

Conference on Disarmament

English

Final record of the one thousand four hundred and eighty-second plenary meeting


Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Friday, 15 February 2019, at 10.10 a.m.

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

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The President: I call to order the 1482nd plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. Before we proceed to our discussions on the second revised draft programme of work in an official setting, would any delegation like to take the floor on other matters? I recognize the Ambassador of the United States of America.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): Mr. President, I am taking the floor to put on record my Government's strong opposition to a representative of the former Maduro regime occupying the seat reserved for Venezuela.

The Maduro regime is illegitimate, having stolen an election from the Venezuelan people, having bankrupted the country's economy, having forced millions of its citizens to flee the country and continuing to deny Venezuelans humanitarian supplies that they so desperately need.

The regime maintains that there is no humanitarian crisis and that this is just a mirage created by the United States. The regime will go to any length to lie and deny reality. It has even made one of the most ridiculous charges that the international community has heard in decades – that the United States is sending in biological weapons as part of the humanitarian assistance that we have provided. I ask: does the regime actually believe that anyone is taking those claims seriously? Maybe only those countries that continue to prop up the regime and to come to its defence in international bodies will do that – and we all know who those few outliers are. A number of countries represented in this chamber have recognized Juan Guaidó as the rightful President of Venezuela, and the number of countries that recognize him is increasing daily.

I raise the issue of Venezuela because that country is scheduled to assume the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament in a few months' time. Having a representative of the former Maduro regime presiding over this august body would be a travesty that would further undermine the credibility of the Conference, following the disastrous Syrian presidency last year. In order to preserve the integrity of and respect for this chamber, the Maduro representatives must vacate the chair reserved for Venezuela. I call on all responsible countries represented in this room to stand with the Venezuelan people and call on Maduro's sycophants not to assume the presidency of the Conference later this year.

Let us not give one iota of legitimacy to this decrepit dictatorial regime but send a powerful message to the Venezuelan people and to other people seeking freedom around the globe that the Conference is unwilling to continue business as usual with representatives of such a cruel regime presiding over the important work of our Conference.

The President: I note the point of order and I now give the floor to the representative of Venezuela.

Ms. Andarcia (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, colleagues, thank you for once again convening this plenary, whose primary purpose is to discuss the programme of work. My delegation felt obliged to raise a point of order, which was unfortunately ignored. We believe that the statement just made by the delegation of the United States is an abuse of the rules of procedure, which explicitly state that our meetings must be devoted to agenda items and matters relevant to the Conference. We fail to see how the internal situation of my country, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, is relevant to today's meetings.

In any event, my delegation wishes to say to the Ambassador, to the President of the Conference and to all colleagues present in this chamber that yesterday our Minister for Foreign Affairs, Jorge Arreaza, held several meetings in New York and once again made clear his position with regard to what the United States is calling the so-called humanitarian crisis in Venezuela. What we have witnessed in recent months is nothing more than the fabrication, and I say it again, by the United States of a so-called humanitarian crisis with the sole purpose of justifying a military intervention against my country.

It has also been mentioned that the United States intends to deliver humanitarian assistance to my country, when in fact this is not true. The principles of humanitarian assistance require it to be impartial, neutral and humanitarian in nature. This is not the case with the so-called humanitarian aid that the United States intends to bring in through our

borders. In addition, the authorization of our country's Government is required to bring in or to coordinate supposedly humanitarian assistance, yet such authorization has not been granted. My country does not know what this so-called humanitarian assistance includes and has not received a single request to agree to receive it.

I would like to say one more thing, or rather to repeat a comment that I made yesterday, which was also reiterated yesterday by our Minister for Foreign Affairs. It is unprecedented for a Government to claim that there is a humanitarian crisis in our country, yet systematically to block billions of dollars belonging to the Venezuelan people and the Government of the Venezuelan State. This is a regrettable situation. Equally unprecedented is the attempt to buy off, or compensate, the Venezuelan people with 20 million dollars in assistance, when in only the first few days of 2019, the United States blocked more than 7 billion dollars of our oil firm's assets, which belong to the Venezuelan people. For these reasons, I deeply regret once again having to use the time available to us in this Conference to discuss these matters.

It appears to me that the rules of procedure in this regard are quite clear. They are also crystal clear with regard to the way in which the presidency of this Conference rotates. According to the rules of procedure, the presidency rotates geographically on the basis of the English alphabetical list of membership. These are the rules of procedure that we have followed until now. It would be up to the Conference to initiate a review, if a consensus were reached in that regard. We will have to see whether there is such a consensus. Nonetheless, these are the rules of procedure of this Conference. These are the rules to which my country is bound. We have every intention of complying with the rules of procedure. We have every intention of cooperating with the other presidents and members of this Conference.

The President: I thank the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and would now like to give the floor to the Ambassador of the United States.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): Mr. President, there are a lot of people banging their tables around here. I am hearing it again. Let me simply say that the reason I raised the issue of – You may bang all you want, it does not matter: I am going to say what I have to say and I will allow others to say what they want to say.

The President: I apologize for interrupting. I would just like to clarify that everybody who asks for the floor will be given the floor. I would like to ask the Ambassador of the United States to continue.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): Mr. President, I am happy to cede the floor to the representative of Cuba.

The President: The representative of Cuba has the floor.

Mr. Delgado Sánchez (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, I apologize for the way in which we have been forced to behave but, believe me, Cuba knows how to behave in the light of the circumstances, and we are concerned that the circumstances in which this meeting is being conducted are very unfortunate indeed. That is why we interrupted. We requested the floor – and the secretariat took note of our request – before the delegation of the United States. We also noticed that, when a point of order was raised, you allowed the meeting to continue, whereas the rules of procedure require you to stop the meeting. Likewise, when this meeting began, you called for general statements, and it was unclear to my delegation which agenda item we were discussing. When a plenary meeting is held, it is tacitly understood that the meeting will address the items of the agenda, yet the delegation of the United States, to which we have now grown accustomed, seems to have taken the floor in this chamber to make an entirely politicized statement. It may well be that we spend the entire year here, repeating this spurious and indecent exercise, but I believe that we should proceed with caution. Great power always entails great responsibility, and I believe that behaving accordingly would be viewed favourably by this Conference.

First, Mr. President, I would like to know which agenda item we are discussing. And, second, I would ask that you follow the rules of procedure. When a delegation raises a point of order, you simply must grant its request, so that this meeting might proceed in a more

orderly fashion. With that said, as a point of order, I would like to know your position on the matter. We reserve the right to respond to any statement made subsequently.

The President: I thank the representative of Cuba and would now like to give the floor to the Ambassador of the United States.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): Mr. President, the reason I raised the issue of Venezuela, as I mentioned in my earlier remarks, is because it does affect this body. In a few months' time, Venezuela will hold the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament, and my Government has great concern about upholding the dignity and integrity of this body. We have been through this exercise once before, and it is time again to take a stand against allowing representatives of such a regime to occupy the chair of this body. It will be a travesty if that happens. It is farcical to think that the United States is not acting in accordance with the rules of procedure. The Conference presidency has everything to do with this body, and my delegation and I will continue to speak up on this issue.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of the United States and now give the floor to the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Ms. Andarcia (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, I would like to reiterate that my delegation is fully aware and fully respects the time that our colleagues and the presidency devote to the consideration of matters that are relevant to the agenda, which are of concern to us and which compel us to be here today. I would like to say that, just as the delegation of the United States claims to be concerned about the presidency of Venezuela, I myself am greatly concerned that, during the presidencies to come, one of which will be that of the United States, we will continue to be forced to endure scenes of this nature. Moreover, we will be forced to endure scenes of this nature by a delegation that has repeatedly demonstrated in this chamber that it attaches very little importance to the global situation or desideratum of complete disarmament.

It seems to me that our delegation is being used, as the United States has done on previous occasions with other delegations, to prevent and hinder the process of the negotiations with which we should be pressing on today, of the discussions that we should be having today with a view to securing the programme of work that this Conference so desperately needs. We are particularly concerned that the United States presidency will take this approach in the coming months and that some delegations will be used specifically in order to hinder the Conference process. The message that I want to convey is this: it is obvious that the delegation of the United States takes little interest in disarmament issues, considering that for the United States it is more important to come here to talk about its desire to overthrow my country's Government than it is to concentrate on the issues that are an absolute priority for this Conference.

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

Mr. Al Ashkar (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): Once again we are witnessing the misuse of the Conference on Disarmament for political purposes and an attempt to hold the Conference hostage to a specific political agenda. Under international law, the legitimacy of any government or the representatives of that government is determined by the people of the State in question and not from abroad. No one shall have the right to adjudicate on or determine the legitimacy of an elected President of a Member State of the United Nations: that would be blatant interference in the internal affairs of a State and a flagrant violation of international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

Bringing up topics that fall outside the jurisdiction and mandate of the Conference and creating an atmosphere of tension and political intrigue is not conducive to its smooth work and only compounds the problems already experienced by the Conference. The Conference on Disarmament is mandated to negotiate legal instruments in the area of disarmament and has neither the competence nor the authority to issue certificates of the legitimacy of States. Nor is it a platform for the shedding of crocodile tears about human suffering or for the purported defence of democracy. This is all the more absurd and ironic when we see that those purportedly defending democracy are friends and allies of the world's most dictatorial regimes.

The President: I now recognize the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Azarsa (Islamic Republic of Iran): Mr. President, I do not want to take up too much of the time of the Conference on Disarmament, but I would like to stress two points.

First, we have not gathered here just to hear political statements. It is better to put an end to debates of this kind, because issues of a political nature should not be addressed here.

Second, with due respect for your presidency, Mr. President, I would like to mention that, when a country raises a point of order, that point should, as has been the practice in the past, be addressed immediately. On 5 February, a point of order was raised by the United States delegation and was immediately addressed. The current practice is not the way to address points of order. I would like to raise this issue, as a point of order: all countries are equal and they should be treated equally.

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

Mr. Wood (United States of America): Thank you, Mr. President. I am taking the floor one more time to respond to the remarks from the representative of Syria. Any representative of the Assad regime is in no position to say anything about international law. The regime's use of chemical weapons against its own people negates any legitimacy that it claims to possess.

The President: I recognize that the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic would like to take the floor.

Mr. Al Ashkar (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): The actions that are being undertaken by the United States in Syria through the presence of its illegal forces in violation of international law and the Charter of the United Nations, its leadership of an alliance that uses military force without the authorization of the Security Council, its perpetration of dozens of massacres that have claimed the lives of thousands of innocent civilians and entirely destroyed the Syrian city of Raqqah, its concealment of human rights violations perpetrated by the egregious allies of the United States in our region, and the attacks that it has launched against the backdrop of false and unfounded allegations are inconsistent with its claims of compliance with international law and do not entitle it to deliver lessons on compliance to others. This approach is incompatible with American actions on the ground and can be interpreted only in the context of a policy of double standards. Nobody is misled by the camouflage, based on lofty slogans and claims of compliance with international non-proliferation norms, that it uses in support of its own special policies. Only those who wish to succumb blindly to American policy have been deceived. These American endeavours are pathetic propaganda-based attempts to demonize the Syrian Government. They are in fact deplorable and doomed to failure.

The President: I thank the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic. Would any delegation like to take the floor at this stage? I recognize the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Mr. Ju Yong-chol (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Mr. President, this is another example of the politicization of the Conference on Disarmament and abuse of the rules of procedure. My delegation made clear its position on the issue of Venezuela yesterday, but I want to underline the following: my delegation stands firm in its position that the issue of Venezuela should be resolved in a peaceful manner, according to the will and decision of its Government and people, and that the Conference is not the forum for discussing the domestic issues of an individual country. My delegation calls for all members to focus on the topics of our discussion, as mandated by the Conference.

The President: I thank the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The representative of Australia would like to take the floor.

Ms. Wood (Australia): Mr. President, I was not planning to speak, but I just wanted to register that, in my view, one of the valuable features of this body is that it is a forum where we can maintain our dignity – we can listen to one another with respect. Our countries may have different views about what is appropriate to raise in the Conference on Disarmament, but we have interpreted those rules quite flexibly, and I think it is fine for a

delegation to raise the issue of the presidency of the Conference. That is fully within the mandate of what the Conference can talk about.

The President: I thank the representative of Australia and now give the floor to the representative of Cuba.

Mr. Delgado Sánchez (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, despite the fact that I have yet to receive any clarification as to the way in which this Conference proceeds with regard to points of order, which appears to vary every day of the week, or as to the agenda item that we are currently discussing in this plenary meeting, I would like to move on to slightly more substantive issues, even if I believe they have nothing to do with the work of this Conference. Now that the topic of discussion has been raised, it is no doubt worthwhile to make some comments in that regard.

It may well be legitimate to raise any issue with regard to procedural matters in this Conference. Nonetheless, I believe that it would imprudent for us to gather here to make statements about which countries we like and which we do not, or which governments we like and which we do not, because there is a principle, the principle of sovereign equality, according to which we have made a commitment to treat one another with equal respect. There is another principle, the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of States, according to which we all agree mutually to respect one another and not to interfere in the affairs of another State. If it up were up to us, the very least we could say is that there are certain presidencies that we too have no desire to see. Perhaps we do not want the presidencies of countries that denounce disarmament treaties for no reason whatsoever, or on spurious grounds, if we are discussing disarmament. Perhaps it is also our view that the only country in the world to have used a nuclear weapon should not be a member of this Conference.

In other words, there are many things that we could say, but all this relates to what we really feel and is neither productive nor relevant to the Conference's work, which consists in promoting an international commitment, in promoting binding treaties that will help us to curb an arms race that unfortunately is currently being dangerously accelerated and promoted, just as if we were living in another era. I believe that, in reality, our greatest responsibility to the international community is to model our behaviour on the ceiling of this chamber, to act like those five giants, who are supposed to protect the world and to save humanity from the destruction that would be a foregone conclusion in wars of attrition of this kind. We are not here to express our feelings, but rather to act like the professionals and diplomats that we are. The United Nations has a Committee on Conferences. Anyone who has an issue should take it to that Committee and raise his or her questions about the legitimacy, or illegitimacy, of a given delegation's credentials there. But why use the Conference on Disarmament for this political circus? There is only one possible reason: a lack of commitment to disarmament.

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

Mr. Wood (United States of America): Mr. President, the remarks that have been made here this morning fundamentally underscore the reason for what I proposed under your programme of work, specifically with regard to working methods. We need to have that discussion. It is very good to hear that the representative of Cuba is interested in having that kind of broader discussion.

We should take a look at how this body operates, whether its working methods make sense today, whether it makes sense to continue the rotation of Conference on Disarmament presidencies, whether there should be criteria. There is a whole range of issues that should be discussed, and we should not be afraid of discussing them in this room. I know that a number of countries are uncomfortable with doing that. They need to ask themselves why they are uncomfortable and I know why a number of them are uncomfortable. But let us have this discussion. The United States is not afraid to have a discussion on any issue, and the issue I raised this morning is quite relevant to the Conference, despite the assertions to the contrary that we have heard in this room.

I would just say to members of this body: let us have that discussion. Do not be afraid of it. Put your views on the table. We need to talk about this body and how we can move it forward, because right now it is in a stalemate, and to continue putting our heads in the sand and ignoring this reality is unfortunate. I am quite open to having a discussion on these issues.

We have had some real concerns about a country that has occupied the presidency, other countries that have previously occupied it and one that may shortly do so, and I therefore believe that it is entirely relevant to have this discussion, which I welcome.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of the United States and recognize the representative of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Deyneko (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. President, yesterday in this chamber we discussed the draft programme of work for the Conference on Disarmament presented by the Ukrainian presidency. Various comments were made, but all the participants in the Conference on Disarmament, at least those that took the floor, all spoke on the same topic – the mandate of the Conference. And we even had a brief discussion on the question of whether it is worth repeating the Conference mandate in general terms in every operative paragraph. I realize that many delegations were in favour of that approach. Now let us consider what, in substance, they were actually supporting. They were basically supporting a confirmation of the fact that the Conference on Disarmament is the only negotiating forum in this field. In this case, and considering what the distinguished Ambassador of the United States of America has just said, I would like to emphasize the word “negotiating”. That is the focus of the programme of the Ukrainian presidency and even though, as we said yesterday, we cannot support all the items in it, we recognize the sustained efforts of the Ukrainian presidency to fulfil our main task of adopting a comprehensive and balanced programme of work without delay.

The President: I thank the representative of the Russian Federation. I would suggest that, if there are no requests for the floor, we continue our discussion of the revised draft programme of work. As I announced earlier today, we will continue discussing the second revision of the draft programme of work, circulated by the secretariat on 13 February.

I wish to thank all the delegations that have submitted comments and made proposals thus far, including on the first revised draft, and also during our informal exchanges yesterday. I look forward to our further deliberations today in this formal plenary meeting.

At this time I would like to open the floor for statements on the second revised draft programme of work. Would any delegation like to take the floor? I recognize Poland.

Mr. Broilo (Poland): Mr. President, despite the informal setting of this meeting, let me first of all thank you and congratulate you for your very good, very effective presidency. An example has been set for the way in which the Conference on Disarmament session should be started. Thank you very much for your consistency, for trying to revive our work and for the second revised version of the draft programme of work.

I would like to refer specifically to only two items: namely, paragraphs 5 (f) and 5 (g). It seems that this particular issue is winning more and more support in this room but, at the same time, there are still some reservations, so I think some comments are needed. If we look at paragraph 5 (f), concerning potential expansion of the membership of the Conference, the past 20 years have proved that the exclusivity of Conference membership has not resulted in much success. Why should we therefore be afraid of further expansion of the Conference membership? In our view, it will not negatively affect the ability of the Conference to take a decision on negotiations. On the contrary, it will bring new blood to the Conference, new ideas and, from the point of view of international relations, it is the right and proper thing to do.

The second issue is that of working methods. I believe that, at the age of 40, everybody needs a proper medical examination, and the same goes for the Conference. Conservatism is an eminent feature of diplomacy, but we should not take an overly dogmatic stance on this issue and we should not be afraid of having discussions. If we look at the mandate set out in paragraph 5 (g), we are speaking of exploring issues, proposals, if

there are any, and views related to Conference working methods. In general, then, the proposal is to discuss the issue.

After further examination of the issue, we may find that the current working methods are effective and that there is no need to change anything. But in our common wisdom, we may also find that there is room for improvement, that certain aspects of the working methods are worth amending. I strongly encourage delegations to consider this process and I hope that the presidency of the United Kingdom will take up the issue.

The President: I thank the representative of Poland for his comments. Would any other delegation like to take the floor? I recognize the representative of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Deyneko (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. President, we have already made the proposal to separate substantive issues from procedural matters. We acknowledge that they are interrelated to a certain extent, but we must also consider that there is no point in discussing procedure if we cannot resolve the substantive issues. The last thing we would want is for procedural questions to overshadow the substantive issues. That is why we have consistently supported and continue to support looking at these issues separately, first trying to agree on the key problems of the Conference or to reach some other arrangements allowing us to move forward in discussions of the agenda items with a view to launching negotiations, and resolving procedural issues separately, especially since we see both strong support in this chamber for those procedural points and equally strong opposition. That leaves almost no possibility of reaching a consensus.

The President: I thank the representative of the Russian Federation for his comments and would now like to give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Azarsa (Islamic Republic of Iran): Mr. President, in yesterday's informal meeting, I made some contributions, but today I am going to share with you our official stance on the second revised draft programme of work. I thank you, Mr. President, for all your hard work. I would like to share a few thoughts with you on the draft.

First, there is no doubt about the magnitude of the risk that nuclear weapons pose to human civilization, especially in the current circumstances, where sabre-rattling by certain warmongering regimes is at its height. Bearing that in mind, my delegation welcomes your proposed line in paragraph 5 (a) regarding nuclear disarmament with a clear negotiating mandate.

Second, the Conference's four core issues are equally important. The Conference should not prioritize one issue at the expense of the others. A programme of work is workable only if a meaningful balance, with solid bases for negotiations, is maintained among the four core issues. We are yet to be convinced that the work done within the framework of the subsidiary bodies could be considered a solid basis for negotiations on the items in paragraphs 5 (a), 5 (c) and 5 (d), given the very divergent views thereon.

Third, as for a fissile material cut-off treaty, referred to in paragraph 5 (b), we reiterate our position that a balanced, non-discriminatory and inclusive approach will best serve the cause of nuclear disarmament. Any process of negotiating such a treaty should be undertaken within the framework of the Shannon mandate and include existing stockpiles of fissile material.

Fourth, as for paragraph 5 (e), my delegation cannot concur with a negotiating mandate for the three issues mentioned.

Fifth, as for the new elements in paragraphs 5 (f) and 5 (g) – namely, establishing coordinators for the purpose of exploring issues related to expansion of the Conference membership and issues related to working methods – we reiterate our concern that committing the Conference to either or both would very likely divert our focus from the core mandates of this body. We should note that the Conference's working methods have already been politicized. Some, in fact, have abused them to put pressure on their adversaries.

Sixth, we welcome active participation by all interested Member States. We have always supported non-members' requests to participate as observers. This procedure allows all States Members of the United Nations to participate in the Conference's deliberations. We do not believe that the Conference's current stalemate is caused by its limited membership. In fact, a very limited number of Conference members are unwilling to let the Conference fulfil its responsibilities.

We are best advised to focus our time, energy and resources on the most urgent security issue of our time, which is to commence negotiation on a treaty for nuclear disarmament.

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

Mr. Wood (United States of America): Thank you, Mr. President, for the second revised draft programme of work. I believe that it is headed in the right direction. I was very pleased to hear my Russian colleague admit that there is a link between substance and the actual procedural work of this body.

I believe, again, that a discussion of the two items that my delegation has proposed under paragraphs 5 (f) and 5 (g) is actually quite critical to this body, and it is clear that some in this room are not interested in having a dialogue on working methods and membership. I have not heard a great deal of opposition to taking on those two issues or having a discussion of them, so I am very pleased that you have maintained those two elements in your draft and urge you to keep them there. They are fundamentally critical, as I said the other day, to moving forward in the body. There is no reason to be frightened of having a discussion on any issue. This body should be willing to address the issue of membership. The rules of procedure require us periodically to review membership and to talk about working methods, as I have said. Any institution or mechanism that has any value periodically reviews how it conducts its business.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of the United States and would now like to give the floor to the Ambassador of Brazil.

Mr. De Aguiar Patriota (Brazil): Mr. President, Brazil has supported you in your successive and evolving draft programmes of work. Of course, it is not that we wish to adopt a programme of work at any cost or a programme of work that does not include an avenue for achieving significant work under the mandate of this body, but we believe that your efforts have been taking us in the right direction. For us, it is important not to lose the momentum that we gained in 2018 with the five subsidiary bodies. The dialogue that we had in those bodies, in informal sessions, proved to be extremely dense and useful. I believe that they prepared the ground for a more focused mandate when the issues have matured.

We agree that the core issues should be given equivalent treatment in any programme of work that we adopt. Of course, in this case, last year's subsidiary body 5 appears under a different formulation that indicates only discussion of the three agenda items that were grouped together in that body. We would have no objections to elevating the language or the treatment of those three issues, so that they are addressed in a manner equivalent to the four core issues, but we believe that increased focus would also be advisable, because we cannot deal with all these dissimilar issues in the same manner.

The issues are quite divergent, and we have to recognize that it is not as easy to make progress on one issue as it is on another. They present different challenges – there are different technical aspects that we have to consider, different levels of difficulty and different levels of maturity. The language needs to reflect these nuances if we are to leave no issue behind, to borrow an expression from the negotiations on the Sustainable Development Goals.

Having said that, I believe, as others have noted, that there was a positive development. You made a clear reference in paragraph 4 to fully respecting the rules of procedure and the mandate conferred on the Conference on Disarmament. For those who understand that it is necessary to keep this fully in mind, it is here – it is stated. The way in which you have included the words “to negotiate” in respect of the four core issues provides us with a perception that we are not just having discussions for the sake of

discussions. But of course to negotiate something at the Conference is a serious and challenging undertaking, and we need time to reach convergence and an understanding of the issues and one another's positions that would make it possible to close in on an effective negotiating mandate at some point in the future.

Such a mandate cannot come out of a void, especially after 22 years of virtual paralysis, not of work in this body but in terms of treaty-making. It is not easy to jump into a negotiating mandate overnight. These issues are extremely complex, and we must also remain mindful of the evolving international environment. We cannot work in a void or ignore reality outside this chamber.

We are willing, then, to have those discussions, but we need to adopt something; otherwise, no work will emerge out of these discussions, and we may be in for another lost year, which would be a pity. For us, it is important to have a text, to be in a position to adopt a decision that allows discussions to go deeper and further than they did last year. If, this time around, there is a degree of formality, all the better, because last year we were not able to agree on convening the subsidiary bodies in formal sessions – all the sessions were informal. In the end, that set before us the difficulty of deciding how to treat the reports of each body and whether or not they had been adopted in the body.

The upshot was that all we accomplished was merely to kick the can down the road, because it raised these complex issues right at the last session. In the end, we managed to adopt four of the five reports, which was a great success, given the circumstances. They were capped by a technical report of the Conference to the General Assembly, so we did not really lose the body of work that we had done, and I believe that we ended on a positive note.

My delegation has no objections. From the beginning, we were willing to concur with the need to have an entry point for discussing matters of membership and working methods. We thought it made more sense to do so under a single coordinator or a single track, but we have nothing against splitting it into two. This is a manner that, as one delegation has described it, is an entry point or an element to allow us to discuss certain sensitive issues – relating to the recognition of Governments – that have been raised this morning and in other meetings in 2019. This is extremely sensitive but also extremely important, and the comment I would make at this point is that, for such a discussion, we will also need adequate technical advice.

Through you, I would suggest that if we are going to pursue this discussion in any structured form, we should perhaps request the presence of the Secretary-General of the Conference during the course of the session or a representative in a position to provide us with some technical advice on how to deal with the challenges that we have ahead of us, which, as is quite clear to my delegation, will not go away.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Brazil for his statement and now recognize the representative of China.

Mr. Wang Lanzhu (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation would like to commend the President on his positive efforts. Regarding the new draft programme of work put forward by the President, we are still awaiting instructions from our capital. I would like to share with everyone our delegation's preliminary views on the draft programme of work. China endorses the view expressed by the Group of 21 and the Russian Federation. We believe that the risk of weaponization and of an arms race in outer space is becoming greater with every passing day. The international community must make a common effort to negotiate a legally binding international treaty to prevent the risks of weaponization and an arms race in outer space and to ensure lasting peace and tranquillity in outer space.

The President: I thank the representative of China for his statement. Now I would like to give the floor to the representative of Cuba.

Mr. Delgado Sánchez (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, yesterday, in the informal meeting on the agenda, we made some preliminary remarks that we would like to reiterate today in the plenary. Cuba would definitely prefer that paragraphs 5 (a), 5 (b), 5 (c) and 5 (d) directly reference the need to reach binding treaties on the matters mentioned. We

understand, however, that the formula that you have proposed would give us a negotiating mandate that would allow us to start negotiating a treaty without predetermining or prejudging the outcome or the time it takes us to do so.

In addition, we would like to express our concern about the wording of paragraph 5 (b), which seems to distance us a little further from consensus than the previous version of the draft programme of work. With regard to paragraphs 5 (f) and 5 (g), our delegation has lingering doubts, which have not been addressed, as to the idea of a coordinator. We are concerned about having a coordinator when there is no clarity as to the role of the coordinator, what meetings the coordinator would convene and how the coordinator might convene them. Cuba is flexible on the issue of working methods, but we see an important point in what the Russian delegation has said about the need to focus on the substantive items of the agenda, because, in our view, the problems of this Conference do not lie in the rules of procedure, but in the political will of the States gathered here.

The most recent version of the rules of procedure in my possession dates back to 2003. We revised the rules then, and I do not believe that we have done anything since to justify revising them again, but we are certainly open to a discussion on the topic. As I mentioned, we still do not understand the idea of having two coordinators, whereby the first coordinator would have to answer a yes or no question, namely: "Is there consensus with regard to expanding the membership, yes or no?" If the answer is no, the coordinator will have completed his or her mandate in the blink of an eye. If the answer is yes, then the working methods will have to be revised, which we see as falling within the scope of paragraph 5 (g).

The most important aspect missing from this draft programme of work, and something that the Republic of Cuba considers essential, is a clear schedule of meetings that would help us to maintain balance in our discussions. In other words, a timetable that could tell us that we will be addressing these issues, either in ad hoc working groups or in subsidiary bodies, we will spend a week and half on this item, another week and half on that item, and so on. That would help us to understand that we have a balanced structure in which we can address every item. But, in terms of procedure, we wish to reiterate that, in our view, the problem of the Conference is undoubtedly a political one, not a procedural one. In any event, we should maintain the right balance and we will undoubtedly need greater clarification on these points to be able to consider them.

The President: I thank the representative of Cuba and would now like to give the floor to the Ambassador of Argentina.

Mr. Foradori (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, I believe that the representative of Brazil has, to some extent, outlined the position of Argentina with regard to the programme of work. Nonetheless, I wish to emphasize the importance of paragraph 5 to Argentina and the region as signatories to the Treaty of Tlatelolco. We note with regret that no agreement was reached in 2018 on this issue within the framework of subsidiary body 4.

With regard to paragraphs 5 (f) and 5 (g), not only do we agree, but, with particular regard to paragraph 5 (g), in informal conversations with various colleagues and delegates in May and June 2018, we shared the concern expressed, because we believe that it is precisely the potential amendment of the working methods that may help in depoliticizing the Conference. This may seem paradoxical, but I believe it to be the case, because we have seen the same difficulties crop up in 2018 and 2019, and I think that something is obviously not working as it should, as observed recently by the representative of Cuba.

These rules of procedure have been in place for several years now and I believe that, if we take a good look at the problems that arise in the course of our proceedings, we will see that there are difficulties. It is time to analyse in some depth the possibility of amending our working methods. I believe that this should be done in parallel to our consideration of issues of substance, because it would leave the Conference in a much better position to make progress on all substantive matters.

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

Mr. Hwang (France) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, thank you for giving us the opportunity once again to attempt to achieve progress on the programme of work, primarily on the basis of document CD/WP.618/Rev.2, which you distributed earlier this week. I had the opportunity to speak at some length on the subject yesterday, but I wish to take the floor again to express, in particular, my interest in the statement made by my colleague from Brazil. My delegation found itself on the same wavelength in many respects, for instance on a point of importance for my country, namely that our work should be fully in tune with the current strategic situation and the challenges presented by the security environment and its rapid evolution.

I also agree with him that the four issues on the table have reached different levels of maturity. While we believe, as I said yesterday, that we must maintain a balanced approach to the four issues, the fact is that they have not reached the same level of maturity. This is particularly true of issue 5, which is reflected in paragraph 5 (b) of the document and which should prompt us to negotiate without delay a legally binding instrument, the treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other explosive devices. All the work conducted previously in various contexts and the discussion held on Tuesday are enlightening on this point, and support our view that we can and should commence negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty. The manner in which you formulated the mandate in your draft programme of work is acceptable to us. We would have liked something a little stronger and more ambitious, but I believe that this will enable us to address the issue in an appropriate manner.

With regard to the issue of enlargement and working methods, as I said yesterday, my delegation has no objection to the proposal that the Conference should address these issues during the current year with one or two coordinators. Both may be addressed through a procedure at the same level as the others or at another level. We are also flexible in that regard. I believe, nonetheless, that we genuinely need to undertake more detailed work on both issues this year.

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

Ms. Flores Liera (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, first of all, we would like to thank you for presenting this revised draft programme of work and for the work that you have carried out since assuming the presidency. You have presented what every delegation always expects from the first presidency of the year, a programme of work, but we also take note of your hard work, your involvement, the consultations held and the constant revisions that you have made in order to accommodate the delegations' various views. We greatly appreciate your work and believe that it is a step in the right direction.

My delegation had the opportunity to make some remarks in the informal meetings and some of our concerns have been mentioned this morning, so I shall focus solely on the mandate set out in paragraph 5. We acknowledge your proposals on negotiating with a view to reaching agreement in accordance with the mandate of the Conference. We believe that this will help us all in our understanding of the work that we should be taking forward.

We do have some doubts in relation to the "matters discussed within the framework" of the subsidiary bodies, "building on the progress made". In this regard, I believe that the representative of Brazil was clear. Why does this wording leave us so uncertain? Because it does reflect all the discussions held, we do not know what "matters discussed" means, too many things were discussed, no formal records were kept, no reports were adopted, all of which raises questions about what we are actually going to discuss in the framework of these paragraphs.

I would prefer to leave this concern on the backburner, however, because I believe that we can keep making progress towards wording that will allow us to carry our work forward on the basis of this draft programme. Perhaps paragraph 6, which states that all future discussions and negotiations shall take into consideration past, present and future proposals, is the appropriate place for taking into consideration the views expressed by delegations in the subsidiary bodies. If we want to reach a programme that is comprehensive and balanced and that assures us that all issues will be discussed, we can continue to work on the basis of the programme that you have presented.

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

Mr. Beerwerth (Germany): Mr. President, at the outset, let me also thank you for your tireless efforts to help us to come to an agreement on our programme of work for 2019. We treasure and value the many consultations you have held, and, as my Mexican colleague has just said, I entirely agree that it is the most important task of the first presidency of the year to find a way to get us on to the right track here in the Conference on Disarmament, to lead us back into negotiation mode, which we have not been in for so many years.

I would like to focus on two aspects of your revised draft with which we do not have any fundamental problems. The first is paragraph 5 (b). Like France, we entirely agree that some issues are much riper for negotiation than others, and the issue under 5 (b) certainly is among those that need urgent attention. The second aspect I would like to touch upon is the proposal to have one or two coordinators to discuss both working methods and membership of this body. We are very open to a discussion on that, and in view of what we experienced not just last year but also in many previous years, it seems apt and proper to have a discussion on that, an open-ended discussion that does not prejudice any outcome. We would be very open to such a discussion.

The President: I thank the Ambassador for Germany for his statement and now recognize the Ambassador of Japan.

Mr. Takamizawa (Japan): I thank you, Mr. President, and thank you for your hard work and for bringing us here. I would like to echo many colleagues on the importance of working together and to highlight just two points. First, as the Ambassador of Brazil mentioned, I think formality needs to be added to what we did in the past. If subsidiary bodies are established, they should work in a formal context, so that the outcome will have significant added value. The second point is that working with agility is very important, so, although I really appreciate the hard work that has been done, the first presidency is almost over, and other issues need to be discussed, so that we can make an early start on our substantive work and the issues that we are facing.

In that sense, the spirit of agility and cooperation and getting off to an early start are of utmost importance. Japan is quite flexible in that regard and can agree to a programme of work that can move us forward. In sum, I simply highlight the importance of an early start.

The President: I thank the Ambassador for Japan for his statement. Would any other delegation like to take the floor? That does not seem to be the case.

Distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen, I wish to thank you all for your comments and proposals on this second revised draft programme of work and the previous iterations of this document. As I mentioned when presenting the first draft of the programme of work in my capacity as the first President of the 2019 session of the Conference on Disarmament, our intention, in accordance with rules 28 and 29 of the Conference's rules of procedure, was to be ambitious in our attempt to lay the foundation of our work for the whole year. I would have been remiss had I not attempted to present a balanced and comprehensive draft that, while perhaps unattainable in its entirety, aimed at being representative of the diversity of interests, priorities and positions in this room. Through our valuable exchanges and with helpful suggestions from many of you, I have presented revisions that were underpinned by a need to be more realistic at this juncture. But as you know – and notwithstanding efforts towards greater pragmatism – the devil is in the details. Bridging the diverging views of many years still appears to be elusive at this time.

As one delegation put it yesterday, the pace of our exchanges on the various drafts has been quite dynamic. I believe that it is desirable to allow all delegations and their capitals more time to ponder the content and merits of proposals made thus far and how to take them forward. In this respect, and given that this is the last plenary meeting under my presidency, I will leave the current draft programme of work on the table, underscoring how open Ukraine is to further consultations with all interested member States. In view, however, of our recent deliberations in the Conference and informal discussions, at this

stage, as I mentioned yesterday, accommodating all prevailing views in one programme of work is proving to be extremely complicated, perhaps even unrealistic. Given these circumstances, I would posit that perhaps even less ambitious and smaller practical steps and initiatives in terms of the work of this Conference during its 2019 session could be considered.

Excellencies, dear colleagues, let me conclude by thanking you, my team, the Conference secretariat and the interpreters for your support, cooperation and constructive engagement throughout Ukraine's presidency. I would also like to take this opportunity to wish the next Conference President, Ambassador Aidan Liddle of the United Kingdom, every success in his future endeavours. I look forward to continuing to work closely with you.

The next plenary meeting will take place on Tuesday, 19 February, at 10 a.m., under the presidency of Ambassador Liddle. Let me also remind you of the reception that we will be hosting from 1 to 2.30 p.m. today just outside this chamber to mark the end of our presidency. The Ambassador of the United Kingdom has requested the floor.

Mr. Liddle (United Kingdom): Thank you very much, Mr. President, and thank you for your kind, good wishes, which I believe will be very valuable and sorely needed. Let me first pay tribute to your tireless efforts over the last four weeks. If we have not reached consensus on a draft programme of work, it is not because of any lack of sincerity, creativity or energy on the part of you or your team. I also want to thank you for the consultative and open way in which you have conducted your presidency and for the close collaboration that our two delegations in particular have enjoyed.

As you said, I have the honour of assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament on Monday. As I said at the beginning of this session, I am ready to pick up the baton which you will pass to me. I have listened carefully to the debate over the last four weeks. I agree with you that they have been very valuable exchanges. You have also briefed me on the consultations that you have had, and I have also had the benefit of the advice and insights and views of many other delegations bilaterally over the last few days and weeks. I have reached the same conclusion that you have: namely, that, while I think everyone agrees this is a good basis for further work, consensus is difficult, if not impossible, to achieve on a programme of work that meets all of the requirements of every delegation in this chamber. I have, however, heard clearly that there is a will to build on the good work that we did in this Conference last year and to resume our substantive work as quickly as possible.

With that in mind, I intend to continue to consult delegations to see whether there might be a route to consensus on a programme of work building on the excellent work that you have done. But, as you suggest, we must also consider whether there is another way of resuming our substantive work while those discussions take place. I therefore intend to consult further in the coming days on the way ahead on that basis. I remain, of course, at the disposal of any delegation that wishes to offer its views bilaterally. I will offer some preliminary ideas on the way forward at our next plenary session on Tuesday morning and I will look forward to hearing your reactions then and to having your ideas on how we can move the work of this Conference forward.

I very much look forward to continue to work with you, Mr. President, and indeed with every delegation in this room, as we seek to find a way forward. Thank you.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of the United Kingdom for his statement and for his kind words. If there are no requests for the floor, I would simply mention that I am looking forward to meeting you during the reception starting at 1 p.m. The meeting is adjourned.

The meeting rose at 11.50 a.m.