

# Conference on Disarmament

English

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

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Thursday, 7 February 2019, at 3 p.m.

*President:* Mr. Yuri Klymenko..... (Ukraine)

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**The President:** I call to order the 1479th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. Distinguished colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, this afternoon, as previously announced, we will hear an address from the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu, followed by a brief exchange.

Thereafter, we will reconvene in the Council Chamber, where I will invite delegations to consider requests for observers received since the last plenary meeting, and we shall continue discussions on the draft programme of work or any other matter, should there be delegations requesting to take the floor.

Excellencies, dear colleagues, at this time I would like to give the floor to High Representative Nakamitsu. I would like to alert you that you will need to use your headphones. Ms. Nakamitsu, the floor is yours.

**Ms. Nakamitsu** (High Representative for Disarmament Affairs): Thank you very much. Good afternoon to you in Geneva from New York, His Excellency Ambassador Klymenko, President of the Conference on Disarmament, distinguished delegates, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen – it is indeed a great privilege to once again address this august body, albeit remotely. I can see you very well on the screen and I thank the President for his kind invitation and the creative way of connecting us across the Atlantic Ocean. It was a pleasure to be in Geneva last week, to be able to interact with some of you and to witness first-hand the importance you continue to attach to the cause of disarmament.

You do not see eye to eye on all issues – that we all know – but I remain assured that you are all committed to our shared goals of the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction and to the strict regulation of conventional weapons in accordance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. That commitment will likely be tested this year, which will be a weighty year for the Conference on Disarmament.

As a global community, we are beset by challenges. In the field of disarmament, our progress has slowed to a crawl and it is in imminent danger of suffering reversals. Instead of seeking to enhance what binds us, we tend to focus on what divides us. Some of you argue that it is because of an increasingly dire global security context. The possibility of regional conflicts engulfing great Powers is real. We are on the precipice of a multipolar, qualitative nuclear arms race.

At nearly two trillion dollars, military spending is reaching obscene peaks. Concerns about the potential for advances in science and technology to undermine our collective security are growing. Yet, despite this dismal picture, there are opportunities, and I know that many of you – in fact, most of you – still believe that disarmament and arms-control efforts are critical to your own security. It is the prerogative of States to seize these opportunities and make the most of them.

In 2020, we will celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. The 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons is a symbolic and important opportunity to make practical gains in strengthening the Treaty, but States parties must commence laying the ground for this outcome now. The various Groups of Governmental Experts, including those established by the General Assembly, are forums in which States can address some of the most pressing security issues of our day.

On cybersecurity, autonomous weapons and the militarization of outer space, States can work together to alleviate not only our collective and current predicament but also to secure the world for future generations. In seeking to find solutions to one of the key challenges to the achievement and maintenance of a world free of nuclear weapons, the Group of Governmental Experts discussing nuclear disarmament verification presents a historic occasion to take tangible steps forward. The Conference on Disarmament can also contribute in 2019. The Conference's decision to establish subsidiary bodies in 2018 was really very welcome. These bodies provided forums for experts and policymakers based in Geneva and beyond to have frank and constructive conversations across the spectrum of concerns this body must deal with.

The year 2019 provides an opportunity to build on the momentum sparked by those conversations, to take your deliberations further and to, *inter alia*, create a repository of

knowledge and expertise and provide a technical and substantive focus on the matters that are most germane to this body. Your responsibility as the single disarmament negotiating forum has rarely been greater. I welcome the constructive deliberations generated by the draft proposal on the programme of work presented by His Excellency Ambassador Klymenko. I sincerely hope it will generate fruitful debate. The Secretary-General of the United Nations has pledged his every effort to assist Member States in their endeavours to create a safer and more secure world. It is the reason he launched his disarmament agenda (Securing Our Common Future: an Agenda for Disarmament) here in Geneva.

As I have outlined to the Conference before, the purpose of the Agenda is to support Member States to support you. It has three substantive pillars: disarmament to save humanity, which focuses on the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, disarmament that saves lives, which focuses on the deadly effects of conventional weapons, and disarmament for future generations, which seeks to pre-emptively engage with the new means and methods of warfare that are emerging from developments in science and technology. The Agenda is comprehensive but of course not exhaustive. Its 40 action items are focused foremost on practical measures that can be undertaken by United Nations entities in support of the efforts and initiatives of Member States. The Agenda has been developed through a process of multi-stakeholder dialogue, including discussions at the Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters, bilateral consultations with many Governments, a high-level informal brainstorming meeting and three consultative meetings with non-governmental organizations.

Overall, the response from Member States has been a positive one. As we move to the implementation phase of the Agenda, I am confident of the support of Member States, even if they do not agree with every element it contains, of course. I should stress that the implementation plan is a living document. The status of activities will be updated on a regular basis, and new steps and activities can be added as needed. The United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs is currently tracking the status of 116 activities listed on the implementation plan.

We have just completed our first quarterly review, the results of which are available on our website. And we are making good progress. More than a quarter of actions – that is, 11 out of 40 – have seen significant updates. The plan will be carried out with the political and financial support of Member States. To acknowledge this support and to promote widespread buy-in, for each action we will be identifying those States as champions or supporters. Such a designation will be limited to States taking on an active leadership role in implementing an action. Thus far, 11 Governments, from both the global North and the global South, have formally stepped forward as champions or supporters of various actions. These include 23 of the 40 actions and cut across all pillars of the Agenda.

I expect additional Governments to confirm their support in the coming weeks. The Office for Disarmament Affairs looks forward to working with all members of the Conference on Disarmament and we seek to provide the best possible assistance we can to your mission.

As we mark the fortieth anniversary of the Conference, I would like to draw attention to the remarks of the Secretary-General of the United Nations in Davos just last month – namely, that, at a time of significant, multiplying and interconnected challenges, we paradoxically see responses that are ever more fragmented and fissiparous and therefore unlikely to succeed. In times of crisis, we achieve success only when we work together. In 2019, I encourage you to exert your every effort to burnish the credibility of this forum for multilateral engagement at a time in which no discernible alternatives are in sight and disarmament efforts are so badly needed. I look forward to working with you in the months to come and to our exchanges today. And with that, I thank you very much for listening.

**The President:** I thank the High Representative for her statement. Dear colleagues, we have an opportunity now for a brief exchange with the High Representative. I would like to suggest that we can take a few questions and comments and then turn to the High Representative for her comments. Would any delegation like to take the floor? At this stage, then, I use this opportunity to put a question to the High Representative.

Ms. Nakamitsu, thank you for your statement and your continued support. I appreciate the update on the implementation of the Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament. I am pleased to hear that States have stepped forward as champions or supporters of various actions and across all pillars of the Agenda.

Which areas are not championed that you would urge support for? In the immediate future, could you tell us on which Agenda actions we can expect more immediate action thanks to the contribution of the States that have pledged support?

**Ms. Nakamitsu** (High Representative for Disarmament Affairs): Thank you, Mr. President, for the question, which is very important. I would like to emphasize again that we are very pleased that the actions that Governments have formally stepped forward to champion or support cut across all four pillars. In addition to the three substantive pillars, there is also, of course, a fourth pillar, which is about partnership for disarmament, and they are championing and supporting actions that cut across all four pillars. I am very happy to see well-balanced interest coming from many of you. As I mentioned, there have also been verbal expressions of interest from many other countries, and we are just waiting for the formalization of such intentions in the coming weeks.

You asked what kind of actions we need to try to take most urgently. One of the things that I have suggested – in fact have requested – is that the five permanent members of the Security Council simply affirm or reaffirm explicitly that a nuclear war cannot be won and therefore should never be fought. That is a principle. If it can be affirmed explicitly by all nuclear-weapon States, we think that would be a significant, positive element as we go into the more intense stages of the preparatory cycle towards the 2020 Review Conference.

So there are, I think, areas in which nuclear disarmament actions are very much desired, and in fact we keep hearing from many other non-nuclear-weapon States that such actions in the areas of nuclear disarmament are very necessary, not least because of an increasingly difficult and dangerous security environment. I have been approaching many Governments bilaterally to try to secure support for that sort of action, and it would be really wonderful if those issues were indeed taken up collectively or individually by nuclear-weapon States as well.

Regarding other areas, as I said, the expressions of interest have been very well-balanced, and many countries have stepped forward to offer financial support. However, I keep emphasizing that it is equally important to give political support, to make political statements in support of those actions – many, or in fact all, of which, coincide with your responsibilities and the issues that you are tackling in the Conference on Disarmament and in other parts of the disarmament machinery.

**The President:** I thank High Representative Ms. Nakamitsu for taking this question and giving her response. I recognize the representative of the Russian Federation.

**Mr. Deyneko** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. President, Ms. Nakamitsu, esteemed colleagues, we appreciate the contribution of the Secretariat of the United Nations and the secretariat of the Conference on Disarmament to the work of the Conference. We are always prepared and open to hold a dialogue with you, but we regret and are puzzled by the fact that neither high-ranking officials of the United Nations, in other words the Secretary-General himself and the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, when in Switzerland and even in person in Geneva, have managed to confer with the Conference on the really burning, topical issues facing this forum. Even your presentation today was largely devoted to advancing the agenda of the Secretary-General of the United Nations; as a matter of fact, this was the purpose for which you paid a special visit to Geneva some time back. I consider this to be at least a duplication of efforts which does not make for a balanced approach, including to questions regarding the Conference. We have expressed our stance on the agenda. While focusing literally only on the subsidiary bodies who worked virtually the whole of the last session on all the items on the Conference's agenda, you devoted immeasurably more time to two proposals, our common tasks, i.e. the Conference's programme of work and the agenda. I would like to hear more from you about what the Conference on Disarmament really is. What practical contribution

can the Secretariat make to improving our work? What practical help can it give to delegations?

**The President:** I thank the representative of the Russian Federation. I now recognize the Ambassador of the United Kingdom, followed by the Ambassador of Brazil.

**Mr. Liddle** (United Kingdom): Thank you very much, Mr. President, and thank you very much, Ms. Nakamitsu for joining us today. My delegation often talks about the importance of joining up New York and Geneva, so it is good to see that we found an innovative way of doing that today.

Thank you also for your support to the work of the Conference on Disarmament. We often say in this body that we do not work in a vacuum – and that is true – and you talked about the need to work together when times are difficult, as they are undoubtedly are. So, my question would be how we in this body can better join up with other bits of the disarmament machinery – the First Committee, the United Nations Disarmament Commission and the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters, of course, which supports the work of the Secretary-General of the United Nations. There are many important forums and voices out there. How do we join up with that effort better?

**The President:** I thank the representative of the United Kingdom and now give the floor to the Ambassador of Brazil.

**Mr. De Aguiar Patriota** (Brazil): Thank you very much, Madam Nakamitsu, for your presence and your statement to the Conference on Disarmament. I can understand the difficulties of being in Geneva on several occasions. It is important nevertheless to have your input as the session progresses in 2019, and we are satisfied that you have emphasized the importance of the Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament, highlighting elements of the implementation action plan. The implementation side of it is perhaps followed more closely by New York missions than Geneva missions, so I think we need to be brought up to date as to what is happening and to join forces on that front.

Again, picking up on your remarks and the Secretary-General's remarks regarding the state of the world in terms of disarmament, which looks dire and bleak – notwithstanding all the efforts we have made to have the Conference generate some productive and substantive work and discussions (although more is required) and be the first body that we look to provide, if not leadership, at least a venue for discussion on the big picture of what has been happening with disarmament since the Second World War. There appears to be a sort of slow unravelling of the regime that applies to arms control and commitments to disarm. Treaties look increasingly obsolete, or commitments to those treaties are no longer as strong as they were.

It is thus my impression that we should perhaps look into new ideas that could be championed not by individual countries but by the United Nations itself. What comes to mind is the idea of the high-level meeting on revitalizing the work of the Conference, a meeting we have postponed; no one speaks of it anymore, but perhaps some initiative like that, a bigger-impact initiative that could bring everything, all the different strands of disarmament, together into a single, broad dialogue regarding the state of the world in security terms and in terms of strategic stability and what is going on with the existing treaties and regime, as we approach 2020 – because 2020 will not be an easy deliverable, either; there are a lot of roadblocks to that.

Those are my comments. I think something bigger and broader is required if we are to make progress.

**The President:** I thank the Ambassador of Brazil. I would now like to give the floor to the High Representative for additional comments.

**Ms. Nakamitsu** (High Representative for Disarmament Affairs): In answer to the first question or comment from the Russian Federation, I think you all know that the Secretary-General of the United Nations will be speaking during the high-level week. You all understand the importance that he attaches to the Conference on Disarmament, and that will be fully demonstrated again this year. The fact that I focused on the agenda issues today in the last part of my remarks is also because I am fully aware that you are in the

midst of deliberations and discussions on the programme of work and how you might wish to structure the work during the 2019 calendar year. I did not want to interfere with what you might be doing, so I thought I would address some of the substantive issues rather than the exact workings of the Conference – of course, with strong emphasis on the fact that we would like the Conference to get back to work.

We believe that it is a fundamental part of the international peace and security architecture. It is the only negotiating body, so I would very much like to throw the ball back into your court. I will be really keen to see the progress, and if there is anything at all we can do, please let us know – we are here for that purpose. You will hear more during the high-level segment about what we are thinking at the moment.

Thank you very much to the United Kingdom. How can we try to make the different parts of the disarmament machinery work together better? If you remember, there is one commitment in the Secretary-General's Agenda which addresses exactly that. From the Secretariat side, the commitment is to support the disarmament machinery components. What we have done was with that aim: as the Secretariat's support for the Disarmament Commission, the First Committee and other bodies was previously dispersed across the Office of Disarmament Affairs, I have now consolidated the coordination of the Secretariat's support in one part of the Office – in fact, I have made it the responsibility of one person with long experience in servicing those entities.

Now, with the Conference, there is of course the geographical separation between New York and Geneva, and I am fully aware of that. Indeed, that is one of the key issues that I want to tackle in our ongoing internal change management and review of our structures in the Office, so I have asked my deputy to travel to Geneva to work with our colleagues in the Geneva branch to think through what might be the best way of also bringing the Geneva Secretariat functions much closer, to implement the commitment that we have made in the Secretary-General's Agenda, which is to achieve better coherence between and among those different parts of the disarmament machinery from the Secretariat's point of view.

Thank you very much for the comments from Brazil – this is a big issue. Indeed, I personally believe that we should really think about potential new ideas and new, creative approaches to today's security environment and the kinds of disarmament and arms-control processes that we might require. I would be very keen to engage in conversations with you – disarmament is a unique field in a way, in that the responsibility for action indeed rests with member States. I would like to work with those member States that are really taking those responsibilities much more seriously than before, and I am beginning to hear very encouraging words, not only from Brazil. A few countries have started to talk about the new ideas and new approaches that are necessary in the new security environment of the twenty-first century.

Perhaps the time has come to start reflecting upon those issues and, to do that, we need to bring good minds together. That is something that the United Nations can do, so I would definitely like to hear more and listen to your ideas about how we might be able to help you. I will be accompanying the Secretary-General during the high-level segment and I hope I will have the opportunity to engage with some of you and listen to the ideas that you are developing over there.

**The President:** I thank the High Representative for her comments. Would any other delegation like to take the floor? I recognize Indonesia and Finland.

**Mr. Sidharta** (Indonesia): Thank you, Mr. President, and through you I would like to also convey my sincere appreciation to Ms. Nakamitsu for taking time to greet us in the Conference on Disarmament.

I do believe that you are aware that we are facing critical challenges not only with regard to substance, disarmament itself, but also with regard to other aspects, such as the administrative aspect and, especially, the financial aspect of many disarmament regimes. The Biological Weapons Convention is one example. We are facing lots of difficulties in supporting our work in the Biological Weapons Convention due to the financial situation, and these financial conditions that are present in relation not only to the Biological

Weapons Convention but also to some other disarmament regimes hold back our endeavours to make substantive progress. For example, the financial conditions of the Biological Weapons Convention kept us from having appropriate time for a meeting of States parties. We cannot have a full five-day meeting; instead, because of the financial situation, we have only a three-day meeting. And we see that there are some countries that are having difficulty fulfilling their financial commitments.

My question, Ms. Nakamitsu, is therefore whether you or the Secretary-General have an initiative on how to bridge these troubles. In particular, have you engaged with countries that have outstanding payments, or is there some sort of solution or mechanism provided by the Office of the Secretary-General in order to bridge these issues? For example, something that may allow us to have the proper time for a meeting of States parties?

**The President:** I thank the representative of Indonesia and would now like to give the floor to the representative of Egypt.

**Mr. Elsayad** (Egypt): Thank you, Mr. President, and thank you, Ms. Nakamitsu, of course, for engaging with the Conference on Disarmament today and for your usual engagement with the members of the Conference in Geneva.

As expressed on several occasions and lately in our statement at the last plenary session of the Conference, Egypt believes that the Conference is at the centre of the disarmament machinery and, more importantly, it is the single disarmament body that has a mandate for negotiating legally binding instruments. Moreover, Egypt, of course, attaches high importance to the negotiation of a comprehensive nuclear-weapons convention within the Conference and, as you all know, in 2017 the General Assembly adopted a legally binding treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. We are fully aware that there are different sentiments and divergent views on the Treaty within the Conference. However, we believe that efforts to pursue this endeavour should be conducted in the Conference by negotiating a comprehensive nuclear weapons convention. We understand that the Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament also included references to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and its importance, and I would like to know more. Do you have any thoughts and views on how the Office for Disarmament Affairs can support the Conference in seizing the opportunity represented by the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons?

**The President:** I thank the representative of Egypt and would now like to give the floor to the Ambassador of Latvia.

**Mr. Karklins** (Latvia): Thank you very much. Being an observer in the Conference on Disarmament, together with two dozen other countries, we are following the discussions and we participate in the work as much as we can and are allowed. I would like to use this opportunity in your presence to remind the consecutive presidencies of the Conference that the issues related to the enlargement of Conference should also be brought up for discussion, because for a long time we have not addressed this issue even briefly.

The question that I wanted to raise with you, Ms. Nakamitsu, is about the gender dimension in disarmament. Last year, in the First Committee, we witnessed an unprecedented number of resolutions outlining gender issues – you yourself, in your statement at the opening of the First Committee, spoke eloquently about it. The question of course is what the best way would be to amplify the gender perspective in disarmament discourse and activities.

From our side, Latvia is chairing the Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty in August 2019, and we have chosen gender and gender-based violence as a focus area for our presidency.

**The President:** I thank the Ambassador of Latvia. Would any other delegation like to take the floor? That does not seem to be the case. I will now give the floor to the High Representative for some final comments.

**Ms. Nakamitsu** (High Representative for Disarmament Affairs): Thank you very much again. The first question from Indonesia concerned the financial issues related to

various disarmament conventions. Indeed, this has been, almost from day one of my arrival in this position in disarmament, one of the key issues that I have been trying to address using different methods. Have we been approaching those countries, impressing upon them the need to contribute as they are required to? Indeed, we have approached them and had conversations with them. Also, I was made aware almost immediately that a number of countries came together and then started to try to formulate an option for addressing those challenges in a slightly more sustainable manner. Last year, one of the conventions, the Biological Weapons Convention, managed to establish a contingency fund, the Working Capital Fund, so there will be a mechanism with which to address the very difficult situations that have been caused by the failure to finance these mechanisms properly.

By request, we are working together with some of the Chairs of those mechanisms and have put together a couple of options. We try to give States parties a few options to consider rather than to impose a particular one. After all, the States parties are responsible for the conventions. They therefore have to resolve these difficulties, but, of course, we are here to try to work with them, to help them to find more sustainable solutions to long-standing problems caused by a lack of funding. We would like to continue doing that. I think it is not just one or two conventions. All conventions are beset by similar financial issues. The time has come for the States parties to the instruments to take those issues much more seriously and address them in a much more sustained manner. Once again, we are here to work with you in trying to do that.

On the question from Egypt about the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, we did indeed mention that. It is a United Nations–negotiated convention. Even though we are fully aware that it is rather controversial for some countries and that some countries did not like the reference to it in the Secretary-General’s Agenda, it is a United Nations–negotiated treaty, so for us, as the secretariat for the various disarmament activities, there was no way not to refer to it.

Regardless of the views of the Treaty, one thing that we all need to do together is to make sure that the strong frustration with the very slow pace or stalled status of nuclear disarmament expressed by many or the majority of United Nations Member States and the political statement made by adopting the Treaty are transformed into positive political pressure, so that we can actually put our heads together and try to return to a united vision for the elimination of nuclear weapons. We do have an opportunity in front of us, as I mentioned: the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty review process. My role – our role – is to try to help you get back to a united vision for a united path towards the elimination of nuclear weapons, and we would very much like to use the opportunity before us to return to such a path.

So, there are many things that we could do, which is one of the reasons why we put together the Secretary-General’s Agenda for Disarmament. The detailed work that we could do and the actions we could take are in fact contained in the Agenda. Our hope is for us to be able to help you get back to the united path. Let us take the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, or the hard core thereof, forward, so that progress in nuclear disarmament is translated into united action. Let us take advantage of the opportunities that are in front of us.

I cannot see you on the screen, Ambassador Karklins, but thank you for the question about gender. There are, again, different dimensions. Let me just summarize. For us, gender issues are important for two strands. One is, of course, that women have to be fully and equally represented in disarmament negotiations, and you all know that we are keeping track of whether various delegations include women. The participation and representation of women in all disarmament processes are a very important part of the gender substance of the disarmament agenda, but there is also another aspect, which is, I think, what you are also alluding to: namely, we have to make sure that gendered impact is properly understood in various parts of the disarmament agenda.

I am extremely happy that you are focusing on that within the framework of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and the Arms Trade Treaty. We are also trying to mainstream gendered impact into different parts of disarmament issues. For example, we are starting quite a large project to try to understand better the gender impact of small arms



in various parts of the world. In the nuclear area, it is better – there have been a lot of expert civil society studies conducted to try to understand the different impacts of those weapons. These are just examples. I very much hope that these issues will be mainstreamed across all areas of disarmament and, for that reason, I would like to thank you, Ambassador Karklins, for taking up the gender aspect within the context of the Arms Trade Treaty and I very much hope that all others will follow in all different dimensions of disarmament work.

Thank you very much for giving me this opportunity. The link worked very well, and since I will be physically back in Geneva in the last week of February, I look forward to engaging with you, meeting with you and speaking face to face.

**The President:** I would like to thank the High Representative for her time and her words and commitment. If there are no more requests to take the floor in the context of this exchange, I propose to suspend the meeting and reconvene our plenary meeting in the Council Chamber.

*The meeting was suspended at 3.50 p.m. and resumed at 4.05 p.m.*

**The President:** The meeting is resumed. Dear colleagues, we have received two more requests to participate in the Conference on Disarmament as observers as of yesterday, Wednesday, 6 February 2019, at 3 p.m. These requests are contained in document CD/WP.617/Add.4, which was shared with you. Any requests from non-member States received after the date indicated above will be presented for your consideration and decision at the next plenary meeting. May I take it that the Conference decides to invite these States to participate in our work, in accordance with its rules of procedure?

*It was so decided.*

**The President:** Excellencies, dear colleagues, at this time I would like to resume our discussions on the programme of work or any other matter. I wish to thank all the delegations that have submitted their comments and made proposals and to reassure you once more that I will endeavour to take them into consideration in the revised draft of this programme of work with the secretariat which we will circulate by tomorrow evening, Friday, 8 February, as I promised.

Now I would like to give the floor to the Ambassador of Poland.

**Mr. Czech** (Poland): Mr. President, at the outset, let me warmly welcome a new colleague, the Ambassador of Indonesia, and also extend best wishes to our colleagues from China and other States that are now observing the new lunar year. Thank you also, Mr. President, for enabling us to be in touch today with High Representative Nakamitsu. Timely exchanges of views among disarmament expert centres – New York, Geneva and Vienna – remain an important element of the disarmament machinery.

Mr. President, on 30 January, you presented a draft programme of work for the Conference on Disarmament. I would like to thank you for this effort. A document so comprehensive and rich in terms of ideas provides a very good basis for further work. From our point of view, the main value of the draft programme of work lies in its mirror effect. We are looking at this document individually and, at the same time, collectively, and we see where we are, what is possible, what is not, what is more relevant, what is less relevant.

What we, Poland, see in this mirror, is that the proposals pertaining to the items on the Conference agenda are not equally mature. Some are already covered or can be better addressed in other forums or by different instruments. I am referring here to paragraph 6 (a).

While acknowledging that biosecurity is an issue of utmost importance, we believe that it should be followed and elaborated under the Biological Weapons Convention. It requires us, at the same time, to do more to strengthen this Convention.

The results of our debates in subsidiary bodies last year were very encouraging and promising. However, we do not see a critical mass for starting negotiations on the four core issues. I can repeat our position and agree with several preceding speakers that the instrument on fissile material, if interpreted in a broader manner, is the issue that, more than any other, is ready to be taken up.

As I stated previously, first and foremost, we need to seek solutions to the impasse in the Conference outside the Conference. Nevertheless, we can also agree that the Conference, like any other body and institution, needs periodic fine-tuning. During previous meetings, some delegations referred to the methods of work of the Conference, the rotation of presidencies and the enlargement of the membership. I would add the notion of duration of the presidency as something that needs to be reflected upon in an urgent and expeditious manner.

It is our conviction that we can go even further. It is worth recalling that the agenda of the Conference is not set in stone. It is a living document that has evolved over the years. It seems to be the right time to look at these seven items and ask ourselves the very basic question – namely, whether they adequately reflect the current challenges we are facing.

There are no doubts concerning the four core issues. Nevertheless, if we look at item 6 (“Comprehensive programme of disarmament”) and item 7 (“Transparency in disarmament”), questions about the practicality of these items in the work of the Conference seem to be quite natural. Item 5 (“New types of weapons of mass destruction and new systems of such weapons; radiological weapons”) needs to be updated and made concrete in order to catch up with the rapid development of new military technologies. This reflection is based on current developments in the security environment and the results of the work of the subsidiary bodies last year. We propose to look at the aforementioned issues in an open and objective manner. Let us be practical – we can change it, we can make it concrete, we can even replace it with more relevant and prospective topics. We can name them and, finally, address them.

Mr. President, we are awaiting the revised version of the draft programme of work that you are going to present tomorrow. Regardless of the fate of the revised version, I would like to congratulate you on a very good start of the Conference session. I hope that we will continue very substantial work this year, while taking into account the observations I have just made.

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

**Mr. Li Song (China)** (*spoke in Chinese*): Mr. President, we would like to commend you, as the first person to hold the rotating presidency this year, for putting forward a number of timely and specific ideas about the programme of work, which have helped to reinvigorate the Conference’s discussions on it. Today I would like, on behalf of the Chinese delegation, to express a few preliminary thoughts about the draft programme of work that you have put forward.

First, China considers that the Conference must adopt a comprehensive and balanced, objective approach in order to address the legitimate and reasonable concerns of all member States. As we all know, the wording “comprehensive and balanced” has been used in the Conference for many years. I am now returning to work in the Conference, and I have noticed that a number of colleagues are rather doubtful of the wording, or even disappointed with it. It has been said by some that certain agenda items should not be linked with others. The Conference is a mirror of the international security situation. For major agenda items such as nuclear disarmament, a fissile material cut-off treaty, the prevention of an arms race in outer space or negative security assurances, as for others, it not only is an objective reflection of the security challenges facing the entire international community; it also offers an authentic portrayal of the various positions of all parties in respect of the international security situation. Thus, it is only with a comprehensive and balanced approach, giving objective and fair consideration to the various priorities, that the differences of all parties can be properly addressed and dealt with, a fair working arrangement can be devised and the Conference can carry out its work on an equitable and objective basis. In this regard, rather than saying there is linkage, it would be better to say that the various agenda items are naturally interrelated. Focusing the spotlight on one or two agenda items will produce bias. Of course, in drawing up the programme of work, we must fully bring into play the role of the Conference as the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating body and make full use of the special expertise of the members of each delegation. At the same time, we must, on the basis of the Conference’s realities, take into

account the major points it addresses, without indiscriminately including in the programme of work just any matter that is suggested.

My second point is that, as we say in Chinese, it takes more than a short cold snap to freeze three feet of ice. If the Conference's work has been frozen, it is the result of the combined effect of the international security situation and the political will of all the States. Revitalizing the work of the Conference cannot be done in one go. The only way to make progress is on a firm foundation, and one step at a time. Last year, the Conference, on the basis of the previous year's working group on the way ahead, set up the five subsidiary bodies and began in-depth discussions, which brought fresh momentum to its work. I have noted that many countries have pointed out that it is not only discussions on treaties that are substantive, and that technical discussions have real and important significance in moving the Conference's work forward. In our view, the Conference should give careful consideration to continuing the beneficial practice begun last year, establishing subsidiary bodies for the important agenda items and respectively carrying out substantive work on them. Regarding the names, mandates and working methods of the subsidiary bodies, we are willing to hold more in-depth discussions to research, think out and explore possibilities with the President and any other parties.

My third point is that this year marks the fortieth anniversary of the establishment of the Conference, and that the Conference's work must keep up with the times. It still must ensure that its treatment of agenda items is objective, and comprehensive and balanced, while at the same time establishing subsidiary bodies to steer its work, and it must constantly improve its own mechanisms and structure. First, it must give due consideration to the profound impact of new developments in science and technology on international security and discuss and update its agenda and agenda items accordingly. Secondly, the Conference's work must be kept in line with multilateralism and globalization. The Conference should actively consider bringing in new members and increasing the universality of its membership. Thirdly, while adhering to the principle of consensus, the Conference must further consider how to improve its methods of work and efficiency. China believes that the Conference needs to consider naming coordinators to work on updating its agenda, extending its membership and improving its working methods, broadly soliciting the views of all parties and drawing on their collective wisdom so that it can, on the fortieth anniversary of its creation, have a fresh look, better standing and new momentum.

**The President:** I thank the Ambassador of China for his statement. I would now like to give the floor to the Ambassador of the Syrian Arab Republic.

**Mr. Aala** (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): The Syrian Arab Republic attaches great importance to the Conference on Disarmament, which is the sole multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament, and to the preservation of its role, status and mandate. It underscores the responsibility and duty of the President of the Conference to seek to produce a programme of work based on wide-ranging consultations with member States in order to identify their views and priorities.

We have taken note of the programme of work for the Conference proposed by the first President of this year's session and have followed with interest the comments made on your draft proposal by member States. While we look forward to receiving the revised version based on the views and observations of member States, I wish to make some comments that reflect my country's priorities in that regard.

First, we underscore the importance of adhering to the priorities that were set by the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, in particular the top priority accorded to the total elimination of nuclear weapons in view of the threat to the survival of humankind posed by the existence and the possible use or threat of use of such weapons. We stress the need to combine action to achieve nuclear non-proliferation with simultaneous action to achieve nuclear disarmament, and we support the position of the Group of 21, as reflected in the working documents submitted to the Conference.

Secondly, Syria reiterates its support for the adoption of a balanced and comprehensive programme of work with a negotiating mandate that comprises the four core

issues on the agenda of the Conference as well as emerging challenges, primarily those concerning access to and use of chemical weapons by terrorist groups.

We have listened to our colleagues' comments on the balanced and comprehensive programme of work, but we do not agree with their proposals, especially those encouraging the Conference to focus on one agenda item at the expense of other items. Syria wishes to underscore the following points in the context of a balanced and comprehensive programme of work:

Firstly, we support as a matter of urgency the launching of negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on the adoption of a comprehensive and verifiable agreement on the elimination of nuclear weapons based on a phased programme and a specific time frame. We note that the mandate set out in the proposed programme of work fails to meet the minimum requirements for that goal and to address the issue of nuclear disarmament as a top priority.

Secondly, Syria supports efforts to produce an internationally binding legal text that bans fissile material and its use for the production of nuclear weapons, since it would constitute a major contribution to nuclear disarmament. With regard to the mandate contained in the draft programme proposed by the presidency, we wish to underscore that it should form part of a balanced and comprehensive programme of work comprising the four core issues, fall within the framework of nuclear disarmament, cover stockpiles of such material, be verifiable, and provide for the destruction of stockpiles of fissile material and non-production of new material.

Thirdly, pending the total elimination of nuclear weapons, Syria supports the adoption of a legally binding treaty that provides non-nuclear-weapon States with effective, universal, unconditional, non-discriminatory and legally binding guarantees of security. We support the launching of negotiations on a binding global instrument concerning such safeguards and we believe that there are strong and constructive grounds on which to move forward in that direction.

Fourthly, Syria supports the negotiation of a legally binding international treaty aimed at preventing an arms race and promoting peaceful uses of outer space. It supports in this context the draft treaty proposed jointly by the Russian Federation and China on prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space, and the threat or use of force against outer space objects, as updated in 2014. The draft constitutes a constructive contribution to the work of the Conference and a sound basis for negotiations on the adoption of a binding international legal instrument.

Fifthly, the risk of terrorist groups obtaining and using chemical weapons is of particular concern, given the ability of such groups to move across borders and the fact that some States condone and occasionally facilitate their activities. In light of these concerns, Syria reiterates its support for the Russian proposal to launch negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on a draft convention on suppression of acts of chemical and biological terrorism based on the text proposed by the Russian Federation. We note that the presidency's proposed programme of work adopts a selective approach to this matter and raises hypothetical issues that first need to be addressed within the framework of the Biological Weapons Convention.

Lastly, Mr. President, the ability of the Conference to emerge successfully from its current state of prevarication and stagnation depends to a large extent on compliance by successive presidencies and member States with the obligation to base their work and positions on the rules of procedure of the Conference, to respect its mandate, role and agenda, and to seek consensus on a genuine agenda for the Conference.

Our experience last year and since the beginning of this year has shown that the problem facing the Conference stems less from its rules of procedure and working methods than from the selectivity and double standards displayed by some of its members, and the absence of the type of political management required to enable the Conference to resume its negotiating role. Some States' persistent politicization of the work of the Conference and their insistence on raising issues that fall outside the scope of its mandate and using them as a pretext for violating its rules of procedure undermine the credibility of the Conference

and the role entrusted to it. The atmosphere of confrontation and polarization that these States seek to impose on our meetings fails to meet the minimum requirements of cooperation and confidence that are needed to consider the proposals of the States concerned regarding a review of the working methods of the Conference.

**The President:** I thank you and would now like to give the floor to the Ambassador of Algeria.

**Mr. Delmi** (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): Thank you, Mr. President. First, I would like to express the sincere congratulations of the Algerian delegation on your taking office as President of the Conference. You can count on our support in helping you to successfully perform this office. I also take this opportunity warmly to welcome our colleagues who have recently arrived in Geneva, the Ambassadors of China, Ecuador, India and Indonesia and the new Secretary of the Conference. My delegation wishes to thank you for distributing the Conference's draft programme of work for the first part of the 2019 session and, at this stage in the debate, I would like to share an initial assessment with you.

First, we are encouraged by the expressions of good faith in favour of enabling the Conference to operate as it should and, in this context, the Algerian delegation is prepared to join with all the members of the Conference in striving effectively to revitalize our work on the basis of a balanced comprehensive programme of work addressing all the aims we have set ourselves at this Conference.

Secondly, my country fully supports the position of the Group of 21, which regards nuclear disarmament as the top priority of the international community. In this respect, we are particularly concerned by the danger posed by the ongoing existence of nuclear arms to the survival of humanity and we restate the urgent need to open negotiations on this subject at the Conference with a view to the complete elimination of nuclear arms.

Thirdly, we consider that the adoption of a work programme is a *sine qua non* for finding the path to negotiation and for taking effective measures to meet the various challenges facing the non-proliferation regime and disarmament and international peace and security. We say this because we are aware that time is not on our side and that it is more necessary than ever before to make progress in order to save this body, which, in our eyes, remains the sole multilateral negotiating body in the field of disarmament, and to give it greater credibility, pertinence and better prospects.

Fourthly, Algeria still thinks that the Conference's stalemate cannot be ascribed only to weakness on its part. It is clearly and plainly the result of an international context characterized by a lack of political will to ensure that all the items on the Conference's agenda are addressed. It is in this context that my delegation would like to join the numerous speakers who were pleased with the experience of setting up subsidiary bodies responsible for examining substantive issues on the Conference's agenda.

As China and a number of other countries from that region are celebrating New Year, I would like to end by joining with the delegations who have expressed their good wishes. Happy New Year, may it be one of health, well-being and development for your respective countries.

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

**Ms. Mansfield** (Australia): Thank you very much, Mr. President, for the hard work that has gone into developing your draft programme of work. We have also listened carefully to colleagues and have a few reflections to put on the table.

From an Australian perspective, our priority would be the negotiation of a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT). There is a wealth of excellent material to draw on, including the rich content of recent reports from the high-level FMCT expert preparatory group and the Group of Governmental Experts. We see a negotiation mandate on this item as appropriate to take forward.

We have heard various statements with respect to document CD/1299 and the mandate contained therein, the Shannon mandate. Our view is that we would be better off

not getting caught up in an extended debate on that mandate, as views on the perceived merits or otherwise appear to be quite clearly fixed. Rather, it would be more profitable to consider whether and how we can be more flexible to engage and enable negotiations to commence in the Conference on Disarmament. Australia would certainly want to show flexibility here, and we are pleased there appears to be broad willingness to continue discussing substantive issues related to fissile material in the Conference.

Mr. President, hearing the divergent views in the room, we do not see consensus emerging for negotiating mandates on all the elements you have proposed, but we would still like to give ourselves the best chance at success possible. The capacity to negotiate simultaneously on several items at the same time does not seem to currently exist in the Conference, but not everything needs to move at the same pace. As others have already said, we think issues relating to biological threats would be best dealt with in the Biological Weapons Convention. We are also unsure about the proposal for a working group focused on emerging technology and critical infrastructure protection.

We appreciate your efforts to be ambitious at the start of the year. Statements so far, however, seemed to have underlined that we are still some distance apart. We have been struck by several comments, too, about building on the work of the subsidiary bodies, and Australia certainly supports doing this. It is important that we find a way to continue the dialogue, build on understanding and collaborate where we can. Our focus should and can be on substance. We are not wedded to any particular format, but we are keen to use the Conference effectively to get us closer to negotiations.

Judging from the 2018 results, subsidiary bodies can help in this regard by enabling useful substantive discussions. We are open to the proposals on working methods and the expansion of the Conference. It is good practice for institutions to regularly review themselves and to see whether or in what other ways we can do things better. We need to remember, too, that our Governments pay for the Conference and that it is incumbent on us to achieve results and to do so as efficiently and as effectively as possible.

Mr. President, just a couple of specific comments on the draft text. On the prevention of an arms race in outer space, for example, Brazil made a useful suggestion on paragraph 6 (c): namely, to end the text after the reference to subsidiary body 3, while others have referenced the need to swap paragraphs 6 (a) and 6 (b) with nuclear disarmament covered under subparagraph (a) and fissile material covered under subparagraph (b).

We very much look forward to considering your revised text and once again thank you for your constructive efforts.

**The President:** I thank the Ambassador of Australia for her statement and for her kind words for the President. I would now like to give the floor to the Ambassador of Japan.

**Mr. Takamizawa (Japan):** Thank you, Mr. President. We really appreciate the hard work and effort you have put into drafting an ambitious programme of work as the first President of the 2019 session of the Conference on Disarmament. As we have stated previously, Japan emphasizes formality, inclusiveness and commonality and creating added value when considering the draft programme of work. In addition to the preliminary comments we made last week, I would like to highlight several points.

First, from the perspective of formality, we appreciate your decision to circulate the draft programme of work and discuss it at the Conference plenary sessions, given the importance of the Conference's mandate to agree on the programme of work and initiate disarmament negotiations.

Second, with respect to inclusiveness and commonality, we value the President's willingness to listen to opinions of the Conference member States regarding the draft programme of work and to include the seven key agenda items. However, when it comes to the issue of priority and the adoption of agenda items that are mature enough to pursue a negotiating mandate for, we have encountered difficulties in agreeing on the language of the programme of work, and the situation seems to be the same as before, if not worse. I hope your revised draft will focus on and find commonalities. Japan's priority has been a fissile material cut-off treaty, a treaty that we believe is ripe for the commencement of

negotiations, given the depth of discussion in subsidiary body 2 and the concrete results of the high-level fissile material cut-off treaty expert preparatory group.

Third, as Ambassador De Aguiar Patriota of Brazil stated on Tuesday, we must approach this matter with agility. We should keep in mind that once the high-level week begins at the end of February, it will be difficult to start substantive deliberations. Therefore, the next two weeks will be crucial, and we must exercise our wisdom and creativity to agree on an agenda and schedule of activities for the 2019 session.

In that context, it is important to review the progress made through the activities of the subsidiary bodies last year. We have heard different understandings of the value of the discussions from the subsidiary bodies last year, but to move forward and create added value on what we have achieved, I would like to suggest two points. First, that we make clear the focus of our discussions and, second, that we hold some of the discussions in an official meeting. With regard to the focus of discussion, Japan welcomes briefings, including on meetings of the five permanent members of the Security Council, and interactive discussions on issues such as the nuclear doctrine and nuclear disarmament verification in the Conference process, which could help promote transparency and an understanding of various situations surrounding nuclear disarmament.

In closing, working with agility is all about creating a flexible and productive environment and focusing on the goals to be achieved rather than sticking to the exact methods that are meant to be used. In that sense, Japan is open to an exchange of views the working methods and membership of the Conference if and only if such an exchange is conducted in the spirit of working with agility. Mr. President, you can count on our delegation's full support.

**The President:** I thank the Ambassador of Japan for his statement. I recognize the representative of Kazakhstan.

**Mr. Baissuanov** (Kazakhstan): Thank you very much, Mr. President. As we are taking the floor for the first time under your presidency, let me congratulate you on the assumption of this important duty and assure you of our fullest support in your endeavours. I would like to read a statement issued by the Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan on recent developments surrounding the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty:

The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan expresses concern regarding the United States of America's decision to suspend its participation in the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty and the mirror decision taken by the Russian Federation. Kazakhstan, as a member of the Treaty, supports the maintenance of and strict compliance with the Treaty by all its parties and confirms its continued value as a unique historical agreement that allowed the joint efforts of the parties to eliminate an entire class of missiles capable of carrying nuclear weapons.

Since its conception, the Treaty has helped to deliver significant progress in nuclear disarmament, in accordance with article 6 of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. The denunciation of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, which is one of the most essential policies in the maintenance of international security, has the potential to trigger a new arms race in many regions of the world and poses a serious threat to global peace and security.

Noting the relevance of the global anti-nuclear initiatives of the President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, aimed at achieving a nuclear-weapon-free world by 2045, the Republic of Kazakhstan stands behind the strict compliance with the Treaty by all parties in the spirit of strengthening mutual confidence-building measures. In order to maintain the Treaty, Kazakhstan calls on the United States and the Russian Federation to make all the necessary efforts to resolve existing problems through constructive negotiations within the framework of existing bilateral and multilateral mechanisms, including the format of a special verification commission, as set out under the Treaty.

Thank you very much, Mr. President.

**The President:** I thank the representative of Kazakhstan for his statement. Would any other delegation like to take the floor? It seems that there are none.

Dear colleagues, I wish to inform you that I intend to convene the next plenary meeting on Tuesday, 12 February, at 10 a.m. to allow the continuation of our discussions, including on the programme of work on the basis of a revised document. I would also like to inform you that at our next plenary meeting, Ambassador Heidi Hulan will address the Conference on Disarmament in her capacity as former Chair of the high-level fissile material cut-off treaty expert preparatory group and within the context of the group's report, which was recently transmitted to the Conference by the Secretary-General of the United Nations. The meeting is adjourned.

*The meeting rose at 4.45 p.m.*