

Conference on Disarmament

English

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

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President: Ms. Veronika Bard(Sweden)

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The President: I call to order the 1453rd plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

Dear colleagues, as the Swedish presidency draws to a close, I would like to share some reflections with you. We started out on a high note, having just adopted the decision contained in document CD/2119. We had a very intensive three weeks working on the choice of coordinators. We managed to agree on five ambassadors willing to undertake the task of leading the work of the Conference on Disarmament in the subsidiary bodies. Our spirits were high. The successful adoption of the decision contained in document CD/2119 can to some degree be attributed to its ambiguity. The draft decision contained in document CD/WP.606, which was presented to the Conference on Tuesday by the presidency, was built on a similar ambiguity. To maintain ambiguity, there needs to be trust. Some delegations had a different interpretation of the content of the decision contained in document CD/2119 than I did. They wanted more clarity on the composition of the subsidiary bodies, and Pandora's box was opened. Mutual trust was replaced by demands from different delegations for clarity on different issues. I tried to reconcile the different views. The most recent attempt was a very good informal meeting this morning, during which a lot of the issues and positions were clarified. However, some of the issues that have paralysed the Conference for over 20 years were not solved. We came close, but not close enough. That is the negative side of the picture, but there is a positive one, too. The decision contained in document CD/2119 stands, and can be built upon by the incoming presidencies. We have an arrangement in respect of the five coordinators. There is a preliminary timetable that will guide their work once they are appointed. They are ready for the go-ahead from the Conference.

We must continue our efforts to find a solution to the deadlock. Our presidency ran out of time. However, the Conference has more time to solve the few remaining issues and get back to substantive work.

With these words, I would like to thank you all very sincerely for your cooperation and your willingness to help the presidency. It was a true experience working with you all. Lastly, I would like to wish my successor, Ambassador Sabrina Dallafior of Switzerland, all success in the role of President of the Conference.

Herewith, I would like to open the floor for comments; I already have some colleagues on the list of speakers. I start with Ambassador Matthew Rowland of the United Kingdom. You have the floor, Sir.

Mr. Rowland (United Kingdom): Thank you very much, Madam President. Let me thank you for all your efforts over the past month to make progress on the hand that you had been dealt. We are very grateful for all those efforts. I am actually taking the floor to speak on a different issue. I do not know whether others would like to comment on the proceedings first, and then I could come back to it. I will accept your guidance.

The President: Perhaps other delegations would like to comment on the past almost four weeks and our procedures ahead. Is there any delegation? Ambassador Wood, you have the floor.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): Thank you, Madam President. Let me first salute you and your team for all of your efforts to try to find a compromise. We know it has been extremely difficult, but please be assured that we all – I think I can speak for everyone in this room – appreciate the hard work and effort that you have put in to trying to find a solution and get us across the finish line. It is unfortunate that we were not able to do that. My delegation offered some ideas that we hoped would help to break the impasse, but it was not possible. And it is unfortunate. I thought there was a real opportunity to get this body back to work, but unfortunately it was for naught. But again, Madam President, thank you so much for your efforts and we look forward to continuing to work with your Government here in the Conference on other issues.

The President: I thank you so much for your kind words. The distinguished delegate of Brazil, Ambassador De Patriota, you have the floor.

Mr. De Aguiar Patriota (Brazil): Thank you very much, Madam President. Brazil would also like to put on record our appreciation of your work during the course of your

presidency of the Conference. We think, as we have stated on several occasions, that you achieved the main and most important aspect of following up the decision contained in document CD/2119, which was deciding on the names of coordinators for the subsidiary organs. I think the ambiguity was a positive aspect of the decision; it was the dimension that allowed us to move forward. It was rather unfortunate that time ran out and we were not in a position to test alternatives that might have bridged the different views, or gaps, regarding certain assurances being provided in respect of particular issues or items of the agenda to be addressed in the course of our discussions that certain countries would like to have clarity on. I have taken note that the decision still stands and that we might have another opportunity during the course of the presidency of Switzerland, with Ambassador Sabrina Dallafior, to make more progress. I think it would be a very negative outcome if the enthusiasm that we had with the decision in February were all of a sudden to give way to lack of movement and a return to paralysis, polarization and acrimonious debate. I think we should not lose our faith in the possibility of finding a way through the impasse. In the view of Brazil, we need to get back to discussion and dialogue, to structured discussions on the fundamental issues. We know that one group of countries considers that discussion of a fissile material cut-off treaty is one of the critical aspects or, in their view, a possible deliverable. We are not opposed to that view and we would be amenable to finding a way to make sure that a fissile material cut-off treaty could be an item to be discussed in one of the subsidiary organs, if the will for such a compromise still exists.

So, thank you very much for your work, and I hope that the Swiss Ambassador will continue to count on Brazil for the next steps.

The President: I thank the representative of Brazil for his kind words and for sharing the presidency's interpretation – a positive interpretation – of what has happened over the past almost four weeks. Now, I give the floor to the representative of Mexico.

Mr. Heredia Acosta (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Madam President. Very briefly, I would also like to express my recognition and appreciation to you and your team for the work accomplished. We really appreciate the intensive efforts that you have made to move our work forward. We also sincerely hope that there has indeed been a breakthrough, recognized by all; the clearest demonstration of this was the consultation on and subsequent identification of the five facilitators, and the truth is, I think, that we were very close to a decision, but time was against us, as our colleague from Brazil commented. We will certainly continue to contribute by participating with a constructive and positive attitude and will place ourselves at the disposal of the next presidency in order to continue making progress towards a decision.

The President: I thank the distinguished representative of Mexico for his kind words. I now hand the floor to the distinguished representative of Turkey.

Mr. Ağacikoğlu (Turkey): Thank you very much indeed, Madam President. In my national capacity, I would like to commend your exemplary efforts during your presidency. As the presenter, we would have wished that the draft decision on the appointment of coordinators for the subsidiary bodies could have gained consensus during your presidency. Nevertheless, we all know that a consensus is not always easy in multilateral diplomacy. Once again, we would like to congratulate you on your tireless efforts to get the Conference back to work. We hope the initiative you started will soon lead to successful results. And we also wish all success to the incoming Swiss Chair.

The President: I thank the representative of Turkey for his kind words. I now give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador of China.

Mr. Fu Cong (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Thank you Madam President. Since your assumption of the presidency, you have held wide-ranging discussions and had contacts with all parties in an inclusive, transparent and constructive manner, making good use of your rich diplomatic experience and meticulousness and patience in your working methods. You have urged all parties to come to a preliminary consensus on the designation of the five coordinators of the subsidiary bodies and you have deepened all parties' understanding of the matters concerned.

The Chinese delegation would like once again to express its admiration of your professionalism and tireless efforts. Even if the Conference is unable to reach decisions on specific questions for now, we are convinced that, with your leadership and coordination, the preliminary consensus reached by all parties provides a sound basis on which to continue the Conference's work. We feel now that any differences in the positions of the parties are not irreconcilable. All parties must adhere to their principles and at the same time show a spirit of compromise and full flexibility. We are looking forward, under the leadership of the incoming President, Ambassador Dallafior of Switzerland, to further consolidating this consensus and to exploring new ideas so that the Conference's subsidiary bodies can quickly turn to substantive work.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of China for his kind words of appreciation. I give the floor to the distinguished representative of Canada.

Mr. Davison (Canada): Thank you very much. Earlier today, I congratulated you and your team on all their hard work. I want to repeat, in a formal setting, that Canada deeply appreciates everything that you strove to achieve, and you did achieve a lot. It took four weeks to produce the decision of 16 December and you only had three weeks to work in because we had the week of high-level meetings. So you brought us right to the edge. We thought we were close to a decision today; I and a number of colleagues who have already spoken think we are still close to a decision. So we look forward to working with Switzerland to try to advance those last few centimetres.

The President: I thank the distinguished representative of Canada for his kind words. I see the distinguished delegate of the Netherlands. Ambassador Gabriëlse, you have the floor.

Mr. Gabriëlse (Netherlands): Thank you very much, Madam President, to you and your team, for all the hard work. As my predecessor said, it was indeed only three weeks you had at your disposal. Also, I do not think that the intensive consultations you held were in vain because we learned a lot from each other about where we stand and the process we are engaged in. I think that the decision contained in document CD/2119 had a deliberate constructive ambiguity built in. It was, as our delegation understood it, based on trust. But over the course of the last weeks, unfortunately, the trust turned a little into mistrust, leading to the situation we have now. Nevertheless, I agree that there is a preliminary consensus which we can build on to go forward. So we wish the incoming Chair, Ambassador Dallafior, good luck; we have every confidence that she can bring this process further. We are not that far away from a consensus but we just need a little bit more time to get there. But we should not lose track of the time constraints we have: there is not that much time left to do some substantive work. And the sooner we agree, the sooner we can start with the constructive work which we are looking forward to within the subsidiary bodies. So let us hope that point will be reached soon and we can start in a more constructive way, building on what we already discussed under your presidency. Once again, thank you very much for all your efforts.

The President: I thank Ambassador Gabriëlse for his kind words. And now I see the distinguished delegate of Ireland. You have the floor, Madam.

Ms. Cullen (Ireland): Thank you, Excellency. Since this is the first time I am taking the floor under your presidency, I wish to join in Canada's very eloquent tribute to you.

The year began very, very well here in this chamber. We were energized by an enthusiasm and collective spirit of goodwill and belief that we could achieve something. I still believe we can. That sense of trust that Ambassador Gabriëlse references was also a sense of collegiality, a sense of the potential to move forward. This is not the end. Ireland, today, is disappointed for you and for us. It is as simple as that. Thank you for your personal unstinting efforts and the efforts of your excellent and able team. We are closer than we were. It is frustrating. We are so close and yet not close enough, and that is where the baton will pass to Her Excellency, Ambassador Dallafior and her team, and we will continue to work together with vision, flexibility and openness.

The President: I thank the distinguished representative of Ireland for her support and her very kind words. So, now, I would like to give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Rowland (United Kingdom): Thank you very much again, Madam President. I spoke on Tuesday about the incident in Salisbury in the United Kingdom, involving the use of a nerve agent. And I undertook to update the Conference on our response to that incident.

Investigations by world-leading experts at the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory at Porton Down, which is accredited by the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), discovered that the individuals affected had been exposed to a nerve agent. And we have deployed our military to secure and decontaminate numerous sites. The police continue an exhaustive wide-scale investigation. Through those investigations, we have concluded that the individuals affected were poisoned with Novichok, a military-grade nerve agent of a type developed by Russia. It is not a weapon which can be manufactured by non-State actors. It is so dangerous that it requires the highest grade State laboratories and expertise. Based on the knowledge that Russia has previously produced this agent, and combined with Russia's record of conducting State-sponsored assassinations, including against former intelligence officers, whom they regard as legitimate targets, the United Kingdom Government concluded that it was highly likely that Russia was responsible for this reckless act.

As I said on Tuesday, we requested the Russian Government to provide an explanation by the end of that day on how this Russian-produced nerve agent could have been deployed in Salisbury. Russia has provided no credible explanation. Its response has shown its contempt for the gravity of the issue. And, as usual, Russia seeks to obfuscate and distract from the main point – the use of a military-grade nerve agent in Europe.

Madam President, we therefore have no alternative but to conclude that the Russian State was responsible for the attempted murder of Mr. Skripal and his daughter, and of police officer Nick Bailey who went to assist them, and for threatening the lives of other British citizens in Salisbury.

The Prime Minister has set out our response. It includes immediate actions to dismantle the Russian espionage network in the United Kingdom. We have expelled 23 Russian intelligence officers. This will fundamentally degrade the Russian intelligence capability in the United Kingdom for years to come. It includes urgent work to develop new paths to tackle all forms of hostile State activity and ensure that those seeking to carry out such activity cannot enter the United Kingdom. This includes measures to harden our borders against the threat posed by hostile State actors, as well as powers to act against those responsible for the sort of human rights abuses suffered by Sergei Magnitsky.

It also includes additional steps to suspend all planned high-level contacts between the United Kingdom and the Russian Federation. We are revoking the invitation to Minister Lavrov to pay a return visit to London and the Prime Minister confirmed that there will be no attendance by ministers or members of the Royal Family at the World Cup.

Madam President, I would like to say a few words that are particularly relevant to this disarmament community and we will go into a little more detail than perhaps we have elsewhere, given the expertise that resides in this room. The United Kingdom is proud to have been one of the States who played an integral role in drafting the Chemical Weapons Convention – a landmark piece of international law. We are therefore dismayed that Russia has suggested that our response fails to meet the requirements of the Convention. Article 7 of the Convention calls on States parties to implement the Convention under their own legislation. The United Kingdom has enacted the Chemical Weapons Act in order to fully comply with this obligation. That legislation, together with relevant criminal law, is now guiding our investigation into this incident, as intended under the Convention.

This was an attack on United Kingdom soil. Under the Convention, we have the right to lead our response, engaging OPCW and others, as appropriate. On 8 March, the United Kingdom formally notified the OPCW technical secretariat that a chemical attack had taken place on United Kingdom soil. The Russian Federation has complained that we are not using article 9 of the Convention. On the contrary, on 12 March, once it became

clear to us that the United Kingdom had been attacked, my Foreign Secretary summoned the Russian Ambassador and sought an explanation from his Government, as article 9 clearly gives us the right to do. As I have said earlier, we have received no meaningful response. It is therefore Russia which is failing to comply with the provisions of the Convention, and no one should fall for their attempts to muddy the waters.

In addition, the United Kingdom has welcomed the offer of technical assistance from the OPCW Director General and we have invited the technical secretariat to independently verify our analysis. We are making every effort to expedite this process.

Madam President, let us turn to the part of the Chemical Weapons Convention which Russia is not talking about, the part which requires States parties to declare chemical weapons stockpiles and facilities which have been used at any time since 1946 to produce chemical weapons: chemical weapons were to be verifiably destroyed and production facilities destroyed or converted, subject to approval, within 10 years of entry into force of the Convention. Russia tells us that it completed destruction of its declared stock in 2017, some 10 years later than required by the Convention and 5 years beyond the single 5-year extension period. Russia did not declare Novichok agents or production facilities associated with them as it was required to do under the Convention. No development facilities were declared. Yet we know from testimony by the Russian scientist Vil Mirzayanov that Novichoks were developed as part of the Soviet Union's offensive chemical warfare programme and inherited by the Russian Federation. Such facilities associated with that programme should have been declared under the Chemical Weapons Convention. Even yesterday, a Russian politician said that Russia had destroyed the Novichok nerve gas.

From all this, we can conclude that Russia is in serious breach of the Chemical Weapons Convention for its failure to declare the Novichok programme. This fact alone means you should discount any arguments you hear from them about the possibility of other countries having inherited this technology. Had Russia declared and destroyed their own programme, there might have been some truth to this.

Madam President, on 4 March, a weapon so horrific that it is banned from use in war was used in a peaceful city in my country. This was a reckless act carried out by people who disregard the sanctity of human life, who were indifferent to whether innocents are caught up in their attacks. They either did not care that the weapon used would be traced back to them or mistakenly believed that they could cover their traces. We have not jumped to conclusions. We have carried out a thorough, careful investigation, which continues. We are asking OPCW to independently verify the nerve agent used. We have offered Russia the chance to explain but Russia has refused. We have therefore concluded that the Russian State was involved, and we have taken certain measures in response, as I have set out. In taking these measures, we have made it clear that we have no disagreement with the people of Russia, who have been responsible for so many great achievements throughout history. It is the reckless acts of their Government which we oppose.

Madam President, we are grateful for the support of so many countries around the world. We note the statement by the North Atlantic Council, the European Union, other statements made bilaterally, and most recently, the statement by the Heads of Government of the United States, the United Kingdom, France and Germany. We have already heard the attacks and threats that Russia has made over the past few days. We know that there will be more to come. That is how Russia has acted in every other case where it has been caught flouting international law. Denial, distraction and threats: that is what Russia does. But we will not let such threats deter us. We will not weaken our resolve. We will stand firm, confident in our rule of law, the freedom of our people, and confident in our democracy.

Thank you very much, Madam President.

The President: I thank the representative of the United Kingdom for his statement and I now give the floor to Bulgaria, on behalf of the European Union.

Ms. Kostadinova (Bulgaria): Thank you, Madam President. I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. I would like to thank you for your remarkable efforts over the past few weeks to facilitate agreement on the draft decision on the

appointment of coordinators for the five subsidiary bodies established under the decision contained in document CD/2119. We regret that no consensus has been reached yet.

The European Union would like to reiterate its solidarity with the people and the Government of the United Kingdom in dealing with the consequences of the horrendous use of a military-grade nerve agent in Salisbury on 4 March 2018. The European Union condemns it in the strongest terms. We hope for the speedy recovery of the victims. We have full confidence that the United Kingdom investigation will establish responsibilities quickly and the perpetrators of this reckless act will be held accountable. The European Union takes very seriously the United Kingdom Government's assessment that it is highly likely that the Russian Federation is responsible. We call on the Russian Federation to respond swiftly to the British Government's legitimate questions and to cooperate with OPCW. The European Union reaffirms once again that the use of chemical weapons, including the use of any toxic chemicals as weapons, by anyone, be they a State or a non-State actor, anywhere and under any circumstances, is abhorrent, illegal and must be systematically and rigorously condemned. Thank you, Madam President.

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

Ms. Guitton (France) (*spoke in French*): Thank you, Madam President. I too would like to take the floor to repeat to our British friend and ally all the support and solidarity expressed by the highest French authorities after the attack on 4 March 2018 in Salisbury, which President Macron has unreservedly condemned. I also refer to the joint statement of the heads of State and Government of Germany, the United States, the United Kingdom and my country, France, which was disseminated today and to the various common declarations made at the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the United Nations Security Council on the matter. Our four countries share the same core values, foremost among which is the rule of law, and also an attachment to the foundations of peace and security.

This attempted murder in a public place put the lives of many British citizens in danger. The use of a military-grade nerve agent, of a type developed by Russia, is the first offensive use of a nerve agent in Europe since the Second World War. It is an infringement of British sovereignty, and any act of this kind coming from a State party to the Chemical Weapons Convention is a clear violation of the Convention and of international law. The security of each one of us is under threat. Today, the United Kingdom, speaking through Ambassador Rowland, once again gave us a detailed account and continues to provide further information on the fact that it is highly probable that Russia is responsible for the attack. We share the British conclusion that there is no other plausible explanation and note that the inability of Russia to address the legitimate requests of the United Kingdom further heightens its responsibility. We ask Russia to answer all questions related to the Salisbury attack. In particular, Russia should fully and entirely declare its Novichok programme to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

The facts and the issues at hand are extremely serious. As we have reaffirmed here on multiple occasions, the ban on using chemical weapons is at the heart of the non-proliferation regime which is the basis of our collective security system. Breaching the taboo on the development, possession and use of these barbaric deadly weapons poses a grave threat to the collective security system that we have gradually built together. Their repeated use in Syria and the Middle East, but also in Asia and now in Europe, cannot be tolerated. It tramples over the founding principles of peace and security, undermines the edifice of non-proliferation which has been gradually built up over the decades, and risks undermining strategic stability.

We have issued multiple warnings concerning the risk of these weapons reappearing and proliferating to all types of actors. Today we are entering a new dimension: the use of a substance which has never been declared to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, the use of which is banned by the Chemical Weapons Convention, in a public place and on the territory of a European country. As I have already had the opportunity to say in this chamber, the perpetrators of chemical attacks will have to account for their actions before a court, and France will ensure that there is never impunity in this

regard. The future of our entire collective security system is at stake. No one must be able to violate its most basic norms without one day suffering the consequences.

Madam President, before I conclude, I would like to add something to the chorus of praise you have received for all your efforts to help us move towards implementation of the decisions already adopted. We wish every success to the Swiss presidency which will soon take over.

The President: I thank the representative of France for her kind words and for her statement. And now I give the floor to the distinguished representative, Ambassador Wood, of the United States of America.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): Thank you, Madam President. I have taken the floor to follow up on comments I recently made concerning the attack in Salisbury, England. Let me make one thing clear from the very beginning, the United States stands in absolute solidarity with the people of Great Britain. No two nations enjoy a stronger bond than those of the United States and the United Kingdom. Ours is truly a special relationship; as Ambassador Haley said yesterday at the United Nations Security Council: “When our friends in Great Britain face a challenge, the United States will always be there for them. Always.”

The United States believes that Russia is responsible for the attack on two people in the United Kingdom using a military-grade nerve agent. Dozens of civilians and first responders were also exposed. Our thoughts and prayers go out to the victims of this atrocious crime. Russia’s crime is not an isolated incident. Russia must stop using chemical weapons to assassinate its enemies. Russia must cooperate with OPCW by turning over all information related to the nerve agent Novichok. Russia must fully cooperate with the United Kingdom’s investigation and come clean about its own chemical weapons programme. And as Ambassador Haley also said yesterday, Russia is a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council: it is entrusted under the Charter of the United Nations with upholding international peace and security; it must account for its actions.

My final point, Madam President, is that, if we do not take immediate concrete steps to address this now, Salisbury will not be the last place we see chemical weapons used.

The President: I thank the representative of the United States for his statement and give the floor to the distinguished delegate of Australia.

Ms. Wood (Australia): Thank you, Madam President. First of all, we appreciate all of your hard work and the hard work of your team during your presidency of this Conference.

I take the floor to declare the Australian Government’s grave concern that a military-grade nerve agent of a type originally developed by Russia was used in an attack on 4 March 2018 in the United Kingdom. We share the United Kingdom’s outrage over this targeted attempt to commit murder using chemical weapons. Australia condemns the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere, under any circumstances. There is no circumstance that justifies the use of such an indiscriminate, abhorrent weapon. Prime Minister May has made a compelling case for the responsibility of the Russian State for this attack, in an unlawful use of force by Russia against the United Kingdom and her people.

Australia stands with the United Kingdom in solidarity and supports in the strongest terms Prime Minister May’s response to this heinous attack – the first use of chemical weapons in Europe since the Second World War. We support the United Kingdom’s commitment to ensure a full investigation and its efforts to bring those responsible to justice. The Australian Government supports the United Kingdom Government’s right to take retaliatory measures, including its decision to expel 23 Russian diplomats and to call for an emergency session of the United Nations Security Council. We are pleased that a special open session of the Council took place on 14 March. Australia has already conveyed our serious concerns overnight at the meeting of the OPCW Executive Council in the Hague. We also raised our grave concerns at the Human Rights Council on 14 March in Geneva. It is important that the international community should not tolerate the use of chemical weapons becoming a new or accepted norm. Refusal to act in ways consistent with the rules-based international order fundamentally weakens global security. The

international community must demonstrate zero tolerance for, and firm commitment to deterring, any acts of this nature in the future. Australia is considering its responses in support of the United Kingdom, in close consultation with the United Kingdom Government and other partners.

The President: I thank the representative of Australia for her kind words and for her statement. Now, I give the floor to the Ambassador of Germany.

Mr. Biontino (Germany): Thank you, Madam President. I asked for the floor concerning the chemical weapons attacks in Salisbury. But before doing so, I would like to thank you very much for your efforts, for having taken the Conference on Disarmament forward. Based on the decision contained in document CD/2119, we were tasked to nominate coordinators; we made sure in the decision taken in February that there would be equitable regional distribution of these coordinators. We omitted to include that we need reasonable balance concerning the core items on the agenda of the Conference. We thank you very much for your tireless efforts and we would encourage the incoming Swiss presidency to continue these efforts in order to start substantive work here right now.

Let me now turn to the chemical weapons attack in Salisbury. We fully align ourselves with the statement just read out by the European Union. And I am also referring to the declaration issued today of the Heads of Governments and States of the United Kingdom, France and Germany. We condemn in the strongest possible terms the despicable act committed in Salisbury against civilians, which is prohibited by international law, in particular the Chemical Weapons Convention. We are in close contact with our British friends and stand by them in this difficult hour in full solidarity. One thing should be clear to everybody: the perpetrators of this gruesome act must be held accountable. We consider this a very, very grave incident. It is now up to Russia to come up with a swift response to the legitimate questions of the British Government and to comply with the request for full disclosure of all facts related to the relevant chemical weapons programme. We find it deeply disappointing that Russia is apparently not willing to contribute meaningfully to the investigation into this matter. We call on Moscow to provide an explanation and to respond transparently to either the United Kingdom Government or OPCW.

The President: I thank the representative of Germany for his kind words addressed to the President and for his statement. And now I give the floor to the Ambassador of Ukraine.

Mr. Klymenko (Ukraine): Thank you, Madam President. Let me, first of all, join my colleagues in praising the excellent work done by your presidency and appreciating your tireless efforts to make possible the launch of the five subsidiary bodies, in particular. In our view, the Swedish presidency has left a good legacy, a good basis, which could be further developed by the upcoming Conference presidency. In this regard, I would like to wish every success to the Swiss presidency.

Madam President, now I would like to comment on the matter raised by our distinguished colleague from the United Kingdom and many other delegations. I would like to draw attention to yesterday's statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, Mr. Klimkin, who stressed that recent events in the United Kingdom involving the poisoning of Mr. Skripal and his daughter are extremely worrying. Following on from the work of the competent British authorities and taking into account the Russian response, which is disingenuous and lacking credibility, we are now ready to back the British Prime Minister's assessment that this is most likely the work of the Russian Federation. This represents a very significant escalation in Russian aggression against a major Western democracy and a closest ally of Ukraine. We assure our British allies of our fullest support and join with them in pressing for the strongest response from the rules-based community. The Russian Federation does not respect international borders or rules and there are no ends to which they will not go to further their own interests if they think that they can get away with it.

In Ukraine, we understand this better than most. We have had the Crimean Peninsula illegally occupied by Russia for over four years now. And shortly after attempting to annex Crimea, Russia also invaded Donbass in the east of Ukraine, where Russia's support for its

proxies has cost the lives of over 10,000 Ukrainians, injured 25,000 and driven 1.8 million from their homes.

Distinguished delegates, in this context I would also like to draw your attention to the intentions of the Russian Federation and its occupation authorities to hold, on 18 March 2018, Russian Presidential elections in the illegally occupied autonomous Republic of Crimea, in the City of Sevastopol. According to the decree of 1 March 2018 of the Verkhovna Rada, the parliament of Ukraine, not only do these intentions violate the Constitution and other relevant national legislation of my country, along with the universal principles and norms of international law, including the Charter of the United Nations and the Helsinki Final Act, they also breach the Budapest Memorandum, which is a very important document in the field of non-proliferation, and United Nations General Assembly resolution 68/262 on the territorial integrity of Ukraine. We request our international partners to step up political and diplomatic pressure on the Russian Federation and respond in a way that will make Russia feel the consequences of its actions. I thank you.

The President: I thank the distinguished representative of Ukraine also for his kind words and for his statement. And now I give the floor to the distinguished representative of Belgium.

Mr. Dhaene (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): Thank you Madam President. I would first of all like to express the sincere appreciation of my delegation for all the efforts you have made with a view to implementing the decision contained in document CD/2119.

I would then like to touch briefly on the nerve agent attack recently committed in Salisbury, to say that my delegation fully aligns itself with the statement of the European Union. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belgium very quickly expressed his great concern regarding this attack, which he called despicable. He expressed his solidarity and here I would like to express the solidarity of all Belgium with the United Kingdom and the British people. He also insisted on the importance of rapidly obtaining full clarity concerning the facts and responsibilities. I would now like to highlight the importance that my country attaches to compliance with the Chemical Weapons Convention, which prohibits the possession and use of chemical weapons. In this context, my country utterly condemns any use of chemical weapons.

Combating impunity for the use of chemical weapons is a priority for my country. On 7 March, the Director General of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, Mr. Ahmet Üzümcü, was received in Brussels by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Defence of Belgium. This reflects the importance that my country attaches to this organization and to cooperation with it. The attack which occurred, as well as the use of chemical weapons in Syria, demonstrates that, even 100 years after the massacre at Ypres in Belgium, the fight against the use of chemical weapons has unfortunately not been won. Thank you, Madam President.

The President: I thank the representative of Belgium for his kind words and for his statement. And now I give the floor to the distinguished delegate of Poland.

Mr. Broilo (Poland): Thank you, Madam President. Let me begin by expressing our appreciation for all your efforts, for your commitment to fulfilling your mandate as President of the Conference. In fact, we have started this year's session with a sequence of two excellent presidencies, those of Sri Lanka and of Sweden, and this makes it even more regrettable that all your efforts have not resulted in a practical and commonly approved result. But we hope that the presidency of Switzerland will achieve it.

Madame President, Poland fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by the European Union. In my national capacity, let me read out the statement issued by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Poland:

Poland is gravely concerned by information concerning the use of a nerve agent in an attempt to murder Mr. Sergei Skripal and his daughter, Ms. Yulia Skripal, which endangered lives of innocent civilians. We condemn this unprecedented attack on the territory of the United Kingdom. This use of chemicals as weapons clearly violates international law and the provisions of the Convention on the

Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction.

Poland expresses its full solidarity with the British people and the British Government, as well as its readiness to support our close ally and European partner in the conduct of the investigation. At the same time, we call on the Russian Federation to address the United Kingdom's questions and cooperate appropriately with the office established in this regard.

Poland expresses its strong conviction that those responsible for the use of chemical weapons must and should be held accountable.

The President: I thank the representative of Poland for his kind words addressed to the President and for his statement. I now give the floor to the representative of Canada.

Mr. Davison (Canada): Thank you, Madam President. I would like to speak briefly on Canada's response to the chemical-agent poisonings in the United Kingdom. Statements were made yesterday by our Foreign Minister and today by our Prime Minister. Canada has offered assistance to the United Kingdom through our Ministers and Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Defence and Public Safety. As our Prime Minister said today, Canada is unwavering in its commitment to the United Kingdom; the United Kingdom can count on Canada's full support in efforts to hold Russia to account for this unacceptable and unlawful behaviour. We will work closely with the United Kingdom as well as with our international partners and through international institutions to address this very serious situation.

The President: I thank the representative of Canada for his statement and I now give the floor to the Ambassador of the Netherlands.

Mr. Gabriëlse (Netherlands): Thank you Madam President. Let me start by saying that we fully align ourselves with the European Union statement. On behalf of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Minister of Foreign Affairs Stef Blok has totally condemned the attack and expressed our solidarity with the United Kingdom. We would like to emphasize again, just as we did yesterday in the United Nations Security Council and the Executive Council of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, that no State can or should accept attacks taking place on its territory. The Netherlands regards this act as a threat to international peace and security. We commend the United Kingdom for bringing it to our attention. We express our grave concern about the type of weapon that was used in this attack – an indiscriminate military-grade nerve agent. This nerve agent was used in a public space with many unsuspecting civilians around. It could have had even more horrible effects than has been the case. The attack in the United Kingdom is another warning to the world that we must step up our vigilance to prevent the use of weapons of mass destruction. We underline the importance of the role of OPCW in the Hague in this regard.

This brings me to my final point – accountability. There can be no impunity for this crime. We call on the Russian Federation to address the questions raised by the United Kingdom authorities and to cooperate with OPCW in this regard. The perpetrators must be brought to justice.

The President: I thank the representative of the Netherlands for his statement and give the floor now to the Ambassador of Japan.

Mr. Takamizawa (Japan): First, let me thank Madam President and her team for their hard work during her presidency. I am quite confident that your achievements, including the identification of the co-facilitators, together with the close cooperation among this session's six presidencies, will help the Conference get back to work. Thank you for your hard work.

And with regard to the case of a nerve agent being used in the United Kingdom, that is a challenge to the international norm on the non-use of chemical weapons. Japan expresses its grave concern and its strongest condemnation of the use of chemical weapons.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Japan for his kind words and for his statement. Now I give the floor to the distinguished delegate of New Zealand.

Ms. Donnelly (New Zealand): Thank you Madam President. The New Zealand Government has expressed grave concerns over the use of a chemical nerve agent in the United Kingdom. We share and support the concerns expressed by others about such use of chemical weapons. New Zealand is deeply disturbed at any use of chemical substances banned by the Chemical Weapons Convention. The use of chemical weapons by any actor, anywhere, for any reason, is totally repugnant and this incident is an affront to global rules and norms.

New Zealand has made a statement on this issue at the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in the Hague and supported the United Kingdom's call for the issue to be addressed at an emergency session of the United Nations Security Council. Russia has questions to answer about how this military-grade nerve agent was transported from Russia and released abroad.

Finally Madam President, I would like to express New Zealand's deep admiration and appreciation to you and your incredible team for your work on the draft Conference decision. All that remains is to wish Switzerland all the very best.

The President: I thank the representative of New Zealand for her statement and for her kind words addressed to our team. Now I give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Kim In-chul (Republic of Korea): Thank you Madam President. You really deserve our full appreciation for all the things that you have done. I am very confident that, with the forthcoming work of your successor, all that you have done will not be a Sisyphean effort. Of that I am really confident.

Now turning to the heinous act in Salisbury; for any chemical weapons attack, there cannot be standards that apply in some cases and do not apply in others. For the Republic of Korea, any use of chemical weapons, anywhere, at any time, by anyone, under any circumstances, is unacceptable and those who are responsible for the use of chemical weapons must be held accountable. The Republic of Korea will keep up its cooperation with the international community to uphold and realize this noble goal. Thank you, Madam President.

The President: I thank you, Ambassador, for your kind words and for your statement. The distinguished representative of the Russian Federation would like to exercise his right of reply, so we can perhaps go through the list of speakers first. So now I give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador of China.

Mr. Fu Cong (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Thank you, Madam President. Regarding the recent poisoning case in England, the Chinese delegation has noted the stances taken recently by the countries in question in relation to this case. We hope that all parties will base their actions on the relevant international rules and principles and will carry out a comprehensive, objective and impartial investigation based on hard evidence to arrive at a factual conclusion borne out by history. We hope that the respective parties will use the appropriate channels to properly deal with this question.

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

Mr. Herráiz España (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): Madam President, I would, of course, like to join all those who have congratulated you for your efforts in the past weeks. We hope these efforts may bear fruit during the new Swiss presidency, which we would also like to wish every success.

With regard to the incident in Salisbury, my delegation supports the views already expressed in the statement delivered by the European Union. In also referring to this matter, we simply wish to recall the communication that the Spanish Government has already issued to express its deep disgust and grave concern about this attack, in which a toxic nerve agent was used as a weapon. At the same time, we would like to express our profound solidarity with the United Kingdom, a country that is a partner, ally and friend. This is an incident of extreme gravity that demands an exhaustive investigation which can

shed light on all aspects of the episode and identify the persons responsible, who will then need to be located and brought to justice.

At the same time, my delegation wishes to reiterate the international community's immutable objective of fighting against chemical weapons, as well as our commitment to the Chemical Weapons Convention, to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and to the international non-proliferation regime.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Spain for his kind words and for his statement and now I give the floor to the distinguished delegate of Austria.

Ms. Hammer (Austria): Thank you, Madam President. Austria fully aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union. I am taking the floor to also condemn in our national capacity this apparent use of a prohibited chemical agent in the strongest terms and to underline our solidarity with the victims and the people of the United Kingdom. Austria made a statement earlier today in the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). The background of this incident needs to be swiftly and thoroughly investigated. In this regard, we wish to reiterate Austria's full trust in the capacity of OPCW to swiftly and thoroughly investigate the incident, and we expect the Russian Federation to cooperate. By threatening the lives of Sergei Skripal and his daughter, as well as those of many other citizens, this reckless act reminds us of the risk of the consequences associated with weapons of mass destruction, be they chemical, as in this case, or biological or nuclear.

The President: I thank the representative of Austria for her statement, and now I give the floor to the Ambassador of Latvia.

Mr. Karklins (Latvia): Thank you very much, Madam President. Let me start by thanking you and the Swedish team for the efforts deployed in seeking the consensual decision and the nomination of coordinators of the five subsidiary bodies that should allow the Conference to relaunch its substantive work.

I also asked for the floor to convey the Latvian Government's solidarity with the Government and people of the United Kingdom. The Latvian Government made a statement on 13 March in which it said that the Government condemns in the strongest terms the use of chemical weapons in Salisbury, United Kingdom on 4 March, and that use of a nerve agent should be considered as a chemical attack, which is a serious violation of international norms including the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction. Those who planned and carried out the attacks in the territory of a North Atlantic Treaty Organization member State must receive an appropriate and a strong response, represented by the United Kingdom's efforts in carrying out the investigation into the circumstances of the perpetrated crime. The incident confirms the need to step up implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention to prevent the use of chemical weapons.

The President: I thank Ambassador Karklins for his statement and for his kind words addressed to the President. I now give the floor to the representative of Estonia.

Ms. Salsa-Audiffren (Estonia): Madam President, I would like to thank you and your team for your efforts in trying to find a compromise over the past weeks.

Estonia fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by the European Union. In addition, I would like to express a few remarks of particular importance to Estonia that have also been conveyed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Estonia. My country is deeply concerned and disturbed by the reported use of a military-grade nerve agent in the United Kingdom on 4 March. This attack is a brutal violation of international law and order and demonstrates complete disregard for human life and suffering. Estonia has every confidence in the United Kingdom in the investigation into this matter and we offer our utmost support to the United Kingdom in this effort to resolve the issue. Perpetrators of heinous crimes must be held accountable. We call for the full cooperation of the international community, including in the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, in this regard. We call on the Russian Federation to reassure the international community that its declaration of the full destruction of its chemical weapons stockpile in

October 2017 holds true, the integrity and effectiveness of non-proliferation regimes will be upheld, and OPCW will be given full information on the Novichok programme.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to inform you that Estonia is going to join the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons, launched in Paris on 23 January, which hopefully will help to mobilize the international community to address this issue of impunity.

The President: I thank the representative of Estonia for her statement and for her kind words addressed to my team. Now I give the floor to the representative of Ireland.

Ms. Cullen (Ireland): Thank you, Ambassador, for giving me the floor. Ireland aligns itself fully with the statement read in this chamber by the European Union and Bulgaria, which very much reflects our thinking in this regard. Ireland condemns the attack which took place in the United Kingdom on 4 March and we join the many States here today in supporting the United Kingdom's efforts to ensure a thorough investigation so that the perpetrators of this crime can truly be held accountable. The Tánaiste, or deputy Prime Minister, and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Simon Coveney, TD, has expressed his grave concern and the concern of the Irish people over the use of a chemical weapons nerve agent. He stated: "Ireland condemns this cowardly attack which has taken place on our neighbour and friend's soil."

The use of chemical weapons, including the use of any toxic weapons, is unacceptable and abhorrent. The incident in Salisbury represents a disturbing violation of international law and goes against norms which have long been established. We join many States in supporting the United Kingdom's efforts to ensure a thorough investigation and we take very seriously the United Kingdom Government's assessment that it is highly likely that the Russian Federation is responsible. We call on the Russian Federation to respond swiftly to the British Government's legitimate questions and to cooperate with the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). We offer our full support and solidarity to the United Kingdom and to OPCW in their joint efforts to seek answers and to take appropriate action for this indiscriminate and reckless act.

The President: I thank the representative of Ireland for her statement and now I hand over the floor to the distinguished representative of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Deyneko (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I honestly thought that our meeting today would be dedicated to searching for a consensus that would allow us to make a decision on nominating coordinators for the Conference on Disarmament subsidiary bodies. However, it turns out that, for the second time in a row, it is necessary, or rather we are forced, to discuss matters which have no direct relation to our tasks. It would be better if the delegations directed their efforts into more constructive channels, but since accusations – and there is no other word for them – have once again been voiced in this room, convention dictates that I must respond in kind.

Firstly, the Russian delegation is probably the only one in this room who learned via the media that the chemical warfare agent known as Novichok had been used. This raised a number of questions with us, which we addressed to the United Kingdom: show us the material evidence and preferably conduct a joint investigation under the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). Our questions have gone unanswered. Instead, we have essentially received an ultimatum, it has been demanded that we admit to having a secret programme for developing chemical weapons. On what basis? On the basis of facts that are not disclosed?

Secondly, insofar as we understand the situation, again from the media, the actual investigation in the United Kingdom is not over, but the guilty parties have already been found and, since we have been accused, our country is legitimately asking the country where the terrible event took place: give us the proof, let us look into this together. We do not have the formula for Novichok.

We do have a question: how did the British investigators and the independent experts (OPCW does not have any Novichok samples either, because no such programme existed) come to the conclusion that Novichok was the substance in question? How is it that, after so many years of work in OPCW, it can be claimed that Russia has some kind of

secret chemical weapons programme? Let us get to the bottom of this. OPCW is the most appropriate forum to do that. However, the United Kingdom prefers not to act through a specialized international organization but rather to head straight for the microphone and make loud accusations, which are of course completely inadmissible for us.

We are ready for any form of cooperation, but on a footing of respect and equality. The most important thing is that, as no one in this room seems to be aware, one of the victims is a citizen of the Russian Federation and we are no less concerned than the British authorities to elucidate the circumstances of what has occurred. In this regard, I would like to observe that the repeated requests of our consular section in London to visit the person who has been subjected to this horrendous attack have either gone unanswered or been denied. We have also been denied what we were asking for, namely the sharing of information. Four requests have been sent to the Foreign Office. There has been no reply. Nothing specific.

Can you please tell me, distinguished delegates, in your national courts, does anybody recognize charges based on public statements, comments and opinions? In any event, that is exactly how the British authorities are acting with respect to the Russian Federation. They have not sent anything, have not shared anything but they demand a confession. Is that a spirit of cooperation which can foster trust? I do not think so. Therefore, we are calling on our colleagues from the United Kingdom and their supporters to think about that and truly begin cooperation on this case. I stress once again that we are no less concerned than anyone else, least of all the British authorities, to establish the truth.

The President: I thank the representative of the Russian Federation for his statement. I see the Ambassador of the United Kingdom who would like to exercise the right to reply. You have the floor.

Mr. Rowland (United Kingdom): Denial, distraction and threats, that is what Russia does. I am not surprised to hear our assessment denied by Russia in this way. Of course, the Kremlin would deny this, as it denies chemical weapons attacks on innocent civilians in Syria, denies it has troops in Ukraine, denies it had some hand in the shooting down of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 – this latest act is part of a pattern of behaviour that attempts to undermine the values and norms that underpin our freedom. Over the past week, we have also seen the usual barrage of distorted facts and lies from the Kremlin; a disinformation campaign is the act of a country with something to hide. However, we are wise to these tactics now and the international community cannot let Russian fiction distort scientific facts. I set out very clearly how we are cooperating with the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons to take forward this investigation. That becomes the mechanism for making progress – Russia should face the international community's call on it to account for its actions and account for a programme which it still continues to deny, despite the fact that a Russian politician only yesterday said that it had destroyed that Novichok gas that it held. Let me conclude this round by thanking all of those who have spoken in solidarity with the United Kingdom here and previously; it is very much appreciated. Thank you.

The President: I thank the representative of the United Kingdom for his statement and let me hand over the floor to the representative of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Deyneko (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Madam President, I propose only one thing. Since many delegations are present in the chamber, I would like to ask them all if they heard any threats or ultimatums in my statement. I somehow cannot recall any. I wish to emphasize one more time that the Russian Federation is ready for equitable professional cooperation, whether that is under the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons or on a bilateral basis.

Any accusation, especially if the accusation concerns an independent State, must be backed by ironclad facts, material evidence and all other arguments required in that situation. Only in this way can genuine trust be created between countries. In our case, we have not yet seen any of this. So let us end this public diplomacy and actually get down to business through specialized agencies and the relevant experts, and also organizations.

The President: I thank the distinguished representative of Russia for his statement and I see the Ambassador of the United Kingdom. You have the floor.

Mr. Rowland (United Kingdom): Thank you. I reiterate again that the process has been followed as it should have been with respect to our obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention and in the face of our appropriate relations with the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). It is Russia that has failed to play its role, by not declaring a programme that is known to have existed and has inadvertently been declared to have existed by a Russian member of Parliament just very recently, and by refusing to respond to the requests that we have made, including through OPCW, for information that would assist the investigation that we have been conducting. But we will continue to abide by our values, we will continue to take this forward in an objective criminal investigation, we will continue to work transparently with OPCW until the perpetrators are held to account.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of the United Kingdom for his statement and I would like to ask if there is any other delegation that would like to take the floor. That does not seem to be the case. So, this then concludes our business for today but, before adjourning, I wish to thank the interpreters for their formidable work and the Conference Officers too for their tireless support to us during our work this month.

This takes us to the announcement that the next plenary meeting of the Conference will take place on Tuesday, 20 March 2018 at 10 a.m. under the presidency of Switzerland. This meeting is adjourned.

The meeting rose at 5.30 p.m.