

Conference on Disarmament

English

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


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President: Mr. Walid Doudech..... (Tunisia)

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The President (*spoke in Arabic*): Good morning. I declare open the 1464th meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. Excellencies, colleagues, Mr. Møller, Ms. Kaspersen, ladies and gentlemen, I am pleased to see you again for the third part of the 2018 session of the Conference on Disarmament. I hope that those of you who had a summer holiday are feeling well rested and that we are all ready to continue working and to seek progress.

Allow me, on behalf of the members of the Conference and on behalf of my country, to extend a warm welcome to our new colleagues: Mr. Liddle, the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom, Mr. Eguiguren, the Permanent Representative of Chile, and Mr. Gallegos, the Permanent Representative of Ecuador. A warm welcome to you all. I hope you are able to make serious and useful contributions to help achieve progress in our work. They have all already started their activities in Geneva and, once again, I wish to welcome them to the Conference on Disarmament.

Dear colleagues, as I informed you at our last meeting, today we are going to discuss the Agenda for Disarmament, which was presented by the Secretary-General of the United Nations in Geneva on 24 May 2018. The Agenda for Disarmament represents an excellent opportunity for our members to expand and enrich the discussion of issues relevant to the Conference's mandate and to seek ways to make progress in addressing those issues.

As we are still working to draw up a programme of work for the Conference, these discussions will also provide an opportunity to engage in dialogue and achieve consensus on a programme of work. I am currently holding consultations with members of the Conference and, during the course of those consultations and in the light of the discussion on the Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament, I will try to submit a new proposal to support dialogue and the exchange of views among the members of the Conference with a view to reaching agreement on a programme of work. Allow me now to continue in French.

(*spoke in French*)

Before moving on to the list of speakers, I invite the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva, Mr. Møller, to make a few remarks as an introduction to our debate. Mr. Møller, you have the floor.

Mr. Møller (Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament): Mr. President, Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen, it is a pleasure to be with you this morning under the presidency of Ambassador Doudech, at the start of what I hope is to be an interesting and fruitful discussion on the Secretary-General's initiative, "Securing our Common Future: an Agenda for Disarmament", in which he outlines his three priorities – disarmament to save humanity, disarmament that saves lives and disarmament for future generations. He also specifically underlines the importance of partnerships and calls on all stakeholders to look at the principal multilateral forums, the Conference on Disarmament and the Disarmament Commission, calling for them to be reinvigorated.

His Agenda aims to be comprehensive but not exhaustive. It proposes solutions and it raises questions and it is not intended to replace the responsibilities of Member States, nor is it meant to impose any specific measures on them, as the Secretary-General states in his foreword. It should reinvigorate dialogue and negotiations on international disarmament, stimulate new ideas and create new momentum. It is therefore very timely, Mr. President, that the Conference on Disarmament should now look at the Agenda and engage in this important dialogue under your leadership.

The positive responses to the Agenda and the discussions that it has generated thus far are encouraging. The Agenda is not simply a paper giving food for thought or the mere result of a brainstorming exercise which benefited from consultations with experts from Member States, civil society and the private sector. It makes suggestions for tangible actions which are linked to the broader international agenda and, in particular, the Sustainable Development Goals, our global road map for action. The actions in the Agenda focus on practical measures. They are aimed at reinvigorating dialogue and negotiations on international disarmament, stimulating new ideas and creating new momentum. They are also aimed at integrating disarmament into the priorities of the whole United Nations system, laying the foundations for new partnerships and greater collaboration. Lastly, they

indicate where the Secretary-General intends personally to engage and support Member States in carrying out their responsibilities.

In order to take forward the actions in this Agenda, the Office for Disarmament Affairs is working on an implementation plan which should be released in September. The plan will lay out specific steps and activities that will be undertaken; it will indicate where support for Member States will be needed; and it will also serve as a basis for monitoring progress. The importance of engaging civil society cannot be overstated.

As I have often said over the past five years, I welcome initiatives aimed at building stronger partnerships across disciplines and institutions. The Geneva dialogues serve as one such example where the Office for Disarmament Affairs and the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research have teamed up with other non-United Nations disarmament platforms in Geneva to organize dialogues on the Agenda itself and to contribute to shaping how the actions in the Agenda are taken forward. They are structured around the three core priorities and partnerships. Forthcoming sessions of these dialogues will be held this coming Wednesday, 15 August, on disarmament that saves lives; on Wednesday, 29 August, on disarmament for future generations; and on Wednesday, 5 September, on strengthening partnerships for disarmament. I encourage you all to attend and participate in these discussions.

I would also like to commend the President for his personal commitment to broadening and deepening the dialogue between the Conference on Disarmament and civil society. Although we made some real and tangible progress this year in the context of the Conference's subsidiary bodies, we need to bring some new impetus to our discussions and deliberations. In this context, allow me to remind you of the forthcoming informal dialogue between civil society and the Conference on Disarmament that I will be hosting on 17 August. This third civil society forum will provide an opportunity for exchanges on scientific advancements, technological developments and disarmament with a particular focus on the convergence of Goal 9 of the Sustainable Development Goals, on industry, innovation and infrastructure, Goal 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions and Goal 17 on partnerships.

The dialogue will of course also serve as an important additional venue for continued discussions on the Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament and for informing implementation efforts, and I look forward to a lively discussion on some of these cutting-edge issues that are squarely in front of this august assembly. Regarding the Conference on Disarmament, the Secretary-General underlined in his statement on 24 May, when he presented his Agenda, that reinvigorating the Conference will require improved coordination, an end to duplication, better use of expertise and, above all, the political courage to shift positions. He also made clear his commitment to work with Member States and to investigate possible ways of achieving this.

Mr. President, I welcome our discussion this morning and you may count on my support and that of my colleagues as you move forward on all the crucial issues that urgently require the Conference's attention. Thank you very much.

The President (*spoke in French*): Thank you very much, Sir, for your introductory remarks. We will now proceed to the list of speakers and begin with the Permanent Representative of Pakistan. You have the floor, Sir.

Mr. Amil (Pakistan): Mr. President, since this is the first time that I take the floor under your presidency, allow me to begin by congratulating you on your appointment as the President of the Conference on Disarmament. You may rest assured of my delegation's full support and cooperation. Since you have asked us, at our plenary meeting today, to discuss the Agenda for Disarmament that the Secretary-General unveiled at Geneva University in May earlier this year, I shall briefly outline our views on that Agenda.

We welcome the personal interest and engagement of the Secretary-General in placing disarmament at the centre of the work of the United Nations. It is ever more pertinent to seek multilateral solutions to the global and regional security challenges in the contemporary setting, so rightly termed by the Secretary-General as dangerous times. We

share the Secretary-General's hope that his Agenda will reinvigorate dialogue and negotiations on international disarmament, stimulate new ideas and create new momentum.

Mr. President, we are pleased to note that the Secretary-General has attached the highest priority to the disarmament of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. At the same time, he also devoted equal attention to two other very important elements: the over-accumulation of all other types of arms and the need to prevent the weaponization of new technologies. We laud the Secretary-General's call on Member States to re-energize disarmament discussions. We appreciate his appeal to Member States to acknowledge and respect one another's legitimate security interests and to find a way to ensure security for all.

Pakistan remains committed to the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world that is achieved in a universal, verifiable and non-discriminatory manner through negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament. This goal can only be pursued as a cooperative undertaking through a consensus-based process involving all the relevant stakeholders, resulting in equal and undiminished, if not increased, security for all our States. The eventual objective must be the total elimination of nuclear weapons within a re-energized collective security system.

We will have to recognize and address the three key motives that drive States such as Pakistan to possess nuclear weapons. The first is threats from larger military forces, both nuclear and conventional, and also from new types of destabilizing weapons systems. The second is the existence of disputes with more powerful States. The third is discrimination in the application of international law and norms, including the failure of the United Nations collective security system to guarantee the peaceful coexistence of all States. These motivating factors are different from those motivating States that retain nuclear weapons as a matter of prestige, either to maintain or to attain the status of a global power.

Mr. President, any arms control, non-proliferation or disarmament treaty that diminishes the security of any State would be a non-starter, as evidenced by the failure to kick-start negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty. No country can be expected to enter into negotiations on a treaty that would be detrimental to its national security, as was the case when a large group of countries refused to engage with the negotiations in 2017 on a treaty banning nuclear weapons. Real progress on disarmament can only be achieved by addressing the security concerns of all States. We also need to reconsider the negative effects generated by misguided policies of discrimination and double standards driven by strategic and commercial considerations. The threats to regional and international peace, security and stability are on the rise, mistrust between States is growing, and old disputes continue to fester while new conflicts are constantly emerging. The quality and the quantity of armaments are steadily increasing and more sophisticated and deadly weapons are being regularly developed and deployed.

In this situation we find both timely and necessary the call on the Member States by the Secretary-General to prevent the emergence of new domains of strategic competition and conflict to ensure the security and sustainability of outer space activities, to rein in new types of destabilizing strategic weapons, to address the excessive accumulation and illicit trade in conventional arms, to rethink unconstrained military spending, to understand the implications of new weapons technologies and their impact on international security and disarmament matters, to keep humans in control of weapons and artificial intelligence and to prevent malicious activity in cyberspace. Ultimate responsibility for taking cognizance of all these urgent and important issues falls on us, the Member States. The Secretary-General can only help us by pointing out the risks and challenges and making us aware of the grave consequences associated with them. We have to take charge of addressing these matters ourselves, by making optimal use of the tools and the forums available to us, such as the unparalleled Conference on Disarmament, and by steadily building the foundations of a just world order where all nations can live side by side in peace and harmony without threat or fear.

Pakistan will never be found lacking in that endeavour. I thank you, Mr. President, and I also join you in welcoming our new colleagues from the United Kingdom, Chile and Ecuador.

The President (*spoke in French*): Thank you, Sir. The next speaker is the Permanent Representative of Chile. You have the floor, Sir.

Mr. Eguiguren (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you. First, Mr. President, allow me to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference and to wish you success in the fulfilment of the functions entrusted to you. You may be assured of our firm commitment to continuing to make a constructive contribution to the deliberations of the Conference. As this is my first statement as Permanent Representative of Chile to the Conference, please allow me, Mr. President, to set out my country's vision in the light of the challenges currently facing this body.

During my last stay in Geneva, where I arrived in 2003, the Conference expressed regret that several years had passed without a programme of work having been reached. In those days, much was said of interesting initiatives that ultimately failed to set the Conference's disarmament mechanism in motion, including the so-called five Ambassadors' initiative, which received plenty of support but ultimately could not be realized.

More than 20 years have now passed and I can only share in the frustration felt by a large majority of delegations at the continued stalemate in the work of the Conference, which was designed to be the quintessential forum for negotiating multilateral disarmament instruments. Recent years have taught us lessons on how to proceed with disarmament and arms control negotiations. Prohibition and regulation are not ends unto themselves, but rather tools, means that give multilateralism an ultimate purpose, that of protecting the individual.

In this regard, Chile welcomed with a cautious optimism the adoption of the decision contained in document CD/2119 on the establishment of subsidiary bodies tasked with addressing the central issues of this forum. Like other delegations, we understand that the work of these bodies does not replace our obligation to agree on a programme of work that would allow us to begin negotiating the necessary international instruments in this area as soon as possible. However, we appreciate the symbolic value of a step in the right direction – the adoption of an agreement by consensus – and we hope that this mechanism will contribute, through its discussions, to the achievement of the basic agreements necessary for building the trust that we need in order to progress towards total and complete disarmament.

We are particularly concerned about the situation of the core agenda items. In the area of nuclear disarmament, we find it regrettable that the unique opportunity to negotiate an international treaty on the prohibition of nuclear weapons took place outside this body, owing to the lack of commitment of a small group of countries that refuse to accept the increasingly compelling evidence that there can be no such thing as legitimate weapons of mass destruction and that no country or organization would be capable of dealing with the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of their use. That is why we actively participated in the negotiation of that treaty, which we hope will come into force shortly.

Additionally, in the area of nuclear affairs, we welcome the work of the groups of governmental experts, including the group on nuclear disarmament verification, in which my country is participating. Naturally, we also welcome the successful outcome of the high-level working group on a future treaty banning fissile material.

Another area of concern for us is the pressing need to reach an agreement to ensure that no nuclear-weapon States threaten to use their weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States. Chile considers that such negative security assurances are a fundamental step towards reducing the threat posed by nuclear weapons with a view to their total elimination.

We are also concerned that the major nuclear powers have kept their operational systems on high alert, which considerably increases the risk that nuclear arms will be used and that an irreversible nuclear confrontation will take place with catastrophic consequences for humanity and our planet. For that reason, together with the delegations of other like-minded countries, we will continue to push for the downgrading of alert levels.

Despite the nuclear States' disheartening insistence on affording a central role to nuclear deterrence, we recognize some positive developments, such as the recent gestures

of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We hope that that country will irreversibly abandon its nuclear weapons programme, regularize its status as a State party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, subject its facilities to International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards and accede to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

Our voice has always been part of the chorus of those insisting on the need to find a peaceful solution to this crisis, because it is a conflict with global ramifications that must be addressed responsibly by the entire international community; we will therefore be following its evolution closely and call on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to accompany its positive gestures with these steps, which are necessary for the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

I would also like to take this opportunity to mention another concerning issue: the risk of a possible arms race in outer space. We have expressed our support for the negotiation of a treaty banning the placement of weapons in outer space. We hope that the new United Nations Group of Governmental Experts on further practical measures for the prevention of an arms race in outer space, in which Chile is also participating, will be able to reconcile positions on this little-known issue, which is of great importance for the future of global security.

Chile is of the view that our efforts in this Conference should not take place in a vacuum, but should be understood within the context of an international diplomatic mission that favours multilateral processes and the strengthening of international legal frameworks as the best way to tackle international security challenges. In that regard, we value and share the priorities identified by the Secretary-General in the United Nations Agenda for Disarmament. It is a broad and comprehensive agenda. We draw attention to its humanist perspective, which calls for the realignment of international security priorities.

The numbers speak for themselves: in 2017, the world's Governments spent US\$ 1.7 billion on military expenses, representing US\$ 227 per person alive today. Military expenditure is equal to 80 times the amount spent on humanitarian aid, while efforts to eradicate poverty, improve education and health, combat climate change and protect the planet are confronted with a lack of resources. This aspect is fundamental for my country and our region. The Agenda for Disarmament shifts the focus of the international system to the individual, to humanity and to future generations. To address the challenges of our era, we must take an integrated approach to disarmament, security and sustainable development through collective action at all levels. Such action is indispensable to the achievement of the commitments made under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. These objectives will not be met without the unequivocal commitment of all countries and effective collaboration through existing international mechanisms in the appropriate international forums.

Mr. President, I will conclude my remarks by calling on all members of this central body of multilateral disarmament diplomacy and international security to demonstrate that we have the political will to forge ahead with our urgent, common disarmament work and that, together, we can preserve the relevance and credibility of this Conference. Thank you, Mr. President, and thank you for your words of welcome.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank you. We will now give the floor to the Permanent Representative of Ecuador, Mr. Gallegos.

Mr. Gallegos (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you, Mr. President. As this is my first time taking the floor, let me start by congratulating you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. We have full confidence in your ability to carry out this delicate task, for which you can safely count on the commitment and full support of my delegation. Secondly, allow me to thank you, Ambassador Doudech, for the warm welcome that you extended to us, the new representatives to the Conference, and to take this opportunity to greet my colleagues in this important forum.

It is a special honour for me to be able to represent my country again in this body, with which I am very familiar. In 1999, when I was the Permanent Representative of Ecuador here in Geneva, we negotiated the last enlargement of the membership of the Conference, which saw the arrival of five new members, including my country, on 5

August 1999. Now, 19 years later, I concur with your expressions of concern and discouragement and believe that we must make every effort to return to a multilateral approach to disarmament. I hereby undertake that we will do our utmost to achieve that.

Subsequently, I returned in my role as Permanent Representative in Geneva, presiding over the Conference at the beginning of 2012 and having the opportunity in 2014 to co-chair the working group established to achieve a consensus and overcome the issues facing the work of Conference. I am therefore well aware of the difficulties that this body has faced in recent years in its attempts to adopt a programme of work and, still more so, to address substantive issues and find the common political will to do so.

Mr. President, as you well know, Ecuador is strongly committed to disarmament and is a party to all the key international disarmament instruments. I can therefore only welcome and support the efforts of the Secretary-General of the United Nations in this area, including his recently published Agenda for Disarmament.

Naturally, we fully agree with the Secretary-General's assessment of the delicate situation of the world today, whose complexity requires that novel solutions be found urgently. The existence of weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, continues to be the greatest threat, with potentially devastating consequences for the planet. In that regard, Ecuador welcomes the announcement of the Secretary-General's personal efforts and the increasing involvement of United Nations bodies in disarmament affairs. We also support the strategies put forward by the Secretary-General in his Agenda that seek, inter alia, to implement various confidence-building and risk reduction mechanisms, to consolidate the principle of non-use of nuclear weapons, to strengthen and increase the number of nuclear-weapon-free zones and to develop standards, techniques and verification capacities for nuclear disarmament.

However, we believe that these strategies are nothing new and, moreover, cannot be implemented independently. Rather, they must be complementary to the central effort of negotiating an international legally binding instrument leading to the prohibition and elimination of all nuclear weapons. This requires a significant shift in the political will of States, particularly those that possess nuclear weapons.

Mr. President, in reference to the second pillar of the Secretary-General's Agenda, we fully agree that it is urgently necessary to make progress in the global regulation of conventional weapons, which currently cause the largest number of civilian deaths. The suppliers and the recipients of arms, in equal measure, must be subject to stricter controls to prevent disasters such as those currently afflicting the planet.

In particular, Ecuador agrees that it is necessary to regulate explosive weapons in populated areas and to take measures to prevent the diversion of small and light arms; we therefore support the strategies proposed in that regard, such as increasing international funding for the control of small and light arms and increasing cooperation among countries to prevent the diversion of weapons stockpiles.

In addition to the strategies put forward by the Secretary-General, Ecuador considers that there is a need for strategies relating to weapons' countries of origin, such as an international norm expressly prohibiting the sale of weapons to unauthorized non-State groups and countries committing acts of genocide or crimes against humanity, among other elements that affect weapons-producing countries.

Lastly, the third pillar of the Secretary-General's Agenda refers to new means and methods of warfare. Ecuador fully agrees with the Secretary-General regarding the importance of becoming more involved in understanding new technologies and preventing their misuse, as well as the need to move forward with the development of strategies to respond to these new challenges.

In sum, Mr. President, we applaud the Secretary-General's efforts in calling for greater dialogue and the involvement of the international community in disarmament affairs. In this regard, I would like to reiterate our delegation's commitment to contributing to such a dialogue, in search of solutions and a programme of work that can guide this Conference and achieve its ambitious objectives. Thank you very much.

The President (*spoke in French*): Thank you, Sir, for your interesting statement and for your kind words for the presidency. I will now give the floor to the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom, Mr. Aidan Liddle.

Mr. Liddle (United Kingdom): Mr. President, thank you for your warm words of welcome, both today and yesterday when I had the honour to present you and the Secretary-General of the Conference with my letter of accreditation. This is the first time that I address the Conference as Ambassador of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. As it is also, of course, the first time that I take the floor under your presidency, allow me to congratulate you on the assumption of that important role and to assure you of my and my delegation's full support.

Mr. President, it is a great honour and a great responsibility to represent my country at this distinguished Conference. I want today to affirm to you, Mr. President, and all delegations my personal commitment to playing an active and constructive role here. I also want to emphasize the continuing commitment of Her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom to the aims and objectives of this Conference as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum of the international community and a crucial element of the rules-based international order.

The British Government remains committed to creating the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons. The United Kingdom is, of course, a nuclear-weapon State under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. We will retain an independent nuclear deterrent for as long as the global security situation demands, but we retain only the minimum nuclear forces necessary to deter any aggressor. We have cut our nuclear stockpiles by over half since their peak in the late 1970s. We will retain no more than 120 operationally available warheads and we will further reduce our stockpile of nuclear weapons to no more than 180 warheads by the middle of the next decade. Our fleet of four nuclear-armed submarines is the minimum that we assess to be necessary for a continuous at-sea deterrent. Each of those submarines carries no more than 8 operational missiles and we have reduced the number of nuclear warheads on each boat from 48 to 40.

The United Kingdom submarines on patrol are normally at several days' notice to fire and, since 1994, our missiles are no longer targeted at any State. We have given an assurance that the United Kingdom will not use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against any non-nuclear-weapon State party to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty which complies with its obligations under that treaty. And by ratifying protocols to the relevant treaties establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones, the United Kingdom has given legally binding assurances to States in Africa, South and Central America, the South Pacific and Central Asia to this effect.

The actions that we have taken at a national level are an important signal of our commitment to disarmament, but it is clear that the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons can only be achieved through a multilateral process. This Conference and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty remain the cornerstones of that process. The British Government will continue to play an active role in the step-by-step process of multilateral disarmament, including by promoting the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the commencement of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty.

It is also incumbent on those of us who retain nuclear weapons to build trust and confidence with the non-nuclear-weapon States. I hope that initiatives such as our work on nuclear disarmament verification are seen as a signal of our openness to dialogue, while also being an important contribution to finding solutions to technical problems that currently constitute a barrier to tangible progress in disarmament. In the run-up to the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, we will engage constructively and with an open mind with all who are willing to do the same, in particular on the creation of a Middle East zone free from nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction.

As our Chilean colleague has just said, nuclear disarmament cannot be discussed in a vacuum. The international disarmament architecture comprises important instruments covering chemical, biological and conventional weapons, and the United Kingdom has played an important role in developing and championing many of those instruments.

Fundamentally, general disarmament can take place only when all States feel secure enough to disarm. As such, it is the responsibility of all States to comply with their international commitments, whether in respect of nuclear, chemical, biological or conventional weapons, and to support the rules-based international system.

When my predecessor first addressed the Conference in July 2013, he noted that those were relatively benign times, but he reminded the Conference that we cannot rule out deterioration in the international environment for disarmament due to changes in global security dynamics and technological developments. I regret to say that he was right on both counts. Even if that is the case, however, we must keep striving towards our common goal.

We are all here because our Governments have subscribed to the objective of general and complete disarmament under effective international control. It is recognized that the essential security interests of all States must be respected in that process; that is why this Conference works by consensus and it is right that it should. But if we have to make progress towards that goal, we must also show courage and imagination to bridge the divides that exist between us. I hope that I am able to contribute my share in my time here.

In that context, I am encouraged by what I have seen of the discussions that have taken place in the subsidiary bodies and I see the merit in them continuing next year. I also look forward to discussions with all my colleagues and, in particular, the other States which will hold the presidency of this Conference in 2019, to see what can be achieved. I look forward to working with you all and with the wider disarmament and non-proliferation community in Geneva and beyond.

With your permission, Mr. President, I will return to the subject of the United Nations Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament later on in our discussion. Thank you.

The President (*spoke in French*): Thank you for your statement. We will now give the floor to Austria, on behalf of the European Union. Ms. Kemppainen will make this statement. You have the floor, Madam.

Ms. Kemppainen (Austria): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and, as this is the first time that I take the floor during the Tunisian presidency of the Conference on Disarmament, I would like to congratulate you and wish you every success in your tenure.

In his new Agenda for Disarmament, the Secretary-General encourages the Conference on Disarmament to live up to its potential as the world's single multilateral disarmament negotiating body. The continuing substantive discussions in the five subsidiary bodies should lead to tangible and much-needed outcomes. The Agenda is a timely reminder of the importance of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation for our collective security.

Effective multilateralism and the rules-based international system with the United Nations at its core are indispensable for ensuring the maintenance of international peace and security. We share the concern of the Secretary-General over the current security environment and concur with his view that further dialogue, transparency and confidence-building measures, along with disarmament education, are necessary. It is important that all parties contribute to improving the strategic context for arms control and disarmament.

We are concerned about the continued non-compliance by some States with their non-proliferation obligations. As emphasized by the Secretary-General, the international community must ensure accountability and end impunity for such violations. We strongly condemn the use of chemical weapons anywhere by anyone. In this respect, the European Union warmly welcomes the decision of the special session of the Conference of the States parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention on addressing the threat posed by the increasing use of chemical weapons by reinforcing international verification and attribution capacities and it looks forward to implementation of the attribution arrangements of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons regarding the Syrian Arab Republic.

We also strongly support the Secretary-General's mechanism for investigation of alleged use of chemical and biological weapons and look forward to his proposal to develop

a stronger international capacity. As outlined in the European Union's strategy against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, a long-standing policy has been to prevent, deter, halt and, where possible, eliminate proliferation programmes of concern while dealing with their underlying causes.

We have done our utmost to promote a stable international and regional environment and address the root causes of instability stemming from political conflicts, poverty, environmental degradation and human rights violations. We have provided significant political and financial support to multilateral institutions to uphold and strengthen key international treaties, conventions, agreements and other instruments, promoted universal adherence thereto and built capacities to help other countries to meet their obligations. We have played a leading role in finding diplomatic solutions to regional proliferation crises backed up by robust sanctions where needed.

The European Union has repeatedly stressed the need for tangible progress towards the full implementation of article 6 of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, with the ultimate goal of total elimination of nuclear weapons. We continue actively to promote the universalization and prompt entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, to advocate immediate negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on a fissile material cut-off treaty, in accordance with document CD/1299 and the mandate contained therein, and to support international efforts on nuclear disarmament verification and the establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East.

The European Union reiterates its commitment to the full and effective implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, which is a key element of the global non-proliferation architecture and a significant achievement of multilateral diplomacy, endorsed unanimously by the Security Council in its resolution 2231 (2015). We support efforts towards complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and underline the importance of maintaining pressure through sanctions while keeping channels of communication open. We continue to encourage the two nuclear weapon States with the largest arsenals to extend the new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, preserve the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty and seek further reductions to their arsenals, including deployed and non-deployed strategic and non-strategic nuclear weapons. Given the current severe security environment, we encourage all States concerned to take appropriate practical risk reduction measures, as outlined in the action plan of the 2010 NPT Review Conference, which are also important to ensuring the safety and security of their nuclear arsenals.

Where activities in outer space and in cyberspace are concerned, we note the support expressed by the Secretary-General for transparency and confidence-building measures such as principles of responsible behaviour. The European Union supports the implementation of the consensus recommendations of the Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-building Measures in Outer Space Activities, which unanimously endorsed efforts to pursue political commitments, for example, in the form of unilateral declarations, bilateral commitments or a multilateral code of conduct to encourage responsible actions in and the peaceful use of outer space. The Group concluded that voluntary political measures could form the basis for consideration of concepts and proposals for legally binding obligations.

The European Union equally supports the implementation of the consensus reports of the United Nations groups of governmental experts in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security, confirming that existing international law applies in cyberspace and promoting the implementation of confidence-building measures and norms of responsible State behaviour.

The European Union welcomes the outcome of the Review Conference of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, held in June in New York. We are particularly satisfied that the outcome document welcomes the process established by General Assembly resolution 72/55 on ammunition and that the importance of implementation of the Programme of Action is stressed for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The outcome document recognizes the gender dimension, with references to

gender-based violence and to the collection of disaggregated data on gender and the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. It calls for a process to reach consensus on guidance for the marking of modular and polymer weapons by the seventh biennial meeting of States. It reaffirms the importance of countering the illicit small arms trade in the fight against terrorism, also underscored by Security Council resolution 2370 (2017). This outcome ensures the relevance and will increase the effectiveness of the programme of action under the International Tracing Instrument. A unanimously adopted outcome on a sensitive security-related topic is also an important achievement, given the growing pressures on multilateralism, international agreements and a rules-based international order.

In this context, the European Union welcomes the proposal by the Secretary-General to establish a dedicated funding facility to support the control of small arms and light weapons and looks forward to additional details regarding its implementation. We must step up national, regional and international efforts against illicit small arms and light weapons, which fuel terrorism and organized crime, trigger conflicts and hamper development in many parts of the world.

The European Union has been investing extensively in related cooperation and assistance, with a focus on the collection and destruction of surplus small arms and light weapons and ammunition, physical security and stockpile management for such arms and ammunition and capacity-building for marking, record-keeping and tracing. The European Union is currently finalizing a review of its 2005 strategy on small arms and light weapons, which will cover the illicit manufacture and diversion of firearms, small arms, light weapons and their ammunition. The focus of our joint efforts is the prevention and reduction of the trafficking in illicit small arms and light weapons and ammunition, in line with target 16.4 of the Sustainable Development Goals.

We call upon all States, in particular major arms exporters, importers and transit States to join the Arms Trade Treaty, which aims to establish the highest possible common international standards for the transfer of conventional arms and ammunition. Within the European Union, the Arms Trade Treaty is given effect through the 2008 Common Position of the European Council, which defines common rules for the control of exports of military technology and equipment of the European Union member States. Every request for an arms export licence for an item listed in the European Union common military list must be assessed on a case-by-case basis against eight risk criteria. These include respect for human rights and international humanitarian law, also taking into account the risk of gender-based violence, diversion and internal and regional instability. The European Union's annual report on arms exports is a significant tool in enhancing transparency in arms trade, as it displays the arms exports of European Union member States together with their refused exports.

Gender equality and the empowerment of women constitute an important horizontal priority for the European Union. We therefore welcome the attention given by the Secretary-General to the gender-related impact of arms and the active and equal participation of women. The European Union will continue to promote the full implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and all other relevant resolutions aimed at advancing the women, peace and security agenda, such as General Assembly resolution 65/69 on the role of women in disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control and its follow-on resolutions.

Mine action is another area where the European Union is playing an active role as a major donor for mine clearance, risk education, stockpile destruction and victim assistance and a strong supporter of the implementation and universalization of the Ottawa Convention. We look forward to the revised Strategy of the United Nations on Mine Action, along with the updating of the International Mine Action Standards.

We take note of the Secretary-General's intention to promote strengthened and coherent United Nations inter-agency coordination on improvised explosive devices. We also appreciate his efforts to raise awareness of the challenges associated with the use of explosive weapons ammunitions in densely populated areas and their impact on civilians. We call on all parties to armed conflict to comply fully with international humanitarian law.

The European Union will continue to take a strong stand in promoting respect for international humanitarian law and the protection of civilians in all conflict situations.

As noted by the Secretary-General, advances in science and technology have brought about enormous benefits which contribute to realization of the 2030 Agenda. These advances also pose a range of risks and challenges such as those associated with synthetic biology and genome editing, 3D printing and new weapon technologies. The forthcoming Conference on Disarmament discussion with researchers, academics, civil society and industry should encourage responsible innovation and we look forward to continued discussion of these issues in relevant international forums.

We welcome the call of the Secretary-General for the further exchange of information on lethal weapons reviews with a view to sharing best practices. The first meeting of the Group of Governmental Experts on lethal autonomous weapons systems, held in November 2017, confirmed that international law, in particular international humanitarian law, fully applies to all weapons systems, including lethal autonomous weapons systems, and that States remain responsible and accountable for their development and use in armed conflict.

The European Union remains a strong, consistent and reliable partner of the United Nations. We recognize the linkages between sustainable development, humanitarian action, conflict prevention and peace building and welcome the efforts of the Secretary-General to explore synergies across the United Nations system. We will contribute to the implementation of the Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament in line with our priorities and look forward to further cooperation with all Member States and other stakeholders.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank you. We will now give the floor to Mr. Fu Cong, Permanent Representative of China to the Conference on Disarmament.

Mr. Fu Cong (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Mr. President, first permit me to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency. The Chinese delegation will actively support your work and push for the Conference to move ahead. I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome the Ambassadors of the United Kingdom, Chile and Ecuador. I am looking forward to working closely with them. China appreciates the President's efforts to hold a thematic discussion on the Agenda for Disarmament put forward by United Nations Secretary-General Guterres. This will help achieve common understanding among all parties and reinvigorate the Conference, and it is thus entirely necessary and beneficial.

More than a century of history has shown that arms control, disarmament and international peace and security are intimately related and complementary. Improvements in the international security situation have helped move the arms control and disarmament processes forward, and progress in the field of arms control is also beneficial in bolstering international peace and stability. Advancing disarmament was one of the important aspirations at the founding of the United Nations. Disarmament has a primordial place in the Charter of the United Nations.

The current international security situation is fraught with complexity and is extremely grim. Relations between the major powers are becoming ever more tense day by day; the geopolitical stakes are rising ever higher; there has been a cascade of regional conflicts; and traditional security issues are now intertwined with non-traditional ones, such as terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. International peace and strategic stability have been impacted by scientific and technological developments. As the lack of rules applying to outer space and cybersecurity comes into focus, an even clearer picture emerges of the importance of the international disarmament process.

Against this background, the Agenda for Disarmament put forward by the Secretary-General is of critical importance in many respects. First, it highlights the significance of disarmament for world peace and development against the backdrop of the weak progress made in the field of disarmament and it places disarmament back at the centre of the work of the United Nations. Secondly, the Agenda is rooted in peace and development; it insists on a people-first concept and puts forth, for the relevant areas and issues, a series of

specific suggestions and recommendations that serve as an important and valuable reference. Thirdly, in the light of changes and developments in the international security situation, the Agenda summarizes the status and tasks in the field of disarmament, along with opportunities and challenges, providing a direction for efforts by disarmament mechanisms, including the Conference.

The Agenda for Disarmament is a systematic, comprehensive document that warrants careful and thorough consideration by all parties. As it touches on many specific questions, it would be very difficult for us to comment on all of its aspects in the short time we have. I would like to take this opportunity to share the following preliminary views with everyone.

First, regarding weapons of mass destruction, a nuclear-weapon-free world is the common aspiration of the international community, but nuclear disarmament is extremely complex and cannot be achieved in a single step. The plan of action for nuclear disarmament in the Agenda is guided by an idea of orderly and gradual measures and highlights the importance of negative security assurances, the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones and measures to reduce nuclear risks. It is worthy of our full recognition. The Conference should draw on the experience of biological and chemical weapons disarmament and start its work by giving priority to negative security assurances; it should strive to negotiate an instrument of international law so as to break the deadlock and move towards a breakthrough in the nuclear disarmament process.

China appreciates the fact that the Agenda places much emphasis on preventing weaponization and an arms race in outer space. Against a backdrop of an increasingly grim security situation in outer space, especially with a major power vigorously promoting the establishment of a space force, the prevention of weaponization and an arms race in outer space, the task of negotiating and concluding a legal instrument demands immediate attention. Outer space transparency and confidence-building measures clearly can have a positive impact, strengthening security in outer space, but transparency and confidence-building measures are voluntary. They have their limitations and cannot replace a legal mechanism applicable to outer space.

Since the conclusion of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention and the Chemical Weapons Convention, implementation of these instruments has on the whole been quite good, but under the influence of scientific and technological development and regional events, it now faces new problems and challenges. China supports strengthening the authority and effectiveness of these conventions' mechanisms so that they can resolve disputes in an objective and impartial manner, with practical steps to address the new threat of biological or chemical terrorism and to encourage the peaceful use of biological and chemical sciences and technologies.

Secondly, about conventional weapons, China approves of the concept put forward in the Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament to save lives and the specific measures that it thus proposes. China places great importance on the conventional arms control process and on addressing the humanitarian concerns raised by the illicit transfer of conventional weapons and their indiscriminate use. It calls for arms control in the field of conventional weapons and for humanitarian concerns to be properly addressed through broad participation by all States, and consultations held on an equal footing.

China believes that solving the humanitarian problems caused by conventional weapons requires both prevention and treatment, with efforts made in three areas. One: we must insist on resolving differences through diplomatic means, upholding the principle of non-interference in internal affairs and refraining from transferring weapons to countries and regions in turmoil and to non-State actors. Two: we must balance the legitimate defence needs and humanitarian concerns of all countries and establish reasonable humanitarian standards for the production and use of weapons, taking the various situations of different countries fully into account. Three: we must increase international cooperation and assistance and take effective steps to prevent and mitigate the humanitarian problems caused by illicit trade in explosive remnants of war such as improvised explosive devices and landmines and in small arms and light weapons. Four: we must improve domestic legislation and strengthen supervision of firearms and explosives, defending social stability

and international security by providing for appropriate measures to address the risks of technological advances in the production and transfer of firearms and explosives.

Thirdly, regarding scientific and technological development, since the turn of the century, cyberspace, artificial intelligence and biotechnology have advanced rapidly, at the same time spurring social and economic development and representing a serious shock to the international security and disarmament system, thus highlighting the shortcomings of international principles on this subject. The Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament devotes an entire chapter to the problem of scientific and technological development, giving it the same importance as disarmament of weapons of mass destruction and of conventional weapons and demonstrating the Secretary-General's profound insight into disarmament issues and his foresight and vision regarding our responsibility towards future generations. At the same time, the Agenda puts forward constructive suggestions that warrant full recognition, such as a dialogue on new weapons technology among all States, responsible scientific and technical innovation, with respect for the objectives of the Charter of the United Nations, the establishment of rules for the responsible use of cyberspace and the use of good offices to prevent conflict in cyberspace.

China has always advocated strong preventive diplomacy, practical measures to prevent a high-tech arms race and the protection of international peace and stability. The Conference can, on the basis of an in-depth assessment of the impact of scientific and technical development, begin work on guidelines to define criteria for responsible behaviour in cyberspace and standards for the application of new and advanced technologies by the military. In addition, the international community should give serious consideration to streamlining and improving existing multilateral non-proliferation mechanisms and should establish a non-discriminatory non-proliferation export control mechanism applicable to all technological fields, and with the participation of all countries, so as to enhance the effectiveness of non-proliferation and ensure that the benefits of scientific and technological development benefit the whole of humanity, to the greatest extent possible.

Fourthly, in respect of partnerships for disarmament, the Agenda for Disarmament put forth a number of suggestions to build up partnership, including stronger streamlining and coordination of United Nations disarmament mechanisms, a strengthening of the role of the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters, ensuring financing for disarmament mechanisms, strengthening regional security dialogues, improving disarmament education, and strengthening participation by women, academia and various sectors of society. In general, these suggestions are feasible and warrant our full recognition.

The Chinese delegation believes that the existing multilateral disarmament mechanisms are a major component of the post-war international security system and that their effectiveness and authority must be strengthened. At the same time, we must also keep up with the times and discuss the question of expansion of the Conference so as to fully reflect international common understanding, reduce regional politicization and reinvigorate the Conference. In view of the increasingly prominent inter-disciplinary nature of many disarmament issues, communication and coordination among the relevant committees of the General Assembly, the relevant departments of the United Nations Secretariat and other international organizations should be further strengthened.

Mr. President, naturally, there is no complete agreement in the positions of the various States on the suggestions and thoughts raised in the Agenda for Disarmament, as the Agenda is a personal initiative put forward by Secretary-General Guterres. However, it reflects the great importance attached personally by the Secretary-General to disarmament and the high expectations of the international community on this subject. The international community should make this a turning point. It should as soon as possible set about convening a fourth United Nations General Assembly special session on disarmament and, through broad and profound discussions, bring forth an international consensus on a blueprint for disarmament in the new century. China is willing to work tirelessly together with the international community to move the international disarmament process forward and to build peace, security and prosperity in the new century. Thank you.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): Thank you very much for your statement. It is now my pleasure to give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador of the Kingdom of Morocco, Mr. Zniber. You have the floor, Sir.

Mr. Zniber (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): Allow me, Mr. President, to begin by congratulating you once again on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and to assure you of my delegation's continued support. I would also like to join you in welcoming the Permanent Representatives of Chile, the United Kingdom and Ecuador.

Mr. President, my delegation has, under your presidency, already made proposals for reaching an agreement on a programme of work for Conference and on the disarmament agenda. You can be sure, Mr. President, of our full support for your efforts to achieve this important objective for the single multilateral disarmament body that is this Conference. I would also like to state here that my delegation will return to the Agenda for Disarmament of the Secretary-General of the United Nations later on in our discussion.

Today, as part of the global and regional disarmament efforts made by the Kingdom of Morocco, I would like to inform this distinguished audience about the sixteenth regional meeting of the national authorities of the African States parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention, held in Marrakech from 19 to 21 June 2018. This regional meeting, organized in partnership with the secretariat of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), was attended by delegations from 38 African States, as well as 6 regional and international organizations, including the Committee established pursuant to Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) and the regional and subregional organizations of the African continent.

The theme of the meeting was strengthening national implementation of the Convention and enhancing coordination among the government departments responsible for the implementation of the Convention in each country. The work of the meeting was thus divided into two segments. The first segment was devoted to cooperation between national authorities and customs services. The OPCW secretariat and the delegations present held a discussion and listed the requirements of customs services for effective cross-border control of toxic chemicals, how those needs could be met and how international and regional partners could provide more support for building the capacity of national customs authorities. Numerous proposals were made in that respect. I would like to mention some of them, in particular the proposals to create more mechanisms for raising awareness among customs services of dual-use products, in accordance with the Convention, to improve technical and operational tools, build specialized training capacities, step up cooperation between customs services and the stakeholders in the implementation of the Convention, develop a platform or system for the exchange of information between the customs services and national authorities and to involve customs officers in meetings held by national authorities and the departments responsible for the implementation of the Convention. The second segment of this important meeting covered the consideration of the implementation of the Convention by African States. It should be noted in this regard that the segment included a presentation by the OPCW secretariat of the regional approach taken by that organization and the expected outcome of the approach. In particular, I would like to mention three important points relating to this segment: first, the establishment of training centres for regional training in each economic community and subregion; second, the training, begun in the economic community and subregion, of first responders to chemical incidents; and, third, the development of a training manual for the training centres. Discussions in this segment also focused on the two priority areas for Africa in terms of assistance and protection from chemical weapons: protection measures at the national level and response capacities at the regional level.

Mr. President, by sharing this brief background information on the proceedings and essence of the sixteenth regional meeting of national authorities of African States parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention, my delegation wishes to draw attention to the need to help African States achieve their legitimate aspirations for inclusive and sustainable development. In this spirit, it is in our view important to keep the Conference on Disarmament informed of our comments on this subject. First, by hosting this important meeting, the Kingdom of Morocco reiterates, albeit unnecessarily, its continued and long-

standing support for the work of OPCW, of which it has been a member since the entry into force of the Convention on 29 April 1997. Moreover, this regional meeting, which was held in Marrakech, is the second of its kind to be held in Morocco, after that held in 2009 in Rabat. Second, Morocco, which has long been the coordinator of the African Group in The Hague, is of the view that the regional approach taken by OPCW is an important means of establishing the principle of the universality of the Convention and an essential lever for getting as close as possible to reality and accurately identifying the challenges faced by States parties and their assistance and cooperation needs in each region and subregion. Third, the Kingdom of Morocco welcomes the 2017 launch by OPCW of the fourth phase of the Programme to Strengthen Cooperation with Africa on the Chemical Weapons Convention 2017–2019 and believes that the Africa Programme, as it is known, is a key instrument likely to help the African States achieve their legitimate aspirations for inclusive and sustainable development. Fourth, the development of the Africa Programme in consultation with African countries, according to their needs, will undoubtedly enable those countries to overcome the obstacles to the development of their national capacities by addressing such issues as strengthening national and regional capacities to respond to chemical attacks and helping make improved peaceful use of chemistry. Fifth, as a strong supporter of the Africa Programme, Morocco stresses the need to ensure that it is provided for and sustainable by supporting it with earmarked appropriations less dependent on voluntary funding. That will help provide the necessary visibility for African States parties. In this respect, promoting regional cooperation is still an important way for African States parties to fulfil their commitments under the Convention and strengthen their national capacities to make the most of peaceful uses of chemistry for their socioeconomic development.

Before concluding, Mr. President, I would like to say how much we wished, through this statement, not only to inform the members of the Conference about this important meeting but also to indicate specifically how, when we manage to negotiate texts in the Conference and then implement them, we make tangible progress towards our common objectives in the field of disarmament and arms control. That is why it seemed important to us to share this information with you this morning, Mr. President. Thank you.

The President: Thank you very much for your statement and for the information you brought to us this morning. We shall now give the floor to the representative of New Zealand.

Ms. Higgie (New Zealand): Mr. President, I welcome this opportunity to register New Zealand's support for you and for the other members of the Tunisian team as you preside over the deliberations of the Conference on Disarmament and also to welcome our new colleagues. May I take this opportunity too, to convey condolences to the Government and people of Indonesia on the tragic loss of life and devastation from the recent earthquakes in Lombok.

We are grateful, Mr. President, for your very constructive suggestion that the Conference on Disarmament hold a debate today on the Agenda for Disarmament. We are pleased to have this opportunity to focus on a number of the key points outlined in the Secretary-General's Agenda, in particular those of most relevance to the work of this body.

In the foreword to his Agenda, the Secretary-General has observed that the new reality of the dangerous times in which we live requires disarmament and non-proliferation to be put at the centre of the work of the United Nations. My Government certainly shares this view, which we too see as being in the interests both of national and of human security, necessary indeed to secure our common future. Disarmament, as the Secretary-General notes, is a tool for the prevention of armed conflict and mitigation of its impacts when it occurs. In New Zealand's view, the moral – if not legal – responsibility of all United Nations members to move forward with strengthening the rules that protect civilians in situations of conflict becomes all the more urgent during times of heightened danger, such as the present. We must direct yet greater efforts to ensuring compliance with international humanitarian law and ending any impunity for non-compliance.

The heading of the first substantive part of the Agenda, "Disarmament to save humanity", makes it clear that the imperative for the international community's focus on

chemical, biological and nuclear weapons flows from the risk that each of these weapons poses for us as – in the words of the American songwriter and satirist Tom Lehrer – “a weapon of universal bereavement”. Under the second substantive part of the Agenda, the Secretary-General has chosen not to deal with the international humanitarian law-related implications of weapons of mass destruction, nor with all the humanitarian consequences underlying them. Instead, his comments on international humanitarian law have been included rather in the abstract, as it were, in the first part. Yet for New Zealand, as for so many other members of the international community, a key factor in our abhorrence and rejection of all three weapons of mass destruction is anchored in our view that their use is incompatible with the fundamental precepts of international humanitarian law, including the rules requiring a distinction between combatants and civilians, requiring proportionality between military objectives and civilian harm and proscribing superfluous injury and unnecessary suffering.

The adoption last year of the Agenda is a recent reflection of this viewpoint and the desire of many of us here to remedy a legal anomaly and to ensure the treatment as a matter of international law of these three weapons, which existed before the advent of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. New Zealand is pleased now to have ratified this Treaty: our instrument of ratification was deposited with the Secretary-General at the end of last month.

More generally, I note that the Agenda for Disarmament includes eight action points on nuclear disarmament. In these the Secretary-General makes the case for renewed dialogue to help Member States “return to a common vision and path leading to the total elimination of nuclear weapons” and he appeals for the preservation of the norm against the use of nuclear weapons and for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty finally to enter into force.

There can be no doubt about New Zealand’s long-standing support, alongside our colleagues in the new Agenda coalition and with other core members of the humanitarian initiative, for the total elimination of nuclear weapons. We have also worked assiduously in favour of related interim goals and steps leading to their total elimination, including the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Together with Australia and Mexico, we have led action on this in the General Assembly for many years now, alongside measures to lower the risk of any use of nuclear weapons such as de-alerting. With specific reference to de-alerting, I note that New Zealand has been a member of the De-Alerting Group since its establishment over a decade ago, to lead advocacy on this issue in the General Assembly, and we are now serving as its current coordinator. Accordingly, it can come as no surprise that New Zealand strongly supports the Secretary-General’s objectives in this context and fully shares his view that “it is in the interest of national, collective and human security, as well as the survival of humanity, that nuclear weapons are never used again under any circumstances”.

We welcome the priority that the Secretary-General accords to the urgent pursuit and implementation of measures to reduce the risk of any use of nuclear weapons and to build mutual confidence and we are also grateful for his willingness and that of the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs to increase their efforts to facilitate dialogue, both formally and informally, in order to advance the prospects for nuclear disarmament. We would wish to be optimistic, but we do find it difficult to believe that the action points identified by the Secretary-General can result in sufficient traction to reverse the distinctly negative trends increasingly evident in the implementation of established nuclear disarmament pathways.

Turning to the recommendations in the Agenda with regard to the other two categories of weapons of mass destruction, New Zealand certainly endorses the Secretary-General’s call that the international community not fall back “to a moral dark age where the use of chemical, and potentially biological, weapons becomes tragically normalized”. It is our hope that the Secretary-General’s action points can help surmount any prospect of this in the face of concerns regarding the increasing risks associated with biological weapons and in view of the institutional weakness of the Biological Weapons Convention. We support the Secretary-General’s observations on the need to strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention and we support too the Agenda’s recommendations, both for the

establishment of an investigative capacity into allegations of use and also for a coordinated response framework to any actual use of biological weapons.

Equally, we endorse the Secretary-General's observations in his Agenda regarding chemical weapons. In addition to the requirement to carry forward work within the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in order to address issues of non-compliance with the Chemical Weapons Convention, we welcome the Secretary-General's action point regarding the need for the Security Council to provide for attribution and accountability for the horrific use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic.

In this regard, New Zealand continues to deeply regret the dissolution of the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism, set up to investigate the use of chemical weapons in Syria. We have therefore supported recent efforts in OPCW to work towards a mechanism for formally identifying perpetrators of chemical weapon attacks so that they can be held to account.

In the final section of the second substantive part of the Agenda, the Secretary-General addresses the need to prevent the emergence of new domains of strategic competition and conflict. We welcome his observations on the importance of ensuring the security and sustainability of outer space activities and will be keen to contribute funding towards a relevant study by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) in this context.

We would expect there to be very widespread support for the Secretary-General's call in the third substantive part of his Agenda for effective action to protect civilians from the growing urbanization of armed conflict, the ubiquitous use of improvised explosive devices and the deleterious impact of new technologies on humanitarian principles. As a member of the fairly recently established core group on the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, we welcome in particular the Agenda's focus on this issue and the Secretary-General's support for action to redress the immediate and also the long-term patterns of harm, so apparent in contemporary conflicts from explosive weapons with wide area effects. We hope that the Secretary-General's recommendations will be able to make some measurable impact on this very real problem. We hope too that the Secretary-General's introduction of better coordination and a whole-of-system approach to the work by United Nations entities on improvised explosive devices will serve to mitigate the widespread proliferation and devastating impact of these weapons.

The Secretary-General raises the important issue of armed drones and the negative impact that these can have and the problems that they raise in terms of demonstrating compliance with international law and by complicating popular support for counter-terrorism operations. Accordingly, we think it would indeed be useful, as the Secretary-General suggests, for the United Nations to support Member States in exploring the application of common standards for the transfer, holding and use of armed unmanned aerial vehicles. We note, however, that given the existing coverage of armed drones in the Arms Trade Treaty, there are already some controls in place for States parties to that Treaty governing the transfer of armed drones.

New Zealand welcomes the Agenda's focus on the implications of the illicit trade in and excessive accumulation of conventional arms and its recognition that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has opened a window for a whole-of-system perspective on combating the illicit trade in small arms. We agree with the Secretary-General's observation that the present orientation towards compartmentalized and short-term projects has not kept pace with the seriousness and magnitude of the problem that needs to be addressed, and we agree with his acknowledgement of the corresponding need for a new fund, a single platform for addressing all the dimensions of illicit small arms in a sustained and holistic manner. In this regard, New Zealand was very pleased to have been able to announce during the recent Review Conference of the Programme of Action a contribution of 100,000 dollars to the new fund or trust facility which the Secretary-General has now established for this purpose, which shall also serve as a contribution towards the global attainment of target 16.4 of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Equally in recognition of what the Secretary-General rightly observes about the need for proper management of small arms stockpiles and his action point under this heading,

New Zealand will continue to be receptive to requests, in particular those from within our region, for bilateral assistance to ensure the safety and security of arms depots and stockpiles.

I have sought today to cover the key issues addressed by the Secretary-General relevant to the topics on the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament. Stopping at that, however, might risk conveying the impression that New Zealand believes all to be well with multilateralism and international rule-making in the disarmament context. This is not at all the case. As the Secretary-General rightly remarks in his final section, strengthening partnerships for disarmament, the United Nations disarmament organs have been “in a state of stagnation” since the turn of the twenty-first century. Earlier in his Agenda, when considering nuclear disarmament efforts in part II, he refers to the decades of paralysis in multilateral negotiating bodies. It is clear to my delegation that, as the international community’s standing forum for multilateral disarmament negotiations, the Conference on Disarmament must take the lion’s share of responsibility for this indictment. The omission in the Agenda of any action steps specifically directed at encouraging the Conference on Disarmament back to work might seem to suggest that the Secretary-General regards the situation as indeed intractable.

For New Zealand’s part, we see no basis for optimism that the decision which the Conference took earlier this year to establish a number of subsidiary bodies will prove instrumental in enabling the Conference on Disarmament to meet its mandate, any more than the establishment of similar bodies has managed in previous years. We can see no point at which the Conference on Disarmament is likely to prove able to surmount the consensus hurdle laid down in its rules of procedure and to engage in meaningful negotiations.

The international community is fortunate that the General Assembly has been able at least to some extent to step into the breach left by the Conference’s continuing paralysis. As the Secretary-General acknowledges, “by necessity, the General Assembly has recently taken on the leading role in all aspects of the disarmament process”. New Zealand takes pride in both the recent treaties successfully negotiated in the context of the General Assembly: the Arms Trade Treaty and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Both have filled very evident gaps in the coverage of international law-making and represent valuable additions to our global rules-based framework. Each is a testament to the value that the General Assembly and its more open and inclusive rules of procedure can bring to meeting the aspirations of many United Nations members.

Equally, we can also see positive aspects to the Secretary-General’s suggestions for an expansion of the General Assembly’s contribution to disarmament processes, including in more cost-effective ways, such as by replacing governmental expert groups with expanded First Committee working groups. We welcome the Secretary-General’s intention to develop specific options for the financial viability of the institutional structures, supporting the implementation of major treaties and conventions.

We welcome too his undertaking regarding a strengthened, strategic role for UNIDIR in all disarmament processes and deliberations. We are pleased to see this enhanced recognition of the importance of UNIDIR and the value that it brings to disarmament work. We are also confident that, as the Secretary-General says, there is scope for a more substantive role for the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters.

The Agenda for Disarmament concludes with the Secretary-General’s hope that it will be able to serve as a catalyst for new ideas and new ways of working together, so that disarmament, together with all the positive outcomes that flow from disarmament measures, will be restored to the centre of the international community’s common efforts for peace and security. New Zealand echoes the Secretary-General’s wish.

The President: Thank you very much for your comprehensive statement and I will now give the floor to the representative of Turkey.

Ms. Rende (Turkey): Mr. President, since this is the first time that my delegation is taking the floor under your presidency, at the outset allow me to congratulate you on the assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and to assure you of my

delegation's full support. I wish you every success in your endeavours to take forward the work of the Conference on Disarmament.

The third session of the Conference on Disarmament commenced last week with the meetings of subsidiary body 1. Starting from today, with subsidiary body 2, all subsidiary bodies will work on their reports on the progress achieved and agreed on and then those reports will be submitted by the coordinators to the Conference on Disarmament through the President for adoption and due reflection in the annual report of the Conference on Disarmament to the General Assembly of the United Nations, as decided by the Conference in the decision contained in document CD/2119. Furthermore, in the second half of August, with the beginning of the Turkish presidency, the Conference on Disarmament will work on the preparation and adoption of its annual report.

As the sixth and last president of the Conference on Disarmament in 2018 and with the support of the secretariat, we expect to distribute the first draft of the annual report in the week starting 20 August, aiming at preparing a factual and balanced annual report. In accordance with standard past practice, we would like to use the period ahead of our presidency to hold informal consultations with interested members of the Conference on Disarmament, in order to hear their preliminary views on the annual report, which is currently at the preparatory stage. Accordingly, we encourage all Conference members to approach the Turkish delegation and to share their views. We shall take as our starting point the annual reports of the previous years and we will do our very best to accommodate the expectations of all member States.

I would also like to make some initial remarks on the Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament, following your request at the Conference's previous plenary meeting.

Turkey would like to express its gratitude to the Secretary-General for taking on this initiative, which we believe to be important, critical and timely. As stated in the Agenda, the initiative was undertaken out of necessity. The stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament and slow pace of other disarmament forums is not producing an environment conducive to the achievement of tangible results in many problematic fields. We fully welcome the understanding which puts disarmament and non-proliferation efforts at the centre of the work of the United Nations and assigns new roles to disarmament, such as maintaining peace and security, protecting civilians and promoting sustainable development. The overarching approach to disarmament following the toolbox analogy, as set out in the Agenda, is an important new approach which, in Turkey's view, merits further study.

In his Agenda, the Secretary-General identified 40 distinct actions. Of these, 16 were tasks assigned to the Office for Disarmament Affairs and 10 were actions entrusted to the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR). The Office for Disarmament Affairs and UNIDIR are already assuming important responsibilities and for that reason the institutional capacities of both bodies need to be strengthened if a better result is to be achieved with the new initiative. This is an important issue since many delegations, in particular the smaller ones among them, are counting on both the Office for Disarmament Affairs and UNIDIR. As we have observed during the meetings of subsidiary bodies of the Conference on Disarmament, UNIDIR has made a substantial contribution to the discussions with its experts and their presentations. It is evident that the institutional capacity of UNIDIR is essential to the processing of the accumulated knowledge in the various disarmament platforms.

Returning now to the actions defined in the Agenda, disarmament experts are familiar with most of them, yet some others need to be further developed. There are three main parts to the document, entitled "Disarmament to save humanity", "Disarmament that saves lives" and "Disarmament for future generations". Although there was an endeavour to strike a balance between these three aspects, it appears that most of the specific actions fall under the notion of "Disarmament that saves lives". We hope that further attention will also be given to weapons of mass destruction and to new technologies when preparing the implementation plan for this initiative.

We welcome the notion behind the first set of actions, which deals with weapons of mass destruction and other strategic weapons. Many of these have been the subject of discussions for a very long time and our position is well recorded in the official records of

the Conference on Disarmament. What we can add now is that we also support efforts to strengthen the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention: ensuring the effective and full implementation of both conventions is the first step, as stated in the Agenda for Disarmament. It is also important to strengthen the norm against all kinds of weapons of mass destruction. We believe that there is a vast space for public diplomacy in this endeavour.

Turning to the issue of disarmament that saves lives, we share the understanding that the set of actions defined in this part of the Agenda can have immediate, direct and mitigating effects on those who are caused suffering by conventional weapons. Maximum protection of civilians in all conflicts should be the priority for all, in different platforms, and ways of strengthening international humanitarian law must be further explored. Political declarations on issues related to international humanitarian law should be further studied, with a view to gaining a better understanding of their advantages and disadvantages. Under this heading, the Agenda calls for better data collection on civilian casualties. While this approach might enable States to cope better with the problem, data-collection activities should not be outsourced to non-governmental organizations with unproven professional capacity.

The extensive use of improvised explosive devices by illegal armed groups and terrorists is a cause of deep concern, as these devices have indiscriminate and destructive impacts at all levels, including on civilians. We therefore support inter-agency coordination and the whole-of-system approach, as proposed with the Agenda. The use of armed unmanned aerial vehicles by terrorist organizations is another great concern for all and, in this context, we note also the need to develop common standards for the transfer, holding and use of drones. The approach proposed under the Agenda for tackling small arms and light weapons, for the maintenance of excessive stockpiles and for the promotion of regional dialogue and confidence-building are other strong points of the initiative.

The last principal section of the Agenda, the disarmament of future generations, deals with emerging needs and methods of warfare. While technological developments bring prosperity to everybody, there is growing concern over the malicious use of these new technologies. Accordingly, the Agenda gives close attention to the risk of lowering the threshold for the use of force, in view of the advancement in autonomy and remote operation of weapons systems. On this issue, important steps were taken at the meetings of the Group of Governmental Experts on lethal autonomous weapons systems. We believe that the Convention on Chemical Weapons is the right forum in which issues related to lethal autonomous weapons systems in this area should be tackled. In our efforts to this end, we should avoid hampering any progress in or access to civilian research and development. We attach importance to the humanitarian aspects of this matter. In line with this position, we support such notions as the need for meaningful human control and accountability for such weapons systems. Humans must always assume the ultimate responsibility when dealing with the question of life and death; in other words, life and death decisions should not be delegated to machines. On the other hand, we believe that current international law and, in particular, international humanitarian law provide the necessary basis for the possible development of such weapons systems.

Mr. President, with these initial remarks on the Agenda for Disarmament, I would like once again to express our gratitude to the Secretary-General for this initiative and for his continuous engagement in disarmament efforts. Thank you.

The President: Thank you for your statement. I now give the floor to the representative of Argentina.

Mr. Foradori (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Mr. President. First of all, we extend our congratulations to you and wish you every success in your tenure. We would also like to welcome Ambassador Gallegos of Ecuador, Ambassador Eguiguren of Chile and Ambassador Liddle of the United Kingdom, with whom we hope to work together in pursuit of our common objectives.

With regard to your proposed discussion of the ways in which the Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament can have a positive impact on the work of the Conference on Disarmament, I would like to make the following comments.

Argentina has consistently maintained that it would be highly constructive, indeed it is vital, for the Conference to adopt a sustainable approach to its future work. It is therefore our view that the objective of each presidency should be to foster a context that is a comparative improvement on that of the year before, thus preventing the paralysis that does so much damage to the credibility of the Conference and its members. In this regard, we believe that the valuable work of the working group on the way ahead set in motion a process that led to the establishment this year of the five subsidiary bodies, which has led to greater dialogue between members. We hope that the reports of the subsidiary bodies will be successful in discovering common ground.

This would offer a firm basis for the continuation of the mandate of the subsidiary bodies in the 2019 session, as indicated by the distinguished representative of the United Kingdom. We understand that the decision contained in document CD/2119 makes that continuation possible. Furthermore, we are witnesses to the fact that certain issues that have traditionally been the remit of the Conference are now being addressed from a more technical perspective in other forums, such as the groups of governmental experts on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, the prevention of an arms race in outer space and nuclear disarmament verification, established by the General Assembly.

In that connection, we agree with the Secretary-General's recognition, in his Agenda for Disarmament, of the need to improve coordination and synergy among the principal disarmament bodies. Consequently, Argentina believes that it is necessary to find a way to enable the discussions of the Conference and of the groups of governmental experts to feed off and complement one another, since negotiation fundamentally requires debate from different perspectives and taking account of what is best and most constructive for the security interests of all States and the international community as a whole.

In this regard, Argentina understands that General Assembly resolution 71/259, which provides for the establishment of a high-level expert preparatory group on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, opens the door to such an exchange. In particular, operative paragraph 4 calls upon the Secretary-General to transmit the report of the group to the Conference before its 2019 session. However, there is no mention of what its scope will be.

It is worth highlighting that the Group of Governmental Experts on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, by virtue of operative paragraph 6 of General Assembly resolution 72/250, is in the same situation. Last, but not least, the Group of Governmental Experts on nuclear disarmament verification encourages the Conference to substantively address nuclear disarmament verification in General Assembly resolution 71/67.

Against this backdrop, future presidencies of the Conference should consider holding an open and public discussion on these reports. This discussion would enrich the initial report of the group of governmental experts from a more political perspective. The discussion could include national and/or regional contributions, and its outcome could be an opportunity to put together a document setting out technical and political assessments to be integrated into the final report of the Conference and subsequently submitted to the General Assembly. It is therefore vital to continue and strengthen dialogue within the Conference, as it is an essential element in building trust among members.

Mr. President, we understand the frustration expressed by the distinguished representatives of Chile and Ecuador, but we are not willing to give up on past hopes. We agree with the remarks of distinguished representative of the United Kingdom regarding two fundamental ingredients: courage and imagination. Indeed, it takes great courage to imagine a world without weapons of mass destruction, but it takes even greater courage to take the decisions that will allow us to make that world a reality. Thank you very much, Mr. President.

The President: Thank you very much for your statement. I now give the floor to the representative of Belgium.

Mr. Dhaene (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, as this is the first time my delegation is taking the floor under your presidency, I would like to congratulate you on

your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and assure you of my delegation's full support throughout your tenure. My country welcomes your initiative to organize an exchange of views in the Conference on the report entitled "Securing Our Common Future: an Agenda for Disarmament", distributed by the Secretary-General of the United Nations in late May. My delegation fully endorses the statement made by the European Union and wishes to make a few points in a national capacity. My country welcomes the publication of the report, which reflects the Secretary-General's commitment to revitalizing the disarmament discussion, including by identifying a number of specific actions. I will repeat a number of these actions here, adding some preliminary comments, and starting now I will make my comments in English.

(spoke in English)

Turning now to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, Belgium, in its capacity as co-coordinator of the article 14 process under the Treaty, joins the appeal made by the Secretary-General to all States whose ratifications are required for the Treaty to enter into force.

Belgium welcomes the recent bilateral and multilateral efforts undertaken to find a peaceful and sustainable solution to the nuclear crisis on the Korean Peninsula. Any comprehensive agreement aimed at ending the nuclear crisis and completing the denuclearization of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea must foresee an irreversible and legally binding end to that country's nuclear testing programme. This would be rendered possible through the signing and ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

On the question of a fissile material cut-off treaty, Belgium welcomes the Secretary-General's support for the commencement of negotiations of such a treaty and its early conclusion. A fissile material cut-off treaty is an indispensable step on the path to a nuclear-weapon-free world. It constitutes the next logical step in the fulfilment of the requirements set out in article 6 of the Non-Proliferation Treaty and is essential for both nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. In that context, we look forward to the conclusions and final recommendations of the high-level fissile material cut-off treaty expert preparatory group led by Canada. We hope that this important work will lead the way to the commencement of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty in the near future. My country is looking forward to discussing the preparatory group's report in the Conference on Disarmament.

On the issue of chemical weapons, Belgium welcomes the Secretary-General's commitment to building new leadership and unity in restoring respect for the global norm against chemical weapons and his support for a new and impartial mechanism to identify perpetrators of the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic. Belgium calls for the swift implementation of the decision of the Conference of States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention at its fourth special session that should lead to an operational attribution mechanism and gives its full support to the Director-General of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in this task.

On small arms and light weapons, Belgium welcomes the Secretary-General's announced actions to address armed violence and the diversion of weapons as a contribution to target 16.4 of the Sustainable Development Goals. Belgium stresses the importance of mainstreaming the fight against illicit small arms and light weapons and their ammunition in post-conflict and reconstruction operations and calls for the universalization of the Arms Trade Treaty as an essential instrument for regulating the international trade in conventional arms and for preventing and eradicating the illicit trade in and diversion of small arms and light weapons.

On the issue of explosive weapons in populated areas, Belgium welcomes the Secretary-General's commitment to protecting civilians against the urbanization of armed conflicts. With regard to explosive weapons in populated areas, my country is of the view that international humanitarian law, as it stands today and if scrupulously observed, is adequate for the efficient protection of civilians in attacks in populated areas. Belgium supports the sharing of good practices and policies among States and looks forward to an

expanded discussion on this topic at the second round of talks on explosive weapons in populated areas in September.

On lethal autonomous weapons systems, Belgium welcomes the Secretary-General's support for the work of the Group of Governmental Experts on emerging technologies in the area of lethal autonomous weapons systems and looks forward to the Group's second session later this month. Human control is a central criterion to be taken into account in moving towards a shared response to the challenges posed by such weapons systems.

On improvised explosive devices, mine action and victim assistance, Belgium welcomes and supports the whole-of-system approach on improvised explosive devices promoted by the Secretary-General and the strengthened United Nations inter-agency coordination that he intends to set in place under the leadership of the United Nations Mine Action Service. Coherent inter-agency coordination is crucial for effective mine action as a tool for threat mitigation. In its capacity as Chair of the Committee on Victim Assistance of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, Belgium calls on the Secretary-General to place victim assistance at the top of the United Nations mine action priorities. This plea was also made by the director of the United Nations Mine Action Service, Agnès Marcaillou, during the meeting of experts on the Protocol on Explosive Remnants of War to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons in June 2018. Given that victim assistance is a long-term commitment of affected States and a major priority in mine action, Belgium also calls for the development of an integrated and cross-sector approach to victim assistance.

Lastly, Mr. President, we turn to the issue of nuclear disarmament. In his report, the Secretary-General recognizes that the international division over the path towards nuclear disarmament has deepened. We welcome the Secretary-General's willingness to step up his efforts to facilitate critical dialogue among member States in this respect. Belgium remains convinced that a realistic path towards nuclear disarmament is provided by the progressive approach based on mutually reinforcing building blocks. On various occasions, Belgium has already expressed its view on the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. It does not support the Treaty and remains convinced that it will not allow us to make progress. While we disagree with other States on this issue, we remain ready to cooperate with all stakeholders in jointly furthering our goal of a world without nuclear weapons.

Now, Mr. President, allow me to end my statement by welcoming our new colleagues, the Ambassadors of Chile, of the United Kingdom and of Ecuador.

The President: Thank you very much. I now give the floor to the representative of the United States of America.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): First, Mr. President, I would like to note, for the record, that the United States has submitted a response to the letter from the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation regarding the analysis by the United States of the draft Treaty on the Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space, set out in document CD/2042. Please look out for the United States response, which is to be circulated as a document of the Conference in the coming days.

I will take up the question of the Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament at a subsequent session of the Conference, but I would like here to read to colleagues a brief extract from the report of the 16 July meeting in Helsinki between President Trump and Russian President Putin. Let me first state that we appreciate the opportunity to be able to brief you on the outcomes of the 16 July meetings in Helsinki between President Trump and President Putin and Secretary of State Pompeo and Foreign Minister Lavrov. The goal in Helsinki was to have a conversation about the state of United States-Russia relations, which are at their lowest point since the end of the cold war, and to explore Moscow's willingness to address the very real issues that have led us to this place.

As President Trump has said many times, better relations between the United States and Russia are in the interest of not just the United States, but the entire world. The administration is clear-eyed, however, about the challenges that Russia presents to our national interest and those of our allies and partners. There were no agreements reached in Helsinki, beyond agreement for our two sides to keep talking on the entire range of issues that the Presidents discussed. President Trump stated that the United States and Russian

National Security Council staffs will develop a dialogue to follow up on the Presidents' discussion in Helsinki and to track the respective national security priorities of our two countries.

Both Presidents are open to the business communities on both sides working among themselves, creating a working group to present ideas to address economic relations for the two Governments to consider. The Presidents reaffirm the importance of continuing discussions on arms control and strategic stability as our two countries hold the preponderance of the world's nuclear weapons and have a duty to manage our relations responsibly. We expect another round of strategic stability talks in the future.

President Putin also suggested a working group of academics and former officials from both countries to work on the political issues and reiterated Russian interest in working groups on cyber-terrorism and counter-terrorism. The United States at this point has not made a decision on these groups.

More broadly, the Presidents reviewed key international issues including the situation in Syria; United States concerns about Iranian activities in the region; denuclearization in North Korea; and the situation in Ukraine. The Presidents agreed that our two sides should continue discussions on these matters with a view to seeking cooperation where possible and to seeking to resolve disagreements. As the President has indicated, this is the beginning of a process towards reducing tensions and risks between the United States and Russia. We expect our two sides to continue discussions to follow up on the Presidents' discussion. Our Presidents will meet again in the future, discussions are under way on this, but at this point we have nothing further to announce.

The President: Thank you very much. I now give the floor again to the representative of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Liddle (United Kingdom): Thank you, Mr. President, for allowing me to take the floor again. The United Kingdom of course aligns itself with the European Union statement but I wanted to make some further comments on the Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament on behalf of the United Kingdom.

The United Kingdom welcomes the fact that the Secretary-General came to Geneva in May to launch his Agenda for Disarmament. His decision to launch the Agenda here recognized the importance of Geneva in the disarmament world and its added value in being able to link the disarmament community to the humanitarian, human rights and development work taking place here. It was also a clear statement that we need to forge a better connection between Geneva and New York, the two disarmament hubs.

The launch of the Agenda here provides us all with an opportunity to use the expertise that we have accumulated in our disarmament community across delegations, United Nations bodies, academic institutions, civil society and international organizations with a view to making progress. For the United Kingdom, the area ripest for progress is part III, "Disarmament that saves lives". During the drafting period we convened a group of countries and civil society organizations interested in peace and security issues to generate a contribution focused on conventional weapons issues. This was welcomed by the drafters of the Agenda and many of our points are reflected.

We welcome in particular the call in this section of the Agenda for disarmament and arms control to be better integrated into the United Nations' wider peace and security agenda. Understanding how arms control instruments can be best applied in the conflict cycle to prevent conflict or the return to conflict is rightly identified as an area that needs further study. We are pleased that the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) is preparing an initial paper on this issue and we look forward to co-hosting an event with the Institute during Geneva Peace Week in November to launch that paper.

We also welcome the call for further study into improving data collection on casualties across the United Nations system and the initiative to combat the illicit circulation and trade in small arms at the country or subregional level. The Agenda states that this will be supported by creating a multi-partner trust fund within the peacebuilding fund, although we understand that the mechanics of this have not yet been worked out. We

hope that the Office for Disarmament Affairs will provide further information on this in due course.

Mr. President, in Part II of the Agenda, “Disarmament that saves humanity”, we welcome the recognition that norms against the use of chemical weapons have been challenged in recent years by their repeated use, so far with impunity, in Syria and also in Malaysia and the United Kingdom. This section also commits the United Nations to building the capacity of the Secretary-General’s investigative mechanism into the alleged use of biological weapons, a mechanism which the United Kingdom strongly supports.

From the United Kingdom’s perspective, the section dealing with nuclear issues appears to offer no new ideas beyond the use of the Secretary-General’s good offices to explore new approaches and measures to reduce risks and build confidence. Unsurprisingly, we do not support the sections on the nuclear ban treaty, which will never become a multilateral norm and will never constitute customary international law.

Part IV of the Agenda rightly highlights understanding the implications of developments in science and technology as an important area for future discussion. On the issue of the increased automation of weapons, we welcome his insistence that humans must remain in control of the use of force at all times. We also welcome his helpful emphasis on the importance of weapons reviews under article 36 of Protocol I additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949. We also welcome the Secretary-General’s recognition in Part V of the Agenda that we need to strengthen partnerships for disarmament and we echo, in particular, his call for the equal, full and effective participation of women in disarmament processes, his emphasis on the involvement and empowerment of young people and his recognition of the role that civil society, including the private sector, can play in that regard.

In our contribution to the drafting of the Agenda, we called on the Secretary-General to articulate the challenges that needed to be addressed. He has certainly done that. As we reflect on how to find solutions to these challenges, our first objective should be to preserve the current norms and standards that we have spent decades building and that have delivered effective and powerful non-proliferation and arms control regimes. We continue to believe that the majority of the international community can and wants to address these challenges and support a robust rules-based international system.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): Thank you very much. I now give the floor to Ambassador Youssef, Permanent Representative of the Arab Republic of Egypt.

Mr. Youssef (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): Mr. President, allow me at the outset to extend you our sincere congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference. We commend you on your sincere efforts to facilitate the work of the Conference and assure you that the Egyptian delegation remains ready to work with you to ensure the success of your mandate. I, too, would like to welcome our new colleagues, the distinguished Ambassadors of Ecuador, Chile and the United Kingdom, and assure them of our full cooperation.

(*spoke in English*)

Egypt welcomes with appreciation the Secretary-General’s Agenda for Disarmament. There is no doubt that the launch of this Agenda was timely, taking into account the current status of the international security environment, which is laden with many existing and emerging challenges. In the current security landscape, disarmament measures are assuming an indispensable role in preventing the international community from drifting into a new arms race that, in the light of the exponential growth of technologies, could extend conflicts into other domains like outer space and the information and telecommunications environment.

It is unfortunate, however, that the Conference on Disarmament, as the single multilateral negotiating forum, has been in a state of stagnation for more than two decades. In my statement, I will endeavour to highlight our views on the Secretary-General’s Agenda, with a particular focus on issues related to the mandate of the Conference on Disarmament and its agenda items.

We fully share the views of the Secretary-General that nuclear disarmament and the total elimination of nuclear weapons remain the highest priority of the United Nations. Egypt will do its utmost to support the efforts of the Secretary-General to achieve and maintain a world free from nuclear weapons. The step-by-step approach essentially promoted by nuclear-weapon States has failed to make systematic and tangible progress towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons. It is in the interest of the survival of humanity that, in the light of their catastrophic consequences, nuclear weapons should never be used again under any circumstances. The commencement and early conclusion of negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices can significantly contribute to the goal of nuclear disarmament, provided that it encompasses within its scope existing stocks of fissile materials. It is also high time to pursue a comprehensive approach, through the negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament, of a comprehensive nuclear weapons convention with an agreed time frame for the complete, irreversible and verifiable elimination of nuclear weapons and all related facilities.

By adopting the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, and thereby establishing a norm against nuclear weapons, non-nuclear-weapon States effectively contributed a priori to the implementation of the Secretary-General's Agenda. Through negotiations, member States have also explored the full potential and contribution of majority-initiated disarmament processes of the General Assembly. This example could further be used on other emerging challenges in the field of disarmament.

It is our country's belief that outer space should be preserved as a domain solely used for peaceful purposes. We therefore fully concur with the Secretary-General that any use of force in the fragile outer space environment would likely bring lasting and devastating impacts. For years, alternately with Sri Lanka, Egypt has submitted a resolution to the General Assembly on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, in addition to co-sponsoring all resolutions that attempt to address this serious threat. We welcome the readiness of the United Nations Secretariat to deepen engagement with member States on the elaboration of effective measures to prevent an arms race in outer space, and we welcome in this regard the convening of the group of governmental experts pursuant to General Assembly resolution 72/250.

Transparency and confidence-building measures are of special importance in the field of disarmament in general and nuclear disarmament in particular. These measures contribute directly to building confidence and impose serious constraints on destabilizing factors that could promote an arms race. Implementation of such measures should aim at building trust and providing accurate, up-to-date and comparable information to enhance accountability. It is for this reason that transparency is a common feature of any efforts that pave the way for concluding legally binding instruments. The engagement of the United Nations with member States to foster the practical implementation of transparency and confidence-building measures is a welcome approach, on the understanding that these are not substitutes for legally binding instruments and are best pursued within such instruments as a legally binding obligation.

Last but not least, Egypt welcomes the approach of the Secretary-General to the establishment in the Middle East of a zone free from nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction. We call upon the Secretary-General to work closely with States of the region and to exert every possible effort to establish such a zone at the earliest stage on the basis of the 1995 resolution adopted by the Review and Extension Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. This resolution remains valid until fully implemented.

The President: Thank you very much, Excellency. I now give the floor to the representative of India.

Mr. Chander (India): Mr. President, distinguished colleagues, greetings to all of you, in particular those who have joined us recently. While I have served for more than a year as the Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations, this is my first statement since taking on the additional function of disarmament, which I assumed last week.

Mr. President, the Indian delegation congratulates you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference and assures you of our support. We are pleased that you have chosen to dedicate today's plenary meeting to a discussion on the Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament, which is a timely and relevant initiative. The choice by the Secretary-General of Geneva, the city which is also home to the Conference on Disarmament, for the launch of his Agenda is a reminder of the key role that this institution is expected to play as the world's single multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament.

The Agenda for Disarmament is indeed comprehensive and broad-ranging, as well as balanced, addressing weapons of mass destruction and conventional weapons. We welcome the Secretary-General's willingness to work directly with member States to facilitate dialogue among Governments, including through the creation of informal platforms to explore new approaches and measures to reduce risks and to build confidence. In our view, in a changing world, finding new forums and formats to discuss and move forward in disarmament will be as important as leveraging existing forums.

India remains committed to the ideals enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and to multilateralism. This is truly the age of interdependence. Enduring solutions to our common problems of peace and security can only be found through the pursuit of genuine multilateralism.

We hear the Secretary-General's call to States possessing nuclear weapons that they have the primary responsibility to lead the efforts on non-proliferation and disarmament. As a responsible State that possesses nuclear weapons, India has on several occasions reiterated the need for meaningful dialogue among all nuclear-weapon States to build trust and confidence and to reduce the prominence of nuclear weapons in their security doctrines. We also believe that we need to bridge the growing divide on disarmament through dialogue and a renewed commitment to multilateralism. This should also be line with the Secretary-General's call that all States, nuclear and non-nuclear, must work together to bridge the gulf that divides them. We also agree with the Secretary-General when he refers to the negotiation of a fissile material cut-off treaty as the oldest outstanding priority on the nuclear disarmament agenda.

On the nuclear front, the Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament calls for reductions in overall stockpiles of all types of nuclear weapons; ensuring the non-use of nuclear weapons; reductions in the role and significance of nuclear weapons in military concepts, doctrines and policies; reductions in the operational readiness of nuclear weapons systems; constraints on the development of advanced new types of nuclear weapons; increased transparency in nuclear weapons programmes; and measures to build confidence and mutual trust. Most, if not all, of these measures find resonance in two of the resolutions tabled by India annually under the nuclear cluster at the First Committee.

The first, on a convention on the prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons, which was first introduced in 1982, reflects a belief that a legally binding instrument prohibiting the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, negotiated in the Conference on Disarmament with the participation of all States possessing nuclear weapons, will contribute to the step-by-step delegitimization of nuclear weapons.

The second, a resolution on reducing nuclear danger, highlights the need for a review of nuclear doctrines and for steps to reduce the risk of unintentional or accidental use of nuclear weapons, including through de-alerting and detargeting. The Secretary-General refers also to the recent technological developments that could challenge existing legal, humanitarian and ethical norms and underlines the need for vigilance in our understanding of such new and emerging technologies. Further steps would be required to encourage responsible innovations by the industry sector.

On lethal autonomous weapons systems, we concur with the Secretary-General that human beings must remain in control of the use of force at all times and that the culture of accountability must be reinforced. We welcome the Secretary-General's focus on empowering young people and creating training and educational opportunities. It is encouraging to note that the Office for Disarmament Affairs, working in partnership with all interested entities, will further invest in disarmament education, including through the establishment of a platform for youth engagement from all parts of the world.

Mr. President, I look forward to working with you and other colleagues.

The President (*spoke in French*): Thank you, Sir. I now give the floor to Ambassador Dallafior, Permanent Representative of Switzerland.

Ms. Dallafior (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Thank you, Mr. President. As I am taking the floor for the first time under your presidency, I would like to congratulate you on your assumption of this important position. I would also like to thank you for your invitation to consider the Agenda for Disarmament that the Secretary-General of the United Nations published and presented here in Geneva last May. We are of the view that the Secretary-General's Agenda is an important document in several respects. Above all, it is in itself a first. Never before has a Secretary-General endeavoured to define in such detail how disarmament efforts contribute to the work of the United Nations. We are grateful to him for this important work. The fact that the Agenda for Disarmament places particular emphasis on the role to be played by disarmament in conflict prevention strikes us as a significant development. This notion of prevention applies to potential conflicts in which weapons of mass destruction are relied on, as well as to regional or intra-State conflicts. This preventive dimension is also inherent to the Secretary-General's call to address rapid scientific and technological advances. We also fully share the Secretary-General's view that disarmament measures are a means of mitigating the impact of conflict when conflict cannot be prevented. Disarmament plays a crucial role in protecting civilian populations in times of conflict. The Agenda for Disarmament highlights another element that we consider to be of paramount importance: the contribution of disarmament extends not only to achieving the objectives of promoting peace and security but also to other areas, starting with development. That is not simply because more and more resources are being invested in weapons purchases. Above all, technology and innovation have a major role to play in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Mr. President, this brief statement will of course not do justice to the Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament. The Agenda approaches disarmament in a holistic way, and this initial discussion cannot be anything more than an introduction that invites further discussion. At this point, I would especially like to point out that the Agenda reminds us of the importance and potential impact of disarmament activities in achieving multiple objectives shared by all States, that it identifies many avenues of work and that it will be important for States to take full ownership of the Agenda. Let me also first of all point out that there are multiple consequences for the Conference on Disarmament and that the Agenda clearly underscores the importance of the Conference for its function as the main global disarmament forum and its contribution to addressing the challenges identified in the Agenda. To address those challenges, it would be important not only for the Conference to regain its functionality but also for it to approach disarmament more comprehensively – namely, for it to cover issues other than (*spoke in English*) “disarmament to save humanity” (*spoke in French*) alone. It should be open to all relevant actors in the field of disarmament, including States knocking on its door and civil society. As noted in the Agenda, partnerships must be strengthened if disarmament is to move forward.

Mr. President, before concluding, I would like to take this opportunity to welcome our new colleagues, the Ambassadors of the United Kingdom, Chile and Ecuador. Thank you.

The President: Thank you very much. I now give the floor to the representative of Japan.

Mr. Takamizawa (Japan): Thank you, Mr. President. At the outset, since this is the first time that I am taking the floor during the Tunisian presidency, I would like to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and to assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation.

Japan welcomes the Agenda for Disarmament presented by the Secretary-General and also his trip to Nagasaki this week: these are both testament to his commitment to engaging more actively in the world's disarmament forums. In particular, we appreciate the comprehensive manner in which he has decided to view disarmament, by suggesting the three pillars, namely: disarmament to save humanity; disarmament to save lives; and disarmament for future generations.

It is in this context, with regard in particular to the second pillar, that Japan will continue actively to address issues in the area of conventional weapons, including small arms and light weapons. We are working hard to tackle this issue with all stakeholders, including civil society, as we move towards the fourth session of the Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty, starting on 20 August 2018 in Tokyo. In its role as president of that Conference, Japan is making every effort to ensure the success of this important meeting, while bearing in mind the significance of ensuring synergy with other relevant instruments, including the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

Regarding the issue of disarmament for future generations, I would like to emphasize the importance of the role of young people in this domain. In this context, since 2013, Japan has been promoting an initiative for young people called Youth Communicators for a World without Nuclear Weapons. This programme is designed to support efforts to transmit the realities of atomic bombing to future generations, to foster critical thinking among young people and to encourage them to listen to a range of opinions. We will continue these activities and contribute to the Secretary-General's Agenda in this regard.

Yet I wonder to what extent today's discussion can be relevant to the Conference on Disarmament without speaking about the Conference itself. Here I support what the Secretary-General has said in that, as affirmed by the Secretary-General of the Conference in his statement, the Conference on Disarmament will require improved coordination, an end to duplication, better use of expertise and, above all, political courage, to shift positions. This is the same point that Japan made during the high-level segment of the Conference in March this year.

Let us now ask: what is really required of us so that we can make progress in the Conference on Disarmament? Japan has actively participated in all sessions of the five subsidiary bodies and we are pleased to see some interactive and detailed discussions, in particular after the presentations by experts, including those by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), which undertook to add value to the achievements of the working group on the way ahead in 2017. Japan is of the view, however, that reasonable ambition and a certain level of humility should be sought as we enter the final phase of the subsidiary bodies process: agreeing on the reports. In that context I really appreciate the advance announcement, made by Turkey, of the important informal consultations that it plans to hold. Japan is ready to cooperate closely in that process. And I also believe that the assessment of this subsidiary body should not consist merely in counting the number of its meetings, but will depend on how well and how closely we can work together in pursuit of this goal.

Japan expects that all Conference on Disarmament members will keep this in mind and will exercise and demonstrate utmost flexibility and creativity. Ultimately, the question that we need to answer is how we can agree to work hard and seriously on the tangible goals taken from the Secretary-General's Agenda and how to tackle them in the Conference on Disarmament with a sense of urgency. It is to be hoped that this can be achieved with a specific multi-year timetable and programme of work. It is my hope that the Secretary-General's Agenda will expedite the process of bringing the members of the Conference closer together in their work and will facilitate discussion of the specific outcomes in the Conference on Disarmament.

The President: Thank you very much. I now give the floor to the representative of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Davydov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. President, as the Russian delegation is taking the floor for the first time under your presidency, we would like to congratulate you on assuming the position. We would also like to welcome the new State representatives at the Conference on Disarmament and wish them success in their work. We are ready to work together, and you can count on the full cooperation of the Russian delegation.

Mr. President, distinguished colleagues, according to paragraph 30 of the Conference's rules of procedure, it is the right of any delegation to raise any subject

relevant to the work of the Conference at a plenary meeting. Of course, the President of the Conference also has this right. The distinguished Ambassador of Tunisia notified delegations of his plans to hold a separate plenary meeting on the Conference's potential contribution to the implementation of the Agenda for Disarmament of the Secretary-General of the United Nations. To our knowledge, no objections were raised at the time. Moreover, as far as we recall, delegations were never asked their opinion on the idea of holding such a meeting. Our question is: why? In this connection, we have a number of thoughts that we would like to share with the President of the Conference and our colleagues.

First, it is established practice that new initiatives are not introduced until unofficial consultations have taken place. This time-tested exercise in multilateral diplomacy allows those who have formulated an idea to clarify, in an atmosphere of trust, the position of the Conference's participants. They, in turn, have the opportunity to openly share their thoughts, including those that they would prefer not to air to a wider audience, let alone on the record.

Secondly, we have a fine tradition in the Conference whereby the President holds meetings with delegations prior to assuming the presidency. Maybe we are forgetting something, but no one had a meeting with our delegation. Of course, that is the President's right. But we also have the right to say what we think about the President's way of doing business. Left with no other option, we must do so in the form of a statement at an official plenary meeting of the Conference.

Thirdly, before discussing the Conference's potential contribution to advancing the Secretary-General's Agenda on Disarmament, we must fully understand what sort of a document it is and how it relates to the work of the Conference in Geneva. Let us recall some recent events. Many of the Conference's participants took part in, or, more accurately, expressed their opinions on, the content of the Agenda at the drafting stage. However, the document ultimately reflects the Secretary-General's personal opinions, and nothing more. Let me explain: unlike the outcome documents of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, which were adopted by consensus by States themselves, the Secretary-General's Agenda has not been approved or adopted by anyone but himself. Do you grasp the difference? I hope that no one in this room needs an explanation of the connection between the first special session of the General Assembly and the Conference on Disarmament.

Fourthly, the Secretary-General's Agenda on Disarmament is a comprehensive document. In our opinion, several of the issues addressed and proposals put forward in it are of no relevance to the Conference's agenda, which was adopted by consensus. This is the basic point. More generally, before beginning to consider a subject as important as the Conference's potential contribution, we should first have thought about the areas in which the Conference was capable of making a contribution.

However, there is one more point of great significance. We must also not forget that the Conference is not the Secretariat of the United Nations, which immediately stands to attention and carries out the orders of the Organization's highest-ranking official. In fact, the Conference is not even part of the structure of the United Nations, although it works in close collaboration with it.

The very notion of the Conference's potential contribution strikes us as extremely misguided and, ultimately, inappropriate. In our view, we should instead have discussed how the Secretary-General's document could help the Conference on Disarmament to resume its work. It is our Conference that has problems, not the other way round.

So what, then, is today's discussion about? Do you not feel that, instead of focusing on our main priority for the time being, namely the drafting of a balanced programme of work with which we can begin substantive work as soon as possible, we are spending our time on scholastic exercises of dubious practical value? Of course, it sounds wonderful: the Conference's contribution to the disarmament efforts of the United Nations. But really these are empty words, as, unless we begin negotiating at our forum, the Conference cannot make a contribution to anything.

We respect every delegation's opinion, even when we disagree. All the more so when the delegation in question is presiding over the Conference. We also expect the same attitude of respect, not so much for ourselves as for our common achievement: our Conference and its rules of procedure. In this connection, we would like to remind you that, according to paragraph 29 of the rules of procedure, the President's main responsibility is to agree the Conference's programme of work, not to advance external initiatives at the forum, however exalted their provenance.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank the representative of the Russian Federation and wish to clarify an issue that I believe was raised in his statement and that concerns this discussion. I am not sure whether I understood you correctly, but I believe you said that consultations should have been held on whether to hold a discussion on the Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament.

I have before me the statement that I read out when I first proposed this matter. I did not impose the topic and I did not say that the discussion should be dedicated solely to the Secretary-General's Agenda. All I did was make a proposal in the belief that it could help the Conference establish a programme of work. The primary responsibility of the President of the Conference at this time is to establish a programme of work. Indeed, I held consultations and I invited the Russian delegation and many others to participate, with the aim of achieving consensus on a programme of work. The sole purpose of the discussion that we are having today and of the proposal that I made is to facilitate more in-depth discussions and consultations between members of the Conference with a view to establishing a programme of work. We all agree that it is the Conference that ultimately makes all decisions.

I did not raise the matter in order to take a decision on any particular issue; all I suggested was that we have a discussion. Each delegation is entitled to choose whether or not to participate in the discussion. It was merely a proposal. I am pleased to see that many delegations have responded to my proposal and have presented their opinions. Some delegations have provided detailed comments, others have presented just a few ideas, whereas some delegations have not yet expressed a clear opinion and appear not to be taking part in the discussion. That is their right. They can share their point of view later or during the ongoing consultations that I have been carrying out since the end of July. I will continue to hold consultations this week and next week, as it is an ongoing process, and I believe that my actions are in accordance with the standard procedure of the Conference.

I believe that all matters should be decided by the delegations before all else and that no decisions can be taken without the support of all delegations. I believe that this is what we are doing, this is the context in which we are working, this is the nature of the work of the Conference. I thank you for the comments you have made. I do not know whether I have answered your legitimate questions. I think we need to continue the work of the Conference so as to achieve progress and to find appropriate solutions in order – as requested by several delegations – to start negotiations, on the basis of the programme of work, of course. That is what we are really seeking to achieve. The President of the Conference certainly has a responsibility in that regard, and I will try to fulfil that responsibility to the extent possible. I am, of course, heavily reliant on your cooperation, your views and your suggestions as to how to move forward. The President cannot make progress without the cooperation of the members of the delegations. Thank you.

I will now move on to the next delegation, which is the delegation of Brazil. You have the floor, Sir.

Mr. Clabuchar Martingo (Brazil): Mr. President, let me join others in congratulating you on assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and also, on behalf of my delegation and of Ambassador De Aguiar Patriota, who could not be here this morning, allow me to welcome the new ambassadors from Chile and Ecuador, sister nations from Latin America, and also the new representative from the United Kingdom.

Mr. President, first of all, my delegation would like to commend you on the initiative of discussing the Secretary-General's Agenda in the Conference on Disarmament. Brazil has already hailed the Secretary-General's Agenda on a number of occasions, as it offers a sober and comprehensive narrative on current and future challenges and

opportunities and provides a solid basis for responding to them. It is, in our view, a pivotal document to be considered in this body, as the Conference on Disarmament remains the single multilateral negotiation forum for disarmament and is instrumental in moving forward the Secretary-General's vision. The Agenda can also help to provide us with the push and momentum that we need to shift gears and to further and deepen the work already under way on the different agenda items towards the return to negotiations, which is our collective goal.

The Secretary-General recognizes the scenario which has been widely mentioned in this forum in recent years, namely that there is an erosion of the international security environment, multilateral norms and general disposition to dialogue. The proposed remedy for this worrying trend is straightforward: stepping up the disarmament efforts worldwide in a comprehensive and integrated manner. Accordingly, the Secretary-General's Agenda explicitly recognizes that it is up to the international community, in particular through multilateral action, to shape and change international conditions, not the other way around.

This realization is key for us in our actions here. That disarmament saves humanity is at the forefront of the Secretary-General's proposals, insofar as the very fate of humanity hinges on the urgent task of preventing the catastrophic consequence of the use of weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons. Brazil is particularly pleased with the depiction in the Agenda of the role and work of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, the highest multilateral norm against nuclear weapons. The Secretary-General's Agenda steps away from the artificial opposition posited by some between the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and helps us to ground the current discussion on nuclear disarmament on the real issues and threats posed by the continuing existence of nuclear weapons.

With regard to the other pillars of the Agenda, the Secretary-General has likewise highlighted the gravest challenges to today's international order and proposed ways forward based on the integrated work of the United Nations agencies, on dialogue and on cooperation between States. In our view, the Agenda can be seen as a road map for the multiple disarmament foreign institutions, from which the Conference on Disarmament can and should profit.

The Conference on Disarmament has managed to achieve a modicum of success in the current session, with the approval of the decision contained in document CD/2119, thus breaking away from the pessimism that has plagued it in recent years. But much more must be done if we are to fulfil our mandate. We should all take inspiration from the Secretary-General's vision and engagement, which has been tirelessly implemented by Under-Secretary-General Nakamitsu, whose work we highly commend and support. We must all therefore show the necessary political will to deepen and extend the current work on the Conference on Disarmament agenda being carried out in the subsidiary organs, with a view to building the necessary consensus for the adoption of a programme of work and a return to negotiations at the soonest possible stage.

The President: Thank you very much. I now give the floor to the representative of Republic of Korea.

Mr. Choi Won-seok (Republic of Korea): Mr. President, allow me to join others in welcoming our new ambassadors from Chile, Ecuador and United Kingdom and wishing them all the best for their future work. At the outset, reiterating my delegation's full support for your presidency, I would like to thank you for today's opportunity to discuss the Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament. We will be able to share our specific views on the Agenda later when its implementation plan is unveiled. In my delegation's belief, however, today's exercise is timely and valuable, because member States, as the primary stakeholders of disarmament, can provide their feedback on the Agenda and inputs for its implementation plan. It is also our sincere hope that the Secretary-General's initiative will serve to reinvigorate the disarmament processes under the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, in particular by overcoming this august body's two-decade stalemate.

The Secretary-General points out a seemingly paradoxical situation that urged him to present this comprehensive agenda. Countries have spent more money in an attempt to ensure better security only to find themselves in a worsened security environment.

Unfortunately, in accordance with a well-known game theory, this is the only possible outcome that can be anticipated for a prisoner's dilemma. Completely rational players tend not to cooperate, even if it is in their best interests to do so. The lesson to be drawn from this theory is that mutual trust is indispensable for self-interested players like us, if we are to achieve a common goal.

In this sense my delegation appreciates the Secretary-General's novel and diverse undertakings in his Agenda: to facilitate dialogue among States; to provide intellectual resources to the disarmament community; and to strengthen coordination within the United Nations. We hope that all political, intellectual and administrative courses of action will contribute to enhancing trust and confidence. The Secretary-General's good offices and mediation based on impartiality and balanced views can give new impetus to the disarmament process by creating conditions conducive to disarmament.

In addition, his Agenda for Disarmament reminds us of the bigger picture – one which we are likely to lose sight of during discussions on technical issues – namely, the close linkage of disarmament not only with peace and security but also with development and human rights. Disarmament cannot take place in a vacuum; it can only take place in the context of security, development and human rights as a whole.

My delegation also welcomes the Secretary-General's strong commitment to incorporating the gender perspective in the field of disarmament. We are confident that the equal and genuine participation of women in the work of disarmament will have a meaningful impact on disarmament itself.

Another strength of the Agenda in my delegation's view is that it lists actions that the Secretary-General will take in cooperation with member States and relevant agencies. As many of these actions are currently outlined in general terms, however, special targets, a clear time frame and detailed guidelines should be included in the forthcoming implementation plan to ensure that the Secretary-General's ambitious Agenda is as practical as possible. In addition, the implementation plan needs to be tailored to regional contexts, so that it can be more relevant and feasible in each and every corner of the world.

In the meantime, we are of the view that each item on the action list should be weighted differently in accordance with its possible impact and the political support that it receives. The slow progress in disarmament seems to be due to a lack of consensus not so much on the type of necessary disarmament measures as on the priorities and sequence of implementation among them. Prioritization is of prime importance but the need to select and focus is a golden rule that will guide us towards success.

We are well aware that the Secretary-General cannot bear the whole burden of disarmament. That is why my Government welcomes his insightful initiative to strengthen partnerships for disarmament. The notion of security has evolved in such a manner that meaningful discussion about disarmament can only be engaged with the expertise of and collaboration with the academic community, business sectors and civil society, in particular in the area of advanced technologies.

Against this backdrop, the Republic of Korea welcomes the establishment of the Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation. We hope that this high-level body can come up with useful guidelines to ensure that new technologies, including weapon technologies, will be for the benefit of humankind.

Last, but not least, it is encouraging that the Secretary-General, as chief executive of the United Nations, has made a commitment to promote inter-agency coordination and to ensure a whole-of-system approach in pursuit of disarmament. We take note with satisfaction of the leading role in this process of the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, the Office for Disarmament Affairs and the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, among others. The Republic of Korea will continue to cooperate closely with them, in particular in the course of the implementation of the Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament.

The President: Thank you very much. I would like to inform you that we now have to close the list of speakers. The remaining delegations who have asked to speak this morning are those of Austria, the Syrian Arabic Republic and the Democratic People's

Republic of Korea and I hope that the interpreters can stay with us until we finish the debate with these three delegations. I now give the floor to the representative of Austria.

Mr. Müller (Austria): Mr. President, Austria fully aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union from this very chair. As this is an issue of particular importance, let me address some additional aspects in our national capacity and, as this is the first time I am taking the floor during your presidency, let me congratulate you upon your assumption of this important function. I also welcome the new permanent representatives of Chile, Ecuador and the United Kingdom.

Disarmament is at the core of the United Nations. We welcome the call by the Secretary-General to reinvigorate multilateral disarmament institutions and to call for an intensified effort to include disarmament more strenuously in our multilateral toolboxes, to address tensions, to prevent armed conflict and to protect civilians. In times of heightened tensions, it is all the more important that we should step up our disarmament efforts. We therefore welcome the opportunity to discuss the timely and highly pertinent Agenda for Disarmament of the Secretary-General in the Conference on Disarmament.

We welcome the efforts made by the Secretary-General to outline his ideas and avenues of action in such a comprehensive document. His personal commitment underlines the necessity for global disarmament for the benefit of global stability. We also welcome the action-oriented approach of the Agenda and hope that the Conference on Disarmament can contribute to the implementation of the actions relevant to its own agenda.

The world has become increasingly multipolar and globalized. Long-standing global norms and institutions are increasingly being challenged. To address these developments, effective multilateralism is decisive for twenty-first century global stability and security. As eloquently stated in June in this chamber by Karin Kneissl, the Austrian Minister for Foreign Affairs, my country is fully committed to effective multilateralism within the United Nations.

In my delegation's view, efforts to enhance mutual trust and confidence, and also respect for the rules of a rules-based order, serve to strengthen collective security. As the overall global environment evolves, our multilateral system needs to keep pace. We need to consider carefully whether further clarification is needed of some instruments and norms, such as those recently agreed upon regarding enforcement of the prohibition of chemical weapons. If we choose to reinterpret international norms at the national level, we risk undermining them, leading to a diversity of views in implementation. The erosion of respect for international norms is closely linked to the failure to implement long-standing commitments. The fulfilment of commitments also represents a confidence-building measure. It is the view of this delegation that, in order to uphold the international disarmament and non-proliferation regime, we should engage jointly to ensure that it is ready for the twenty-first century.

Today human beings should be included among the objects of security considerations, since the notion of security is no longer limited to States but also encompasses the constituencies forming the State, namely its population. Thus, national security and human security must never be seen in isolation from each other but have to be pursued together as two sides of the same coin. Recent disarmament treaties, such as the Chemical Weapons Convention or the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, bear testimony to that imperative.

With regard to the Secretary-General's Agenda, I would like to echo the following views. In the part that deals with disarmament to save humanity, the Secretary-General makes a strong and urgent call for progress in nuclear disarmament. My country firmly supports the long-standing efforts of the international community to totally eliminate nuclear weapons. This is the only guarantee that these weapons will never be used again, be it deliberately, accidentally or by miscalculation. Seventy-three years ago the people of Hiroshima had to experience the horror of the devastating consequences of the first use of an atomic bomb. According to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization, the most powerful nuclear weapon ever tested – the Soviet Tsar Bomba – had a yield of 50 megatons with the power of some 3,800 Hiroshima bombs detonated simultaneously.

Nuclear weapons are indiscriminate, inhumane and the most destructive weapons of mass destruction. Their catastrophic humanitarian effects cannot be contained by any borders and would thus affect all States. Owing to the unacceptable risks involved, nuclear disarmament remains the highest disarmament priority of the United Nations. We are encouraged by the call of the Secretary-General to make progress in nuclear disarmament to save humanity. We welcome his call on member States to revitalize pursuit of the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. Apart just from resuming dialogue, we should seek to extend the norms against nuclear weapons and their proliferation and prepare for a world free of nuclear weapons.

As repeated on numerous occasions by my delegation, non-proliferation and disarmament efforts are intrinsically linked. We are proud to be among the leading countries engaged in the process of bringing about the legally binding prohibition of nuclear weapons and we have deposited our instrument of ratification. The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is a key piece in the global disarmament and non-proliferation puzzle that the international community is putting together. As the Secretary-General has reaffirmed, it is fully compatible with the existing international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. Specifically, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons strengthens the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and is indispensable to the full implementation of article 6 of that Treaty.

Further measures will need to be taken urgently to complement the regime, among them the prompt entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, as called for in the Agenda for Disarmament; the beginning of the long overdue negotiations on fissile material; and the development of options and capacities for nuclear disarmament verification for both reduction and elimination. Given the inherent risk of nuclear weapons that I referred to above, there is an urgent need to pursue immediate risk-reduction measures pending total elimination of these weapons. These measures are well known and relatively straightforward. Risk reduction benefits both the disarmament objective and non-proliferation. The measures in question will also serve as confidence-building measures and will decrease tensions. Taking immediate action to reduce risk would therefore have a positive impact on dialogue and cooperation.

Let me turn now to the question of disarmament that saves life. With spending on weaponry at its highest since the cold war and the emergence of new technologies, we welcome the call by the Secretary-General to step up the efforts to protect civilians. The devastating impact of the use of explosive weapons in populated areas keeps increasing. When explosive weapons are used in populated areas, 92 per cent of the victims are civilians. Given the general principles of proportionality, distinction and the prohibition of attacks against persons hors de combat, this is unacceptable. The direct medium and long-term consequences of these weapons, together with the effects of their use, require urgent and increased attention. We therefore welcome the encouragement given to the Secretary-General to announce his action “to support the efforts of Member States to develop a political declaration as well as appropriate limitations, common standards and operational policies in conformity with international humanitarian law relating to the use of explosive weapons in populated areas”.

As we reaffirm our commitment to international law, including the principles of international humanitarian law, there are areas where clarification and new legal norms are needed. Technological progress is advancing at unprecedented speed. The weaponization of artificial intelligence, in particular in technological applications involving high degrees of automatization and autonomy, is of utmost concern. Keeping humans in control of lethal autonomous weapons is critical in upholding international law, ethical and moral standards, and also in preventing the extremely negative effects on regional and global security.

We welcome the commitment by the Secretary-General to support the efforts of United Nations Member States to elaborate new measures, including through political or legally binding arrangements, to ensure that humans remain at all times in control over the use of force.

Let me conclude by thanking you, Mr. President, once again for your initiative to discuss the Secretary-General’s Agenda in the Conference on Disarmament. The toolbox of

disarmament non-proliferation arms control is manifold and mutually reinforcing. We perceive the Secretary-General's Agenda as an urgent call for action in multilateral disarmament efforts and we welcome the new impetus that, it is hoped, this will give to our deliberations here in this chamber. After 22 years of stalemate, this is truly needed. We share the view that renewed dedication and dialogue are required. We wish to echo the need expressed in the Agenda for Disarmament to improve coordination and synergies among the principal disarmament organs. At the same time, it is important to remain focused in order to be effective and efficient. Duplication of work might not only lead to decreased resource efficiency but might also bring new complexities by adding possible competing avenues of discussion.

My delegation stands ready to embark on a sincere, substantive and results-oriented dialogue on how the Conference on Disarmament could contribute to the actions contained in the document.

The President: Thank you very much. Unfortunately, we cannot continue beyond the time allocated to us. I thank the interpreters for granting us an additional five minutes, as we had agreed to finish at 1.10 p.m. Since we have two more speakers, they have now agreed to continue until 1.15 p.m. I am not sure whether the delegations which still want to take the floor might agree to hold their statements until the next meeting, on Thursday, or if they can proceed in whichever language they choose and then we will have no interpretation. My question to the Syrian Arab Republic and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, therefore, is: what is your preference? Do you insist on delivering your statements today, now? I give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Aala (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): Thank you, Mr. President. I promise to be as brief as possible. Your invitation to engage in a preliminary discussion on the Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament is an important initiative. We hope that it will help achieve consensus among the members of the Conference on a programme of work, in accordance with the rules of procedure. We believe that the initiative comes at a time when many States and political groups are still in the process of examining the perspectives and proposals set out in the document and developing their positions in response, taking into consideration the fact that the Secretary-General's Agenda covers a wide range of issues that go beyond those covered by the agenda of the Conference and its mandate as a negotiating forum. These issues should be discussed in depth in deliberative bodies, with the agreement of the member States.

We welcome the fact that the list of priorities of the United Nations once again includes disarmament. It is important that this issue should be reinstated at the heart of the collective security system, as specified by the Charter of the United Nations. It is important that we remain committed to the priorities identified at the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. We share the belief that, in the area of disarmament, the United Nations should continue to give the highest priority to ensuring the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. All disarmament proposals must therefore give that issue the priority it deserves. In that regard, I wish to emphasize my country's position on the key themes in the Conference's agenda, in particular the support of Syria for the adoption of a comprehensive convention on the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. My country also supports the adoption of a fissile material cut-off treaty, on the condition that it cover existing stocks of fissile materials and that it serve to further the cause of nuclear disarmament. Pending the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, Syria supports the adoption of a legally binding convention to provide negative security assurances, as well as the adoption of a binding convention on the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

Mr. President, we share the Secretary-General's concern regarding the growing tendency among some parties to resort to the use of unilateral force where it is in their own interest, in a manner that violates the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations. In the context of the international system, it is essential to demonstrate respect for the sovereignty, political independence, unity and territorial integrity of States, and to refrain from interfering in their internal affairs. We echo the Secretary-General's warning regarding the dangers of succumbing to the illusion that security can be achieved solely

through the possession and exercise of military force, rather than through the wisdom of international dialogue and cooperation.

We therefore welcome the fact that the Agenda includes concrete proposals for establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. This is a legal obligation set down in the package of resolutions adopted in 1995 to ensure the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. We hope that, as part of the action taken under this framework, the only party in the region not to have acceded to the Treaty as a non-nuclear-weapon State will be asked to do so and to place all its nuclear facilities under the comprehensive safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency. It is alarming that this party is the only one to possess all forms of weapons of mass destruction and to refuse to accede to the treaties and conventions that prohibit the proliferation of such weapons. We would also like to see these proposals include specific actions to deal with the risk of terrorist groups possessing and using chemical weapons, which is an aspect that had thus far been overlooked in the proposals.

Finally, Mr. President, my delegation would like to emphasize the importance of respecting the mandates of existing United Nations bodies and of not overstepping those mandates by making accusations against Member States in a manner that disregards and oversteps those mandates. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): Thank you. I would also like to thank the interpreters for remaining with us until this time.

(*spoke in English*)

I now give the floor to the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the last speaker.

Mr. Ju Yong-chol (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Thank you for giving me the floor. Let me just begin by congratulating you on your assumption as President of the Conference on Disarmament.

Mr. President, representatives from Belgium, Chile and the European Union made unacceptable demands and remarks relating to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in their statements. It is in this regard that my delegation would like to advise them to read again, with care, the joint statement signed between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States in Singapore in June. The statement underlines the commitments of both countries, and I said "both countries", in establishing new bilateral relations and building a lasting regime of peace on the Korean Peninsula. The statement does not only specify the obligations of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to achieve this goal. I therefore advise these delegations to read the joint statement once again and to gain a correct understanding of its key elements before accusing another country.

I would also like to remind the European Union of the fact that applying pressure through sanctions is not an absolute solution to a problem and that diplomacy accompanied by pressure will never work. Trying to impose unilateral demands on one side will never get us anywhere. No, it will get us nowhere.

Confidence-building is the key to full implementation of the joint statement by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States. Confidence is not a sentiment that can be cultivated overnight. In order to build full confidence between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States, it is essential for both parties to take simultaneous action and phased steps one after another on what is possible. We believe that the only practical way to move forward is to follow a new approach whereby priority is given to confidence-building and implementation of all agreed items of the joint statement in a balanced, simultaneous and phased manner. The Democratic Republic of Korea stands firm in its determination and commitment to implementation of the joint statement in a way that is responsible and in good faith.

The President: Thank you very much. Now we have to finish our meeting but I still need to consult you, because we agreed that on Thursday we should have a meeting to replace the one that we should have held on 30 July. Is there any delegation that still wishes

to speak? If not, I do not believe that we need to have the meeting on Thursday; but I wanted to seek your opinion on this. The representative of China has the floor.

Mr. Ji Haojun (China): First of all, I would like to point out that we are very busy these days, with the meeting of experts under the Biological Weapons Convention, the meeting of experts on prevention of an arms race in outer space and then, this afternoon and on Thursday, we have the subsidiary bodies' discussion on the reports. As a result we are working under high pressure. Personally, I would prefer us not to have the plenary meeting on Thursday. If we need to consult on the programme of work, we can do that bilaterally or in a small group.

Secondly, through you, I have a request to make to the officers of the Office for Disarmament Affairs that, in future when we schedule meetings, they might be arranged so that we do not have so many meetings in parallel. Otherwise many delegations smaller than that of China will have to work under very high pressure. Even my delegation is very busy. We also highlight the importance of proper management of the time in plenary, because we then have to rush back after lunch for the discussions of the subsidiary bodies.

The President: I thank the representative of China. May I take it that we are now agreeing not to have the meeting on Thursday and, if there is any other delegation that wishes to speak on this issue or on any other issue, we will have that debate next Tuesday? Is that acceptable? So the meeting on Thursday is cancelled and we shall continue our work in plenary session next Tuesday. Thank you very much. The meeting is now adjourned.

The meeting rose at 1.25 p.m.