
Conference on Disarmament

English

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

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 20 March 2018, at 10.15 a.m.

President: Ms. Sabrina Dallafior (Switzerland)



The President: I call to order the 1454th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, dear colleagues, taking up my function as President of the Conference on Disarmament, I would like first to express my gratitude to my two predecessors in this chair. They spared no effort in order to take this Conference forward and their efforts have yielded significant results.

Ambassador Aryasinha of Sri Lanka successfully guided us towards the adoption of the decision establishing the five subsidiary bodies on the agenda items of the Conference. Under the able leadership of Ambassador Bard, we were able to identify five coordinators to lead the different subsidiary bodies, with full respect for the principle of credible regional representation. We were also able to define the core elements of the subsidiary bodies' timetable.

One step remains to be taken so that the positive developments that materialized under the Sri Lankan and Swedish presidencies can take practical shape. It is not an easy step, but one that calls for our collective efforts.

Distinguished colleagues, at the last meeting under the Swedish presidency last Thursday, statements by the many delegations that took the floor were unambiguous. They highlighted the importance for the Conference on Disarmament of succeeding in operationalizing the decision contained in document CD/2119. They also underlined that, although some differences remained to be overcome, they may not be insurmountable. I take this important message with me as I commence my presidency. The adoption of the decision contained in document CD/2119 indicated that, after more than 20 years of paralysis, the Conference is willing to look at practical options to take substantive work forward. This development has attracted significant attention and interest beyond this chamber.

The incapacity of the Conference on Disarmament to operationalize this decision would be difficult to understand. It would not only dash the hopes placed in this development but would ask additional questions of the Conference. What is the Conference on Disarmament to do in 2018 if the decision contained in document CD/2119 cannot be implemented? What are the prospects of adopting a programme of work if such a decision cannot go forward? To put it differently, the stakes are not insignificant.

Distinguished colleagues, my first priority as I start my presidency will therefore be to consult broadly with a view to reconciling outstanding differences in the implementation of the decision contained in document CD/2119. I will spare no effort to this effect. In this regard, I would like to highlight the following elements. I am fully aware of the different sensitivities expressed regarding the decision contained in document CD/2119. Any draft decisions submitted to the Conference will have to meet the requirements of all parties and should be introduced only if there is clarity that it will meet agreement in this room. Finding ways to bridge differences may require some creativity. It will also require a degree of flexibility from all members of the Conference. Time is increasingly of the essence. We are two weeks away from the break between the first and the second part of the 2018 session. The time for subsidiary bodies to meet is getting more and more constrained. When the session is resumed in mid-May, time will, as usual, fly by very rapidly. So, we will have to be creative, flexible and quick.

I will now turn to the list of speakers, and first on my list is the distinguished representative, Ambassador Ambrazevich from Belarus. You have the floor, Sir.

Mr. Ambrazevich (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): Madam President, I would like from the outset to wish you success in carrying out the work that you just mentioned.

Seventy-five years ago, on 22 March 1943, a small Belarusian village known as Khatyn was destroyed, along with its inhabitants. One hundred and forty-nine people were burned alive, including 75 children, and all 26 homes were destroyed. The village of Khatyn shared the fate of hundreds of others in Belarus and other countries that were destroyed during the Second World War. For several generations of Belarusians and people now living in the countries formed after the disintegration of the USSR, the word "Khatyn" has become an iconic symbol of the horror and suffering of the peaceful peoples of the

world. The Khatyn tragedy provides the most faithful illustration of the result of any war and of what remains indelibly marked in the memory of a nation in its aftermath.

This is precisely why we regret to note, with deep sadness and concern, that the level of distrust and antagonism has in recent years reached new levels among certain States that are among the most important participants in the international security system and that possess the overwhelming majority of the military potential on our planet. We see increasing antagonistic rhetoric, a growth in military expenditure and an escalation of conflict.

We would very much like to believe that historical memory will serve as the best vaccine against a new war. We must stop in time, before we reach a point of no return, with irreversible consequences for the survival of human civilization. The United Nations Conference on Disarmament has a special role to play in ensuring and preserving peace. At the most critical times of the cold war, when the world repeatedly faced the threat of the use of weapons of mass destruction, it was specifically the Conference that assumed the concrete task of drawing up instruments for a modern international security system.

We believe that in the current circumstances, too, we are obliged to make the best possible use of the Conference's capabilities as a platform to reduce tensions and build trust. We call on everyone to implement our own decision, contained in CD/2119, and the concrete work of using the Conference's potential for the benefit of a safe world and sustainable development.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Belarus for his statement and the kind words addressed to the presidency. I now give the floor to the representative of the United Kingdom. Ambassador, you have the floor.

Mr. Rowland (United Kingdom): Thank you very much, Madam President. Let me congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency and assure you of my delegation's full support for your efforts.

I think my statement will fit very nicely after the statement made by the Ambassador of Belarus, with his focus on the post-Second World War rules-based international system that we have established and the modern tools we have put in place for reinforcing that system.

I will pick up a little bit from where I left off last Thursday and comment on developments related to the use of the nerve agent Novichok in Salisbury on 4 March. Independent investigators from the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), one of those modern tools that we have put in place to reinforce the rules-based international system, arrived in the United Kingdom yesterday to begin their investigation into the nerve agent used in the attempted assassinations of Mr. Skripal and his daughter in Salisbury on 4 March.

The team from The Hague met with officials from the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory and the police to discuss the process for collecting samples, including environmental ones. These samples will be dispatched to highly reputable international laboratories selected by OPCW for testing, with results expected to take a minimum of two weeks.

This is the next step in the process of independently verifying the analysis carried out by the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory at Porton Down. Last Wednesday, the Prime Minister wrote to OPCW to formally invite them to verify the Government's analysis of the nerve agent used in the Salisbury attack.

Subsequently, the United Kingdom's Permanent Representative to OPCW wrote to the Technical Secretariat, inviting them to come to the United Kingdom to take a sample under article VIII of the Chemical Weapons Convention. These actions reflect the commitment of the United Kingdom to fully complying with the obligations of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

On 12 March, the Foreign Secretary summoned the Russian Ambassador and sought an explanation from the Russian Government, as article IX of the Convention is clear that we have the right to do. We received no meaningful response. It is, therefore, Russia which

is failing to comply with the provisions of the Convention, and we should resist any attempts by Russia to muddy the waters.

The Foreign Secretary revealed on Sunday that we have information indicating that, within the last decade, Russia has investigated ways of delivering nerve agents, likely for assassination, and part of this programme has involved producing and stockpiling quantities of Novichok. This is a violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Madam President, colleagues, we have been encouraged by the international support we have received to date. We will continue to work with our partners and allies around the world to tackle the threat posed by Russia to our collective security.

Thank you.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of the United Kingdom for his statement and his kind words addressed to the presidency and I now give the floor to the representative of Turkey. Ambassador, you have the floor.

Mr. Koru (Turkey): Madam President, I would like to join other colleagues and congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. I assure you of Turkey's full support and cooperation in your endeavours to advance the work of the Conference.

Madam President, the Conference has a unique place and a very special responsibility in international forums. It is tasked with negotiating multilateral disarmament instruments, with the aim of achieving the ultimate goal of creating a safer world. We must bear this important responsibility on our shoulders.

The world, unfortunately, has not become a safer place than it was before the new millennium. On the contrary, there exists an increasing urgency to address the new challenges that we face today.

The first step to overcome this situation is to learn from repeated failures and achieve consensus over a programme of work. We began this year cherishing hopes again. With the approval of the decision on establishing five subsidiary bodies, our hopes doubled. If we had been able to achieve consensus on the draft decision on the appointment of coordinators for the subsidiary bodies last week, it would have been possible to start substantive work this week. Nevertheless, we once again saw that, despite the Conference's mandate, rules of procedure and membership composition, the lack of confidence and trust that results from a lack of political will did not let this happen. It is incumbent upon us to overcome this challenge. Turkey is ready to do its part to make this happen. As you assume the last presidency of this august body this year, we are looking forward to achieving progress that we will be able to reflect in the annual report.

Madam President, the use of chemical weapons is a crime against humanity under all circumstances. In this context, we condemn the recent attack in Salisbury and express our solidarity with the United Kingdom. The North Atlantic Council made a statement on this issue on 14 March. Investigations regarding this grave incident should be conducted and the perpetrators brought to justice at the soonest.

As a party to the Protocol for the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or Other Gases, and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare and the Chemical Weapons Convention, Turkey supports all efforts to counter the use of such weapons.

Wishing you every success in your efforts, I thank you, Madam President.

The President: I thank Ambassador Koru for his statement and the kind words addressed to the presidency. Would any other delegation like to take the floor? Norway, please. You have the floor.

Ms. Evenesen (Norway): Thank you, Madam President, and let me congratulate you on assuming this presidency and wish you every success in your endeavours.

My reason for taking the floor today is to express solidarity with the people and the Government of the United Kingdom in dealing with the consequences of the shocking and

reckless attack against the United Kingdom that occurred in Salisbury. Norway condemns this attack in the strongest possible way and we hope for the speedy recovery of the victims.

Norway is deeply concerned by the first offensive use of a chemical nerve agent on the territory of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization since that alliance's foundation. The use of such a nerve agent is a breach of international law and forbidden under the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Norway has full confidence in the investigation carried out by the United Kingdom and the assessments of the British Government and supports international calls for the Russian Federation to respond to the British Government's legitimate questions. Norway underlines the important role of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in the investigation and we support the request from the United Kingdom to OPCW to provide independent verification of the British analysis. Norway has repeatedly condemned the use of chemical weapons, including the use of toxic chemicals as weapons by anyone, be they State or non-State actors, anywhere. It is, under any circumstances, illegal and must be rigorously condemned. Those responsible must be held accountable. Thank you.

The President: I thank the representative of Norway for her statement and the kind words addressed to the presidency. I now give the floor to the representative of Viet Nam.

Mr. Dzung Duong Chi (Viet Nam): Thank you, Madam President, for giving me the floor. It is my pleasure to take the floor at the first plenary meeting under your presidency. First of all, I would like to express our congratulations on your assumption of the presidency this year.

Since its full membership of the Conference on Disarmament, Viet Nam has always attached great importance to the Conference as the sole global forum responsible for discussion and negotiations on international disarmament affairs. My country's consistent policy is to uphold peace, oppose war and support all efforts for disarmament, especially the disarmament of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and international law.

Viet Nam is therefore a party to disarmament and non-proliferation treaties relating to key weapons of mass destruction and fully compliant with its obligations under all such agreements. It is our firm belief that addressing non-proliferation must be coupled with substantive progress in disarmament of weapons of mass destruction particularly and towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons. In this regard, we strongly support international efforts towards this noble goal, especially through the historic adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, to which Viet Nam is proud to be an early signatory.

Madam President, the Conference has achieved great momentum this year by agreeing on the formation and establishment of five subsidiary groups, in accordance with the decision contained in document CD/WP.605. The legacy of your predecessors, the Ambassadors of Sri Lanka and Sweden, has brought the Conference closer to substantive work. Undoubtedly, the Conference is now on the threshold of reaffirming its role and credibility. However, we still need some extra efforts to overcome divergence among member States to implement our own decision contained in document CD/2119. Against this backdrop, Viet Nam supports any initiative that can address the concern and interests of member States and reach common ground to overcome the deadlock in the context of the lack of a programme of work.

Finally, Madam President, we wish you a successful presidency and we would like to take this opportunity to assure you of our full support to assist you in your efforts to enable the substantive work of the Conference. I would like to thank you, Madam President.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Viet Nam for his kind words addressed to the presidency and his statement. I now give the floor to the representative of Indonesia. Sir, you have the floor.

Mr. Bektikusuma (Indonesia): Thank you, Madam President. Allow me at the outset to congratulate you on your assumption of the post as President of the Conference on

Disarmament and wish you every success in performing your duties. Rest assured of my delegation's full support for the accomplishment of tasks during your tenure.

My delegation would also like to express its appreciation to your predecessors, Ambassador Aryasinha and Ambassador Bard, for their able stewardship in guiding the work of the Conference.

Madam President, at this juncture, I would like to refer to the message delivered by the Secretary-General to this august body last February, when he said that we must reinvigorate the agenda for disarmament and put it back on course. We must work together towards our common goal, a world free of nuclear weapons.

It is central to the system for international security, as agreed in the Charter of the United Nations. There lies the critical importance of the Conference on Disarmament as the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating body. In this context, Indonesia would like to once again bring your attention to the decision contained in document CD/2119. Indonesia strongly supports the decision to establish subsidiary bodies this year under the Conference on Disarmament, as first introduced by Ambassador Aryasinha on 8 February 2018 and adopted at the 1442nd plenary meeting on 16 February 2018. 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 maintain the positive momentum in the Conference.

My delegation commends the challenging work conducted by the Swedish presidency and the flexibility shown by members in deciding on the coordinators of subsidiary bodies. I believe that, with this positive atmosphere of working together, we were able to reach an understanding on the areas of commonality in the Conference. Nonetheless, Madam President, Indonesia shares its concerns on the recent development of the debate on how we would like to proceed with this decision. While it might not be wise to argue the interpretations of the decision, my delegation is of the view that the establishment and work of the subsidiary bodies should be conducted in accordance with the agenda for the 2018 sessions adopted at the 1434th plenary meeting, on 23 January 2018. As a valuable member of the Conference, Indonesia will always maintain its good faith towards the system and continue to uphold the decisions that we have agreed on consensually.

In this regard, Indonesia profoundly hopes that we can redouble our efforts to follow up the decision. Taking into consideration the time constraints that we have, we need to begin the substantive work of the subsidiary bodies as soon as possible.

Let me conclude by reiterating that Indonesia is committed and stands ready to support your work, in line with your presidency's agenda, and to engage constructively in the Conference and in the effort to fully undertake its mandate. I thank you, Madam President.

The President: I thank the representative of Indonesia for his statement and the kind words addressed to the presidency. No other delegation seems to ask for the floor. Yes, Slovakia, please. You have the floor, Sir.

Mr. Šefčík (Slovakia): Thank you very much, Madam President. Since this is the first time my delegation takes the floor during your presidency, let me begin by congratulating you on the assumption of the presidency. I assure you of Slovakia's full support in assisting you to fulfil this role.

Slovakia condemns in the strongest terms the use of nerve agents in Salisbury and the attack against Mr. Skripal and his daughter. Any use of chemical weapons, including the use of any toxic chemicals as weapons, is unacceptable and violates international norms and human dignity. These weapons are banned under international law and have no place in the modern world. We stand with the Government of the United Kingdom and the British people. They have our full support.

We strongly reject the false and absurd accusations made by the Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson that the nerve agent used in Salisbury could have originated in Slovakia. They have no basis, are not true and are unacceptable. Slovakia is a reliable

member of the Organisation for the Prevention of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and has always implemented all its treaty obligations not to develop, produce, acquire, stockpile, transfer or use chemical weapons and to destroy them. We support the call for full and complete disclosure by the Russian Federation to OPCW of the Novichok programme. We call on the Russian Federation to respond swiftly to the British Government's legitimate request and to cooperate with the competent international agencies. Thank you, Madam President.

The President: I thank the distinguished representative of Slovakia for his statement and the kind words addressed to the presidency. Sweden, please. You have the floor.

Mr. Makarowski (Sweden): Thank you very much, Madam President, and let me congratulate you on the assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. The Swedish delegation stands ready to support your work in any way that we can.

Madam President, Sweden condemns in the strongest terms the attempted murder on United Kingdom soil using a nerve agent. We stress the seriousness of this incident, unprecedented in Europe in recent years. Those responsible for the attack must be identified and held to account for their heinous actions.

Sweden supported the decision by the United Kingdom to bring this matter to the attention of the Security Council and we have spoken on this matter in the Security Council. We note that the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, in her letter to the Secretary-General, states that the class of chemical warfare agent used was originally developed by the Soviet Union and then inherited by the Russian Federation.

Madam President, last Friday, the spokesperson of the Russian Federation's Ministry of Foreign Affairs made a statement claiming that Sweden was one of the four countries that were likely to have produced the Novichok chemical weapons agent that may have been used in the case of the attempted murder of Mr. Skripal and his daughter in Salisbury. That allegation was also made at the Organisation for the Prevention of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in The Hague. Let me be very clear, for the record, that Sweden forcefully rejects this unacceptable and unfounded allegation. The claim by the Russian Federation should be recognized for what it is: an example of manipulating information in the public space by releasing a highly speculative claim supported by no proof whatsoever. Sweden strongly urges the Russian Federation to instead answer the legitimate questions raised by the United Kingdom, a fellow State party to the Chemical Weapons Convention. I thank you, Madam President.

The President: I thank the representative of Sweden for his statement and kind words addressed to the presidency. Would any other delegation like to take the floor? This does not seem to be the case. The Russian Federation. Sir, you have the floor.

Mr. Davydov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Madam President, permit me to take the floor on a right of reply.

We have once again heard the usual series of irresponsible claims by the British about the incident in Salisbury. I would like to state once again that reports of this incident appeared in the press on 4 March. There has been absolutely no effort to work with us to get to the bottom of what, despite the fact that the Russian side immediately expressed its desire to work together.

Despite numerous requests, no information on this case has been forwarded to us. The Russian Embassy in the United Kingdom sent the Foreign Office several diplomatic notes indicating that Russia had nothing to do with the incident, requesting samples of the substance used and calling for a joint investigation. Instead, all we heard was ultimatums, while the proof of a Russian lead has remained, as before, inexistent. London has simply forgotten about the presumption of innocence.

We note that even Jeremy Corbyn, the leader of the Labour Party, has asked that at least members of Parliament should be apprised of the results of the investigation. He too was turned down. No comment is needed on that score.

From the outset, we expected the United Kingdom to activate the procedures of the Chemical Weapons Convention. When that did not happen, the Russian delegation to the

Organisation for the Prevention of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) filed an initial request along those lines on 13 March. Nor did the British make use of the tools available through the European Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters, of the Council of Europe.

I would like to say a few words about the toxic substances involved in this affair. After chemical weapons were destroyed in the Russian Federation – and this was verified by OPCW in 2017 – research into chemical weapons continued, according to our information, in Great Britain itself, and also, possibly, in a number of other countries. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, laboratories for the production of poisonous substances of the category in question remained in a number of other countries.

Incidentally, the government laboratory for weapons of mass destruction is located in Porton Down, which is right next to Salisbury. And if in London they are so convinced that it is Novichok gas that was used, then that means that they must have at least its formula and samples, and we cannot exclude the possibility that they can produce it as well. For years now, one of the developers of the gas, Vil Mirzayanov, has been living in the United States, where he was taken along with technical documentation about chemical substances. And since that time there has been no scientific research in Russia on the substance known as Novichok.

We still insist that this discussion should take place with due professionalism. We have taken note of the statement made by Britain to OPCW on 15 March. However, in this connection, we must clarify a number of points.

First, it is not clear what our British partners have in mind and specifically which provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention the British and the Technical Secretariat will use as a basis for carrying out an independent analysis of the results of the British investigation. If they intend to act on the basis of article IX of the Convention, then the secretariat's technical assistance under paragraph 4 (e) is possible only once all other measures provided under that article have been carried out, and on the basis of coordination with us. If the assistance is being requested under article X (8), then Britain must provide a clear basis for such a request, substantiating it in accordance with paragraph 9 of the same article, with the information in question.

Secondly, Theresa May's letter indicates that the substance known as Novichok can be produced only in a specialized laboratory by experts who know how to deal with highly toxic substances. We have paid attention to the statement by the British that the chemical allegedly used in the incident in Salisbury was identified, as I just said, at the Porton Down research centre, which has in the past developed chemical weapons.

Regarding the well-known and repeated British demands that we answer all the questions: we owe nothing to anyone. We can only engage in a fully open and constructive dialogue on the basis of first-hand sources, certified samples, victim and witness testimony and other case materials. We are, of course, willing to engage in such a dialogue.

As for confidence in the British sources, we all fully understand that in the not so distant past British public opinion believed the words of Prime Minister Tony Blair, who led his country into an exercise of adventurism in Iraq. He affirmed, with full confidence, that the Saddam Hussein regime possessed chemical weapons. As we later found out, he was himself "set up" by his own allies.

The President: I thank the distinguished representative of the Russian Federation and now give the floor to the representative of the United States. Ambassador Wood, you have the floor.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): Thank you, Madam President. Let me first congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. My delegation and I pledge our support to you as you carry out your endeavours.

Madam President, once again, we have just heard very typical Russian propaganda blaming everyone else for things that have happened or things that they have carried out. This is quite concerning. These charges that other countries are the source of the chemical agent used in the Salisbury attack are just absurd and, frankly, what Russia needs to do is to

cooperate fully with the authorities in the United Kingdom and with the Organisation for the Prevention of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) so that we can get to the bottom of what happened and so that the perpetrators of the attack can be brought to justice. This continual use of propaganda to deflect attention away from the source of the problem, as I said, is quite typical Russian behaviour. It does not help things. Russia needs to be honest and forthcoming with everything it knows about what happened and it needs to end this very, very bad propaganda that does nothing but show just the type of problem we are dealing with in the international community. There is a severe lack of trust and I would certainly encourage our Russian colleagues to end the blame and come forth with all the information they have at their disposal. Thank you.

The President: I thank Ambassador Wood and now give the floor to the United Kingdom. Ambassador Rowland, you have the floor.

Mr. Rowland (United Kingdom): Thank you very much, Madam President. The Russian response started the way most Russian responses do, which is to try and deflect attention from the real issue, to try and inject a series of wild hypotheses and half-truths and half-lies to distract from the real truth. The United Kingdom is following the Chemical Weapons Convention explicitly. We have acted entirely in line with the Convention, including in all of our interactions with the Organisation for the Prevention of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). On 8 March, the United Kingdom formally notified the OPCW Technical Secretariat that a chemical attack had taken place on the soil of the United Kingdom.

The Russian Federation complained that we are not using article IX of the Convention. On 12 March, once it became clear to us that a chemical weapons attack had taken place on United Kingdom soil, the Foreign Secretary summoned the Russian Ambassador and sought an explanation from his Government. Article IX contains nothing prohibiting States on whose territory a chemical weapons attack has taken place from seeking a rapid response to their immediate and urgent concerns from another State party. That is what we did on 12 March, but we received no meaningful response. Our actions have been fully consistent with our obligations under international law and, in particular, the Convention. Russia, on the other hand, is failing to comply with the provisions of the Convention. It has violated the fundamental prohibition on the use of chemical weapons contained in article I of the Convention. In addition, the United Kingdom welcomed the offer of technical assistance from the Director-General of OPCW and we invited the Technical Secretariat to independently verify our analysis, in accordance with article VIII (38) (e) of the Convention. As I said earlier, a team of scientists arrived in the United Kingdom on Monday, 19 March.

Furthermore, the United Kingdom has fully complied with its obligations under article VII of the Convention, including by implementing the Chemical Weapons Act of 1996, which translates the prohibitions of the Convention into domestic criminal law. In line with the Convention, the United Kingdom has the right to lead our own response, engaging OPCW and others as appropriate. Russia's attempt to hide behind a false interpretation of the Chemical Weapons Convention should fool no one. We asked Russia for clarification on an urgent matter of danger to the public and of national security for the United Kingdom concerning a serious violation of the Convention, and they provided none.

Instead of engaging on the substantive concern, Russia has sought to confuse the picture with, at best, a misleading procedural argument. I would like to comment very briefly on article IX. There are no provisions in the Chemical Weapons Convention that require the United Kingdom to share samples with Russia in this type of scenario. An inspected State party has a right to have duplicate copies of samples, but Russia is not an inspected State party. No article IX challenge inspections or investigations of alleged use had been called for on Russian territory. Thank you very much, Madam President.

The President: I thank Ambassador Rowland of the United Kingdom. I give the floor to the distinguished representative of the Russian Federation for his right of reply.

Mr. Deyneko (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Madam President, first I would like to congratulate you on the assumption of the presidency of the Conference on

Disarmament and on your efforts to complete work for the implementation of the Conference's decision contained in document CD/2119. You can count on our support.

As for the unreasonable polemics about the so-called Skripal affair, I would like to ask a few simple questions. First, how will a discussion of this case help solve the common goals of the Conference? Is the Conference the place where a problem so complex as to be linked with claims of the use of chemical weapons can be resolved? What role can the Conference play?

As we have seen, and there is no propaganda involved here, the Russian Federation has from the outset stated that it was not involved. What more clarifications are needed by the British side? Official ones, through which channels?

At the same time, we have requested the case file from the British authorities. We have the right to do so, as we have been publicly accused of involvement in this incident. Our question is this: Where is the propaganda here? From the start, we have attempted to build a serious dialogue, but instead we have faced a mouthpiece accusing us of the use of a chemical weapon that we do not even have. What more of an answer do they expect?

It is only after the Russian delegation raised the question of cooperation with the Organisation for the Protection of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) that the British began taking specific steps. Again, the activation of the Convention's mechanism is based on the premise that evidence has been presented, but none has been presented to us for more than two weeks. Think about that. What kind of serious dialogue can take place?

I would like once again to say that we are just as interested as the British authorities in establishing the truth. I already said as much, on Thursday. Why? Because one of the victims is a Russian citizen. Also, to the best of our knowledge, our consular staff have not been permitted or given the opportunity to meet with the victim. What kind of cooperation can take place in such circumstances?

Generally, to the extent that I know about western democracy, no western court will accept an indictment for proceedings without sufficient proof. How, then, can a State be accused without the presentation of any proof, simply asking us to believe a position according to which "we know it was you, so you just have to admit it"? We have nothing to admit, and we will not do so. And we will not entertain talks in a language of ultimatums.

I have no desire to comment further. Of course, we would like a professional dialogue to take place with OPCW experts, and since Russia is being accused, with the active participation of the Russian Federation.

The President: I thank the distinguished representative of the Russian Federation for the kind words addressed to the presidency. I now give the floor to Ambassador Rowland of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Rowland (United Kingdom): Thank you very much, Madam President. Given the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's judgment on the recent election in Russia, I would not expect my Russian colleague to understand very much about western democracies.

Coming to the point, I have set out very clearly how we are following the stipulations of the Chemical Weapons Convention and working with the Organisation for the Prevention of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to ensure that there can be an independent and impartial investigation of this matter, that the whole international community would benefit from. I am not to going to dwell on that.

Our Russian colleague asks how this assists us to reach our goals in this Conference and whether the Conference on Disarmament is the right place to discuss this sort of issue. Of course, in its better days, the Conference on Disarmament negotiated the Chemical Weapons Convention and, if we are to continue to negotiate disarmament agreements or even arms control agreements, we must have trust among ourselves. This act, along with many other Russian acts, unfortunately underlines just how little trust we can have in Russia as a negotiating partner. What value has an arms control or disarmament agreement if one of the key parties to that agreement does not declare a programme that is of relevance to that Convention?

Over the past few days, from the Russian President downwards, there have been claims that there was never a programme on Novichok, that there was a programme on Novichok but that it was all destroyed, that it was a Soviet programme that the Russian Federation never inherited. The story is simply not clear at all and that is the sort of question that the Russian Federation now needs to respond to, not just to the United Kingdom, but to the international community as a whole. Thank you.

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

Mr. Wood (United States of America): Thank you, Madam President. I will be very brief. What I referred to with regard to propaganda is this practice of blaming other countries that the Russian Federation knows are not responsible for this particular act in Salisbury. So, I would encourage our Russian colleagues to end this practice. It just further undermines what little credibility they have left. Thank you.

The President: I thank Ambassador Wood and I give the floor to the distinguished delegate of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Deyneko (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Let us refrain from distorting what has been said. Speaking of the Conference on Disarmament, I said that we here are in no position to resolve this issue. I did not raise the issue of whether we should discuss it. That is my first point.

Requesting evidence is entirely normal international practice. If you are feeling that you are in the right, then why stubbornly refuse to present the evidence? Why not, from the outset, without any propagandistic hype, invite us to take part in a joint investigation and share information, for instance? This is not a question of trust. It is a question of civilized relations, especially for those who consider themselves more advanced in such matters. We are accusing no one of anything here. It is rather the opposite; it is us who are being accused. But if you are going to level accusations, show us the proof.

The President: I thank the distinguished delegate of the Russian Federation and I give the floor to Ambassador Rowland of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Rowland (United Kingdom): Thank you for your indulgence, Madam President. The United Kingdom does not consider itself the most far-advanced in this arrangement. The United Kingdom considers that, as a community, we have put in place measures and organizations such as the Organisation for the Prevention of Chemical Weapons to reinforce the rules-based international system that underpins our collective security, and it is with those bodies that we are cooperating to provide evidence and ensure that there is an impartial investigation. Thank you.

The President: I thank Ambassador Rowland and, if no other delegation wishes to take the floor, distinguished colleagues, I have just two points to raise before closing.

First, I have not yet decided whether to hold the plenary meeting later this week to address the implementation of the decision contained in document CD/2119. I will assess, depending on progress made, whether or not there will be such a meeting later and I will inform you of my decision as early as possible. And secondly, I would like to present some information about an informal panel that will be held next Friday, at 10 a.m., on the margins of the Conference on Disarmament, on past, present and future developments in the field of nuclear disarmament verification. A number of developments have occurred regarding this issue over the past few years and others will materialize shortly. The panel is notably intended to provide the opportunity to address the upcoming first meeting of the group of governmental experts established by General Assembly resolution 71/67 with a mandate to consider the role of verification in advancing nuclear disarmament. It will also provide the opportunity to place these developments in a broader context, including the role that the Conference on Disarmament has played with regard to verification of multilateral disarmament treaties.

We have deemed that these developments are of significance for the disarmament community and that it would be of value that it should be kept abreast of this issue. This panel is a stand-alone event, and not a Conference on Disarmament meeting, whether formal or informal. It is open to all and I hope that you will be able to join us on this occasion. You should receive a flyer giving additional information shortly.

With this, I would like to declare the meeting adjourned.

The meeting rose at 11.10 a.m.