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# Conference on Disarmament

English

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

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva on Tuesday, 19 February 2019, at 10.10 a.m.

*President:* Mr. Aidan Liddle..... (United Kingdom)

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**The President:** Good morning, everyone. I call to order the 1483rd plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, dear colleagues, it is an honour for the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to assume the presidency of this Conference. I would like to begin by thanking and congratulating, once again, my distinguished predecessor, Ambassador Klymenko of Ukraine, and his delegation for their excellent efforts to achieve consensus on a programme of work and for the exemplary way in which he presided over the work of this Conference. My thanks and congratulations again.

As I noted in my remarks at the opening meeting of this year's session, 2019 marks the centenary of the establishment of the League of Nations and the fortieth anniversary of the Conference. These anniversaries give us an opportunity to reflect on the past and future of disarmament diplomacy in Geneva. In connection with the high-level segment of this Conference, which will take place next week, the delegation of the United Kingdom has been working with United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs and the library and archives of the United Nations Office at Geneva to put together a special exhibition in the atrium outside this chamber, looking back at some of the achievements of those last hundred years. If I may be permitted a spoiler, it has not all been plain sailing. I warmly invite you all to a reception to launch the exhibition at 1 p.m. on the Tuesday of high-level week, 26 February, in the presence of the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Møller.

I would also like to let you know that we have been involved in the planning of two special discussion events on the history and future of disarmament diplomacy in Geneva, which may be of interest to delegations. The first, in collaboration with the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, will take place at 1 p.m. on the Wednesday of high-level week, 27 February, in room VII. The second, which forms part of the series of library talks organized by the library of the United Nations at Geneva, will take place at 12.30 p.m. on Tuesday, 5 March.

Dear colleagues, I would now like to share with you some ideas for how we might proceed with our work over the coming four weeks.

As I said on Friday, in the last meeting of the Ukrainian presidency, I intend to continue to consult delegations to see whether there might be a way to finding consensus on a programme of work. I am under no illusions; there is a reason why this has proved elusive for more than 20 years, and the debate on the drafts presented by the Ukrainian presidency has shown that it is likely to remain so. But I have heard clearly the desire among delegations to build on the substantive and valuable work we did in this Conference last year. To do that, we must agree a way of structuring our work.

Today, I should like to outline some proposals for how we might do that. It seems to me that the best way to proceed this year would be to set up new subsidiary bodies as a vehicle for continuing and deepening the discussions we had last year. I propose that the Conference should create four such bodies, one for each of our core issues: nuclear disarmament, fissile material, the prevention of an arms race in outer space and negative security assurances. Those bodies would be allocated 10 meetings, an increase from 7 last year. Their mandates should explicitly draw on the possible ways forward identified in the reports of the 2018 subsidiary bodies, where they were agreed, in order to move the conversation on from last year.

The fact that four out of the five subsidiary bodies set up in 2018 were able to agree reports by consensus was very welcome. But in setting up new bodies this year, we should look again at the reporting requirements. I should welcome the views of delegations on how they might be improved. I understand the need to identify consensus on commonalities and recommendations, where possible. But the value of last year's exercise was not just in the achievement of consensus reports but also in the rich discussions that were held on the technical and political challenges we face. We should consider how the nuance of discussions can be best captured. The idea of introducing a formal element to the work of the new subsidiary bodies might be a way of doing this.

Alongside the four subsidiary bodies, I propose appointing two special coordinators. The first would be tasked with examining emerging issues and new technologies and how they impact on the agenda of this Conference, building on the discussions held in subsidiary body 5 last year. It seems to me that these questions are better discussed in a more agile and flexible way than is possible in a subsidiary body.

The second special coordinator would be tasked with examining the question of the working methods and membership of this Conference. Many delegations have expressed the view that this would be a valuable exercise and one that is worthwhile from time to time in any institution or organization. I am also aware that others are cautious, fearing that it could distract us from the substance of our agenda. It seems to me that this discussion has already begun, and mandating a special coordinator to channel and coordinate it would ensure that we use our time in the plenary meetings and the meetings of the subsidiary bodies to focus on substantive issues. To ensure that this would be a neutral and open process, I propose entrusting the mandate not to an individual but to a small group of colleagues drawn from across the regional groups, who would consult widely and report on their work, with any recommendations, to the Conference. We should bear in mind, of course, that action could only be taken on any recommendations by consensus of the whole Conference.

Dear colleagues, in a moment I will open the floor to any delegation that wishes to make a statement on these proposals or any other matter it deems pertinent to the work of the Conference in our formal session. I then intend to move to an informal setting to allow delegations the opportunity to give their preliminary reactions to the ideas I have sketched out.

After listening to your comments, whether in the Chamber today or bilaterally or in the regional group coordination meetings tomorrow, I intend to circulate a draft decision tomorrow afternoon through the secretariat in order to facilitate your consultations with your capitals. I would then suggest that we meet again to discuss the proposal at a plenary session on the morning of Thursday, 28 February, following the high-level segment. I hope this will be ample time to formulate your views and additional suggestions and that we can make progress reasonably quickly thereafter. I look forward to working with you all to move our work ahead this year. We can after all only proceed together.

I will now turn to the list of speakers who would like to speak in our formal setting. The first on my list is the Ambassador of Morocco. Sir, you have the floor.

**Mr. Zniber** (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, as I am taking the floor for the first time under your presidency, I would like to express our satisfaction at seeing you at the helm of this Conference. Knowing your determination and dynamism, I am sure you will carry out your work to the satisfaction of all. You can count on my delegation's cooperation and firm support. I would also like to pay a tribute to your predecessor, Ambassador Klymenko of Ukraine, for the manner in which he guided our debates throughout his presidency, and for his efforts towards adoption of a programme of work with the consent of all Member States.

There is no doubt that every country represented in this forum has its own priorities and its own concerns. Nevertheless, based on the mandate we have been given, we must put aside our immediate, narrow interests and rise above any piecemeal approach in order to arrive at a programme of work in accordance with the agenda we adopted at the start of this session. In that regard, Mr. President, allow me to make a few comments on how best to guide us towards such an agreement.

In our view, a balanced and comprehensive programme of work is the key to allowing the Conference to move forward and to play its full role as – and it bears repeating – the international community's sole permanent multilateral disarmament negotiating forum. The programme should strike a balance between, on the one hand, the aspirations expressed, and, on the other, the current realities and the negotiating mandate we have been given. Our main guiding principle, we believe, should be continued security for all. The Conference is not a talking shop, nor is it a synonym for lethargy, inaction and impasse. We are ambassadors and diplomats, and we must demonstrate high-mindedness and great wisdom; we must also strive to convince our own governments that it is in the interests of all to

move forward, for these are simply basic issues that have to do with the maintenance of international peace and security.

Mr. President, last year, under the leadership of the five coordinators, and in the framework of the five subsidiary bodies established, as we are all aware, pursuant to the decisions contained in documents CD/2119 and CD/2126, the Conference embarked on important substantive discussions on all agenda items, and most notably the four core issues. Apart from some differences, these discussions, as I am sure all members of the Conference would agree, have made a vital and worthwhile contribution that we must build on if we are to move forward during the current session, consolidate our cooperation, reach a deeper understanding of each other's concerns and priorities, dispel our fears and spark a new dynamic leading to consensus on a programme of work. We are very much aware that everyone has his or her own priorities in terms of the topics to be considered. However, that ought not to stop us from coming up with a work programme that reflects a political will to pursue multilateral disarmament, regardless of the negotiations such a programme might subsequently require on each of the topics or themes it contained.

Should any additional discussions prove necessary, we would encourage you, Mr. President, following your own suggestion this morning, to set up the subsidiary working bodies as soon as possible, making the necessary procedural adjustments to ensure their proper functioning and facilitate the adoption of their reports. In the same context, Morocco shares the view expressed during the consideration of the draft programme of work submitted by your predecessor regarding the importance of setting up coordinating bodies to look into the question of the expansion of the Conference and the review of its working methods, in a comprehensive, inclusive and transparent manner, again in line with the ideas you put forward just now.

I cannot conclude without reiterating the commitment of the Kingdom of Morocco to fully support all United Nations efforts to reverse the arms race and strengthen the effectiveness of the agreements on disarmament and arms limitation, to revitalize the multilateral disarmament mechanisms and support action by the international community to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons and eliminate weapons of mass destruction. In that regard, my country believes that the Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament can be a catalyst for renewed dynamism in the Conference, revitalization of its work and fulfilment of its mandate, which has become a matter of urgency given the uncertain international geopolitical situation, marked as it is by a resurgence of tension, the erosion of the international security architecture and declining compliance with arms control and disarmament standards. We hope that the spirit of dialogue that prevails and the general concern that inspires us all will help to break the deadlock and enable us to find a way out that is acceptable to all. We have no choice but to move forward in this Conference. Otherwise, and if we continue to ignore our mandate, it will be only too easy to understand the attitude of those who seek other outcomes, and other forums in which to discuss the issues for which this body is responsible.

**The President:** I thank the Ambassador of Morocco for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Ukraine.

**Mr. Klymenko (Ukraine):** I thank you, Mr. President. Since this is my first time taking the floor under your presidency, I would like to start by extending my warmest congratulations to you on the assumption of your important duties and wishing you every success in your very important endeavour. Ukraine had the pleasure of enjoying excellent cooperation with you during our tenure as the first presidency of this year's Conference on Disarmament session. Please be assured of my delegation's full support and cooperation with you to advance the objectives of the Conference.

The Ukrainian delegation commends the presidency of the United Kingdom for outlining today this forward-looking and timely initiative. We believe this smaller yet more pragmatic and result-oriented step is an appropriate approach, given that the programme of work is somewhat unattainable at this stage, as evident from the outcome of our previous deliberations. Recognizing that time is of the essence, underscoring the need to continue our joint efforts aimed at paving the way to a breakthrough in the Conference, and acknowledging the wide support among member States, including Ukraine, for enhancing,

capitalizing and building upon all the efforts made within the five subsidiary bodies during last year's Conference session, my delegation is looking forward to the relevant draft decision to be circulated tomorrow by the presidency of the United Kingdom and is willing to work closely with you, Mr. President, to bring it to fruition.

**The President:** I thank the Ambassador of Ukraine for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. The next on my list is the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

**Mr. Azarsa** (Islamic Republic of Iran): Today is the beginning of the Conference on Disarmament's second presidency in 2019. The presidency, which rotates in alphabetical order, is a good opportunity, provided under the Conference's rules of procedure, for each and every Conference member to function as the body's presiding officer. We should all appreciate the high value of this rule, which is central to the overall functioning of the Conference. That said, my delegation would like to wish you success in discharging your responsibility during your tenure. I think the United Kingdom, as a possessor of nuclear weapons, has a far greater responsibility to coordinate the Conference's deliberations in a way that all legitimate concerns of member States are duly addressed.

We acknowledge that the United Kingdom has already engaged with Conference members to seek their views on preparations for the programme of work and encourage it to continue doing so. My delegation assures you of its full cooperation in furtherance of the Conference's mandate. Any programme of work must necessarily be balanced and comprehensive, with a negotiating mandate for each of the Conference's four core agenda items: that is, nuclear disarmament, the prevention of an arms race in outer space, negative security assurances and a fissile material cut-off treaty. Any initiative that lacked such balance and comprehensiveness could hardly serve the Conference's critical goal of total nuclear disarmament. We need to fully respect the Conference's rules of procedure in the meantime. After all, the long deadlock in the Conference is not caused by any real or perceived deficiency in the Conference's rules of procedure or its methods of work. We should not complicate the situation by mixing matters of substance with matters of procedure.

The causes of the stalemate in the Conference are clear to us all, and we should address them by meaningful engagement and negotiations for drafting relevant treaties. We note the willingness to build upon the work already done by the subsidiary bodies established last year. That is an option we are entertaining as well. We would not welcome proposals that are destined to reduce the Conference to a platform for divisive and polarizing discourse. We need to avoid further diverting the Conference from its main work.

**The President:** I thank the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. Next, I would like to give the floor to the Ambassador of Sri Lanka.

**Mr. Azeez** (Sri Lanka): Thank you, Mr. President, and good morning to everybody. On behalf of the delegation of Sri Lanka, let me express our sincere best wishes on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament today. We would like to assure you, and through you, other delegations present here, that Sri Lanka remains ready and willing to support all efforts towards generating and achieving consensus within the Conference. We need to seriously attempt to negotiate a programme of work and find a way forward that could facilitate or create momentum for work on all core areas or issues.

I also take this opportunity to thank Ambassador Klymenko for his efforts as the first President of the year's session. In hindsight, we could, collectively, have done more, building on the positive momentum of the consensual outcome achieved last year, but of course we have a second chance under your leadership if we are forward-looking enough.

Mr. President, almost every delegation that has addressed the Conference in the past one and a half months has highlighted the urgency and importance of making progress towards negotiating a programme of work and getting down to the actual task: addressing the serious challenges that lie ahead, some of which have persisted for far too long and some of which are new and emerging. We can no longer afford to continue with a divisive approach.

We need to have a clear focus. It is important, of course, that the Conference should be representative enough of the whole range of views and perspectives that are out there on critical issues in the disarmament and non-proliferation arena. In this context, we need to have a clear focus and pronounced emphasis on two important aspects as enablers of fresh thinking and initiative.

First, the need for education and training in disarmament and non-proliferation to help address substantive aspects, including new and emerging issues. The lack of opportunity or exposure in the form of training may only contribute to the perpetuation of the current impasse. India, for instance, showed the way forward by hosting the first-ever international security and disarmament seminar recently. I think it is important for other countries to follow suit and execute similar programmes. This is not a demand, but of course it is something that is owed to other members of this body as well as the international community.

Second, it is important to have a gender perspective fully integrated into disarmament and non-proliferation discourse. These two factors, we believe, would help advance fully informed, well-represented and result-oriented negotiations on most if not all critical issues.

Having said all this, let me take the opportunity to appeal to all delegations to take a hard look at the challenges that lie ahead and to consider taking a constructive approach to addressing the challenges by seriously negotiating a programme of work as early as possible. We would like to once again assure you, Mr. President, that Sri Lanka will work closely with you and other delegations to see if, together, we can break the continuing impasse that has marked the Conference for long years now. We wish you well, Mr. President.

**The President:** I thank the Ambassador of Sri Lanka for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. Next, I would like to give the floor to the Ambassador of the Netherlands.

**Mr. Gabriëlse** (Netherlands): From the outset, let me congratulate you, Ambassador Liddle, on your assumption of the presidency and assure you of the full support of my delegation. Let me also take this opportunity to thank the outgoing President, Ambassador Klymenko, and his team for all their efforts to build on the progress achieved last year. We have listened carefully to the outline of your proposal and we look forward to receiving it in writing.

Currently, we are in week 5 of our 24-week annual session, so we believe that, to move the Conference on Disarmament forward in 2019, time is of the essence. Your proposal is compatible with the incremental and pragmatic approach that was advocated by the Netherlands and, as noted in our opening statement, we are flexible on the way we organize our work as long as the substance of the agenda is central to our work.

Listening to the statements made by delegations over the past four weeks and today, we are of the view that there remains a broad, general will within the Conference to continue our discussions on substance while not losing sight of the negotiating mandate of the Conference. We therefore believe that any framework that will allow us to proceed in that manner and that does not harm anyone's security interest should find consensus in the Conference.

**The President:** I thank the Ambassador of the Netherlands for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. Next, I would like to give the floor to the Ambassador of Viet Nam.

**Mr. Duong Chi Dzong** (Viet Nam): Thank you, Mr. President. At the outset, we would like to congratulate you on your assumption of the second presidency this year and assure you of our full support. Mr. President, the Conference on Disarmament should be moved forward.

As we mark the fortieth anniversary of the Conference and the centenary of multilateralism in Geneva, we strongly believe that now is the time for the Conference to have a balanced programme of work, but of course it is very difficult for us to reach

consensus now. Diplomacy has been at work, but under the year's first presidency, held by the Ambassador of Ukraine, we were unable to reach consensus on the draft programme of work. And of course, we would also like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation for the efforts he made in consulting and intensively drafting the programme of work. But we see that great store has been set by the possibility of proceeding to a very substantial discussion of the programme of work.

We welcome what you have just proposed to the plenary: namely, to establish subsidiary bodies for further discussion on the four core issues of the Conference and to appoint coordinators to explore other emerging issues that need to be discussed in the Conference. In the current situation, this is a really appropriate option to help the Conference move forward and, of course, to overcome the protracted lack of a programme of work. It will help us save time and move faster to substantive work.

It is, however, very important for us also to agree on specific mandates for subsidiary bodies and to nominate special coordinators. And we look forward to thoroughly and constructively contributing to the draft decision and hope to see it at an appropriate time that you will propose.

In the spirit of celebrating the centenary of multilateralism in Geneva and the fortieth anniversary of the Conference, we also believe that the high-level segment of the Conference, with the participation of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and other dignitaries from different member States, will deliver a very meaningful message and provide guidance on the way forward for the Conference by helping to enrich commonalities among the members of the Conference.

Mr. President, we would like to conclude by reiterating the strong commitment of our delegation to supporting all efforts and initiatives aimed at promoting the work of the Conference under your presidency and the following presidencies.

**The President:** I thank the Ambassador of Viet Nam for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. The next speaker on my list is the representative of Brazil.

**Mr. Dalcero (Brazil):** Thank you, Mr. President. Let me congratulate you on assuming the rotating presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. Please count on the support of the delegation of Brazil as we seek to collectively lay a solid foundation for the substantive work of this year's session.

As we repeatedly stated during this annual session's first four weeks, Brazil's priority is to build upon the momentum generated last year and deepen our deliberations towards full-fledged disarmament negotiations. We are ready to adopt a programme of work with a strong negotiating mandate but, at the same time, understand the concerns of delegations and underlying divergences that make adopting a programme a difficult prospect at this point in time. The discussions on a programme of work held under the Ukrainian presidency were useful for outlining positions and calibrating our immediate ambitions. If there is a prevailing understanding that a programme of work is not attainable now, Brazil will support alternatives that move our work forward in a consistent manner.

Re-establishing subsidiary bodies on the four core issues with more specific, substance-driven mandates could constitute a solid step forward if framed in the right manner. Furthermore, as we have also stated in previous meetings this year, Brazil supports the discussion on the methods of work and membership of the Conference. As to your proposal, Mr. President, we support one coordinator rather than two for discussions on membership and methods of work. It will be important, however, for the future coordinator or coordinators to regularly consult with delegations and periodically report to the Conference, preferably at the end of each presidency of the 2019 session.

Finally, Mr. President, we must not lose sight of the Conference's primary role in negotiating legally binding international instruments and should explore all options that can bring us closer to fulfilling that role once again. The Brazilian delegation strongly supports you and believes that under your able guidance, we will move forward in this year's session.

**The President:** I thank the representative of Brazil for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. The next on the list of speakers is the representative of Switzerland.

**Mr. Masmеjean** (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, first allow me to congratulate you on your accession to this important office and assure you of our full support. We also wish to express our gratitude to the outgoing presidency, Ukraine, for its unwavering commitment to the adoption of a programme of work.

At its 2018 session, the Conference adopted a new approach in order to move ahead with its work and overcome the obstacles that have long blocked it. It is an approach based on the idea of gradual progress, that is, an analysis of the various matters on the Conference agenda and the emergence of a common approach that in time will enable negotiations to get off the ground. This pragmatic approach has proved generally positive, allowing the Conference for the first time in more than 20 years to reach agreement on substantive points as a result of the adoption of the reports of four of the subsidiary bodies. As some have pointed out in recent weeks, the approach adopted last year is in many ways a return to how the Conference approached its work in the days when it worked properly, when the programme of work was no more than a timetable. It seems important to bear that in mind. As to the work of the Conference this year, we wish to echo what many delegations have said during the past weeks. Now that we have acknowledged the impossibility of adopting a programme of work as we have interpreted it for the past 15 years, it would be wise and timely to revert to the approach agreed upon last year and use that as a basis for our work.

We wish to make the following remarks on the matter. First of all, time is of the essence. It is no simple task to adopt a decision that covers the establishment of subsidiary bodies, their coordinators and their timetables. Furthermore, it is important for the subsidiary bodies to be able to start work early enough in the session to be fully productive. Should we wish to set up the subsidiary bodies once more, it may be a good idea to think about the wording of their mandate. In a step-by-step approach, it is important to make sure we do not repeat the previous year's discussions, and instead keep up the momentum towards negotiations. It is vital to build on the outcome of the work done in 2018 and on other relevant developments. As you have pointed out, it would also be useful to clarify a number of procedural points relating to the subsidiary bodies, notably concerning the adoption of their final reports. We have no set views on a particular procedure for adoption, but we feel it would be best if the various subsidiary bodies all took a similar approach.

The proposal that the Conference, too, review its working methods and its composition seems appropriate to us. We are keeping an open mind on how to deal with these issues, that is, whether to use one or more than one coordinating bodies. We would like to point out that when the Conference worked properly, such matters came under regular, or even constant, review. There is no contradiction in working on the substance and on institutional matters at the same time; on the contrary, the work is complementary. In respect of working methods and the improved and effective functioning of the Conference, to use the terminology of the annual report, several questions certainly deserve further thought, particularly, given how far behind the times the Conference has fallen, the modalities for civil society participation in its work. As to the issue of the membership of the Conference, it has not been thoroughly discussed for 20 years now, though the rules of procedure call for regular consideration of the matter. The launch of a structured review of the issue is therefore long overdue.

In conclusion, Mr. President, we welcome the plan for your presidency that you have presented this morning: it is eminently sensible and you can certainly count on our full support in its implementation.

**The President:** I thank the representative of Switzerland for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of the Republic of Korea.

**Mr. Lee Jang-keun** (Republic of Korea): Mr. President, let me first also congratulate you on your assumption of the second presidency of the Conference on Disarmament for this year. I am confident that, under your able leadership, we will be able to build a meaningful foundation for getting this body back on track and helping it regain its



reputation as the single multilateral disarmament negotiation forum. I would like to assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation in your endeavours. I would also like to thank the outgoing Ukrainian presidency, Ambassador Klymenko and his team, for its hard work in formulating our programme of work. Even though we were not able to reach an agreement, we appreciate your devotion and efforts to accommodate the different views and positions of member States.

As you correctly noted at the plenary meeting last Friday, Mr. President, accommodating differences appears elusive and unrealistic at this time. I believe that we are all frustrated with our failure to come up with a programme of work – the very basic schedule of our activities – for more than thirty years, but more disturbing is the fact that such frustration is leading us neither to renewed determination nor to renewed aspirations. To the contrary, the continued failures are highly likely to lead us to fatigue and lethargy.

Even though I am somewhat reluctant to take the pessimistic view, as we are still at the beginning of this year's session, I cannot help but say that, given the atmosphere in this room over the past few weeks, achieving an agreed programme of work any time soon looks almost impossible. If there had been any such possibility, in my view, it would have been when the Conference was nearing a consensus on this matter, during the adoption of the decision contained in document CD/1864 in 2009.

However, in the current situation, I believe that we would do better, sooner rather than later, to take a practical and realistic approach to moving this body forward while making a parallel effort to adopt a programme of work. In this sense, we thank the presidency of the United Kingdom for offering an alternative practical proposal to establish subsidiary bodies, thereby building on the work of the subsidiary bodies last year. While we look forward to seeing more details in the draft to be circulated tomorrow, in principle, we support the idea, including the appointment of coordinators for emerging issues and working methods and membership.

We also thank the presidency of the United Kingdom for planning various side events during its term to commemorate the hundredth anniversary of the League of Nations and the fortieth anniversary of the Conference. My delegation is looking forward to participating in these events.

**The President:** I thank the Ambassador of the Republic of Korea for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. The next on my list is the representative of Mexico.

**Mr. Heredia Acosta (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*):** Thank you. As this is the first time that I have taken the floor during your presidency, please allow me to congratulate you and to express my delegation's willingness to assist you in your important and complex task of guiding us beyond the paralysis that this august body has faced for the past 23 years.

Mr. President, last week saw the conclusion of the Ukrainian presidency, during which Ambassador Klymenko skilfully engaged in substantive efforts to adopt a simple and direct programme of work that would have set the Conference on Disarmament on the path to substantive negotiations. The text that he presented had the advantage of showing that a programme of work should not be a complicated document, nor contain excessive detail. My delegation welcomes your interest in maintaining this approach in the work to adopt the programme of work presented by the delegation of Ukraine, since presidencies should cooperate and not operate in a vacuum. I hope that this commitment will be supported by specific measures to move forward in negotiating the draft programme of work, with a view to achieving consensus.

However, we note from the information that you have provided that you also propose another route whereby the Conference again would commit itself to subsidiary bodies. These are reassuring for those who are interested in discussions, but they are of concern to my country since – as we confirmed last year and have seen in other similar exercises in previous years – we see them as being too flexible and lacking in commitment, clear objectives and the rigour that would allow us to break the impasse in which this body finds itself. I believe that last month's discussions were clear on that point.

With regard to the proposal to appoint a coordinator for working methods and expansion, my delegation has supported the consideration of these issues in the past and is prepared to do so again, but on the understanding that they are each considered in their own right and are not necessarily linked. We must recognize that expansion has merits of its own, including a dimension of equitable geographical representation that does not necessarily relate to the working methods of this Conference.

Lastly, Mr. President, we take note that tomorrow afternoon you will present a document containing a specific proposal. We will refer that proposal to our Government and we will make specific comments at the next available opportunity. However, I reiterate that the establishment of subsidiary bodies is not the preferred path of the delegation of Mexico.

**The President:** I thank the representative of Mexico for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. The next on my list of speakers is the Ambassador of China.

**Mr. Li Song (China)** (*spoke in Chinese*): Thank you, Mr. President. First of all, I would like on behalf of the Chinese delegation to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency. We would also like to thank the previous President, the Ambassador of Ukraine, for his positive efforts to move the Conference's work ahead. My delegation and I personally will support you in your work, as we supported him.

We have heard some of your initial thoughts about how to advance the Conference's work. The Chinese delegation has on numerous occasions set out our position and put forth initiatives concerning the Conference's programme of work. Our delegation recommends that all parties give serious consideration to establishing subsidiary bodies, as was done last year, to move the Conference ahead in its work. So we agree to take a serious look at this reasoning, and especially to the text that you are going to produce. At this juncture, I would like to say that we hope this year's work will be like last year's, and that we can achieve the same success as last year, for which we must draw all the lessons from last year's experience. In line with the Conference's agenda, that means taking into account the concerns of all parties in a comprehensive and balanced manner and facing the actual international security situation in accordance with the working principle held in high esteem by the Conference, of consensus reached by means of consultation. That principle is important. It calls for the views of all parties, and especially the numerous developing countries, to be fully taken into account.

According to the secretariat's presentation and the arrangements you have made, next week we will have a high-level week. It appears from the information currently available that many countries and many member States will send high-level officials to speak at the Conference during the first half of next week. This in itself fully reflects the importance attached by the international community to the Conference's work and the high expectations that substantive work will begin as soon as possible. I am thus confident that, in the process of advancing the programme of work with all the parties and securing a consensus on arrangements for substantive work this year, you will take full account of the important opinions expressed in the contributions made during the high-level segment. I believe that, on the basis of such efforts, you will surely be successful in bringing the Conference to substantive work. Initiating substantive work is in the interests of the entire membership of the Conference. The Chinese delegation expresses the will to maintain close contacts with all parties and to keep up active communication with you and your team, so as to actively and constructively take part in this important process. Thank you.

**The President:** I thank the Ambassador of China for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. The next on the list of speakers is the representative of Australia.

**Ms. Wood (Australia):** Thank you, Mr. President, and congratulations. I would like to add my thanks to Ukraine. Ambassador Klymenko, the work you did on the programme of work was very necessary work for us, and I think it really helped us to flesh out what was and what was not possible at this time in the Conference on Disarmament.

For Australia, as I have said before, a programme of work can be something very, very simple, and I think my Mexican colleague also made the point that a programme of work does not need to contain excessive detail. What you are proposing, Mr. President, sounds to me very much like a programme of work, whether we are able to call it that or not.

I agree with you completely that the value of what we did in the subsidiary bodies was more about the actual discussion that took place in the room. It was great that we were able to agree on four reports, but the discussion was more important, and this year, if we are going to build on what we did last year, we need to bring more countries into that discussion. And I am hoping – because we had good discussions last year and the year before – that more countries will be encouraged to participate actively in the debates and that we can make them as interactive as possible. I know that my experience from the subsidiary bodies is that where we really learned was where we had interactive discussion and where we were going out of our comfort zones to try to understand the positions of others. And I note that the Chinese Ambassador made the point about listening to each other. I think that is important. That is where we will really start to build towards commonalities.

Ten meetings sounds like quite a lot. I think we had seven last year. But we took longer last year, so I think if we pull our socks up and get on with it, that is feasible. We probably need a little more time to agree on the final report, maybe at least two meetings, and my view is that less is more. I do not like creating really long Conference documents. If we could have a two-page document for each subsidiary body, that would be more efficient and probably more useful.

Your idea about having a bit more formality this year is a very good idea. A couple of the sessions can perhaps be allocated to having countries outline their positions at the start and then to discussions. That might be useful.

The proposal for the special coordinators is a good idea. I particularly like the innovation of having different representatives from regional groups. The more we work across regions, the more likely we are to build understanding and find common ground. I think that the special coordinators are on a different level, so I do not actually see them as taking away from the substantive work on the four core agenda items.

In terms of looking at working methods, we need to think about how the outside world sees this body, if it sees it in any way at all, and I think that Governments expect us to look at how we do our work and to work out whether the Conference is still fit for purpose. One issue that is important in looking at working methods is the issue of diversity in disarmament.

We look forward to seeing your draft decision. Australia is very keen to continue discussions on substance, however we do that – having subsidiary bodies seems a very sensible way.

**The President:** I thank the representative of Australia for her statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. Now I give the floor to the Ambassador of Japan.

**Mr. Takamizawa (Japan):** Thank you, Mr. President, and please allow me to congratulate you on your assumption of the second presidency of the Conference on Disarmament in 2019.

Your proposal seems to be based on very hard work by the Ukrainian presidency and Ambassador Klymenko. I think we have seen a lot of differences and commonalities in the debate. I think that is the basis of your proposal. From that perspective, I would like to comment on some points about your outline.

First, your proposal contains elements of formality, inclusiveness, commonality and added value that we mentioned in previous meetings and that I very much welcome. With regard to the agenda items, it is quite fair and reasonable to deal with the four agenda items on a very equal footing. We have different priorities, but we need to show the utmost flexibility on this issue.

The second point I would like to mention is the sense of urgency. I just listened carefully to what you said, but what I was hoping is that we would reach consensus this week, so that we can use the high-level segment much more constructively. According to your plan, however, there seems to be no urgency to reach consensus. But we need to expedite our proceedings to begin substantive work as soon as possible. And from that perspective, I really want to raise an important issue. With regard to decisions made last year, we had trouble appointing or finding a coordinator and agreeing on the schedule. It took several weeks for us to have a concrete plan. It is therefore reasonable to include the coordinator and schedule in one decision package this year, and I hope all delegations will find it acceptable. To take a value-added approach, I think it is very important, with regard to the coordinator, to consider continuity and professionalism from last year's discussions.

Ten meetings is a lot, and it would be very difficult for delegations, including ours, to participate in all of them. Inclusivity and sharing information are very important: good records of the discussions or summaries through the meetings of the six Presidents of the 2019 session or regional meetings should be shared well in advance and in an easy-to-understand manner.

Finally, formality is very important, and I hope that the formal discussions will be followed by very substantive informal discussions. I also think that, by proceeding in that way, we can have a really inclusive discussion in the Conference.

**The President:** I thank the Ambassador of Japan for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I also note your concern about urgency, which I share. I am trying to strike a balance between giving enough time for delegations to consider the proposals and hoping that we can move ahead as quickly as possible. Of course, if delegations wish to move ahead more quickly, then that will be what we will do.

I would now like to give the floor to the Ambassador of France.

**Mr. Hwang** (France) (*spoke in French*): First of all, Mr. President, my delegation would like to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of our Conference, and would like once again to thank the Ukrainian presidency for the way in which it guided our work at the start of the year. We wish you every success. We know that we are in excellent hands and that your professionalism and commitment will enable us to move forward together.

Mr. President, we appreciate and welcome your realism and pragmatism. Like you, I think, and like the distinguished Ambassador of Japan, I feel a sense of urgency: it seems to me that it is high time – it is already 19 February – to agree on the way forward and to start work on substance. Agreeing on a balanced programme of work in the short term is a difficult task, it is true, but we must not lose sight of that important goal. We therefore believe, like you and like other delegations, that nothing prevents us from working in parallel in 2019 using last year's formula. In the view of my delegation, it was successful.

As I have said on several occasions, continuing the work of the four subsidiary bodies on the four substantive topics will allow us to continue to exchange information, to move towards a common understanding of the challenges, and in particular to build up confidence, which we always need. On the proposal for including special coordinators, we are naturally open and flexible. We have no preconceptions on the matter and I think the two topics that you mentioned are relevant. They have been discussed several times and we recognize that it is important to some delegations to move ahead on this matter. We shall look with great interest at the proposal you will be putting before us at the end of the week, and I would just like to say that my delegation will support you in whatever way is needed to help you move forward.

**The President:** I thank the Ambassador of France for his statement and the kind words addressed to the Chair. The next on the list of speakers is the representative of Belgium.

**Mr. Dhaene** (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, I too would like to congratulate you on your appointment as President of this Conference and assure you of the full support of my delegation. I also wish to thank the outgoing President, Ambassador Klymenko, for his much appreciated efforts to come up with a programme of work. Like

you, we believe that it does not seem a very realistic prospect at this stage. In that context, we welcome the proposals that you have just submitted to us, on organizing our work by setting up four subsidiary groups to look at the four substantive topics on the Conference agenda and appointing special coordinators to address emerging issues and the questions of the working methods and the expansion of the Conference. As others have said before me, it is the most pragmatic approach that will enable us to launch substantive discussions. This approach therefore has the support in principle of my delegation and we look forward to receiving your written proposals and discussing them in greater depth. We welcome the fact that you have already made such progress with your proposals since assuming the presidency. It is important to move quickly, as other delegations have also emphasized.

**The President:** I thank the representative of Belgium for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of the United States of America.

**Mr. Wood** (United States of America): Mr. President, let me first congratulate you on assuming the Conference on Disarmament presidency and let me assure you of my delegation's full support as you go about conducting your duties. Let me also congratulate the Ukrainian delegation for its hard work before and during its presidency to develop a programme of work.

Mr. President, thank you for sharing your ideas on a way forward. Like others, I look forward to seeing your draft decision on paper. I would just make a couple of points. One, I am certainly appreciative that you have taken from the Ukrainian delegation's proposed programme of work the idea of appointing a coordinator or coordinators to discuss the issues of enlargement and working methods. My delegation thinks those two elements are critical to any programme of work that goes forward. I do agree with our Mexican colleague that, frankly, enlargement and working methods are two separate issues and thus should be dealt with, in our view, by separate coordinators. But, again, I want to thank you for sharing your ideas with us this morning and I look forward to further conversations about your draft decision, once you put it forward.

**The President:** I thank the Ambassador of the United States for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, if he is ready. You would prefer not to. In that case, the next on the list of speakers is the representative of Belarus.

**Mr. Nikolaichik** (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): First of all, I would like to thank the delegation of Ukraine for its efforts in preparing the draft programme of work and its support for recognizing the need to revitalize the work of the Conference on Disarmament that has accompanied us over the past few years. Belarus is ready for constructive work in order to return the Conference to substantive discussion of the agenda items. You can count on our delegation's support for your efforts.

As the coordinator of subsidiary body 5 during the 2018 session, Belarus is prepared to continue its constructive involvement in considering, among other issues, new challenges and threats, and to use the lessons learned to continue with substantive work. We await your proposals in the form of a draft decision to examine and discuss them in more detail.

**The President:** I thank the representative of Belarus for this statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Egypt.

**Mr. Elsayed** (Egypt): Thank you, Mr. President, and at the outset my delegation would like to congratulate you on assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and to pay tribute to the outgoing president, the Ambassador of Ukraine, and thank him and his team for all their efforts during their tenure.

Mr. President, my delegation listened very carefully to the proposal you outlined today, and we look forward to receiving it in writing to study it and provide you with our remarks. We appreciate the general ideas presented in your proposal. They are in line with Egypt's views on the way forward for the work of the Conference, as we believe that building on the work of previous years is essential if the Conference is to make progress.

Moreover, we value your early engagement with delegations bilaterally and with regional groups and look forward to your meeting with the Group of 21. Mr. President, I would like to assure you of my delegation's full support. We look forward to working with you and all other delegations to start our substantive work.

**The President:** I thank the representative of Egypt for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of India.

**Mr. Sharma** (India): Mr. President, my delegation would like to congratulate you on the assumption of the second presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. I would also put on record our sincere appreciation for the efforts undertaken by Ambassador Klymenko towards achieving an agreement on a programme of work.

We have heard with interest your proposals and look forward to receiving them in writing. While we would have preferred to have an agreed programme of work, we understand the difficulties in achieving one, due to the divergent positions on some issues of member States. Subsidiary bodies are not a substitute for an agreed programme of work but can certainly contribute to achieving our mandate for negotiating legally binding agreements through substantive work. My delegation participated actively in the work of the subsidiary bodies last year and shall continue to do so this year to support your efforts to build on the important work carried out last year.

I would like to thank the Ambassador of Sri Lanka for his ideas, including the one on the importance of disarmament education. He cited the example of the annual disarmament fellowship, launched by India this year. This is a three-week fellowship programme covering the whole gamut of disarmament and international security issues, with field visits to several nuclear and space facilities. Representatives from 27 Conference member countries participated in the fellowship programme this year, including one delegate from the Conference itself, and we have received excellent feedback about the programme. We shall continue to offer it in the years to come.

In concluding, Mr. President, I would like to assure you of the full cooperation and support of my delegation as you lead this august body for the next four weeks.

**The President:** I thank the Ambassador of India for his statement and for his kind words addressed to the Chair. One of the participants in the fellowship programme was from the United Kingdom, and I, too, heard very good feedback from that participant. Next on the list of speakers is the Ambassador of Germany.

**Mr. Beerwerth** (Germany): Thank you, Mr. President. At the outset, let me welcome you to the Chair and pledge my delegation's full support for your presidency over the next four weeks. Like many others, I would also like to pay tribute to the previous President, Ambassador Klymenko from Ukraine. I agree entirely that it was necessary and important that you took the course you took. We now have a very clear sense of what is possible and what is evidently not possible in the Conference on Disarmament.

Like many other delegations, Mr. President, my delegation would have liked to agree on, say, a formal programme of work in the traditional sense with a negotiating mandate, but since obviously that has not been possible, we entirely and fully support the approach you sketched out at the beginning of the meeting, and we are very much looking forward to studying the document that you will be circulating, as you said, later tomorrow. As a matter of fact, whether we call it a formal programme of work or subsidiary bodies, we will be working substantively, and that, in my delegation's view is the important thing, even if we cannot have the very best negotiating mandate.

We look forward, then, to constructive discussions with the aim of reaching a speedy consensus on your way forward. The manner in which your draft decision will be drafted is excellent. Again, let us hope for a speedy consensus. Thank you.

**The President:** I thank the Ambassador of Germany for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. Next on the list of speakers is the representative of Pakistan.

**Mr. Jadoon** (Pakistan): Thank you very much, Mr. President. I join others in congratulating you very warmly on assuming the presidency of the Conference on

Disarmament. We are confident of achieving substantive progress under your very able leadership. You are very well placed to lead us in that direction. We would also like to thank the ambassador of Ukraine for the excellent manner in which he chaired the Conference during the past four weeks and appreciate the significant efforts that he devoted to developing a programme of work.

Mr. President, you can rest assured of my delegation's full support and cooperation. We remain committed to the Conference and its effective functioning and look forward to the resumption of substantive work this year. We thank you for the very clear and succinct outline of your plans as President. We also probably agree with the assessment that you shared regarding the state of play at the start of the meeting. We noted the very interesting side events that you are planning and we look forward to attending all of them.

Our substantive priorities in the Conference have been reiterated on more than one occasion during the past four weeks, so I will not repeat them. The plan that you shared with us was also conveyed to us through the Group of 21 coordinator, Bangladesh, in a very clear and crisp manner. I think you probably made it known to the delegation of Bangladesh during the presidential consultations yesterday. It gave us a bit of a heads-up.

Following your remarks today, we will report back to our capital and, like other delegations, we will wait for the written text to consider it very carefully. We assure you that we will engage with this process very constructively and very positively. Without prejudice to the eventual instructions we get from Islamabad, I just wanted to share some initial feedback with you.

First of all, we value the holding of informal discussions in any framework in the Conference that can achieve consensus and allows for a free, frank, open exchange of views on all issues. Such exchanges are very useful for building convergences, for understanding various concerns and for narrowing differences of opinion.

We note some differences in the approach outlined by you and the one that was agreed last year. For instance, last year we had five subsidiary bodies, four dealing with the first four agenda items and the fifth dealing with items 5, 6 and 7 combined. As you informed us earlier today, you only proposed the establishment of four subsidiary bodies.

The second observation is on the titles of the subsidiary bodies. Last year, as you will recall, the subsidiary bodies were established on the agenda items of the Conference, and one of them was further amplified to clarify what the general focus would be. We think that that is a more appropriate way of framing the subsidiary bodies. We also note that you are proposing that we appoint some coordinators or co-coordinators on reviewing working methods and membership. My delegation has no objection to reviewing the membership of the Conference with a view to its expansion. However, we are still studying the implications and the utility of reviewing the working methods of the Conference. We hope to have a response by the time you convene the plenary meeting next Thursday.

You also asked whether or not the subsidiary bodies should meet formally. The subsidiary bodies themselves are formal subsidiary bodies of the Conference, and we would be ready to go along with whichever format a consensus emerges on; however, I think informal meetings provide more flexibility and a greater possibility of a frank exchange of views. We should bear that in mind.

Lastly, on reporting, one of the flaws of the scheme that we put in place last year was, as you rightly pointed out, our lack of foresight in providing adequate time to agree on the reports. We set aside only a single three-hour meeting for the consideration and adoption of the report. In the end, that proved impossible, and all the reports were subsequently finalized through a very irregular informal process. We should certainly prevent that scenario from reoccurring. A preferable option for us would be to have not a negotiated report but a report produced by a coordinator in his or her personal capacity and under his or her own responsibility.

Once again, Mr. President, thank you very much for these proposals. You can rest assured of our continued cooperation and constructive engagement in achieving consensus for putting in place a framework for substantive work in the Conference this year.

**The President:** I thank the representative of Pakistan for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. The next speaker on my list is the Ambassador of Spain.

**Mr. Herráiz España** (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you, Mr. President. My delegation congratulates you on the assumption of your new functions; we do not doubt that you will carry them out efficiently and successfully, for which purpose you may count on our support. We also wish to congratulate and thank Ambassador Klymenko for his efforts in striving, during his term, in pursuit of a goal that ultimately could not be achieved: that the Conference on Disarmament should reach agreement on a negotiating mandate. Mr. President, I believe that your alternative proposal is the correct one, there being few other possible solutions. We will have to try to find an effective minimum common denominator so that this Conference may at least start technical discussions. I know that some delegations are inevitably sceptical about the compatibility of the Conference's natural negotiating mandate with interminable discussions that are repeated each year and which do not add any value in terms of improving on the existing situation.

I believe that we have no alternative but to continue discussions. The Conference has to find an efficient way at least to offer solutions with a minimum common denominator, and we have to be imaginative enough not to repeat the discussions of past years without injecting some imagination or making original contributions when discussing more specific issues. Perhaps rather than a legally binding treaty, the discussions might instead be geared towards recommendations, guidelines, codes of conduct or action lines which, for example, would allow us to find a dignified solution to a source of concern that I believe all of us must have, namely the forthcoming Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and its process, which soon begin with the third session of the Preparatory Committee, in New York.

The Conference's discussions here will be an opportunity to generate a climate of greater trust, transparency and dialogue, so as to prevent the gathering in New York from being a time of tension and disagreement, and for the Conference to least explore the possibility of creating, through these subsidiary bodies and thanks to exchange, dialogue and mutual understanding of positions, a slightly more constructive atmosphere by the time of the New York session. Accordingly, Mr. President, we are grateful for this alternative, which we see as the only one which can create added value for us at this time.

**The President:** I thank the Ambassador of Spain for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. The next speaker on the list is the representative of Bulgaria.

**Mr. Tomov** (Bulgaria): Mr. President, let me at the very outset warmly congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. We take this opportunity also to thank you and to thank the outgoing Ukrainian presidency for its tireless efforts to accommodate a variety of diverging views in the few drafts of the programme of work presented to us. Thanks to Ambassador Klymenko, we gained a clearer picture of what we can and cannot achieve this year. We support your proposal, as outlined now, since we think it builds on the progress achieved last year in the subsidiary bodies and also accommodates concerns related to the methods of work and the membership, as expressed last month.

We think that the construct that you propose provides for a flexible approach. No major agenda items will be left behind, and having the coordinators chosen from the different regional groups provides for a balanced geographical presence and the active involvement of all Conference members. We truly believe that continuing work in the format of subsidiary bodies will enable greater understanding and trust.

We also welcome your proactive approach to consulting with regional groups in the very first days of your presidency. We look forward to your written proposal and we wish you all the best in your active endeavours.

**The President:** I thank the representative of Bulgaria for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. Would any other delegation like to take the floor in our formal session? I see the representative of Algeria.

**Mr. Berkat** (Algeria) (*spoke in Arabic*): Thank you, Mr. President. I should like at the outset to offer you my sincere congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of



the Conference on Disarmament, and to assure you of my delegation's willingness to support your efforts and those of the members of the Conference to achieve progress that meets all our aspirations. I also wish to thank the Ambassador of Ukraine for his tireless efforts to reach agreement on a programme of work for the Conference.

Mr. President, we have taken note of your proposals and look forward to studying the draft decision that you intend to circulate and to contributing constructively to the debate to be held on it during the Conference. My delegation concurs with previous delegations that have underscored the urgency of promoting a discussion in the Conference on substantive issues relating to its mandate. It also understands your approach aimed at striking a balance between the urgency of the proposals and the need to give delegations time to study and reflect on them.

I also wish to express my delegation's appreciation of the consultations you have initiated with the members of the Conference and of the dialogue that you propose to conduct with the members of the Group of 21.

**The President:** I thank the representative of Algeria for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. Next on the list of speakers is the representative of the Russian Federation.

**Mr. Deyneko** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. President, distinguished colleagues, first of all I would like to congratulate the distinguished Ambassador of the United Kingdom on assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and to welcome the practical approach he has outlined for the presidency. At the same time, I would like to express my gratitude to the Ukrainian presidency for the energetic efforts undertaken to build a consensus on a draft programme of work for the Conference.

Many people in this chamber have stressed the inextricable link between the programme of work, which is our main task, and the progress of substantive discussions. In that regard, we would like to share a few preliminary remarks, but since they represent the unofficial position of the Russian delegation, we would prefer to do that in an informal setting.

**The President:** I thank the representative of the Russian Federation for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. Next on the list of speakers is the representative of Ecuador.

**Mr. Stacey Chiriboga** (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you, Mr. President. Let me first congratulate you on assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. We are certain that, with your capability and leadership, we can greatly advance towards substantive discussions on the core issues of the Conference. You may count on this delegation's commitment to that undertaking. Let me also take this opportunity to thank the previous President, the Ambassador of Ukraine, for the significant efforts which he led, and which will certainly be useful in informing our next steps.

With regard to your proposal, we will be ready to receive your document tomorrow, which we will forward to our capital for instructions, and we will be glad to provide you with further comments and observations as soon as they are available. However, the preliminary view of this delegation is that, although we would have preferred the adoption of a formal, comprehensive and balanced programme, we can support the establishment of subsidiary bodies in view of the current difficulties. All the more so if, as you suggested, it were possible to give them greater formality and clarity in terms of the outcomes they are expected to achieve. Similarly, our delegation can support your proposal to appoint a coordinator to review working methods and expansion of the membership.

Allow me, Mr. President, to reiterate our commitment to the work that you undertake during your presidency.

**The President:** I thank the representative of Ecuador for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. The next on the list of speakers is the representative of Cuba.

**Mr. Delgado Sánchez** (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you, Mr. President. At the outset, I would like to congratulate you on assuming the presidency of the Conference on

Disarmament. I would also like to add some words of gratitude for the work undertaken by the Ambassador of Ukraine. Although regrettably we were unable to arrive at a programme of work, we know that he was not in the least responsible for that outcome.

We look forward to receiving your proposal soon in writing, as we would like to examine it very carefully. We consider that it would be extremely helpful if your draft decision were to be accompanied by the names of the coordinators of these subsidiary groups, or some idea of who they would be. Above all – as we have been emphasizing in respect of the programme of work – it is necessary that it should come with a schedule of work so that we can check that we are giving balanced treatment to the different interests in these issues. The Cuban delegation wishes to state that subsidiary bodies for substantive issues are an acceptable, albeit not an ideal, outcome, because we consider that to a certain extent they take us away from our negotiating mandate, making us more of a deliberative body than a negotiating one, which is what we should be. Nevertheless, we look positively on the idea of establishing subsidiary groups that can focus on substantive discussions on the Conference's core issues.

That said, there are still some issues that concern us, such as how we are going to adopt the reports and whether (as been discussed in this chamber) these should be factual reports produced by the coordinator or reports by the whole subsidiary body. It is because we have concerns about these ideas that we would like to examine your draft decision. Moreover, we still do not understand why some matters should be addressed by subsidiary bodies and others by special coordinators, as you proposed, and – aside from the idea that we should not steal time from the core issues of the Conference – we are concerned that this might create unnecessary interference in our work. This delegation reiterates its full readiness to participate in substantive work under your presidency and the essential need for clarity and transparency in how we move forward, so as to be able to adopt by consensus a decision that, in our view, should be clear about the mandate, the schedule of work and the identity of the coordinators, thus allowing us to foresee the desirable outcome that we wish to obtain.

**The President:** I thank the representative of Cuba for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Canada.

**Mr. Davison (Canada):** Thank you very much. Let me just start by reassuring you of this delegation's support for your work and to thank Ukraine again for all its efforts over the past four weeks. Initially, I thought to take the floor because in my count there were about 22 delegations that had spoken and I thought, well, let's just take it over into having one third of the members speak, but then there was a flurry of other placards, and here we are at number 26 or something like that. I think that is significant in its own way, though. At the beginning of the year, when we start, there are always lots of placards up and they slowly decrease in number through the sessions. This time around, we had a good start with Ukraine and we have an equally good start with the second presidency.

Under the first presidency, unfortunately, we came to the realization that we could not agree on a programme of work and that we had to look at some other way to keep this body focused and progress in some manner on disarmament issues, on the issues that bring us here and on the things that matter to us. It strikes me that what you have proposed now is 2018 redux but, with some tweaking, that is probably appropriate, given the lessons that we learned last year and, again, our inability to agree on a programme of work with a negotiating mandate.

The four core agenda items are the favourites, the ones that most of us want to concentrate on. We agree entirely that that is where the main emphasis should be. But one of these twists that you have introduced this year is this notion of a coordinator on emerging issues, the ones that Belarus led on last year under subsidiary body 5, where there were clearly things that interested us. As a whole, however, we struggled a little bit to focus, and I think it just does not warrant quite the same amount of attention as a subsidiary body would provide.

Now, you have proposed 10 meetings. I agree with others that that is perhaps a lot, but perhaps we could say up to 10 meetings, including at least 2 to adopt the final report, given others' observations that agreeing on a report or an outcome document is important. I

do not know whether we need that level of specificity, but some colleagues have indicated that it would be useful to have as much clarity at the beginning as possible.

As to coordinators on working methods and Conference on Disarmament expansion – it could be one or it could be two. I am of a mind with those who have some concern about procedural issues overshadowing substance issues. One coordinator for both seems appropriate if it is set up fast enough. He or she will have a lot of time to work over the weeks that are left to the Conference. And the three parties or three coordinators coming from each of the regional groups is, I think too, a welcome addition, because it gives some comfort as to where the coordinators can go if all regions have somebody with a stake in it.

The format of the final report has come up a few times. Our preference would be for something that is formal and, ideally, consensus-based. The fallback could be a report in the coordinator's personal capacity, but that would not be our preference. That would hide all our work under a basket. Quite frankly, if, after 12, 14 or 16 weeks, we just produce something that does nothing more than stating what a coordinator said or understood, I do not think that is quite enough. That is definitely third best in terms of all the options.

Finally, and I think it was Switzerland that noted this: there needs to be some similarity in the approaches taken by the coordinators. There was too much daylight in terms of styles and approach between the subsidiary bodies last year and that created some confusion and, I think, made the work harder overall, both for the coordinators themselves and for all of us participating in the subsidiary bodies. If we can find a way to harmonize these matters a bit more, I think we would all benefit.

**The President:** I thank the representative of Canada for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. Next on the list of speakers is the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

**Mr. Peña Ramos** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you, Mr. President. On behalf of the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, we welcome and congratulate you on assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. We thank the secretariat for preparing this meeting. We also take this opportunity to reaffirm our willingness to fully cooperate in the efforts you will undertake in the coming weeks to advance in fulfilling the purpose of the Conference, as one of its six Presidents for 2019. We reiterate our commitment to working together and we look forward to a fruitful and substantive session of the Conference this year.

Mr. President, as is well known, we attach great importance to the work of the Conference as the single multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation, and as a vital and integral part of the global disarmament machinery that must be preserved and strengthened. Venezuela will therefore support all efforts that are undertaken to strengthen the Conference in the interests of disarmament and non-proliferation. We are very aware of the substantive difficulties that lie in reaching a consensus on a programme of work for this year. In that regard, and in general, our country is willing to consider and discuss the proposals that you or the member States might wish to submit, while always bearing in mind our position on the need to lay the foundations for the negotiation of a legally binding instrument banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and containing specific provisions on verification that cover, inter alia, stocks, the prevention of an arms race in outer space and negative security assurances.

Furthermore, we believe that the stalemate will not be overcome by making the negotiation of substantive agenda items – that have been or are still to be addressed – conditional upon deliberations concerning purely procedural matters. We take this opportunity to reiterate our interest in working, in a constructive spirit, with the other member States of the Conference so that it may fully realize its purpose, adopting a programme of work with, as has been said, the necessary urgency.

Lastly, Venezuela reaffirms its commitment to existing institutions and agreements in the sphere of disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation, and the need to continue working on this important subject in accordance with the principle of multilateralism. Thank you, Mr. President.

**The President:** I thank the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. Would any other delegation like to take the floor in our formal session? That does not seem to be the case. As I suggested earlier, I would intend to switch to an informal session if that would be acceptable to delegations that have not yet expressed their views. As the representative of Canada noted, many delegations have already taken the floor to express their views, but I understand that some delegations would appreciate a move into an informal session. Is that the case?

If no delegation would prefer to express its views in an informal session, then perhaps we shall proceed in our formal session for the time being. Very well.

Excellencies, dear colleagues, I wish to thank you very much for the comments that you have already expressed. I want to reassure you that I will endeavour to take them into consideration. As has been mentioned, I will be consulting the regional groups tomorrow morning and I look forward very much to the conversations I will have with you then – and of course any delegation is very welcome to contact me and my delegation bilaterally.

I understand that one delegation would prefer to move into an informal session. Is that the case? Very well. In that case, we will suspend our formal session briefly and move into an informal session.

*The meeting rose at 11.55 a.m.*