

# Conference on Disarmament

English

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

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 15 May 2018, at 10.10 a.m.

*President:* Ms. Sabrina Dallafior ..... (Switzerland)

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**The President:** I call to order the 1456th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. Excellencies, colleagues, welcome back. It is a pleasure to see you again for the start of the second part of the 2018 session of the Conference. Before we proceed with our order of business for the day, it is my pleasure to extend a warm welcome to new colleagues, Her Excellency Ms. Sally Mansfield, Permanent Representative of Australia to the Conference, and His Excellency Mr. Lee Jang-keun, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea to the Conference. And last but not least, His Excellency Mr. Azeez, Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka to the Conference.

On behalf of my Government and on behalf of the Conference, I would like to take this opportunity to assure you of our full cooperation and support in your new assignments. Since our last plenary meeting, we have received a request from one delegation wishing to participate in our work as a non-member State, as in document CD/WP.604/Add.5 before you, based on the request received after 3 p.m. yesterday, Monday, 14 May. I would like to know whether there are any comments on this request. Can I take it that the Conference decides to invite this State to participate in our work in accordance with the rules of procedure?

*It was so decided.*

**The President:** Allow me to suspend the meeting for a brief moment in order to allow the representative of the non-member State who has just been invited to participate in the work of the Conference to take a seat in the Council Chamber.

*The meeting was briefly suspended.*

**The President:** During the first part of the 2018 session, the Conference held intensive consultations, and these efforts were fruitful, as the Conference adopted two decisions regarding the establishment of five subsidiary bodies to address matters of substance. These decisions are significant expressions of the Conference's collective readiness to seek to overcome its long-standing deadlock. But the establishment of the subsidiary bodies was only an initial step. Ensuring that the subsidiary bodies fulfil their mandate will require a sustained engagement by Conference members. Subsidiary bodies will start meeting as early as this afternoon and they will follow a fairly intense schedule until the end of June. We are fortunate in that the subsidiary bodies will meet under the authority and stewardship of five experienced coordinators. The coordinators have worked intensively during the break in order to prepare for the upcoming meetings. Several of them have already circulated documents clarifying their intention and providing guidance for the discussions to come. I am very grateful for all their efforts. I also welcome the fact that the subsidiary bodies follow a broadly similar approach to their work.

Finally, let me underline that the Swiss presidency of the Conference will take fully into account the already busy Conference calendar in planning for the remaining two weeks of its tenure.

Allow me now to turn to the list of speakers for today. The following delegations have requested the floor: Australia, Republic of Korea, Sri Lanka, the United Kingdom and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. I now give the floor to the representative of Australia.

**Ms. Mansfield (Australia):** Madam President, I am delighted to assume my duties in Geneva representing Australia and attending the Conference on Disarmament for the first time. I have had the pleasure of meeting some of you already and I look forward to getting to know you. I have the sense that the disarmament community is a tight-knit collegiate group with an enormous work agenda and I very much look forward to being part of that.

I am conscious that I have come here at a challenging time for international security and disarmament. The rules and the institutions that help maintain peace and security and guide global cooperation are under strain. With divergent interests and shifts in power between States, it is more difficult to respond collectively to security challenges. In this context, it is essential that we promote and protect the international rules and institutions that support stability and prosperity and enable cooperation to tackle global challenges. I see the role of Australia in the Conference through this lens – maintaining and strengthening the rules-based international order by using the Conference to build

collaboration and common ground on disarmament and international security. At the best of times, this takes patience and political will. We will need to build progress incrementally in a way that takes account of all our security interests.

I am told that year after year there is an echo chamber of regretting the Conference's failure yet again to agree a programme of work with a negotiating mandate. I wish the situation were different, but if reaching consensus were easy we would have done so years ago. Today, I prefer to focus on the positive momentum demonstrated by last year's working group on the way ahead, ably chaired by Ambassador Lynn, and the opportunity presented this year through the Conference's decision to establish five subsidiary bodies, which start their work later today. Australia will participate actively and constructively with a view to building trust, understanding and, hopefully, common ground for future negotiations. Australia was also pleased to chair the United Nations Disarmament Commission in New York this year, getting the new three-year cycle off to a good start.

The Conference does not operate in a vacuum, and much has happened since the Conference last met in late March. On issues related to the Korean Peninsula, Australia welcomes the news that the United States-North Korea summit will be held in Singapore on 12 June. We hope North Korea will honour its commitment to complete denuclearization of the Panmunjom Declaration on Peace, Prosperity and Reunification of the Korean Peninsula. Australia remains committed to the consistent goal of the international community – complete, irreversible and verifiable denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula – and we will continue to work alongside our partners to this end.

On Syria, Australia condemned the use of chemical weapons on 7 April in Duma. The use of chemical weapons any time, anywhere, under any circumstances, is abhorrent and deserves investigation and accountability. We strongly support the independent investigation of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons into the attack. On another matter, the Australian Government has consistently said that the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action should remain in force until such time as an alternative arrangement can be negotiated.

Many of those present in this chamber attended the recent meetings of the Preparatory Committee for the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, in Geneva. For Australia, the Treaty remains a crucial element in the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation architecture, as well as in the promotion of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Australia will continue to make every effort to strengthen and support this important treaty. I do not intend to outline Australia's position on the various issues on the Conference's agenda. There will be plenty of time to do so during the meetings of the subsidiary bodies. But I would like to flag that last week the Australian Government announced new investments in our country's space industry, including for the development of world leading satellite infrastructure and technologies. We will shortly establish our first space agency. The economic and security interests in space of Australia, like those of other countries, will grow. At the same time, the expansion of space-based technologies creates risks. Australia is committed to strengthening the international laws and norms that apply to State behaviour in space, including military uses of space. We look forward to the discussions in the subsidiary body on preventing an arms race in outer space.

Before closing, I would like to say a few words on culture and values in organizations. I have just come from running our department's people management area, so I have a particular interest in building effective institutions. I believe deeply that individuals make a difference and that mentoring, valuing diversity and ensuring respectful communications go a long way in achieving our common purpose. From me and from the Australian delegation, you can expect a constructive, pragmatic and realistic approach. We will question why, and look for creative approaches to our work, including from other forums. You can expect us to focus on our region, connecting the dots between global security issues and the Indo-Pacific region, which is important for us, and in particular, to pay particular attention to any impact on the Pacific itself. You can expect an inclusive, cross-regional approach that encourages diversity – diversity of views, gender and geographic perspectives – and you can expect unwavering attention to the central question of how our work contributes to making our community safer and more secure.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of the Republic of Korea.

**Mr. Lee Jang-keun** (Republic of Korea): As Ambassador Dallafior mentioned, I arrived in Geneva only last week and am still in the middle of finding my way around the city, but in fact the Conference on Disarmament is not new to me at all. I was here first in the summer of 2008, when Korea first tabled the First Committee resolution on illicit brokering, together with Australia, to explain our plan for the resolution relating to the membership of the Conference and to request its support for it. I was also here last March, accompanying my Minister as she delivered her speech at the high-level segment. But I am here now again, and I am very honoured and pleased to be on my own in a different capacity, and to make my first statement.

During the past week, I presented my letter of appointment from my Minister to Ambassador Dallafior and also had several opportunities to meet with ambassadors of the six member States that will occupy the presidency this session, and also with the coordinators of some of the subsidiary bodies. During the discussions, one thing they all told me in one voice was that I was here at a very interesting time, as the Conference is slowly waking up from a long hibernation. In this regard, I cannot but express my deep appreciation to the previous Presidents of this body and also the presidencies of Sri Lanka, Sweden and Switzerland for making this happen. I agree that revitalizing the Conference, the single international disarmament-negotiating forum of the United Nations, is of the utmost importance in sustaining international peace and security. We must seize this hard-won momentum, and I would like to assure the presidencies and coordinators of the five subsidiary bodies – namely the Ambassadors of Indonesia, the Netherlands, Brazil, Germany and Belarus – of my delegation's full support. I believe that the substantive discussions starting this afternoon will not only enhance our common understanding but also cultivate confidence among us, which is crucial to the success of our common endeavour here in the Conference.

I might have ample opportunity to express my country's positions on the various issues under discussion in this body, but I would like to focus on one thing today in my first statement about what is happening on the Korean Peninsula. This is also echoing the interest shown during my first encounters with some Ambassadors, who showed a great interest in and expectations for the recent developments. If you remember the atmosphere in this very room just one year ago on the issue of the Korean Peninsula, you might realize that there has been a sea change now. No one at the time might have thought of what is happening now on the Korean Peninsula. Since his inauguration in May last year, President Moon Jae-in has made persistent efforts to engage North Korea in dialogue for the resolution of the nuclear and missile crisis on the Korean Peninsula. His efforts finally started to yield results, especially with the participation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in the Pyeongchang Winter Olympic Games. It was followed by the visit of our envoy to Pyongyang and Washington in March, which led to the decision to hold the United States-Democratic People's Republic of Korea summit.

On 20 April, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea announced that it would discontinue nuclear tests as well as ballistic missile tests and dismantle its nuclear test sites. On 27 April, the two Koreas finally held a historic inter-Korean summit in the southern part of Panmunjom, leading to a crucial turning point for denuclearization and peace on the Korean Peninsula. After open and candid discussions, the two leaders declared that a new era of peace had begun and signed the Panmunjom Declaration, which consists of three sections: first, measures for the comprehensive and ground-breaking advancement in inter-Korea relations; second, efforts for alleviating military tension and eliminating the danger of war; and, third, cooperation for the establishment of a permanent and solid peace on the Korean Peninsula, including the confirmation of the common goal of complete denuclearization. In this chamber, I believe that it is particularly pertinent to note the great significance of the fact that the two leaders confirmed in writing the common goal of realizing a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula through complete denuclearization. As you all know, the United States-Democratic People's Republic of Korea summit is scheduled to be held on 12 June in Singapore. The first ever meeting between the leaders of the United States and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will be a rare historic opportunity to pursue denuclearization and the establishment of peace on the Korean Peninsula.

All signs indicate that both sides are sincerely committed to the success of the upcoming summit. It is particularly welcome that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is taking voluntary and proactive measures, as I mentioned earlier. I believe that the dismantlement of nuclear test sites in Punggye-ri will mark the start of the complete denuclearization process. As for the United States, Secretary of State Pompeo has already made two visits to North Korea to make preparations and has expressed his hope for a successful meeting. Furthermore, at the Korea-Japan-China trilateral summit held in Tokyo last week, the three leaders expressed their support for the Panmunjom Declaration and ongoing efforts for denuclearization. The next few weeks will be critical for the success of the United States-Democratic People's Republic of Korea summit. Korea will continue to work with all members of the international community, in particular those in this chamber. I am sure that the progress made on the Korean Peninsula could have positive spillover effects on the work of the Conference as well and also on other fronts in international efforts for disarmament and proliferation. I would like to ask your continued and sincere support for our endeavours in making history, not only on the Korean Peninsula and the region, but also across the globe. I look forward to working closely with you during my mandate here and to engaging with you not only on this issue of the Korean Peninsula, but also on all other international security and peace-related matters under discussion.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Sri Lanka.

**Mr. Azeez** (Sri Lanka): Today is the first time I take the floor in the Conference on Disarmament. I am pleased to do so as you preside over this plenary. I also thank Sweden and Switzerland for giving leadership to the Conference at this most crucial time.

I do not need to belabour the point that the Conference is the negotiating forum for multilateral instruments on arms control and disarmament. We are aware that negotiations, by their very nature, involve addressing challenging issues, and an exchange of perspectives and understanding. The essential task of the process remains one of endeavouring to achieve negotiated outcomes. The eventual goal of general and complete disarmament underpins the fulfilment of that task. Between 1996, when I left Geneva on completion of my assignment as a second secretary in the Sri Lankan Mission, and today, when I am back again, I wonder whether anything significant that has happened in the Conference has been lost on me. The two decades of inaction and prevarication have only marked a generation gap. Apart from everything else that the Conference should have endeavoured to achieve in the area of arms control and disarmament, there was a resultant loss of a generation of experts and professionals who could understand and address disarmament-related issues. The gap in disarmament education has been all too glaring.

Against this backdrop, we feel it is a consolation that the Conference adopted a significant decision in February this year. The decision contained in document CD/2119, complemented strongly by the decision contained in CD/2126, has led to the establishment of five subsidiary bodies to work on specific areas of interest to all members of the Conference, as well as the disarmament community. We need to ensure that we do not lose this momentum and that we move forward with substantial discussions.

It is satisfying to note that the subsidiary bodies will be convening their sessions shortly and that delegations will be addressing matters within the purview of each theme assigned to the subsidiary bodies. I take this opportunity to assure all delegations that are present here that in the coming weeks and months the delegation of Sri Lanka will remain actively engaged in this process. We need to build consensus even as we maintain differences in our approaches. What is at stake is the collective security of all humanity. We need to ensure that no one is left behind in the context of the advancement of the United Nations development agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, not against a backdrop of an arms race, proliferation and armament, instead of disarmament and non-proliferation.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Rowland** (United Kingdom): Madam President, I would like to make a statement on the actions that we have taken together with our allies from the United States and France last month, while this body was in recess, to degrade the Syrian regime's chemical weapons capabilities and to deter their future use. On Saturday, 7 April, up to 75

people, including young children, were killed in a horrific attack in Duma, with as many as 500 further casualties. All indications are that this was a chemical weapons attack. United Kingdom medical and scientific experts have analysed open-source reports, images and video footage from the incident and concluded that the victims were exposed to a toxic chemical. This is corroborated by first-hand accounts from non-governmental organizations and aid workers, while the World Health Organization received reports that hundreds of patients arrived at Syrian health facilities on Saturday night with signs and symptoms consistent with exposure to toxic chemicals. Based on our assessment, we do not think that reports could be falsified on this scale.

Furthermore, the Syrian regime has reportedly been attempting to conceal the evidence by searching evacuees from Duma to ensure samples are not being smuggled from the area. The fact that such an atrocity can take place in our world today is a stain on our humanity. We are clear about who is responsible. A significant body of information, including intelligence, indicates the Syrian regime is responsible for this latest attack. Open-source accounts state that barrel bombs were used to deliver the chemicals. Barrel bombs are usually delivered by helicopters. Multiple open-source reports and intelligence indicate that regime helicopters operated over Duma on the evening of 7 April shortly before reports emerged on social media of a chemical attack, and Syrian military officials coordinated what appears to be the use of chlorine weapons. No other group could have carried out this attack. The opposition does not operate helicopters or use barrel bombs. Daesh does not even have a presence in Duma, and the reports of this attack are consistent with previous regime attacks. These include the attack on 21 August 2013, when over 800 people were killed and thousands more injured in a chemical attack, also in Ghutah, 14 further smaller-scale chemical attacks reported prior to that summer, 3 further chlorine attacks in 2014 and 2015, which the independent United Nations Security Council-mandated investigation attributed to the regime, and the attack at Khan Shaykhun on 4 April 2017, where the Syrian regime used sarin against its people, killing around 100, with a further 500 casualties.

Based on the regime's persistent pattern of behaviour and the cumulative analysis of specific incidents, we judged it highly likely that the Syrian regime had continued to use chemical weapons on at least four occasions since the attack in Khan Shaykhun and we judged that they would have continued to do so. So we needed to intervene rapidly to alleviate further indiscriminate humanitarian suffering. We explored every possible diplomatic channel to do so, but our efforts have been repeatedly thwarted. Following the sarin attack in eastern Damascus back in 2013, the Syrian regime committed to dismantle its chemical weapons programme, and Russia promised to ensure Syria did this, overseen by the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. But this process did not work. It did not eradicate the chemical weapons capability of the Syrian regime. Only last month, the Organisation found Syria's declaration of its former chemical weapons programme to be incomplete. This did not stop the Syrian regime from carrying out the most abhorrent atrocities using these weapons.

Furthermore, on each occasion when we have seen every sign of chemical weapons being used, Russia has blocked any attempt to hold the perpetrators to account at the United Nations Security Council, with six such vetoes since the start of 2017. And following the attack in Duma, Russia blocked a Security Council resolution that would have established an independent investigation capable of determining responsibility for this latest attack. So, regrettably, we had no choice but to conclude that diplomatic action on its own was not going to work. The Cabinet of the United Kingdom agreed that it was not just morally right, but also legally right, to take military action together with our closest allies to alleviate further humanitarian suffering. This was not about intervening in a civil war, and it was not about regime change. It was about a limited, targeted and effective strike that sought to alleviate the humanitarian suffering of the Syrian people by degrading the Syrian regime's chemical weapons capability and deterring its use. We have published the legal basis for this action. It required three conditions to be met. First, there must be convincing evidence, generally accepted by the international community as a whole, of extreme humanitarian distress on a large scale, requiring immediate and urgent relief. Second, it must be objectively clear that there is no practical alternative to the use of force if lives are to be saved, and third, the proposed use of force must be necessary and proportionate to the aim

of relieving humanitarian suffering and must be strictly limited in time and in scope to the same.

I have set out why we are convinced by the evidence and why there was no practical alternative. Let me set out how this military response was also proportionate. This was a limited, targeted and effective strike that would significantly degrade Syrian chemical weapons capabilities and deter their future use, and with clear boundaries that expressly sought to avoid escalation and did everything possible to prevent civilian casualties. As a result, the coordinated actions of the United States, the United Kingdom and France were successfully and specifically targeted at three sites. The first was the Barzah branch of the Scientific Studies and Research Centre in northern Damascus. This was a centre for the research and development of Syria's chemical and biological programme. The second site was the Him Shinshar chemical weapons bunkers 15 miles west of the city of Homs, which contained both a chemical weapons equipment and storage facility and an important command post, and the third site was the Him Shinshar chemical weapons storage site and former missile base, which is now a military facility. This was assessed to be a location of Syrian sarin and precursor production equipment, whose destruction would degrade Syria's ability to deliver sarin in the future. Very careful scientific analysis was used to determine where best to target these missiles to maximize the destruction of stockpiled chemicals and to minimize any risk to the surrounding area. While targeted and limited, these strikes by the United States, the United Kingdom and France were significantly larger than the United States action a year ago after the attack at Khan Shaykhun, and they were specifically designed to have a greater impact on the regime's capability and willingness to use chemical weapons. We also minimized the chances of wider escalation through our carefully targeted approach, and we will all note that Russia has not reported any losses of personnel or equipment as a result of the strikes.

Military action was specifically focused on degrading the Syrian regime's chemical weapons capability and deterring its future use. In order to achieve this, there must also be a wider diplomatic effort, including the full range of political and economic levers to strengthen global norms prohibiting the use of chemical weapons, which had stood for nearly a century. So we will continue to work with our international partners on tough economic action against those involved with the production or dissemination of chemical weapons. We will continue to push for the re-establishment of an international investigative mechanism which can attribute responsibility for chemical weapons use in Syria. We will advance, with our French allies, the new International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons, which will meet in the coming weeks, and we will continue to strengthen the international coalition we have built since the attack in Salisbury. We cannot go back to a world where the use of chemical weapons becomes normalized. We are clear that the way we protect our national interest is to stand up for the global rules and standards that keep us all safe. This is what we have done and what we will continue to do.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

**Mr. Han** Tae-song (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Welcome, new representatives to the Conference on Disarmament family. At the outset, Madam President, allow me to begin by congratulating you on your assumption of the first presidency of the second part of the 2018 session of the Conference. You can count on my support and cooperation. Since we will be focusing on in-depth discussions on key issues during the second part of the Conference, I would like to assure you of my delegation's commitment to making contributions to the successful results of this discussion.

Just before, my compatriot, the South Korean representative, mentioned what is happening on the Korean Peninsula. I would like also to express my view on this, trying to avoid overlapping with what he said. The situation of the Korean Peninsula attracted global attention as a matter of great interest from the beginning of this year. Comrade Kim Jong-un, Chairman of the State Affairs Commission of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, said in his New Year's address that North and South should improve their frozen relations and glorify this year as an eventful one not foreseen in the history of the nation, and he laid out ways and means to achieve this goal. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea formally committed to put an end to a history of confrontation and to make

contributions to regional and global peace, and it took unprecedented measures to bring about dramatic changes in the situation on the Korean Peninsula. This resulted in the creation of a good atmosphere for improving inter-Korean relations during the twenty-third Winter Olympic Games in March, followed by the historic North-South summit and the adoption in April of the Panmunjom Declaration on Peace, Prosperity and Reunification of the Korean Peninsula.

The Panmunjom Declaration is a signal flare fired by the North and South of Korea and serves as a historical milestone for a new era of independent reunification and common prosperity. The eye-opening spectacular events, which no one ever could have imagined occurring just a few months ago, are unfolding one after another, and inter-Korean relations, which had been frozen for 10 years, have taken a dramatic new turn within a short period of only four months, leading to a positive atmosphere of de-escalation of tension and building of mutual trust. This remarkable reality is the result of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's strong will to defend peace and its courageous determination for national reunification.

Through the Panmunjom Declaration, North and South confirmed the common goal of turning the Korean Peninsula into a nuclear-free zone through complete denuclearization. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea declared in April that it will discontinue nuclear tests and the test firing of intercontinental ballistic missiles. Its declaration was followed by the announcement this month of its plan to dismantle the nuclear test site – within 10 days' time – in order to ensure transparency. Discontinuation of nuclear tests and follow-up measures are an important process for global disarmament, and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will join the international desire and efforts for a total ban on nuclear testing.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea will further make efforts to achieve the development of inter-Korean relations, defuse acute military tensions and substantially remove the danger of war on the Korean Peninsula. It will make sincere efforts to end the present abnormal armistice and establish a lasting peace mechanism on the Korean Peninsula. Misleading the public, arguing as if the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's clarification of its intention to denuclearize the Korean Peninsula expressed at the North-South summit were a result of so-called sanctions and pressures, or talking about continuing maximum pressure, cannot be construed as anything other than a dangerous attempt to ruin the hard-won atmosphere of dialogue and to worsen the situation. I would like to take this opportunity to express my expectation that the international community will extend its active support in encouraging and promoting the current positive climate on the Korean Peninsula. My delegation will play a responsible role, conducive to bringing the Conference back to life this year after the long-standing stalemate of over 20 years.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of France.

**Mr. Riquet** (France) (*spoke in French*): I am taking the floor to speak about the action that my country took on the night of 13 April alongside the United States of America and the United Kingdom, following the Syrian Government's criminal use of chemical weapons in Duma on 7 April 2018. On Saturday, 7 April 2018, in Duma, dozens of men, women and children were massacred with chemical weapons, in complete violation of international law and United Nations Security Council resolutions.

Some days later, France published a national evaluation based on technical analyses of open-source information and declassified intelligence obtained by the French intelligence services. This national evaluation is available online on the France Diplomatie and France Disarmament websites. The facts and the Syrian regime's responsibility are not open to doubt. The red line drawn by France in May 2017 was crossed. We had said that we would not fail to react to such a transgression. We took note of the systematic obstruction of the United Nations Security Council. We thus acted in accordance with our word and our responsibility, in coordination with our allies.

By using chemical weapons, the Syrian regime deliberately chose to break a taboo dating from the early twentieth century. For seven years, it has repeatedly infringed international standards in complete disregard of the law of war and basic humanity. The chemical escalation in Syria is not acceptable. It is not acceptable because the use of



chemical weapons is a violation of a fundamental norm of international law and humanitarian law. The use of these weapons of terror violates some of the earliest conventions, including the Geneva Protocol of 1925, which prohibits the use of chemical weapons in war. It violates the Chemical Weapons Convention signed in Paris in 1993, to which Damascus acceded in 2013.

The manufacture and use of these weapons pose a threat to international peace and security. Those that do manufacture and use them make pariahs of themselves. Chemical escalation is not acceptable because the Syrian regime had made a commitment to the complete dismantlement of its arsenal. In September 2013, the United Nations Security Council took note of this commitment and decided, through resolution 2118 (2013), that non-compliance by Syria would result in the imposition of measures under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations. Chapter VII makes clear that military measures are to be taken to stop those who threaten international peace and security.

The President of the French Republic therefore ordered the French armed forces to intervene, as part of an international operation conducted in a coalition with the United States of America and the United Kingdom, against the Syrian regime's clandestine chemical weapons arsenal. Our response was limited to the Syrian regime's facilities for the production and use of chemical weapons. In accordance with the Constitution of the French Republic, the French parliament was informed, and a parliamentary debate was held on 16 April, following this decision, to order the intervention of our armed forces abroad. We can have no tolerance for the normalization of the use of chemical weapons, which poses an immediate danger to the Syrian people and to our collective security. That is the essence of the initiatives and efforts constantly made by France and its partners at the United Nations. They are aimed at setting up an international mechanism to establish responsibility, preventing impunity and obstructing any temptation on the part of the Syrian regime to repeat these acts.

Since May 2017, France has had the same priority objectives in Syria: to end the fight against Daesh; to allow humanitarian aid to reach civilians; to engage a collective movement towards a political settlement of the conflict so that peace can finally return to Syria; and to ensure the stability of the region. France would thus like to focus on certain political initiatives. In our view, three things must first be ensured. First, the verifiable and irreversible dismantlement of the Syrian chemical programme. Secondly, a ceasefire throughout Syria and humanitarian access to civilians, as required by Security Council resolutions. These decisions have the force of international law. They are binding on all. They have remained a dead letter until now, and we must resurrect them. Thirdly, a plan to end the crisis, which must be found with a political solution. We are ready to work on it now, with any countries that can help. Thank you.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

**Mr. Al Ashkar** (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I have asked for the floor in order to respond to the statements made regarding my country by the representatives of France and the United Kingdom and to reply to the accusations they have levelled and to their attempt to justify the attacks launched against the Syrian Arab Republic, in flagrant violation of the Charter of the United Nations and international law.

The truth is that, at the beginning of this second part of the 2018 session of the Conference on Disarmament, we were expecting representatives of member States to focus on the positive progress that has been made: the establishment of the subsidiary bodies and the appointment of coordinators for those bodies with a view to relaunching the Conference's work and breaking its stalemate, a stalemate not unwelcome to some. However, the representatives of the United Kingdom and France continue to insist on using this platform to denigrate the Syrian Government and to spread empty and politically motivated propaganda, unsubstantiated by tangible material evidence, to justify the criminal attacks their countries have perpetrated against my country. Those attacks – which, as I said, constitute a flagrant violation of international law and the Charter of the United Nations – came just one day before the arrival of inspectors from the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW); they were carried out without any indication to OPCW

itself, and without awaiting the outcome of any professional and impartial investigations to identify the perpetrators.

The attempt to justify the attacks on the basis of so-called intelligence reminds us of the intelligence described as reliable and used to support the invasion of another country, bringing tragedy and death to hundreds of thousands of people and displacement to millions more. Certain parties still insist on relying on intelligence as the basis on which to deliver judgment vis-à-vis the use of chemical weapons, which is a very serious matter that, far from serving and promoting the non-proliferation regime as a whole, actually constitutes an affront and a blow against that regime. In fact, in making such serious allegations, the representative of the United Kingdom has relied on media reports, images and videos which any amateur or even incompetent director is capable of recording and transmitting: a manifest, risible and wretched attempt to justify the attacks.

Using this platform to raise, once again, the subject of the use of chemical weapons in Syria and to toss around unsubstantiated allegations constitutes inadmissible politicization. It is motivated by the clearly hostile stance that the United Kingdom and its allies have towards my country. Such allegations have become a tedious broken record that convince no one save certain States that trade in the blood of Syrian civilians to serve their own interventionist and imperialist agendas and that support and finance terrorism inside Syria. It is no coincidence that such allegations are raised whenever the Syrian Arab Army has made significant progress in extirpating terrorist bases. Is it not clear that the real purpose is to lengthen the lives of the terrorists in Duma? Can any sensible person believe that the Syrian Arab Army, which liberated eastern Ghutah in a matter of weeks and which has made such rapid progress towards eliminating terrorism, needs to use such weapons just as it is securing one victory after another against the terrorists and gaining the upper hand? And, in the light of that information, can any sensible person believe that the army has any need to conduct such operations, which beget no military advantage but merely bring well-known and negative repercussions?

The pretext of the use of chemical weapons was planned in advance. Reliable and verified information to that effect has been supplied by the Syrian Government to the Security Council and OPCW in the form of hundreds of official letters explaining how terrorist groups in eastern Ghutah were preparing scenarios for the use of chemicals and fabricating pretexts for Western military intervention in Syria. Western States, whether deliberately or not, have provided a media and political umbrella for the activity of the terrorist groups through anti-Syrian reporting and a focus on accusations of the use of chemicals by Syria, while at the same time overlooking the fact that those groups themselves possessed chemical weapons. In fact, stockpiles and factories of chemical materials and weapons have been discovered in Shaffunyah and other towns of eastern Ghutah.

Terrorist groups have launched numerous chemical attacks against Syrian civilians and the Syrian Arab Army, beginning with an attack against the latter at Khan al-Asal in 2013. A number of media outlets and organizations that speak on behalf of the terrorists began a coordinated campaign to accuse the Syrian Arab Army of using chemical weapons during its antiterror operations in Duma. This was followed by a Western political campaign to justify any aggressive measures taken against my country, the aim of which was to ensure that the terrorists did not collapse, particularly as the terrorist base in Duma, being so close to the capital, was the last card the anti-Syrian States could use to apply pressure on Damascus. The loss of that base was a hard blow for the States that support and finance terrorism.

The accusations, which have come just as positive developments are being made in the political process, have the clear purpose of hindering political progress towards ending the suffering of the Syrian people and stopping the bloodshed. They represent an attempt to extend and perpetuate the crisis in the name of narrow political interests and at the cost of Syrian blood. The accusations also come in the wake of the failure of repeated attempts by the United Kingdom, France and their allies to manipulate the Security Council into issuing resolutions to apply pressure on my country's Government, provoking and blackmailing it with the pretext of the use of chemical weapons.

The time has come to stop the manipulation of the noble goals and aims of United Nations mechanisms with a view to making them serve the destructive, interventionist and imperialist agendas of certain States, States that see the United Nations only as an agency for the implementation of their own agendas. Those States do not allow the truth about the use of chemical weapons to be known; they do not allow commissions of inquiry to carry out their work professionally, impartially and objectively, because the truth would not serve their interests. Quite the contrary, in complicity with their regional proxies, they concoct crimes involving the use of chemical weapons with the intention of then launching accusations against the Syrian Government. In fact, having exhausted all other means with which to apply pressure, such weapons are the most serious thing they can find to use against Syria.

The Syrian Government condemns the use of chemical weapons in the strongest possible terms. It considers such use by any side, in any place and under any circumstances to be immoral, and it has fulfilled its own obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention. Syria does not possess any chemical weapon, a fact that has been acknowledged by OPCW, and it has been complying with the Chemical Weapons Convention and cooperating positively and transparently with OPCW since it acceded to the Convention in 2013.

Lastly, I would like to recall that, when making their statements, member States of the Conference have an obligation to abide by the norms of diplomatic propriety and should desist from using terms that are inappropriate for this illustrious forum. At the same time, I would like to point out that we ourselves are not incapable of using similar language. However, we refrain from doing so out of a desire to maintain a professional and constructive working environment and a disinclination to use language that reveals only futile resentment.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of the United States.

**Mr. Wood** (United States of America): As my United Kingdom and French colleagues have already said, on 13 April, United States, French and British forces undertook military operations against the Syrian regime's chemical weapons programme. Our strikes were focused on degrading Syria's chemical weapons capabilities and deterring further use – consistent with the policies of the United States and our allies on Syria. As I think many in this room know, the United States has tried repeatedly to use diplomatic and economic tools to stop the Assad regime's use of chemical weapons. We have sought action at the United Nations and the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). We have imposed sanctions in partnership with the European Union and other countries. However, Russia has stood in the way of every effort the United States and our partners have taken over the past year. By shielding its ally, Syria, Russia has failed to live up to its international commitments in guaranteeing the removal of chemical weapons from Syria. It has betrayed the Chemical Weapons Convention, United Security Council resolution 2118 (2013) and its commitment to OPCW. And as we have said before, and despite the remarks just made by the regime's representative here, the Assad regime's history of using chemical weapons against its own people is not in dispute, as determined four times by the impartial, independent OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism. The 7 April attack in Duma, among other chemical weapons attacks conducted by the Assad regime, violates Syria's obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention and United Nations Security Council resolution 2118 (2013), and as I have said many times before, it is critical that Assad be held accountable for the crimes he has committed against his own people.

I would like now to turn to the situation on the Korean Peninsula. The United States welcomes the professed commitment by North Korea to end nuclear tests and ballistic missile launches and to shut down its nuclear test site, and the United States looks forward to the 12 June United States-Democratic People's Republic of Korea summit in Singapore. It is a historic opportunity to achieve peace on the Korean Peninsula, and the United States will be seeking a complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. As I have said, it is a historic opportunity, and we hope North Korea will seize the moment and take the bold steps necessary to lead North Korea to a peaceful and prosperous future.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of the Russian Federation.

**Mr. Deyneko** (Russian Federation) (spoke in Russian): First of all, we would like to welcome all our colleagues in the room and congratulate them on the start of the second part of the Conference's 2018 session. I would also like to welcome the new Ambassadors of Australia, the Republic of Korea and Sri Lanka, with whom we look forward to entering into a cooperative working relationship aimed at achieving a common outcome.

As you know, and as we have said many times in this room, we are not in favour of importing to the Conference topics that do not belong in the forum or are patently divisive, ones that in no way further our common goal of agreeing a programme of work as soon as possible.

With regard to the specific issues raised and the numerous accusations hurled against Russia, first of all, our British colleague must not be up to date, but we certainly cannot say the same of the representatives of the United States of America and France; they are surely well aware that their experts were offered and promised assistance in conducting an inspection visit to the city of Duma in order to fully study the circumstances of what took place there on 7 April. Regrettably, neither London nor Paris replied to this proposal. It was proposed that the visit could be conducted either as part of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) mission or in a national capacity. Is it not astounding that the two capitals have reached findings that they claim to be based on facts, while declining the opportunity to verify everything at the scene of the supposed crime?

Secondly, the missile strike against Syria was carried out before the OPCW mission's arrival in the country. This, too, is a fact, not some video on social media. Would it not have been more logical to wait until the fact-finding mission had issued its conclusions before taking specific action – provided, of course, that the national conclusions had the authority of OPCW behind them? Indeed, our colleagues have invoked the findings of the Joint Investigative Mechanism on a number of occasions. Why – as would seem to me to have been more logical – was the same approach not taken in the current case?

Thirdly, when massive missile strikes are carried out against a chemical facility, chemicals are released in massive quantities, and a wide area, including the local population, is exposed to toxins. After these large-scale strikes – and let me recall that over 100 missiles of various classes were fired into Syrian territory – the surrounding area showed no signs of contamination.

I will not offer any of the now rather dated examples that clearly show the value of the intelligence gathered and findings reached by the intelligence agencies of Western States, particularly the United Kingdom. We all know this from the example of Syria, and from many other examples. In this connection, it is quite clear that the missile strikes had nothing to do with the use of chemical weapons but served completely different aims.

My last point once again concerns the authority of OPCW. On 26 April, OPCW organized a briefing whose participants included those filmed in the White Helmets' video, the alleged victims and participants of the incident in Duma on 7 April. And yet, dear colleagues, the most ardent truth-seekers did not even attend. Does this not give an indication of the true aims of the strike?

This list could be added to ad infinitum. I would like to raise one further point, namely that, once Duma had been liberated, a store of chemical weapons containing products manufactured in the London suburb of Salisbury was found. A coincidence? I think not.

I think the time has come to renounce “megaphone” diplomacy and loud accusations about the “regime” and other such things that have never featured in classical diplomacy. Such tactics ultimately bring us no closer to a solution to the problem, but only heighten tensions between States, including the delegations here at the Conference on Disarmament. Let us leave all these complex situations to the international organizations that should actually be handling them.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Rowland** (United Kingdom): I will perhaps exercise my right to reply later, but I have a second statement to make. I would like to repeat to this chamber the joint statement from Prime Minister Theresa May, Chancellor Angela Merkel and President Emmanuel Macron following President Trump's statement on Iran, on 8 May:

It is with regret and concern that we, the leaders of France, Germany and the United Kingdom, take note of President Trump's decision to withdraw the United States of America from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

Together, we emphasize our continuing commitment to the Plan. This agreement remains important for our shared security. We recall that the Plan was unanimously endorsed by the United Nations Security Council in resolution 2231 (2015). This resolution remains the binding international legal framework for the resolution of the dispute about the Iranian nuclear programme. We urge all sides to remain committed to its full implementation and to act in a spirit of responsibility.

According to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Iran continues to abide by the restrictions set out by the Plan, in line with its obligations under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. The world is a safer place as a result. Therefore, we, the E3, will remain parties to the Plan. Our Governments remain committed to ensuring the agreement is upheld, and will work with all the remaining parties to the deal to ensure this remains the case, including through ensuring the continuing economic benefit to the Iranian people that are linked to the agreement.

We urge the United States to ensure that the structures of the Plan can remain intact and to avoid taking action which obstructs its full implementation by all other parties to the deal. After engaging with the United States Administration in a thorough manner over the past months, we call on the United States to do everything possible to preserve the gains for nuclear non-proliferation brought about by the Plan, by allowing for a continued enforcement of its main elements.

We encourage Iran to show restraint in response to the decision by the United States. Iran must continue to meet its own obligations under the deal, cooperating fully and in a timely manner with IAEA inspection requirements. IAEA must be able to continue to carry out its long term-verification and monitoring programme without restriction or hindrance. In turn, Iran should continue to receive the sanctions relief it is entitled to while it remains in compliance with the terms of the deal.

There must be no doubt: Iran's nuclear programme must always remain peaceful and civilian. While taking the Plan as a base, we also agree that other major issues of concern need to be addressed. A long-term framework for Iran's nuclear programme after some of the provisions of the Plan expire, after 2025, will have to be defined. Because our commitment to the security of our allies and partners in the region is unwavering, we must also address in a meaningful way shared concerns about Iran's ballistic missile programme and its destabilizing regional activities, especially in Syria, Iraq and Yemen. We have already started constructive and mutually beneficial discussions on these issues, and the E3 is committed to continuing them with key partners and concerned States across the region.

We and our foreign ministers will reach out to all parties to the Plan to seek a positive way forward.

That concludes the statement.

**The President:** I have three more requests for the floor. I assume that all three want to exercise their right of reply. Is there any other delegation that wishes to take the floor, not exercising its right of reply? I see Bulgaria and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

**Ms. Kemppainen** (Bulgaria): For the record, I have the honour to deliver a declaration that was given by High Representative Mogherini on behalf of the European Union on 9 May, on the Iran nuclear deal:

The European Union deeply regrets the announcement by United States President Trump to withdraw from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

The Plan, unanimously endorsed by United Nations Security Council resolution 2231 (2015), is a key element of the global nuclear non-proliferation architecture and is crucial for the security of the region.

As long as Iran continues to implement its nuclear-related commitments and as it has been doing so far and has been confirmed by the International Atomic Energy Agency in 10 consecutive reports, the European Union will remain committed to the continued full and effective implementation of the nuclear deal. The lifting of nuclear-related sanctions is an essential part of the agreement. The European Union has repeatedly stressed that the sanctions lifting has a positive impact on trade and economic relations with Iran. The European Union stresses its commitment to ensuring that this can continue to be delivered.

The Plan is the culmination of 12 years of diplomacy, which has been working and delivering on its main goal. The European Union is determined to work with the international community to preserve it.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

**Mr. Heidari** (Islamic Republic of Iran): First and foremost, Madam President, I would like to congratulate you on your presidency and also, through you, welcome the new representatives to the Conference on Disarmament. Maybe I was hasty. May I defer my intervention to later stage?

**The President:** I give the floor to the representative of Australia.

**Ms. Wood** (Australia): I just wanted to add Australia's voice to those of the United Kingdom, the United States and France. We strongly support the strikes by the United States, the United Kingdom and France on chemical weapons facilities in Syria on 14 April. The strikes were calibrated, proportionate and targeted. They were designed to send a hard message about the consequences of Syria's actions and to degrade its chemical weapons capabilities, and they were designed to deter future use. The international community cannot tolerate the use of chemical weapons.

**The President:** Now let us turn back to the right of reply. I give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

**Mr. Al Ashkar** (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I apologize for taking the floor once again, yet I am obliged to do so in order to respond to the claim made by the representative of the United States that the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) has confirmed the use of chemical weapons by Syria on four occasions. It should be recalled that my country's Government has already commented in detail about the unprofessional and biased methods used by the OPCW-United Nations joint mission in conducting its investigations into incidents involving the use of toxic chemical substances on Syrian territory, about the intense politicization that tarnished the activities of the Joint Investigative Mechanism and about the lack of objectivity in its reports. All this was a consequence of the pressure exercised by the United States in order to make the reports serve its own interests, at the expense of scientific truth and sound logic. The scientific facts and legal explanations submitted by my Government are all in the records of the Conference on Disarmament for last year and in the minutes of meetings and other documents of OPCW and the Security Council. In order to save your time, I will not repeat them again now.

Lastly, I would question whether expressing support for the attack against Syria and the violation of the Charter of the United Nations helps to achieve the noble purpose of non-proliferation or acts as a deterrent against the use of weapons of mass destruction.

Thank you, Madam President.

**The President:** I give the floor to the representative of France.

**Mr. Riquet** (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to exercise my right of reply following the comments made by the representative of Syria and the representative of the Russian Federation.

With regard to the Russian Federation, I wish to reassure our colleague, the representative of the Russian Federation, that France is well aware of the situation. I thank him for having mentioned the Fact-Finding Mission dispatched by OPCW following the attack of 7 April in eastern Ghutah. I would remind him that the OPCW team is tasked with establishing whether a chemical attack did indeed take place and determining the nature of the chemical agent used. The Mission does not have a mandate to identify the perpetrators of the attack. Only the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism could have done this. Regrettably, owing to the opposition of the Russian Federation in the Security Council, its mandate was not renewed.

As for the remarks made about our intervention by the representative of Syria, particularly the fact that, if I understood correctly, he implied that France supported or encouraged terrorism, I must formally reject these allegations. France does not support terrorism. France is a victim of it. France is fighting terrorism tirelessly and with absolute determination.

**The President:** I give the floor to the representative of the United States.

**Mr. Wood** (United States of America): Madam President, I am taking the floor to respond to some remarks made by the representative of the Russian Federation.

That representative claimed that we should stop bringing foreign issues into this body for discussion. Foreign issues – that is quite interesting. Chemical weapons use is quite relevant to this body, and I remind the Russian representative that the Chemical Weapons Convention was negotiated in this body, and any violation of the Convention is certainly an issue relevant to this body. And so I would request that our Russian colleagues stop making the point that we should not be discussing this issue here in this body. It is relevant, and we will continue to raise this issue as necessary.

As I have said before, chemical weapons use by the Assad regime is not in dispute, and I think the record makes that quite clear.

On the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, since it was raised by several delegations – the Plan was agreed to with the hope it would lead to improvement in the behaviour of Iran in other areas outside of the nuclear area, but this has not happened. Instead, its behaviour has become more aggressive and threatening to the United States and our interests, under the cover of the so-called Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action deal. Last October, President Trump outlined a strategy to counter Iran's continuous aggression. This strategy addresses the full range of Iranian threats, of which the nuclear programme is one important element. The President made clear that the Plan gave too much to Iran for too little, and far too many of those benefits were paid upfront. He pledged that if we were unable to secure an agreement with our allies to fix the deal's flaws, then the vital national security interests of the United States would compel him to reimpose sanctions on Iran and terminate United States participation in the nuclear deal. We were unable to reach an agreement that adequately addressed the Plan's flaws and protect the vital interests of the United States. We have said many times that Iran needs to come clean to the world and its own people about its comprehensive nuclear weapons effort. No deal with Iran can stand that is not based on full verification that it has completely abandoned its pursuit of nuclear weapons. No one should continue in a deal with Iran if they cannot be confident that Iran will abide by its commitments. Therefore, President Trump decided that the United States would terminate its participation in the Plan, and, as has been said, we will begin immediately the process of reimposing the Plan-related sanctions.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Rowland** (United Kingdom): I will be brief in my right of reply. I am not going to respond to our Russian colleague, whose efforts to muddy the waters are becoming increasingly fantastical, nor will I repeat the case for action, which I set out very clearly, though I note that our Syrian colleague misunderstands the independent role that the British media plays.

We considered the situation carefully, we reached a conclusion, we acted on it. We will stand up for the global rules and standards that keep us safe. We will continue to raise those issues within the purview of this body, however inconvenient.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of the Russian Federation.

**Mr. Deyneko** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I thought that I was dealing with facts rather than fantasy in my earlier remarks. The facts of a case must be established before decisions can be made. When did the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, whose authority you are trying to invoke, establish as a fact that a chemical weapon was used in Duma? This is my first point.

Secondly, if you are so interested in establishing the facts – and the perpetrators cannot be identified without doing so, as it is impossible to establish who has committed a crime before that crime has been established – our chemical defence specialists, who were the first on the scene, ascertained that nothing of the sort had occurred. So our opponents must have a doubly solid basis for proving them wrong, as they had no one “on the ground”, no opportunity to collect samples and no opportunity to interview victims and witnesses of the incident. Without such a basis, their analyses and conclusions amount to nothing but words. Objective information cannot be obtained on social media, long the site of brutal information wars that leave no room, and cannot leave room, for moderation.

Thirdly, the United States and France were invited to visit the scene and send their experts there in order to determine whether a chemical weapon had been used. This raises a further question. Was this a chemical weapon as defined in the schedules annexed to the Chemical Weapons Convention, or was it something else, used as a weapon? The weapon has not been identified in any of the statements that we have heard. Forensics is an exact science. I do not wish to draw parallels here with other processes that have also had an unusually large public and political impact. But we are dealing with a case in which the perpetrators have been identified in advance, and then punished, and the investigation conducted only afterwards. This really does belong in the realm of fantasy, as it runs contrary not only to the accepted practice of justice in most civilized countries, but also to basic common sense.

**The President:** I give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

**Mr. Heidari** (Islamic Republic of Iran): I hesitated to intervene today, but reference was made to my own country, positively and also negatively. The positive comments were made by the representative of the United Kingdom, as well as in the statement by the European Union regarding the implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action; the negative comment came from the United States. Therefore, I am obliged to exercise my right of reply, to make positive comments as well as respond to the comment made by the Ambassador of the United States.

Despite the full compliance of the Islamic Republic of Iran with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, which was confirmed by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the only competent authority to determine the compliance of my Government, in its 10 consecutive reports, unfortunately, President Trump has ignored all of this and decided to destroy the Plan. He has repeatedly ignored all the IAEA reports. He has done his utmost to ignore the reports of IAEA, weakening the agreement negotiated by the five permanent members of the Security Council, including the United States, and Germany, until, by this recent decision, the United States pulled out of the agreement.

Now, once more, by expressing false and unsubstantiated allegations against my country, the United States is trying to force the other partners of the agreement to pull out of the agreement and to force them to refrain from implementing their obligations under the agreement. It is justifying its withdrawal by resorting to unilateral, unfounded reasons that are against international law and thoroughly against United Nations Security Council resolution 2231 (2015), which confirmed the Plan. The Islamic Republic of Iran, while reserving its right to stop implementing partially or completely its obligations under the Plan in the absence of participation by the United States, is still committed to the Plan's agreement and has continued to honour its commitments. And now, it is negotiating with four of the five permanent members of the Security Council (every member but the United States) and Germany to redress the situation and to come to a certain agreement that guarantees the interests of the people of Iran, within the terms of the Plan.



The Plan was negotiated with a total pledge that, if disregarded by one party thereto, it should not be disregarded by the others, which should compensate for the breach committed by the withdrawing party. Consequently, while we are negotiating the Plan's implementation with four of the five permanent members of the Security Council and Germany, we are expecting other independent countries in the international arena to extend their firm support for the full implementation of the Plan as an international instrument confirmed by a Security Council resolution. Our foreign minister has sent official letters to the United Nations Secretary-General, as well as to the High Representative of the European Union, Ms. Mogherini. Our negotiation with the European Union for continuing implementation of the Plan is intended to evaluate the European Union's political will and its capacity for ensuring the interests of Iran through continuing its commitment to the Plan. Therefore, from yesterday, we have held our meetings with the European Union, and today, our foreign minister in Brussels is continuing negotiating with France, Germany and the United Kingdom. Actually, our foreign minister, just after the withdrawal by the United States, started his trip and travelled to different countries. He has stressed that the future of the nuclear agreement of 14 July 2015 hinges on the assurances to be given to Iran by the remaining five signatory States of the original six. He has had good and substantive meetings with his counterparts in Beijing and Moscow, and he left to meet with the European Union High Representative and the foreign ministers of France, Germany and the United Kingdom, in Brussels. We will soon determine how four of the five permanent members of the Security Council and Germany can guarantee that Iran will benefit under the Plan and preserve its unique achievement of diplomacy.

In response to the comments made by the representative of the United States, I could say that regarding the missile programme, which was also mentioned by the United Kingdom, during the war imposed on us by the Saddam regime, not only did the United States and its regional allies provide military intelligence, logistical, economic and political assistance to Saddam, but they also offered their support and maintained their silence during his campaign of chemical weapon attacks, which was treated differently from the case of Syria. Being an expert on the long, painstaking negotiation of the Chemical Weapons Convention, I could say that the Convention was a very important treaty, as it is very different from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which is considered discriminatory between the haves and the have nots. The Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) has been established as an independent, autonomous organization. This is very different. If someone makes reference to the Convention, that person will find that in accordance with the articles of the Convention, the Organisation is not only able to investigate any alleged use of chemical weapons, but can also work on the political attribution of such use. One of the articles clearly refers to redressing a situation, including through the use of sanctions, and that is to say that the Executive Council and the Conference of the States Parties are able to discuss any allegations under the Convention. Of course, Iran, being a victim of the use of chemical weapons, condemns any kind of chemical weapon use in any circumstances, by anybody. Therefore, Iran negotiated painstakingly and was present in the negotiation of the Convention to create an organization that is independent and autonomous. And such a situation exists, as we have OPCW. If we are actually upholding the legal connotations of the Convention, some part of it must not remain as a failed provision. In terms of the Convention, in terms of situations of particular gravity which have not been defined by the Convention, issues relating to any allegations whatsoever should go before the General Assembly and the Security Council. I remember that when we were negotiating the agreement between the Organisation and the United Nations – relating to the agreement mostly used for providing United Nations laissez-passers to inspectors – some delegations did their utmost to change this wording to “General Assembly and/or Security Council”. Of course, the authority of the Security Council is established by international law – there is no dispute about that. But I should say here, as an expert, that the Organisation, which has been established as autonomous and independent body, is different from IAEA, and I am astonished by the fact that in the case of the Syrian use of chemical weapons, in this case of the incident in Syria, the Organisation, for example, is not able to judge. Of course, the investigation is part of the Organisation's procedure, and the Organisation's Executive Council and the Conference of States Parties can make best use of it.

On the missile programme, through that very bitter experience, we have learned that in order to protect our people, safeguard our independence and security and defend our national honour, we must rely on indigenous capabilities and not hesitate in developing the capability to meet the country's legitimate defence needs. It is in this framework that the missile programme of Iran has a purely defensive and deterrent character. Our missiles are strictly designed to carry conventional warheads, and the range and precision are proportionate to our security environment and threat perception. The missile programme will continue with full force in accordance with our national defence programme. It is not negotiable and never will be.

When the allies of the United States in the region, whose combined population is far less than that of Iran, spend exponentially higher sums on their military than Iran, why should Iran, which has attacked no one in almost 300 years but has been a victim of aggression supported by the United States and its regional partners, not acquire the necessary tools of defence in the face of constant threats by aggressors? Actually, our missile capability which does not have any nuclear-weapon-capable warhead was clearly not included in the negotiation and was not addressed in terms of Security Council resolution 2231 (2015).

On the issue of Syria and also Yemen, which was referred to by the Ambassador of the United States, the proposal of Iran for a political settlement to end the horrifying wars in Yemen and Syria have been welcomed by the international community, and Iran has played a constructive role in every international initiative aimed at ending regional conflicts. Iran has also cooperated with Russia and Turkey effectively to de-escalate the violence in Syria and stands ready to contribute actively to joint efforts with the United Nations Secretary-General and other responsible countries, including the permanent members of the Security Council and the European Union, to put an end to the conflict and violence in any region. I think that is enough, and I will limit myself to what I have said.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of China.

**Mr. Ji Haojun (China) (*spoke in Chinese*):** The second part of the Conference's session has begun with so much acrimony and bad feeling that I hesitate to take the floor, but after much reflection, I think I should say these few words.

Firstly, on behalf of our Ambassador, I would like to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference and to welcome the Ambassadors of the Republic of Korea, Australia and Sri Lanka. We were very gratified to see the representatives of the Republic of Korea and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea describe the situation on the Korean Peninsula. With the joint efforts of all the parties involved, progress has been made in consolidating an improvement of the dialogue on the peninsula and in moving towards the development of a beneficial political solution to the problems there. China encourages all the relevant parties to continue along these lines and to keep facilitating dialogue and building mutual trust with expressions of goodwill and a relaxation of tensions. China will continue, as in the past, to make tireless efforts to find a political and diplomatic resolution to the peninsula's problems.

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on the Iranian nuclear question is a multilaterally negotiated agreement that has been endorsed by Security Council resolution 2231 (2015). The relevant parties should all scrupulously implement it. Defending the integrity and sanctity of the agreement is paramount to preserving the international nuclear non-proliferation system and fostering peace and stability in the Middle East. The agreement is also of the utmost importance as an example of how to solve problems in hotspots through political means. In the current situation, the Chinese delegation calls on all parties to retain a responsible attitude, to bear in mind the big picture in the long term, to support political and diplomatic solutions, to manage their differences appropriately and to quickly return to the right track of the successful implementation of this comprehensive agreement. China will maintain an objective, impartial and responsible attitude and will keep up its dialogue and consultations with all parties, and it will continue to advocate for the preservation and implementation of the comprehensive agreement.

(*spoke in English*)

In our world, it is all too easy to bully vulnerable groups, but to stand up to big guys is not so easy. Now, I hope that the process and the result of defending the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action will not prove that this world is a world of cowards and snobs.

**The President:** I give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

**Mr. Al Ashkar** (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): Thank you, Madam President, for giving me the floor for a third time. I apologize, yet I find myself compelled to respond to what the representative of the United Kingdom said in respect to what he calls media reports.

To be honest, I do not know of any credible media reports that could be relied on to demonstrate that chemical weapons have been used, or by whom, or that would enable definitive judgments to be emitted on the basis of which dozens of missiles could be fired against alleged chemical weapon facilities. It is remarkable that those sites were destroyed without any victims, or without large numbers of victims, in the areas attacked, and without causing any damage to the nearby environment. Evidently, the secret lies in the fact that the missiles used were smart missiles. The States that perpetrated that attack against my country have weaponized their lies and deceit in an attempt to bring Syria to its knees and to create pretexts for attacking it. To that end, they have relied on the mercenaries known as the White Helmets, which was set up by the British intelligence services to fabricate evidence and film Hollywood-like sequences. Thankfully, however, they always fail to be entirely precise in fabricating their lies, and we have noticed that, in the alleged use of chemical weapons by the Syrian Government, each theatrical episode regarding the deployment of such weapons by the Syrian Arab Army has emerged only when our troops were advancing victoriously, and the terrorists were falling back and retreating. Moreover, the chemical substances do not seem to be targeted against combatants at all, but against women, children and the elderly, and they require no more treatment than to be washed off with water in front of the camera while first responders have no need to wear masks or gloves to protect themselves from those substances.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of the Russian Federation.

**Mr. Deyneko** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Madam President, we have asked for the floor not in exercise of our right of reply but in order to make a statement.

**The President:** In that case, I give the floor to the representative of the United States.

**Mr. Wood** (United States of America): I will be very brief. I just wanted to respond very briefly to the comments made by our Iranian colleague.

As you all know, the United States is a State party to the Chemical Weapons Convention and has always condemned the use of chemical weapons, any time and anywhere.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of the Russian Federation.

**Mr. Davydov** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Our statement is based on the statement of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation regarding the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on the Iranian nuclear programme.

Moscow is deeply disappointed by the decision of President Donald Trump of the United States of America to unilaterally renege on his country's commitments under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on the Iranian nuclear programme and to impose national sanctions on Iran.

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action is a critical multilateral agreement endorsed by resolution 2231 (2015) of the United Nations Security Council. The Plan of Action is not the exclusive property of the United States of America, but represents an achievement of the entire international community, which has repeatedly affirmed its commitment towards the maintenance and long-term sustainable implementation of the Plan of Action in the interests of strengthening international and regional peace and security and the nuclear non-proliferation regime.

We are extremely concerned that the United States of America is once again acting in defiance of the opinion of the majority of States and exclusively in its own narrow and short-term interests, in blatant violation of the norms of international law.

There is and can be no justification for undermining the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. It has shown that it is entirely adequate. It effectively addresses all the challenges before us.

Iran strictly adheres to the commitments that it has made, as is regularly confirmed by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). We fully support and welcome this.

Most regrettably, Washington's actions undermine international confidence in the Agency, which has implemented the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action with a consistently high level of professionalism.

The decisions announced on 8 May provide further evidence of Washington's inflexibility. They also show that the complaints of the United States about the absolutely lawful nuclear activities of Iran are a mere pretence for settling political scores with the country.

Washington's stated position represents a substantive violation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. The Joint Commission of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action must rapidly and with the greatest possible care examine and classify the situation within the framework of established procedures.

Russia is open to further engagement with the remaining participants in the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and is continuing to actively develop bilateral cooperation and political dialogue with the Islamic Republic of Iran.

**The President:** I give the floor to the representative of the United States.

**Mr. Wood** (United States of America): I apologize for taking the floor once again, but I will simply say, with regard to the comments from my Russian colleague, that a country that has violated treaties such as the Treaty on Open Skies and the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty is in no position to say anything about other countries violating treaties.

**The President:** I give the floor to the representative of China.

**Mr. Ji** Haojun (China): I just want to ask Ambassador Wood if Security Council resolutions are still international law or not.

**The President:** Please.

**Mr. Wood** (United States of America): Indeed, they are.

**The President:** So we have clarified this. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor at this point? That does not seem to be the case.

Colleagues, I would like to remind you that we will start with the work of the subsidiary bodies as early as this afternoon. Subsidiary body 2, coordinated by Robbert Gabriëlse, Permanent Representative of the Netherlands to the Conference on Disarmament, will meet this afternoon, 15 May, at 3 p.m. and tomorrow, 16 May, at 3 p.m. as well. Subsidiary body 5, coordinated by Yury Ambrazevich, Permanent Representative of Belarus, will meet on Thursday, 17 May, at 3 p.m., and Friday, 18 May, at 10 a.m. The subsidiary bodies will meet here in the Council Chamber, and with this I would like to conclude our business for today. Our next plenary meeting will be next Tuesday, 22 May, as usual, at 10 a.m. in the Council Chamber.

*The meeting rose at noon.*