt the decision which is on the table.

The President: I thank the delegation of Germany. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of India.

Mr. Gill (India): Mr. President, I want to join other colleagues in thanking you for your leadership. You have made us think, you have made us speak and you have made us work. Thank you for circulating a draft decision for our consideration. You have very ably captured the different proposals that were made on the points of commonality and, in my

view, you have not captured the lowest common denominator; in fact, you have looked for the maximum stretch in every possible direction. That is why we have heard so many substantive comments today in continuation of our discussion at the last plenary.

There is not much I can add by way of substance to what has been said so eloquently by other colleagues – those from Argentina, Australia and Switzerland in particular. I like the way our Swiss colleague described the debate about what a programme of work is, what it is that we are deciding and what it is that we are leaving out. Given the nature of this forum, I think we should not be looking at what we are leaving out, because it never leaves this room.

On some of the specific suggestions that have been made, I want to join our colleague from the Netherlands and others who have urged for caution, saying that we should curb our urge to tinker with parts of the text beyond what is absolutely essential. We could, for example, consider the suggestion made by our Turkish colleague, as well as that made by the United Kingdom and supported by others, to add clarity with regard to the formal or informal nature of the subsidiary bodies. Perhaps we can also look at shortening, rather than deleting the third preambular paragraph. It is always a challenge to quote from the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, and I think our American colleagues have a point, in that we need to look for something that is manageable in the context of the work we do in the Conference.

Lastly, I want to say that we have noted that you want to move at a pace which allows everyone in this room to come on board and to seek instructions from our capitals. We look forward to working with you through the final days of the Sri Lankan presidency in order to achieve a result that your successors can build on, that can add value to what has been achieved in previous years and that allows us, in a very challenging year, to underline the importance of the Conference on Disarmament and the substantive work it is capable of conducting.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of India for his statement and for the suggestions he has made. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Japan.

Mr. Takamizawa (Japan): Mr. President, I really appreciate your hard work and also the fact that you have considered the various views of member States in the draft decision submitted; however, such sounding-out activities should not end before the plenary meetings. Additional and new views are expressed in the plenary meetings. I respect your prudence in picking up on those voices in the Conference on Disarmament. What I really want to see in the coming session is that the purpose of your draft decision is to have substantive discussions and to avoid repeating the past. It is therefore necessary to move forward and, if we can reach a consensus, the next step is to appoint a coordinator as soon as possible as well as to have a concrete schedule of activities. Furthermore, in order to create value-added results, it is necessary to create concrete discussion points and a questionnaire or food-for-thought paper of some kind to be discussed on each agenda item and shared as early as possible.

Those are the kind of things that I would like to see but, given the various proposals and amendments, I would urge you, as my colleagues have done, to exert prudence as President in coming up with something new, but which basically reflects the old views expressed in your private consultations or our regional consultations and also in the statements discussed here – maybe tonight or tomorrow morning. Basically I respect your prudence as President and also hope to see progress this week.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Japan for his statement. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Latvia to speak on behalf of the informal group of observer States.

Mr. Karklins (Latvia): Mr. President, since this is the first time that my delegation is taking the floor, let me congratulate you on the assumption of this high office in the Conference on Disarmament and express my admiration of how you conduct business.

I am taking the floor not on behalf of the informal group of observer States, but as its coordinator. I would like to thank you for your efforts to advance the substantive activities of the Conference. The observer States are following the debate closely, as its results will not only affect the members States of the Conference on Disarmament, but also all States Members of the United Nations. In the light of the above, and in accordance with

the rules of procedure of the Conference, it is our hope that all observer States that have been admitted to follow the 2018 session of the Conference will also be allowed to follow the work of the subsidiary bodies established in formal and informal settings, should your draft decision meet with the consensus of the Conference member States.

As coordinator of the informal group of observer States, Mr. President, I would appreciate it if you were either to incorporate this notion into operative paragraph 1 (b) or, as a minimum, to make it very clear at the moment of the adoption of your proposed draft decision, as required by rule 35 of the rules of procedure. Let me conclude by expressing my gratitude to the distinguished Ambassador of Morocco for suggesting the appointment of a coordinator on enlargement. I think this sounded like music to the ears of all observer delegations.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Latvia for his statement on behalf of the informal group of observer States and I have taken note of the request made. I see no other delegations requesting the floor at this moment. We have had some very interesting suggestions made. First of all, I thank all delegations for their comments addressed to the President. As I have always said, it is not only thanks to me and my team, it is also thanks to the many others who have continued, in this period, to work at this, to those who have put proposals and to all those who have refined those proposals through consultations.

I have been asked to try to bring these proposals together in a revised version. I will be doing that, as I have done all this time, in consultation with the delegations which have expressed some of these views. We hope that, when we meet tomorrow afternoon, we will have before us a refined, revised and amended version which includes what I might call the key points that were made. I agree with the view expressed that it is not just a matter of time, but that trying to overdo it will unravel the very delicate balance found in the text. However, we will endeavour to find what the real sticking points are and try to unknot them so as to try to bring about the broadest possible consensus and comfort to all delegations in this room. I believe that tomorrow's regional group meetings will also be an opportunity to refine these thoughts a little more. I look forward to meeting with you tomorrow afternoon to continue our discussion and, with that, I bring today's proceedings to a close. The meeting is adjourned.

The meeting rose at 4.55 p.m.