

Conference on Disarmament

English

Final record of the one thousand four hundred and seventy-eighth plenary meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 5 February 2019, at 10.10 a.m.

President: Mr. Yuriy Klymenko..... (Ukraine)

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The President: I call to order the 1478th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. Dear colleagues, it is my intention to continue discussing today the draft programme of work as circulated by the secretariat on Tuesday, 29 January, in order to listen to the reactions of delegations.

As I said at the last meeting, I would like to assure all delegations that I intend to provide time to all States and regional groups to provide me with their comments on this draft, whether in this setting, formally or informally, as well as bilaterally, verbally or in writing. I will do my utmost to listen to all suggestions and incorporate them in the text as best I can.

I thank the delegations that have already shared with me in writing their comments on this draft and invite other delegations to do likewise. It is my intention to incorporate the comments received to the extent possible and to circulate a new draft by Friday evening of this week.

Dear colleagues, before moving to the discussion of the draft programme of work, I would like to open the floor on other matters. Before giving the floor to the Ambassador of China, I would like to use this opportunity to express our congratulations to the Chinese delegation on the occasion of the lunar new year as well as to some other delegations that celebrate this occasion. I wish you all the best in the new year and extend our appreciation for your flexibility and willingness to join our work today.

Ambassador Li Song, the floor is yours.

Mr. Li Song (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Thank you, Mr. President. I would especially like to thank you for expressing your best wishes to us on the occasion of the Chinese New Year. As this is a holiday celebrated not only in China but also in many other countries of Asia, I would like to wish our Asian colleagues as well as everyone else here at the Conference on Disarmament a very happy new year.

Mr. President, I would today like to take this opportunity to brief the Conference's plenary on the meeting of the five nuclear-weapon States, held recently in Beijing. On 30 January, China, France, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States held the eighth formal conference of the five nuclear-weapon States, or P5, in Beijing. The meeting was chaired by Chinese Assistant Foreign Minister Zhang Jun. It was attended by Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov, Under Secretary of State Andrea Thompson of the United States, Nicolas Roche, the Director for Strategic Affairs, Security and Disarmament at the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Philip Barton, Director General, Consular and Security, at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office of the United Kingdom, along with Ambassador Wood of the United States, Ambassador Liddle of the United Kingdom, the Chinese Director General ad interim of the Department of Arms Control and Disarmament of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Fu Cong, and me, as well as other colleagues from the five delegations. Discussions were held on strengthening cooperation among the five nuclear-weapon States and safeguarding the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) regime, and in-depth and candid discussions were held on nuclear policies and doctrine, nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation, with consensus reached on a number of points. China, as the coordinator of the five nuclear-weapon States' cooperation mechanism and the Chair of this event, would like to present the Conference with a brief description of it.

First, the five nuclear-weapon States undertook to jointly assume responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. The P5 States recognized the serious challenges currently faced in the international security environment and acknowledged that it is crucial to maintain good relations in order to solve global strategic problems. They agreed to take an objective view of one another's strategic intentions, strengthen exchanges on nuclear policies and doctrines, promote strategic trust and common security, and make every effort to prevent nuclear risks resulting from miscalculations or misperceptions. The five nuclear-weapon States recalled the importance of maintaining the existing international arms control architecture and complying with all international arms control agreements. They reaffirmed their commitment to existing negative and positive security assurances and expressed their readiness to resume consultations with the South-East Asian countries on a protocol to the Treaty on the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone and to continue

to promote the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.

Second, the five nuclear-weapon States undertook to maintain the NPT regime. They emphasized that the NPT constitutes the cornerstone of the international non-proliferation regime and is an essential part of the international security architecture. The P5 States reiterated their commitment to abiding by all the provisions of the Treaty and to promoting its universality. They said that they would adhere to the principle of undiminished security for all States, promote further progress in nuclear disarmament and achieve the aim of a world free of nuclear weapons through a gradual and orderly approach. They also said that they believed that the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons contradicted and risked undermining the NPT, and they reiterated their unanimous opposition to it. The five nuclear-weapon States confirmed that they would use diplomatic means to solve the non-proliferation issue and expressed support for the International Atomic Energy Agency's strengthening of the safeguards and supervision system. They undertook to promote cooperation for the peaceful use of nuclear energy and they agreed to strengthen coordination and cooperation in the fields of nuclear safety and nuclear energy security. They also agreed to submit their national reports to the 2020 NPT Review Conference and to work together to make that Conference a success.

Third, the P5 States agreed to enhance coordination and dialogue through the P5 process. The international security situation is currently undergoing complex and profound change. Interaction between major countries has a bearing on the international security environment, the evolution of the international order and the confidence of the international community. The P5 States agreed to maintain their strategic dialogue and to strengthen exchanges on policy and nuclear doctrine, to strengthen coordination in the NPT review process and to take concrete steps through their Ambassadors for disarmament, based in Geneva. All parties supported the work done, under the lead of China, on the second phase of the P5 working group on the glossary of key nuclear terms and welcomed the fact that the United Kingdom would host the next formal conference of the five nuclear-weapon States, in 2020.

The P5 States have also been proactive in having an open and constructive dialogue with the international community. On 31 January they held a dialogue in Beijing with representatives of international academic institutions, the media and the embassies of some of the non-nuclear-weapon States. Today's briefing to the Conference's membership on the event held in Beijing is yet another effort along the same lines. We can further interact with the international community in various venues, including that of the NPT.

The P5 States, as permanent members of the United Nations Security Council and the countries recognized as nuclear-weapon States in the NPT, were able to hold an in-depth exchange of views in a spirit of mutual respect and in a frank and pragmatic manner. They reached consensus on many questions and identified directions for future cooperation, demonstrating a positive attitude on the part of major countries to address international security challenges through cooperation and coordination, which serves to strengthen the international community's confidence in the international security environment.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the four other P5 States for their support and cooperation in making the Beijing Conference a success. China will continue to work to build consensus and manage differences among the P5 States in the field of strategic security so that coordination can replace competition between major countries, and win-win cooperation can replace the zero-sum game, in order to make a positive contribution to international peace and stability. Thank you.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of China for his statement and would now like to give the floor to the Ambassador of the United States of America.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): Thank you, Mr. President, I just wanted to say a few words about the announcement over the weekend with regard to the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty that was made by the Secretary of State. On 1 February, Secretary Pompeo announced that the United States would suspend its obligations under the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty effective 2 February. This follows from the United States announcement of 4 December that Russia was in material breach of the

Treaty and had 60 days to return to compliance before United States suspension took effect. But Russia has not taken any demonstrable steps to do so.

Additionally, the United States provided six-month written notice on 2 February of its intent to withdraw from the Treaty, pursuant to article 15 of the Treaty. The United States retains the right to revoke its notice of withdrawal from the Treaty before the end of the six-month period, and we would be prepared to consider doing so should Russia return to full and verifiable compliance, but in the absence of a change in Russia's conduct, our decision to withdraw from the Treaty will stand, and the Treaty will end. All National Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies agree that Russia is in material breach of the INF Treaty and support our actions to suspend our obligations and provide notice of our withdrawal. As NATO allies have stated, Russia's violation erodes the foundation of effective arms control and Euro-Atlantic security.

Over the last 60 days, we have continued to engage with Russia and with allies regarding Russia's violation. We have provided Russia in writing specific steps it could take to return to compliance and save the INF Treaty. Only the complete and verifiable destruction of Russia's 9M729 missiles, launchers and associated equipment will resolve Russia's violation. Instead of engaging on how to return to compliance, Russia has refused to admit that it is in violation of the Treaty and has attempted to spread falsehoods and disinformation about the capabilities of the 9M729 missile.

Russia's highly publicized demonstration in Moscow is a perfect example of such obfuscation and in no way addresses the fact that Russia has flight-tested this missile to intermediate ranges in violation of the Treaty. An arms-control treaty that one side abides by, while the other openly and brazenly violates it, does not make us safer. Violations have consequences; this is Russia's final opportunity to return to compliance. The onus is entirely on Russia to save the Treaty.

Mr. President, let me be clear: the United States is not walking away from arms control. The United States remains committed to effective arms control that advances United States, allied and partner security, is verifiable and enforceable and includes partners that comply responsibly with their obligations. We stand ready to engage with Russia on arms-control negotiations that meet these criteria. Regrettably, the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty is no longer an example of such effective arms control due to Russia's ongoing material breach. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President: I thank Ambassador Wood for his statement and would now like to give the floor to the Ambassador of Egypt.

Mr. Youssef (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): Thank you, Mr. President. Allow me at the outset to welcome the Ambassadors of India, China and Ecuador to the Conference on Disarmament and to assure them of my delegation's willingness to cooperate fully with them. May I also congratulate all those who are celebrating the lunar new year.

Egypt believes that the Conference on Disarmament plays a central role in the disarmament system. It is the only multilateral forum with a clear mandate to negotiate legal instruments in the area of disarmament. It must therefore be revitalized and enabled to implement its mandate, as stated at the first special session devoted to disarmament.

The protracted deadlock in the Conference should not persist and should certainly not prevent us from doing our utmost to achieve substantive progress during the current year.

Mr. President, during the previous plenary meeting we affirmed our full support for your efforts to reach consensus on a balanced and comprehensive programme of work with a view to resuming multilateral disarmament negotiations. I wish to present, in that context, the vision of Egypt on the priorities of the Conference on Disarmament.

First, Egypt attaches great importance to negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on a comprehensive nuclear weapons treaty with the ultimate aim of achieving the irreversible elimination of nuclear weapons within a specific time frame and with provision for an effective international verification and control system. Nuclear disarmament remains a top priority for Egypt and a goal that must be pursued in accordance

with article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and, if possible, alongside all other items on the Conference agenda. We therefore expect that any programme of work for the Conference will provide for the establishment of a subsidiary body to discuss nuclear disarmament and promote the launching of negotiations without delay.

We listened attentively to the statement made just now by the Ambassador of China, and we intend to study the important points on which agreement has been reached among the five nuclear Powers. The United Nations General Assembly adopted in 2017, for the first time since the use of nuclear weapons, a non-discriminatory legal instrument prohibiting nuclear weapons. Regrettably, this advance was not achieved in the Conference on Disarmament. Nonetheless, efforts to carry it forward must be undertaken in the Conference on Disarmament through negotiations on a comprehensive convention on nuclear weapons that specifies a time frame and progress made towards the total, irreversible and internationally verifiable elimination of nuclear weapons.

Second, it is of the utmost importance to launch negotiations in the Conference on a legally binding, non-discriminatory, multilateral, and internationally and effectively verifiable instrument prohibiting the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other explosive nuclear devices, in accordance with the report of the Special Coordinator (CD/1299) and the mandate contained therein. As the instrument in question must achieve the objectives of both nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation, it is essential to include fissile material stocks within its scope. An instrument that simply prohibits future production of fissile material would not constitute a priority for Egypt and would not make a tangible contribution to nuclear disarmament. The 13 practical steps adopted at the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty included a recommendation that such a treaty should be negotiated in the Conference on Disarmament. Nineteen years after the adoption of the 13 practical steps, this appeal has still met with no response.

Third, the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only available safeguard against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. Pending the complete elimination of such weapons, there is an urgent need to develop a binding, universal, unconditional and irrevocable legal instrument that provides non-nuclear States with effective safeguards in all circumstances against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.

Fourth, Egypt attaches great importance to the development and bolstering of the existing legal system aimed at ensuring that outer space is used solely for peaceful activities and that it is preserved as a common heritage of humankind. Given the vital role of outer space technology for all humanitarian activities and the vulnerability of the outer space environment, it is essential to take immediate action to prevent the conversion of outer space into a new arena for conflict and the arms race. Egypt and Sri Lanka have for many years submitted a resolution to the United Nations General Assembly on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. Negotiations on a binding legal instrument to prevent an arms race in outer space are of great importance, particularly in view of the alarming trend towards the possible weaponization of outer space and the development by a number of countries of anti-satellite capabilities.

Mr. President, nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation are mutually reinforcing and are essential for the promotion of international peace and security. The delicate balance between nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation, on the one hand, and peaceful uses of nuclear energy, on the other, facilitated the adoption of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. The Conference on Disarmament must fulfil its mandate and launch negotiations on binding legal instruments relating to its four core agenda items. The persistent deadlock in the Conference will further undermine its mandate and may gradually lead to its termination.

Mr. President, since 1974 Egypt has been calling for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East and since 1990 it has been calling for the establishment of a zone free from all weapons of mass destruction. In 2018, the United Nations General Assembly succeeded in breaking the deadlock by adopting decision 73/546, which mandates the Secretary-General to convene a conference before the end of 2019 to

draft a treaty on the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. The decision provides for the adoption by the conference of all its decisions by consensus. The conference will discuss, in a non-discriminatory manner, all concerns of the participating parties with a view to elaborating arrangements freely among the States of the region.

The three co-sponsors of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East and the other two nuclear Powers are invited to participate in the conference in order to support the shared regional objective of guaranteeing collective security, based on cooperation, for all States of the region without discrimination, thereby enhancing international peace and security and making a historic contribution to disarmament efforts throughout the world. We call upon all States, particularly the States of the region and States and organizations that have been invited to participate, to make a constructive contribution to this earnest and comprehensive process.

Lastly, Mr. President, Egypt appreciates your commitment to the launching of the substantive work of the Conference, and we thank you for presenting the draft programme of work last week. We hope that the observations we made during the last plenary meeting are taken into account and we reaffirm our willingness to work constructively with you and with all member States in order to adopt the programme of work as soon as possible, in accordance with the rules of procedure of the Conference. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Egypt for his statement and would now like to give the floor to the Ambassador of Ireland.

Mr. Gaffey (Ireland): Thank you, Mr. President. At the outset, allow me to reiterate congratulations to you on the assumption of your role and to assure you of my delegation's full cooperation and support in your important and challenging task.

I add the following opening remarks, in a national capacity, to those already delivered on our behalf by the European Union. Mr. President, like many speakers before me, I would like to thank you for presenting your draft programme of work to the Conference on Disarmament last week. After such an extended period of paralysis in this forum, a sense of disillusionment could take hold. Your draft programme of work challenges us to be ambitious and capitalize on the discussions within the subsidiary bodies last year. Ireland looks forward to working with you and all members on building a consensus that can get us back to fulfilling the essential mandate of this Conference.

Your draft is timely – events of recent days have reminded us of the fragility of disarmament and non-proliferation agreements. The announcements by the United States and the Russian Federation that they are suspending their obligations under the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty are deeply worrying. Throughout its 30-year history the Treaty has resulted in the removal and verifiable destruction of almost 3,000 missiles with nuclear and conventional warheads. Properly implemented, it improves security not only between its parties but also globally, and for Europe in particular. The unravelling of the Treaty and the potential arms race its termination could instigate would be a step back into a dark and dangerous past that must be avoided. It could have far-reaching consequences for other disarmament and non-proliferation instruments, including the negotiations on the New START Treaty. We believe there remains an opportunity for constructive dialogue to take place and to resolve the issues about Russian compliance raised by the United States in a full and verifiable manner that ensures the Treaty's preservation.

Mr. President, in 2018 we witnessed direct challenges to the norms against use of weapons of mass destruction, violations of international humanitarian law and the deepening political stalemate on issues of substance. It is vital that, this year, we use the tools at our disposal here in the Conference to make substantive progress and re-engage with our collective commitments to sustainable peace and security. That is why, Mr. President, I was particularly pleased to see a reference in your draft to the United Nations Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament. The unrestricted spread and use of weapons, whether conventional or weapons of mass destruction, is a cross-cutting matter that threatens human rights, the environment, the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and indeed the very future of our planet. While recognition of the links between

disarmament and development is not new, for a long time there has been a tendency to work in silos. This is despite a large body of evidence demonstrating that excessive arms build-ups can divert essential resources from development and fuel armed conflict and violence. As High Representative Nakamitsu has stated, the failure to establish dynamic disarmament and arms-control systems is devastating to socioeconomic development, peace and security and human well-being.

The Secretary-General's Agenda recognizes disarmament's potential in this respect. It offers us new and creative ways to approach our mandate in this Conference by encouraging us to place disarmament and arms control within the scope of sustainable development, conflict prevention and peacebuilding. As such, my delegation hopes that the Conference can contribute to the implementation of the actions set out by the United Nations Secretary-General in the areas relevant to the Conference's own priorities.

Restoring the focus of disarmament on humanity rather than thinking about it in isolated, abstract, security terms alone should be at the core of our work. As the President of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins, recently stated, we are engaged in disarmament not for its own sake but because of the effects that these terrible weapons have had on the many human beings who have suffered the appalling and generational consequences of their use. National security interests and the security environment are, of course, very legitimate concerns and should be carefully considered. However, in terms of heightened tensions, it is crucially important that we renew, recommit to and implement the commitments we have already made. There is, after all, no greater confidence-building measure to improve the security environment than the faithful implementation of past agreements.

This year we face a critical stage in the review cycle of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. The Preparatory Committee will be tasked with making recommendations to the Review Conference in 2020, the fiftieth anniversary of the Treaty's entry into force. Our starting point at this significant juncture should be to ensure a continued commitment to the Treaty, including the consensus agreements we have already reached at previous review conferences. The lack of progress on establishing a zone in the Middle East free of weapons of mass destruction is also a matter of serious concern.

At the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Preparatory Committee meeting this year, Ireland is fully committed to engaging actively and constructively in our national capacity, as well as with the European Union, the New Agenda Coalition, the Vienna Group of 10 and other like-minded parties. We will aim for meaningful and balanced outcomes across the three pillars of the Treaty. Ireland also looks to other disarmament and non-proliferation opportunities where we can make progress.

We would like to see movement on the long-stalled process leading to a fissile material treaty, negotiated within this body; the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty also remains a top priority for Ireland, and we warmly welcome the latest ratification, by Thailand. With 167 States parties, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty has the resounding backing of the vast majority of United Nations Member States and the remaining annex 2 States must acknowledge the clear will of the international community for its immediate entry into force.

Mr. President, as well as implementing past commitments, we must also look to the future to explore new ways of engaging on the substance of our work, not least through a focus on gender issues. Ireland has called for the recognition of the disproportionate impact of ionizing radiation on women and girls. As Co-Chair of the International Gender Champions Disarmament Impact Group, along with Canada, Namibia and the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, Ireland is pleased to support efforts that strengthen the application of gender perspectives in multilateral disarmament, non-proliferation and arms-control forums. The Impact Group takes a two-track approach focusing on promoting gender analyses of substantive issues and on realizing gender equality and improving women's meaningful participation in the disarmament machinery.

One such effort of the Impact Group, as you are aware, has been to develop a gender and disarmament resource pack to support Chairs of the disarmament machinery to apply a gender lens to their work. The six presidencies of the Conference on Disarmament for 2019

have received this resource pack, and we hope that this tool can be usefully employed during our discussions this year.

As the current Chair of the Commission on the Status of Women, Ireland is also working to ensure that the body is active in promoting women's rights, highlighting the reality of women's lives throughout the world and shaping global standards and gender equality and the empowerment of women. Such discussions should be mainstreamed into nuclear disarmament discourse and can add another dimension in how we consider nuclear weapons and why they should be eliminated.

Realizing our shared goal of a world without nuclear weapons will require creativity and a fresh approach. In this respect, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, we believe, is a truly ground-breaking legal instrument that finally puts in place a workable, legal framework for the total elimination of nuclear weapons. There have been suggestions that the Treaty somehow undermines the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty by creating a separate legal instrument to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Such arguments create, we believe, a false dichotomy between both treaties. For Ireland, a founder member and original instigator of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, prohibition is a logical imperative. Our firmly held view is that the best way to protect the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty is to implement it. The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons allows us to do exactly that by filling the legal gap that exists in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty's disarmament provisions. With respect to the existing disarmament and non-proliferation regime, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is practical, it is entirely complementary and it is now a reality.

Mr. President, Ireland strongly values the contribution of civil society to the debate on disarmament. Its expertise would add to the richness of our discussions, and it is regrettable that we cannot find a means of facilitating its meaningful engagement. Similarly, expanding the Conference's membership may also re-energize the Conference's work.

In conclusion, I would like to call for open-mindedness and flexibility as we conduct our work this year. There are many issues on which we are all like-minded. We all share a commitment to achieving the goal of nuclear disarmament, even if our views on how to realize this goal sometimes diverge. The Conference is a well-funded United Nations body with a clear mandate to negotiate disarmament treaties. We have a unique privilege that should not be wasted. In the light of the prevailing security environment, the Conference cannot afford to lose any more time. We call on all member States to spare no effort to ensure that the Conference reasserts itself by making real and substantive progress this year. Thank you very much, Mr. President.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Ireland for his statement and for his kind words for the President. I would now like to give the floor to the Ambassador of France.

Mr. Hwang (France) (*spoke in French*): Thank you, Mr. President. France fully associates itself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union at the beginning of the session. I would also like to make a few additional remarks in a national capacity. At the outset, allow me, Mr. President, to congratulate you on how you have been conducting the work of the Conference on Disarmament and, if it is not too late, to wish you every success. I would like to say, quite simply, that my delegation stands ready to contribute to the work of the Conference in an open and constructive manner. We have come here with a lucid understanding of the challenges facing us and are fully committed to supporting successive presidencies contribute to this work, which we still consider to be essential to our collective security. I will not reiterate my country's views on the Conference on Disarmament, as they are already known and have not changed. I would add that the latest developments in the strategic and security environment serve only to strengthen our convictions. They were described in our strategic vision, which was made public this time last year and the analysis of which still holds true.

Mr. President, dear colleagues, we acknowledge the complexity and deterioration of the international situation. We do so in order to be realistic, as we believe that multilateralism must be strengthened in order to address, even if but partially, this deterioration. In this context of uncertainty, resignation or inaction is not a solution. As you know, my country continues to contribute actively and tangibly to resolving regional

security crises and strengthening international security, yet we still firmly believe in arms control and disarmament. I would also like to reiterate France's commitment to the various instruments in force in this domain, which help to ensure strategic stability. We therefore call on Europeans and all parties to step up their efforts to preserve existing conventional and nuclear arms control instruments. France, together with its partners and allies, has concluded that Russia has developed a missile system, the 9M729, in violation of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty. Russia has not responded to the repeated requests for explanations or calls for observance of the Treaty that have been made in recent months. France regrets reaching a situation in which the United States has had to provide notification of its withdrawal from the INF Treaty. We call on Russia to use the six-month period following the suspension of American obligations, established by the INF Treaty, to fully realign itself with the provisions of this instrument. During this period, France will continue to encourage an in-depth dialogue with Russia and to closely consult its NATO allies. My country also encourages Russia and the United States to extend the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) beyond 2021 and to negotiate a subsequent treaty.

Mr. President, dear colleagues, let's be honest: arms control and disarmament processes, which are supposed to contribute to building a safer world for all, can produce concrete results only if they are the result of truly shared diagnoses on the issues at hand. The aporia we are seeing can be overcome only if we all find a shared interest, as our collective objective is to make our strategic environment less uncertain and more stable. Recently, disarmament has too often been approached in an autonomous, if not disconnected, way, without a real, serious and in-depth analysis of the strategic context and political realities. From now on, it must fully take into account contemporary military realities, technological breakthroughs, capability developments and new threats. We believe that this forum will not accomplish anything if it does not take into account all these dimensions. A simplistic approach to disarmament will not produce any tangible progress; however, we have the necessary know-how to do this complex analytical work. Our strength is, above all, our know-how. Last year, the five subsidiary bodies did not, to be sure, enable us to launch major negotiations on any instruments, but they did enable us to move towards a common understanding of the technical issues surrounding each of the themes addressed. This is not insignificant. In fact, it is very significant. We still believe that the boundary between discussions and negotiations is an artificial one, as no disarmament or arms control agreement can be concluded without a prior debate aimed at reaching a shared understanding of the issues. We hope that these discussions will continue and expand this year, as it is important to overcome political differences, which are generally the result of futile clashes of positions of principle and are not related at all to the search for common ground in the interests of all.

Mr. President, dear colleagues, as we start this new year, it is customary to say that you have the difficult task of getting the Conference on Disarmament back to work. But did it ever stop working? Adopting a programme of work is a laudable objective, but we are aware of how difficult a task it is. We are carefully studying the draft you have kindly submitted to us and assure you of the full commitment of France to your efforts to ensure that this Conference returns to its original mandate – namely, the negotiation of multilateral disarmament agreements – taking into account the progress and achievements made in recent years. My country's priority remains the immediate launch of negotiations of a treaty on a ban of the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons, as outlined in document CD/1299 and the mandate contained therein. Of all the possible advances in the field of disarmament, this is undoubtedly the most developed project, the negotiation of which is within reach, as evidenced by the extensive work carried out in recent years by the various groups of experts on the fissile material cut-off treaty. In a strategic environment that is more unpredictable and tenser than ever before, a treaty to cap current stocks of fissile material usable for the production of nuclear weapons remains relevant and important. The treaty in question is not only the next logical step but also an essential and invaluable step forward and a prerequisite for any tangible progress towards nuclear disarmament.

In addition to establishing the programme of work, if we are to be realistic, we must also consider practical solutions, such as continuing work through theme-based subsidiary bodies. The work carried out in these bodies last year has led to significant and very

encouraging progress and made it possible to move beyond the procedural debates or political clashes that, unfortunately, all too often characterize this forum, in order to discuss the main technical issues surrounding the various agenda items in a calmer manner. A renewal of the mandate of these subsidiary bodies would also make it possible to resolve the problems caused by the short rotation cycle of the Conference presidency. It might thus enable the Conference to return to the practice of taking up long-term tasks. My delegation sees significant advantages in tapping all possible areas of synergy in order to enhance consistency across the various pillars of the disarmament machinery. For example, this could take the form of closer cooperation between the First Committee of the General Assembly and the Conference on Disarmament. It could also take the form of even closer ties between the Conference on Disarmament and the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research. On this point, my delegation is of the view that there would be considerable advantage in allowing the Conference to commission the Institute to carry out research – through studies and analyses on the subjects I mentioned earlier – so that the Conference would have access to full information. The aim would be to facilitate negotiations on disarmament and strengthen international security, in accordance with the Institute's mandate.

Mr. President, in conclusion, you may count on the full support and firm commitment of my delegation to pursue its consideration of the various proposals, and above all to contribute to the continuation of substantive work in the Conference on Disarmament as soon as possible. Thank you.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of France for his statement and for his kind words for the President. I would now like to give the floor to Ambassador Erwin of Indonesia, whom I cordially welcome to the Conference on Disarmament.

Mr. Erwin (Indonesia): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you on your assumption as the first President of the Conference on Disarmament for the 2019 session. I wish you every success in performing your duties. Rest assured of my delegation's full support for the success of your presidency.

Mr. President, I believe that all of us agree that the main challenge facing us is the deterioration of the global security environment. As we move beyond this crucial common understanding and perception, it is the task and the important role of the Conference to address the challenge to ensure that it will not lead to nuclear armaments and a nuclear arms race. We need to reaffirm the importance of the Conference's work towards the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. In this regard, we need to strengthen our commitment to the Conference, as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, to continue its work to attain its objective.

Indonesia is also of the view that we need to further raise awareness of the Conference among other stakeholders, including youth, women, civil society, think tanks and academicians. As we commemorate the fortieth anniversary of the Conference, we may consider organizing a special commemorative event this year.

We also need to think about the Conference's profile in the international community and to recognize its importance and contribution during this august year. One possibility to underline this is to submit a resolution to the First Committee on the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of the Conference.

Mr. President, the beginning of the Conference's session each year is important for us, to agree on our programme of work. The decision to establish the five subsidiary bodies in 2018 and their programme of activities was a true reflection of the collaborative spirit and efforts from the members to continue the work of the Conference. We need to redouble our efforts to find initiatives and embark on all endeavours aimed at breaking the impasse and bringing the Conference back to substantive work in this year's session.

Indonesia welcomes the President's initiative to draft a proposal for a programme of work. We remain committed to engaging constructively with a view to agreeing on a programme of work for this year's session. We need to maintain the momentum from last year's substantive work and build upon the outcomes of the subsidiary bodies to continue our substantive work towards the commencement of negotiations.

Mr. President, Indonesia acknowledges the diversity of membership of the Conference. Political positions vary greatly, and sometimes irreconcilable positions exist. However, Indonesia is of the view that regardless of our political positions, our common goal and commitment to issues under the Conference remain and must take precedence. In this regard, we would like to reiterate our position that we must avoid politicizing the Conference. Upholding the rules of procedure of the Conference is a fundamental principle.

On a personal note, it is an honour for me to be able to join this august body for the first time. I thank you for the warm welcome and look forward to working closely with you in the Conference and beyond.

Lastly, I would also like to convey my warmest wishes for the lunar new year. May the new year bring us prosperity, happiness and well-being. I thank you, Mr. President.

The President: I thank Ambassador Erwin of Indonesia for his statement and for his kind words for the President. I would like to give the floor to the representative of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Deyneko (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. President, before exercising our right of reply, I would like to join those who wished our Chinese and other Asian colleagues a happy lunar new year. Second, we subscribe fully to the briefing provided by the Chinese coordinators of the five permanent members of the Security Council on the outcome of the high-level conference in Beijing. We also fully share the views expressed by the Chinese representatives on the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

Before exercising our right of reply, Mr. President, I have a practical proposal. If there are others who would like to speak on this subject, we will listen to them first, so that we can answer everyone. Otherwise, I am ready to comment on the statements that have been made in this chamber on the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF Treaty). It seems that there are no others.

On 2 February, Mr. President, distinguished colleagues, the President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, held a working meeting with the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Defence that involved a comprehensive analysis of the current state of disarmament affairs in the light of the decision by the United States to unilaterally suspend its fulfilment of its obligations under the Treaty.

I will not recount everything that was said at the meeting; the relevant materials are on the documentation table. Those who wish to may read them. We will indicate only the key points.

After a comprehensive analysis of the situation with regard to the Treaty and the steps taken by the United States to undermine the international legal framework for arms control, starting with its unilateral withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty in 2002, the following decisions were made.

With regard to the INF Treaty, President Putin, in response to the decision made by the United States, announced the suspension of the fulfilment by Russia of its Treaty obligations. Support was given to the military and technical measures proposed by the Ministry of Defence in response to the violations by the United States of the relevant provisions of the Treaty. In particular, the discussion centred on research and development in respect of the land-based version of the Kalibr missile. In conclusion, and to avoid being misunderstood, I will quote from the President's instructions to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defence. The direct quote is as follows:

Over the years, we have repeatedly raised the issue of substantive negotiations on virtually all aspects of disarmament. In recent years, we have seen that our initiatives have not been supported by our partners. On the contrary, one pretext or another is always being sought to dismantle the established international security system.

In this respect, I would like to be categorical, and I ask the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defence to be guided by the following considerations. All our proposals in this area are still on the table; the doors to negotiations are open. However, I ask the two ministries not to initiate any further negotiations on this issue. Let us wait until

our partners are ready to engage with us in equitable, meaningful dialogue on this topic that is crucial for us, our partners and the rest of the world.

There is one other consideration that I would like to communicate to the two ministers. We operate on the understanding that Russia will not deploy intermediate- and shorter-range weapons in Europe or other parts of the world, if any such weapons are developed, as long as similar weapons of American manufacture are not deployed in still other parts of the world.

I ask both the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defence to monitor events closely as they unfold and to make proposals, in due time, for our response.

I would like to note, in closing, that I will refrain from commenting on the statements made by the individual delegations of States members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. The relevant comment was made by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and a copy in English and Russian is available on the documentation table.

The President: I thank the representative of the Russian Federation. Would any other delegation like to take the floor on any other issue before we proceed with the discussion of the draft programme of work? I recognize that the Ambassador of Mexico has requested the floor.

Ms. Flores Liera (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to take this opportunity to wish a very happy new year to the Chinese delegation and to other countries from the region celebrating the lunar new year. May the new year bring you happiness. We would also like to thank you, Mr. President, as this is the second time that I am speaking before the Conference on Disarmament, for presenting your programme of work and to assure you of our cooperation in whichever format you choose for our deliberations, so that we can soon establish a programme of work.

Mr. President, I would simply like to take this opportunity to thank the Chinese delegation for briefing us on outcome of the discussions of the five permanent members of the Security Council, the P5 States, that took place a few days ago in Beijing. We believe that this is a very positive development and welcome this dialogue, particularly as such a meeting had not been held for two years. The fact that those States are willing to make a significant contribution to maintaining international peace and security at a time like this, when international security is deteriorating, is very important.

I would like to point out that as a State party to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, Mexico firmly believes that this instrument plays a vital role in the non-proliferation regime, in particular with regard to compliance with article VI of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. I fully agree with what the delegation of Ireland said earlier, and we reiterate Mexico's readiness to pursue a constructive dialogue that will enable all our delegations to move towards the objectives of the Conference on Disarmament. Thank you.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Mexico for her statement and for her kind words for the President. Would any other delegation like to take the floor on any other issue before we proceed with the discussion of the draft programme of work? I recognize the representative of South Africa. The floor is yours.

Mr. Mahomed (South Africa): Mr. President, my delegation would like to congratulate you on the assumption of the first presidency of the Conference on Disarmament for 2019 and assure you of our full cooperation and support in steering our deliberations to a successful outcome.

We would also like to welcome the new representatives of China, Ecuador, India and Indonesia to the Conference, as well as the appointment of the new Secretary of the Conference. We want to extend our best wishes to all those who celebrate the lunar new year.

South Africa supported the request by the State of Palestine to participate in the work of the Conference and regretted that the request could not be accommodated. South Africa continues to be concerned about what appears to have become the politicization of the Conference, which only serves to divert attention from discussing substantive issues falling within the mandate of the Conference. These actions only serve to diminish the

credibility of the Conference, and we join others that call for respect of the rules of procedure and respect for all members, and we call on members to refrain from introducing issues that fall outside the mandate of the Conference.

The 2019 session of the Conference takes place against the backdrop of several challenges that have affected international disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control efforts in recent years. The continuing deadlock and inability of the Conference to deliver on its responsibility as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum of the international community must rank very high among these challenges.

The continued impasse is not sustainable and will increasingly affect the relevance and stature of the Conference. To restore confidence, we need to find compromises that would allow the Conference to resume its substantive work and regain its position as a responsive, responsible, multilateral institution that can effectively contribute to building a new consensus on matters affecting our common security.

We therefore welcome the draft programme of work submitted by you, Mr. President, as a step in the right direction. We all want a perfect outcome, but perfect should not become the enemy of the good. It is therefore of the utmost importance to reach consensus on a programme of work and schedule of activities and for negotiations to start on issues of convergence. Progress will require significant effort to build trust, increased flexibility by all Conference members and a willingness to move beyond absolutist positions in past approaches that have prevented progress. If we fail, we may not be able to revive this institution and will all have to take collective responsibility for its demise.

Mr. President, let me state unambiguously that South Africa is a strong proponent of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control and an ardent supporter of a world free from the threats posed by weapons of mass destruction and the proliferation of conventional weapons. While the threat to humanity posed by chemical and biological weapons is left to the Biological Weapons Convention and Chemical Weapons Convention, negotiated in this very body, the achievement of a world free of nuclear weapons remains an elusive goal. If the indiscriminate destruction and devastating humanitarian consequences posed by weapons of mass destruction are unacceptable, then the continued retention of nuclear weapons by nine countries surely cannot be justified.

We notice that the draft programme of work proposes the establishment of a working group on existing and potential biosecurity threats. We believe that discussions on these issues would be better served within the framework of the Biological Weapons Convention.

Mr. President, the inextricable link between disarmament and non-proliferation implies that continuous and irreversible progress on both fronts is essential. As the cornerstone of the nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation regime, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons represents a historic bargain between the nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States in terms of which the nuclear-weapon States have undertaken to eliminate nuclear weapons based on the reciprocal undertaking by the non-nuclear-weapon States not to pursue the nuclear-weapon option. The lack of implementation of nuclear disarmament obligations in related commitments, together with the modernization of nuclear arsenals and the development of new nuclear-weapon capabilities by new nuclear-weapon States, is contributing to global tensions and insecurity.

We are convinced that neither the possession nor the pursuit of nuclear weapons can enhance international peace and security. The primary responsibility for taking the necessary steps for the elimination of nuclear weapons lies with the nuclear-weapon States. It is therefore incumbent upon these States to engage without further delay in an accelerated process of negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament. This should remain our core objective as we execute our responsibilities as members of the Conference.

Mr. President, in South Africa's view, there are several items on the Conference's agenda that have long been ripe for negotiations, including a fissile material treaty, a treaty on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, as well as other effective measures towards nuclear disarmament. We see no reason why negotiations in the Conference on any

or all of these issues cannot commence. We are not convinced that the conclusion of such instruments could jeopardize the national security interest of any State. To the contrary, new norms in these areas can only serve to strengthen international and regional peace and security. In addition, the mere fact of negotiation can also uphold trust among States, something that is desperately needed.

Despite the lack of progress, more countries have expressed an interest in membership. Notwithstanding the regular membership review envisaged under rule 2 of the Conference's rules of procedure, this issue has not been given proper consideration in recent years. The recent misuse of the consensus rule to further political agendas and exclude countries from becoming observers gives a clear indication that the issue has not been given sufficient attention. It is our hope that a solution to this impasse can also be found. The Conference can only benefit from the collective wisdom of a more representative membership.

Mr. President, the South African delegation looks forward to working with you and other members of the Conference in a collective effort to restore hope for a more peaceful, secure and prosperous world. We will remain actively and constructively engaged in the Conference and other multilateral disarmament forums with a view to seeking solutions that will inevitably require compromises to strengthen the multilateral system in efforts towards the achievement of a world without nuclear weapons.

I wish to assure you of my delegation's continued cooperation and support in the execution of the Conference's mandate. I thank you, Mr. President.

The President: I thank the representative of South Africa for his statement and for his kind words for the President. Would any other delegation like to take the floor on any other issues before we proceed with the discussion of the draft programme of work? That does not seem to be the case.

Before we proceed to our second round of formal consultations on our draft programme of work contained in document CD/WP.618 in our current format, allow me to address a few questions that were raised by several member States in this chamber last week regarding paragraph 6 (e) of Ukraine's initiative.

Distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen, talking about the broader context of biological security, it is our strong belief that the Biological Weapons Convention represents only one pillar of contemporary efforts to mitigate biological threats. Whether the threats come from biological weapons or naturally occurring epidemics, biosecurity policy confronts the task of integration, security and public health. The gap between public health and theory and the practice of national and international security has historically been and is, by and large, enormous. However, effective biosecurity policy and Governments require, nationally and globally, the integration of security and public health, supervision of science for security and public health, embedding biosecurity policy in the rule of law and globalizing governance for biosecurity. In simple terms, the suggestion is to think outside the box of the Biological Weapons Convention.

Second, what we can see during the past decade is the proliferation of initiatives that relate to biological weapons and naturally occurring infectious diseases. This is a multidimensional process, and it includes the international level, the State level, the level of non-governmental organizations, public/private partnerships and so on. However, the proliferation of initiatives, actors and financial resources on global security and health in the past decade has reached a point where it may harm efforts to improve the possibility of controlling biological threats. Thus, our idea, which is actually not new and has already been described by several of our researchers, is to combine all the initiatives coming from State Governments, academia or the non-governmental sector on one hand with efforts in the security and public health domains on the other. The integrative task, in our opinion, is critical. To move forward, we have to recognize that biosecurity policy requires globalized governance of biosecurity threats, which is also required to achieve sustainable biosecurity in the twenty-first century.

The format and the scope of that is the issue up for discussion; however, the response to the current challenges related to the ban of biological weapons must be

network-based, enabling multiple actors with different mandates. That is exactly what we have proposed in paragraph 6 (e) under agenda item 5, entitled “New types of weapons of mass destruction and new systems of such weapons; radiological weapons” – namely, to establish a working group and associated schedule of work for the duration of the Conference session to conduct negotiations with a view to elaborating a globalized governance mechanism on existing and potential biosecurity threats.

I thank you and would now like to give the floor to the Ambassador of Zimbabwe.

Mr. Mushayavanhu (Zimbabwe): Thank you, Mr. President. From the outset, I wish to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. You can count on the support and cooperation of my delegation. At the same time, I also wish to welcome new colleagues who have joined the Conference as representatives of their countries. In this respect, I wish to welcome the Permanent Representatives of China, India and Ecuador, as well as the Secretary of the Conference, and to wish a happy new lunar new year to all those who celebrate this festive period. Before I go into the substance of the programme of work, let me start by thanking China for the important and comprehensive report on the high-level conference in Beijing of the five permanent members of the Security Council. In that regard, my delegation requests that the report be circulated for closer study.

Mr. President, my delegation joins others that have spoken before us in thanking you for the draft programme of work for the Conference for this year. In this respect, we wish to register our appreciation for its comprehensive coverage and its high level of ambition. My delegation therefore believes that the draft you circulated is a good basis for deliberations, as it sets the tone and the right tempo for succeeding presidencies, including that of Zimbabwe. Having said that, Mr. President, we also agree that the issues before the Conference are not amenable to a quick fix. We do not underestimate the challenges, but, at the same time, my delegation is convinced that we need to be creative in our approach. In this regard, we think that the progress achieved last year in the subsidiary bodies is a sound basis for further work this year.

During discussions in the subsidiary bodies, we collectively identified what could be described as the lowest common denominator. In reaching consensus on the lowest common denominator, we identified and fleshed out the contentious issues standing in the way of agreement on negotiating mandates. In other words, Mr. President, the work that we did last year has prepared us well to clearly see the obstacles ahead. We are better prepared to come up with a matrix of country or group positions that require some creative bridging. In other words, Mr. President, as a practical way forward, my delegation is in favour of an even more ambitious exercise, which would require that we identify the differences that separate us on the specific agenda items. When that is done, we can have dedicated or focal sessions with the objective of narrowing our differences. In that same manner, I propose that the Conference should focus its attention on areas that require bridging. For that to happen, we need to locate the two ends of the bridge. We cannot continue to skate around the problems forever. Twenty-three years of renegotiation of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is too painfully long a period, in my view.

Mr. President, during our coordination of the Group of 21 in August last year, I presented, on behalf of the Group, our position with regard to procedures that should guide the conduct of our work. In the same vein, Zimbabwe is committed to the rules-based international system. My delegation believes that for the Conference to function properly, it must respect its own rules. We should avoid the politicization of this body and focus on our mandate, which is to negotiate legally binding disarmament, non-proliferation and arms-control treaties.

Mr. President, my delegation is ready to engage with your office and with other members to fine tune our proposals. I thank you.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Zimbabwe for his statement and for his kind words for the President. I would now like to give the floor to the Ambassador of Argentina.

Mr. Foradori (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Good morning, Mr. President. First, the Argentine delegation would like to join others in wishing colleagues a happy lunar new year. We hope this year will be a very positive one. I would also like to welcome the new representatives of Colombia and Ecuador, as well as the new Secretary of the Conference on Disarmament, Ms. Radha Day. We welcome the outcome of the meeting the five permanent members of the Security Council in Beijing, as described by our colleague from China. We also welcome the draft programme of work for the 2019 session of the Conference on Disarmament prepared by the President. You can count on the cooperation of my delegation in our ongoing deliberations.

We believe that this document is a good starting point for our work. In particular, we welcome the reference, in its preamble, to the Agenda for Disarmament of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, António Guterres. We also welcome the reference to the work and progress achieved during the meetings of the subsidiary bodies of the Conference on Disarmament, which should be taken into consideration during our negotiations on paragraphs 6 (a) to 6 (f) of the draft. My delegation nevertheless wishes to emphasize that, should we fail to reach a consensus on a programme of work during the upcoming meetings of the Conference on Disarmament, we should consider, in a timely manner, resuming the work of the subsidiary bodies. Over the course of the 2018 session, they have proven to be an excellent tool for holding informal substantive discussions that foster the work of the Conference, primarily because they provide us with an opportunity to learn about the views of members on the various agenda items of the Conference on Disarmament – these are discussions that, for a number of reasons, are often difficult to have during plenary meetings.

If these bodies resume their work, it will be important to hold discussions as soon as possible on the nature of the final reports issued by each body and to determine whether they will be considered reports of the body concerned or reports of the coordinator of the body, so as to avoid any ambivalence when the texts are negotiated during the third part of the Conference on Disarmament.

In the light of the international context characterized by the crisis in multilateralism, reinvigorating the Conference on Disarmament and proving that it is still possible to hold substantive discussions within this body is a matter of extreme urgency if the current disarmament and non-proliferation regimes are to be protected, especially in view of the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

Thank you, Mr. President.

The President: I thank Ambassador Foradori for his statement and would now like to give the floor to the Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Baghaei Hamaneh (Islamic Republic of Iran): Thank you, Mr. President. My delegation would like once again to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and assure you of its full support and cooperation.

I would also like to welcome new representatives from Colombia, China, Ecuador, India and my neighbour Indonesia to the Conference. Let me also congratulate colleagues from China and other Asian countries who celebrate the lunar new year.

Mr. President, we appreciate all the efforts you put into preparing the draft programme of work circulated as document CD/WP.618. Any step aimed at breaking the long deadlock in the Conference by commencing negotiations to advance disarmament goals through the adoption and implementation of a balanced and comprehensive programme of work is highly valued and very heartening. Such endeavours are all the more critical given the risky and evidently deteriorating security climate our world faces due to an unprecedented tendency to unilateralism, which knows no bounds in its whimsical sabre-rattling and reckless pace towards a new nuclear arms race.

In this context, my delegation would like express its deep concern regarding the latest developments concerning the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty. While we urge all sides to act responsibly by preserving and upholding the Treaty, consistent with their nuclear disarmament obligations under article VI of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation

Treaty, we cannot disregard the fact that the current Administration of the United States has repeatedly violated its international obligations all along, with or without excuse.

Turning to the draft programme of work –

The President: I now give the floor to the Ambassador of the United States of America.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): Thank you, Mr. President. I apologize for taking the floor, but the comments that were being made by the representative of Iran have absolutely nothing to do with the programme of work. If he wanted to make a statement on the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, he had an opportunity to do so earlier in the session, so I would ask that we focus our discussions right now on the programme of work. Thank you.

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

Mr. Baghaei Hamaneh (Islamic Republic of Iran): Thank you, Mr. President.

I think you should not set a precedent by interrupting delegations that are speaking; it is for the delegations to decide how to speak and how to contextualize their comments about particular items on the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament.

If I may continue, Mr. President, turning to your draft programme of work, my delegation wishes to know the following.

First, we take positive note of the proposed draft, which appears to be reasonably inclusive of the four core issues the Conference is mandated to address – i.e., nuclear disarmament, a fissile material cut-off treaty, prevention of an arms race in outer space and negative security assurances. We need to treat them in a balanced and comprehensive fashion. However, we believe that the Conference's top and urgent priority remains unchanged and that it is to commence negotiations on effective nuclear disarmament measures to achieve total elimination of nuclear weapons, including in particular on a comprehensive convention on nuclear weapons. This needs to be properly reflected in the draft programme of work.

Second, in reference to a fissile material cut-off treaty, it should be crystal clear in the programme of work that any negotiations on such a treaty need to serve both non-proliferation and disarmament objectives and apply to all existing stocks. Such a treaty will hardly make much sense in the absence of meaningful negotiations on nuclear disarmament.

Third, the Conference should not be overburdened with or inadvertently disrupted by issues that have their own relevant and well-established platforms. In its programme of work, the Conference should focus on four core issues to achieve disarmament goals. The issue of biological weapons is best handled by the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention.

Fourth, as for item 7 of the agenda – paragraph 6 (g), on transparency in armaments – my delegation is yet to be convinced of its added value and relevance. We prefer it to be deleted.

To conclude, my delegation considers your programme of work a workable basis, subject to a number of amendments and improvements to bring it into line with the mandate and urgent priorities of the Conference. We stand ready to work constructively and cooperate with you and with other delegations to develop a balanced and objective text. I thank you, Mr. President.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran and would now like to give the floor to the Ambassador of the United States of America.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): Thank you, Mr. President.

First, let me thank you for putting forward this draft programme of work. My delegation has a number of concerns about it, but I do believe it to be a good basis for further deliberation. I will not get into all of my concerns with the text right now, but I would like to go back to the issue you raised under the last part of the sentence in paragraph 6 (e), which calls for the elaboration of a globalized governance mechanism on existing and

potential biosecurity threats. I fail to see how that does not intersect directly with the Biological Weapons Convention. I am having a hard time getting my head around how negotiating or elaborating a global governance mechanism would really work within the context of what the Biological Weapons Convention is already doing – that is a major question for me.

There are a couple of things missing from this programme of work, and, as I said, I have some other issues with the text that we can talk about later, but there are two items that, in my view, are missing fundamentally from this draft programme of work that need to be addressed and have been called for, one of which is the need for us somehow to incorporate into this draft an ability to deal with the working methods of the Conference on Disarmament. I think a number of us have concerns about the current working methods. My delegation remains absolutely committed to the consensus principle here, but there are other elements that I think need to be looked at, and any organization, any institution, any mechanism normally goes through a process of evaluating how it is conducting its business, and there are a number of issues we really need to take a look at, and one of them is whether or not this alphabetical rotation of presidencies continues to make sense, given the current realities. We had a good example of that during last year's Conference session. This is just one example.

The other item that also needs to be looked at is expansion of the membership. There are a number of countries that want to get into and become members of the Conference, and I think we need to address that desire. My delegation would support a discussion of a limited expansion of the membership.

So I see two areas where we could possibly look at having special coordinators – one, to take a look at the issue of working methods, the other to take a look at the issue of expansion. I think it is now time to do this. There has been a lot of talk about it in the past, but we really need to focus on these two areas. I think it is important that you try to incorporate these two elements into your draft programme of work. I will have more to say later on the rest of the text. Thank you very much, Mr. President.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of the United States of America for his statement and now I would like to give the floor to the representative of Bangladesh.

Mr. Kazi (Bangladesh): Thank you, Mr. President. We share our greetings on the Chinese new year.

We thank you for the draft programme of work. Our delegation attaches importance to commencing the substantive work of the Conference on Disarmament on the basis of a balanced and comprehensive programme of work. We consider your draft to provide us with a sound basis for that purpose. We would like to make three observations.

Firstly, as a number of other delegations have noted, we would also suggest appropriate readjustment between paragraphs 6 (a) and 6 (b), in line with the practice followed in the work of the subsidiary bodies in 2018.

Secondly, in paragraph 6 (c), we would suggest making a reference to a legally binding agreement in the context of negotiations for the purpose of reaching an agreement on effective measures related to prevention of an arms race in outer space. The formulation used in paragraph 6 (d) could be used to similar effect in paragraph 6 (c) as well.

Thirdly, with regard to paragraph 6 (e), while we take note of your explanation, we would like to have some further clarity, spelled out in the text, concerning the possible interface between the proposed globalized governance mechanism on existing and potential biosecurity threats and the Biological Weapons Convention. This should help provide a rationale for establishing the proposed working group under the aegis of the Conference instead of under the Biological Weapons Convention.

We thank you for taking into account the United Nations Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament in the preamble. We look forward to a revised version of this programme of work by the end of the week. Thank you.

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

Ms. McCarney (Canada): Thank you, Mr. President. Let me join others first in wishing colleagues a very happy lunar new year and let me also thank our colleague, the Ambassador of China, for briefing the Conference on Disarmament this morning on the meeting of the five permanent members of the Security Council hosted by Beijing last week. It was very helpful for all of us.

Mr. President, we appreciate your sincere efforts to reinvigorate the 2019 session of the Conference through a very ambitious and wide-ranging programme of work, and on balance we recognize that finding agreement in the Conference on what item or items to begin negotiations is challenging.

As it stands, the draft programme appears to propose multiple negotiations at the same time, and for Canada this raises concerns about whether all these items are ready for negotiations. There is also a capacity issue that many delegations, including my own, would encounter if negotiations were launched on more than one agenda item, and this alone leads us to be somewhat cautious on the ambition of the draft programme of work.

On the content of the draft programme and our perceptions of what holds the most promise for negotiation, we offer the following observations.

First, as was noted last week, paragraph 6 (b), on prevention of nuclear war, including all related matters, should encompass fissile material, as this has been the past understanding in the Conference, most recently in the work of subsidiary body 2.

Second, we support the start of negotiations in the Conference of a treaty on a ban of the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices that would be universal, effectively verifiable and non-discriminatory. While this treaty could be framed in terms of the mandate contained in document CD/1299, we are flexible on this matter if the negotiation takes place in this Conference. Even if negotiations were to proceed on the basis of the mandate contained in document CD/1299, it has been our position that that mandate does not preclude the inclusion of negotiations on past production of fissile material. In undertaking a possible treaty negotiation, we believe that the recent report of the high-level fissile material cut-off treaty expert preparatory group would be a valuable aid to negotiators in the Conference, as it provides a range of potential treaty elements. We remain of the belief that a fissile material cut-off treaty is the one agenda item most ready for negotiation in terms of the substance and that with political will on all sides – and, we have to underline, on all sides, not just one – such negotiations could be initiated without delay.

Regarding paragraph 6 (c), on prevention of an arms race in outer space, Canada shares with many delegations the importance of preventing such an arms race. For this reason, we are pleased to have been invited to participate in the Group of Governmental Experts mandated by the First Committee on the subject and chaired by our colleague, Ambassador Patriota. We believe that the Group has to date made valuable headway in fleshing out areas of concern and commonality regarding further practical measures for the prevention of an arms race in outer space, and, on that basis, Canada prefers to see that the work of the Group is concluded before new consideration is given within the Conference to commencing negotiations on preventing an arms race in outer space.

We would, however, welcome further discussion in this forum on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, building on the report of the subsidiary body 3 from last year.

(spoke in French)

With regard to paragraphs 6 (a) (Cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament) and 6 (d) (Effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons), and on the basis of the subsidiary body's discussions in 2018, we note that, despite the importance of these items, no consensus has been reached on launching negotiations and that more time is needed to close national gaps. We would therefore welcome a more in-depth discussion on these items in 2019. With respect to paragraph 6 (f) (Comprehensive programme of disarmament), we would welcome the establishment of a working group or other body to continue discussions on this item. We are open with regard to the issues that could be addressed. As for paragraph 6 (g) (Transparency in armaments), as several delegations pointed out last

week, although this issue falls within the remit of subsidiary body 5, we have not agreed on the basic concepts and consider that this issue cannot be the subject of negotiations until further clarification has been provided.

(spoke in English)

Finally, on paragraph 6 (e) (New types of weapons of mass destruction and new systems of such weapons; radiological weapons), while subsidiary body 5 did explore issues of relevance to this agenda item, there was no agreement on pursuing negotiations. Paragraph 6 (e) focuses on biosecurity. Canada believes that, in this area, the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention would be the better venue at this time for further concerted action, but we appreciate very much your opening comments on this matter.

Thank you very much. We thank your team for your work and your efforts in creating this draft programme of work and look forward to further consultations.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Canada for her statement and would now like to give the floor to the Ambassador of Brazil.

Mr. De Aguiar Patriota (Brazil): Mr. President, since it is the first time that I personally take the floor under your leadership, I would like to congratulate you on the assumption of the office of the first presidency of the Conference on Disarmament in 2019 and to commit our full support to your endeavours during the course of your presidency.

I would like to thank you for proposing a programme of work and thereby fulfilling what I think a majority of us, if not all of us, consider to be almost a requirement of the first presidency – namely, to put forward a full-fledged programme of work. You have done it, and I thank you for that, and as a general comment, I think we can work on the basis of your proposal, so we are thankful for that.

I would also like to welcome the new representatives from China, Ecuador, my colleague from India, Colombia and Indonesia who are sharing this chamber with us. We will also be happy to collaborate with all of you towards productive outcomes in the Conference.

We were very happy to see a reference to the Agenda for Disarmament of the Secretary-General of the United Nations in your draft programme of work. We would like further clarification as to how you intend to proceed with the consideration of the draft, time-wise, formally or informally, and what opportunity we would have to make more detailed interventions with respect to certain refinements of language that I think might be necessary. I think we need some agility, because what we learned last year, when we managed to make some progress – we came to an agreement late in the 2018 session and lost some precious time, because it was not simple to agree on the draft decisions that we ended up adopting – is that agility is essential.

I would like to support one of the additional elements that was presented by the Ambassador of the United States, in particular the working methods discussion, not only the issue of alphabetical order but also improving the prospects for more productive sessions in the year. I think we also have to examine the procedure by which each presidency lasts only four weeks and the issue of the sequencing and the continuity of discussions not only through the presidencies but also from one year to the next. Starting everything all over again from scratch, every January of every year, is perhaps not the practice that is most conducive towards making progress and strengthening the Conference as a body for substantive work. My modest contribution would thus be to support an opportunity in your programme of work to discuss working methods. Of course, we would have no issues with the discussion of the expansion of the membership. That is also a necessity, because it is true that we have a number of Member States that have been following our activities as observers, and perhaps the time has come to expand and to increase the capacity of this body to represent the broader community of Members of the United Nations.

A couple of comments on the content on the programme of work: I think you clearly attempted to make it comprehensive and balanced, although a fissile material cut-off treaty and the prevention of an arms race in outer space stand out as items that are perhaps more

substantive, more clearly defined as of interest to members and non-members of the Conference, because both these issues are also dealt with under other mandates within the General Assembly and other ongoing processes. Again, I also agree with the Ambassador of Canada, who has indicated the importance of the high-level fissile material cut-off treaty expert preparatory group and the work it has done. We should make a reference to that. I will even note that in that group, Brazil made a particular proposal that we had made in the Conference in 2010 – a proposal that still stands – which is for a framework-agreement approach to a fissile material cut-off treaty. Regarding the issue of stating that we would take as a basis the mandate contained in document CD/1299 – although Brazil, like Canada, understands that that particular mandate does not preclude dealing with past production – I think perhaps we will need an opportunity to refine this reference and to have greater flexibility, so that we can manage to have everyone on board as we proceed to negotiate your programme of work.

With regard to the prevention of arms race in outer space, you have presented a different ending – to negotiate for the purpose of reaching agreement on effective measures. That is different from the idea of having at some point the opportunity to discuss elements for an international legally binding treaty, which is the mandate under which we are working in the Group of Governmental Experts on further effective measures for the prevention of an arms race in outer space, so my suggestion here would be to keep it simple and shorter and end after the reference to subsidiary body 3. We should perhaps focus on making further progress on the basis of what we managed to agree on last year here in the Conference while we wait for the outcome of the work of the Group of Governmental Experts – that is, to see how much progress we can make in the Group. That will be important.

In connection with paragraph 6 (d), we should have a second chance to try to achieve consensus on a report on negative security assurances. That was the one item that we did not manage to agree to last year, so perhaps we have a second chance this year. We should be slightly less ambitious – first, let us try to get that report through, which would be a stepping stone towards greater progress. We are also flexible, however.

We discussed the topics of paragraphs 6 (e), (f) and (g) in a single subsidiary body last year. I would, in principle, favour continuing to discuss them in conjunction. I would not go into such detail with respect to biological weapons, as I think there is clearly overlap with the work of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention that is not particularly positive in the light of the breadth of the challenges we already have in the Conference. We have so many things to do, and, along the lines of the argument by the Ambassador of Canada, I think we cannot tackle too many issues of the same depth at the same time, so we have to take a progressive approach and modulate a bit the maturity of each item and our readiness to discuss it to the fullest. Less duplication or overlapping wording with respect to biological weapons, and grouping these items together under an item that deals with emerging weapons, the transparency issues and so on would perhaps be in order.

That is more or less what I would have to say at this point, but Brazil is open to an agile consideration of this text with a view to its adoption as soon as possible. Thank you.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Brazil for his statement. Would any other delegation like to take the floor? I recognize the Ambassador of the United States of America.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): Thank you, Mr. President.

This is to go back to what I said earlier: that I would walk through some of my other concerns with the draft programme of work. I will be brief.

Paragraph 5 – I am not sure that my delegation can agree to taking into account the United Nations Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament. We have made our views known on that document, so I think we would have trouble with a reference to it.

Paragraph 6 (c) – The recommendation by the Ambassador from Brazil to end the paragraph after subsidiary body 3 makes sense. From my Government's standpoint, we are not prepared to negotiate the prevention of an arms race in space, and we have made that point clear numerous times in this body.

I have already talked about paragraph 6 (e).

Paragraph 6 (g) – It was not quite clear to me what was trying to be accomplished here, but maybe you can elaborate a bit more.

I have two overall comments with regard to the text: one, there are some elements here that are clearly not ripe for negotiation, the prevention of an arms race in space being one of them, of course, but you may need to go back and, as was mentioned here earlier, be less ambitious with regard to negotiating mandates on these items. The other issue – I think my Government's views on the subsidiary body discussions are quite clear as well. I am not sure that repeating the exercise has a whole lot of utility. I do think, however, that there certainly is a growing interest on the part of member States, as I have said earlier, to take a look at working methods and to have a discussion or an examination of the issue of expanding the membership, so those two areas again, working methods and expansion on the membership, are something that we think would be important to try to incorporate into your draft programme of work. Thank you very much.

The President: I thank Ambassador Wood for his statement. Would any other delegation like to take the floor? I recognize the Ambassador of Argentina.

Mr. Foradori (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you, Mr. President. I would just like to add that Argentina supports trying to change our current methodology, especially the rotation system. This is something I mentioned during some informal talks last year, and I think it would be appropriate and timely to try to examine this issue. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Argentina. Would any other delegation like to take the floor? That does not seem to be the case.

Dear colleagues, I wish to thank you once more for the comments received today and earlier, and I wish to reassure you that I will endeavour to take them and those shared with me bilaterally into consideration in the revised draft programme of work, which, as I said before, I intend to circulate by Friday evening, 8 February, through the secretariat. To facilitate our joint work, I invite all interested delegations to provide the ideas relevant to the programme of work as well as to the advancement of our business in the Conference on Disarmament as a whole by email to our Permanent Mission or the Conference secretariat. I completely agree that agility is essential. We will also try to approach all the delegations that expressed willingness to work on the draft programme of work. I intend to meet with the regional groups, and, as I mentioned, we will do our best to provide the revised draft programme of work, which will take on board the proposals that were suggested, by Friday evening. It is not an easy mission, but we will try our best to accommodate the majority of them.

I also wish to inform you that, as I announced during the last plenary meeting, I intend to convene the next plenary meeting on Thursday, 7 February at 3 p.m. to allow the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu, to address the Conference and to allow exchanges with her via teleconference in the afternoon. I ask the delegations to be punctual to allow the meeting to commence on time.

I also wish to inform the delegations that the Conference will be exceptionally convened in room VII, as this chamber does not have facilities for videoconferences. Following exchanges with the High Representative, I propose that we resume discussions on the draft programme of work in this chamber should delegations wish to take the floor on this matter at that time. I think Indonesia is asking for the floor

Mr. Sidharta (Indonesia): Thank you, Mr. President. I am sorry to interrupt you during our lunch hour, but I would like clarification from you with regard to the address by Izumi Nakamitsu, the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs.

Ambassador, I would like to know on what particular issue Ms. Nakamitsu would like to address the Conference on Disarmament, because some two days ago, she addressed the members of the Conference in room V, and it was unfortunately at the same time as our deliberations on the programme of work. Since the next dialogue will be in teleconference mode, I would like further clarification as to whether this is really concerning urgent and

pressing matters. Our delegation's understanding now is that we have important issues to be discussed – namely, the programme of work. I propose that we focus more closely on discussing this programme of work and make use of the time we have, because last week, one delegation also raised a concern about the interpreters, about using the allocation of interpretation time. My concern is whether having the interpreters work on the teleconference is going to take the time we are allocated for interpretation, because, if so, my delegation would have serious concerns. I would like to have our work this year be more focused on your efforts, the considerable efforts you have made on this programme of work. I would like your clarification on these particular issues. I thank you, Mr. President.

The President: Would any other delegation like to make comments on this matter, because, if not, I will clarify the issue. I also recognize Ambassador of Brazil, who has asked for the floor.

Mr. De Aguiar Patriota (Brazil): Thank you, Mr. President. In fact, I was under the impression that the first event in which Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu participated was a general briefing within the context of the regular briefings we have at the United Nations Office at Geneva and was not necessarily the same as addressing the Conference on Disarmament, as she usually does in the first period of our yearly session. In addition, I was not in a position to attend that particular briefing, so in my case I would be quite interested to hear from the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs and to listen to her views on what she considers to be a relevant work arrangement or agenda for Conference for the course of this year. Thank you.

The President: Thank you, Ambassador, for your comments. Would any other delegation like to take the floor? If not, I would like to clarify the issue of the videoconference with Madam Nakamitsu. Actually, I would like to point out that there was an executive briefing from Madam Nakamitsu on issues for which the context is broader than that of the work being done in this chamber. It is already a good practice when the Secretary-General of the United Nations addresses the Conference on Disarmament at the beginning of each session. But the message from Madam Nakamitsu will be focused primarily on the work of the Conference, so I think that for all Conference members, it would be pertinent to hear the vision of the United Nations leadership on our work, and I think it could help us in our further deliberations.

Let me stop here and give the floor to the representative of Indonesia.

Mr. Sidharta (Indonesia): Thank you for the explanation, Mr. President, but my delegation would like to note that we hope that in the future, this kind of arrangement can be made in a much more efficient and effective way. Madam Nakamitsu was here a couple of days ago, and I think it would be good for her to address the Conference directly, not via videoconference, because doing so would make for more interactive dialogue between the members of the Conference and the Executive Office of the Secretary-General of the United Nations. I hope that the secretariat can take note of this matter and make better arrangements in the future, so that we do not waste time repeating an exercise. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President: We will take note of your suggestions. We will try our best to effectively use the time and any possibilities of the visits of the United Nations High Representative to Geneva, but we also try to accommodate other Conference on Disarmament members who were not in Geneva at the time. It is very important, I think, to have everybody engaged in this dialogue. Thank you.

Are there any other requests for the floor? I see none. In that case, the meeting is adjourned.

The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.