

# Conference on Disarmament

English

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


Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Wednesday, 27 February 2019, at 10 a.m.

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

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**The President:** I call to order the 1488th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

Distinguished colleagues, good morning. We begin this morning the third and final day of the high-level segment of the Conference on Disarmament. This morning, we have nine speakers on our list.

Allow me at this stage to suspend the meeting to welcome our first distinguished guest, His Excellency Kiyoto Tsuji, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan.

*The meeting was briefly suspended.*

**The President:** The meeting is resumed. Distinguished colleagues, I would like to extend a warm welcome to our first distinguished guest of today, the Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan. You have the floor, Sir.

**Mr. Tsuji (Japan):** Ladies and gentlemen, Excellencies, on the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of the Conference on Disarmament, it is a privilege to address this august body, and I would like to congratulate you, Mr. Liddle, Ambassador of the Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom to the Conference on Disarmament, on your assumption of the presidency and to assure you of the full support and cooperation of my delegation. I would also like to express my gratitude to Mr. Michael Møller, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations, and his team for their support for the work of the Conference.

Since the atomic bombings in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the vision for a safer world free of nuclear weapons has been a shared goal of the international community. As the only country to have ever suffered atomic bombings during war, Japan knows how catastrophic the consequences of the use of nuclear weapons would be. Japan has a responsibility to lead international efforts towards the elimination of nuclear weapons.

The year 2020 is going to be a critical year, as it is the fiftieth anniversary of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the year in which the 2020 Review Conference of the parties to that Treaty will take place. The international community faces challenges regarding how to advance nuclear disarmament substantially under the increasingly complex international security environment. We all need to work together at this important juncture.

To establish common ground during the process of the convergence of different approaches, a dialogue engaging both nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States is necessary. The Conference on Disarmament is the single multilateral negotiating forum which has as its members both nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States. It is the shared responsibility of all members of the Conference on Disarmament to achieve tangible results, as it has done in the past. We need to make this Council Chamber a place in which members are flexible and willing to understand the different positions, in order to find solutions.

Japan has been working hard to advance practical measures with the cooperation of both nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States, while striking a balance between the necessity to avoid the humanitarian consequences of the use of nuclear weapons and real security threats. Recognizing the importance of bridge-building in re-establishing trust among countries with divergent views, Japan has established the Group of Eminent Persons for the Substantive Advancement of Nuclear Disarmament. I attended the third meeting of the Group, held in Nagasaki in November 2018, during which members of the Group discussed tangible measures to advance nuclear disarmament, along with hard questions regarding the relationship between disarmament and security, from medium-to-long-term perspectives. The discussions under the Group of Eminent Persons need to be further deepened. Japan will also make efforts to advance nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation in the run-up to the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, in close cooperation with members of the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative.

Japan welcomes the launch of the Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament, as it demonstrates the active engagement by the United Nations for disarmament. The launch is timely, as the Agenda covers not only traditional disarmament and non-proliferation issues, but also new challenges which could have serious implications for international security and disarmament, such as emerging technologies and lethal autonomous weapon systems. Japan also stresses the importance of the engagement of the younger generation in disarmament and non-proliferation efforts and intends to continue its cooperation with the United Nations in pursuit of this endeavour.

I sincerely hope that we, the members of the Conference on Disarmament, will carry on the efforts of disarmament and non-proliferation with a strong and renewed determination in which our work here will give hope for future generations. Currently, the President of the Conference has circulated a draft proposal for a decision by the Conference to establish subsidiary bodies and special coordinators for the 2019 session. We believe it is important to remind ourselves to work with agility, an undertaking which Japan will continue to support. Lastly, Japan is committed to making the utmost efforts to achieve a world without nuclear weapons, in cooperation with the Presidents of the Conference on Disarmament, the secretariat, and also all its members.

**The President:** I thank Mr. Tsuji for his statement. Allow me now to suspend the meeting for a short moment in order to escort Mr. Tsuji from the Chamber.

*The meeting was briefly suspended.*

**The President:** The meeting is resumed. Distinguished colleagues, I would like to extend a warm welcome to our distinguished guest, His Excellency George Chacallis, Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cyprus. You have the floor, Sir.

**Mr. Chacallis (Cyprus):** Distinguished delegates, good morning. It is a particular honour to address this august body today and let me begin by congratulating you, Mr. President, on the assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament.

The Conference on Disarmament remains the sole, credible, global, multilateral disarmament negotiating forum. Its significance has been highlighted by the successful negotiation of important agreements in the disarmament and arms control field, such as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention. Having these successes in mind, Cyprus calls for the continued engagement of all members of the Conference towards achieving the adoption of a programme of work with a negotiating mandate and welcomes any ideas which will lead this body to substantive and results-oriented discussions.

We strongly believe that the issue of disarmament should be addressed in universally representative bodies. The membership of the Conference on Disarmament should be open to all States that adhere to the United Nations principles and standards, willing and determined to contribute to its activities and objectives. It is therefore deeply regrettable that no enlargement of the Conference has been possible since 1999, even though, according to the rules of procedure, the membership of the Conference will be reviewed at regular intervals. Cyprus, like other States, submitted an application to join the Conference more than two decades ago. The expansion of the Conference will give new impetus to its work. We hope that work towards this end will continue actively. As a first step, we believe that the position of Special Coordinator on Enlargement needs to be re-established.

Cyprus stands ready to work for substantive progress in all relevant disarmament forums. In this spirit, we support the immediate entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Our country's commitment to non-proliferation is also reflected in our efforts against the spread of weapons of mass destruction in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East, a region of particular concern to us.

Cyprus, as you also may know, currently serves as an elected member of the Management Committee of the Arms Trade Treaty.

Mr. President, let me conclude by expressing once more the hope that, under your leadership, this body will advance its important agenda, including the expansion of its membership, which will contribute to the overall goal of the Conference for a safer world.

**The President:** I thank Mr. Chacallis for his statement. Allow me now to suspend the meeting for a short moment in order to escort Mr. Chacallis from the Chamber.

*The meeting was briefly suspended.*

**The President:** The meeting is resumed.

Distinguished colleagues, I would like to extend a warm welcome to our distinguished guest, His Excellency Marcelino Medina Gonzalez, First Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba. You have the floor, Sir.

**Mr. Medina Gonzalez (Cuba)** (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, safeguarding future generations from the scourge of war and the terrible suffering it causes, working tirelessly to preserve international peace and security, and fostering friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principles of sovereign equality and self-determination of peoples must remain a commitment of the United Nations and its Member States.

In 2017, 1.74 trillion dollars were squandered on the military, the highest amount since the end of the cold war. It is alarming that, every year, exorbitant sums of money are spent on the war industry. Existing nuclear arsenals are upgraded and new nuclear weapon systems are developed instead of those resources being channelled to promoting peace, fighting hunger and poverty and implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Nuclear disarmament remains at a standstill and the existence of enormous nuclear arsenals poses a serious and imminent threat to the survival of humanity: 100 warheads would be enough to cause a nuclear winter.

Mr. President, our country attaches great importance to the promotion of multilateralism as a basic principle of disarmament and non-proliferation negotiations. It is in this context that we express our deep concern regarding the decision of the United States Government to withdraw from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or the nuclear agreement, with the Islamic Republic of Iran and, more recently, the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty signed with Russia in 1987. The international community cannot remain passive or silent, especially when we see the strengthening of the role of nuclear weapons in the defence and security doctrines of certain nuclear-weapon States, which are increasingly ready to consider using these weapons even in response to so-called non-nuclear strategic threats. We condemn the role of nuclear weapons in political doctrines and security strategies, including the threat of their use, while reiterating the inalienable right to the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

Let us take advantage of the momentum created by the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons to resume negotiations within the framework of the Conference on Disarmament. This multilateral forum is prepared to negotiate several matters at the same time, including a treaty preventing an arms race in outer space; another that would offer effective security assurances to States that, like Cuba, are not nuclear-weapon States; and a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

Mr. President, at a time when unilateral and interventionist policies that seek to destabilize the region prevail, Cuba reiterates that the Proclamation of Latin America and the Caribbean as a Zone of Peace, adopted at the Second Summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) in Havana in 2014, remains in force. We denounce the escalation of pressure and the action taken by the United States Government to prepare for a military venture disguised as humanitarian intervention in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and we call on the international community to mobilize to prevent this from happening. History will severely judge another imperialist military intervention in the region and the irresponsible complicity of its supporters.

Not only the sovereignty and dignity of Latin America, the Caribbean and the peoples of the South but also the survival of the rules of international law and the Charter of the United Nations are being decided in Venezuela today. We categorically reject attempts to deny the legitimacy of the Venezuelan delegation in this forum. It is unacceptable that this matter should be politicized.

Mr. President, we have a duty to contribute to the building of a new world order based on human solidarity and justice, in which dialogue and cooperation take priority in resolving conflicts. Let us cast aside what opposes or divides us. We have the responsibility to protect future generations from the scourge of war, save the planet and create conditions whereby justice and respect for treaty and international law obligations can be upheld.

Thank you very much.

**The President:** I thank Mr. Medina Gonzalez for his statement. Allow me now to suspend the meeting for a short moment in order to escort Mr. Medina Gonzalez from the Chamber.

*The meeting was briefly suspended.*

**The President:** The meeting is resumed. Distinguished colleagues, I would like to extend a warm welcome to our distinguished guest His Excellency Kyaw Tin, Union Minister for International Cooperation of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar. The floor is yours, Sir.

**Mr. Tin (Myanmar):** Mr. President, Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen, first of all, I would like to thank you for this opportunity to address the high-level segment of the Conference on Disarmament. I would also like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of this Conference at this important juncture.

This year marks the fortieth anniversary of the Conference on Disarmament. As you all know, anniversaries always offer us the opportunity to review our activities and progress. The Conference on Disarmament is the focus of multilateral efforts in the domain of arms control and disarmament. Over the past 40 years, as you all know, the Conference has produced many important legal instruments on disarmament and contributed its share to world peace and security. Myanmar's participation in and dedication to multilateral disarmament negotiations date back to the early 1960s, with the establishment of the Conference of the Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarmament, one of the predecessors to the Conference on Disarmament. Notwithstanding the prolonged stagnation in this Conference, Myanmar's view on it remains unchanged. Myanmar continues to commit itself to the Conference on Disarmament as the single multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament created by the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.

The prevailing circumstances of international peace and security are undergoing the most profound changes with growing uncertainties and instability since the end of the cold war. As world peace and security are being seriously challenged by various threats, the maintenance of healthy relations among major countries is of utmost importance to the settlement of global strategic problems. The announcement by certain States parties of the suspension of their obligations under the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty is cause for deep concern for the international community.

We would like to encourage us all to pursue the simple policy of compromise at any negotiating table. We should not focus solely on what we want to take but on what we can give to achieve the common goals. With this in mind, we need to further develop the principle of win-win cooperation. This principle should be sincerely observed by the member States of the Conference on Disarmament with stronger political will. The nuclear-weapon States should be committed to sharing responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. We are of the view that the flexibility of nuclear-weapon States and the constructive approaches taken by all other member States can maintain and contribute to global peace and security. Despite the growing call for nuclear disarmament by the international community, achieving a world without nuclear weapons remains a distant goal.

Bold and swift actions, in particular by the nuclear-weapon States, are essential to achieve that goal.

Myanmar firmly believes that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons remains the cornerstone of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. The Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty, to be held in 2020, will provide yet another opportunity to discuss that issue. We are encouraged to hear that the Preparatory Committee has declared its determination to achieve a meaningful outcome. We urge all States parties to seize this opportunity to advance the three major objectives of nuclear non-proliferation, nuclear disarmament and the peaceful use of nuclear energy in a comprehensive and balanced manner, so that the Review Conference can produce substantive outcomes.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty also plays a crucial role in achieving nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. We would urge the States listed in annex 2 of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty which have yet to ratify the Treaty to demonstrate renewed political commitment to achieve the earliest entry into force of this important instrument.

A peaceful approach is the right solution to the nuclear issue. In this regard, Myanmar welcomes the summit meeting between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States being held today in Hanoi. We hope that the summit will be meaningful and lead to the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, thereby contributing to peace and stability in the region and beyond.

We believe that the Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament lays out a clear and strategic road map for addressing current challenges that could help the Member States to set the world on a path towards sustainable peace and security for all. In this context, Myanmar would like to call on all member States to demonstrate goodwill and a cooperative spirit in the disarmament and arms control process.

At this point, allow me to turn to Myanmar's continued efforts in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation. Despite our domestic priorities focusing on peace, national reconciliation, development and the process of democratization, we shall never lose sight of the wider common goal of world peace and security and our disarmament agenda. Our signing of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons was the most recent instalment in our pursuit of a broad range of disarmament goals. Myanmar attaches paramount importance to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

The Conference on Disarmament has a number of urgent and important issues on which negotiations should be held to achieve disarmament goals. Myanmar has long advocated that the Conference's immediate focus should be on a comprehensive nuclear weapons convention. A treaty banning fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices would also be a logical step towards nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. We would welcome the commencement of negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on a fissile material treaty, including both existing stockpiles and future production.

Pending the attainment of our goal of a world free of nuclear weapons, a way must be found to ensure that nuclear-weapon States provide negative security assurances to non-nuclear States. We stand ready to join consensus in the hope that the work of Conference on Disarmament will lead to the commencement of negotiations on a legally binding effective instrument.

The peaceful use of outer space is also in the interest of all nations and, therefore, an arms race in outer space must be prevented and avoided. In this context, we would like to welcome the initiatives leading to the negotiation of a legally binding instrument on this matter.

Regarding the new type of weapons, let me reiterate the statement I made in the Chamber last year to the effect that cybersecurity is an issue that increasingly affects all countries and should be given attention in multilateral negotiation forums.

Against this backdrop, we appreciate the efforts made by the coordinators of the subsidiary bodies during the 2018 session and believe that it would be both appropriate and constructive to build on and to continue to focus on those positive elements in this 2019 session. We acknowledge and welcome the efforts made by both the outgoing and the current Presidents. We encourage all member States of the Conference on Disarmament to demonstrate the necessary political will to ensure that the Conference fulfils its negotiating mandate.

In our view, the lack of political will, coupled with differences in the security interests of countries, is mainly responsible for the current deadlock in the Conference on Disarmament. In addition, any efforts to politicize the work of the Conference on Disarmament should also be avoided. We encourage all member States to work together in a spirit of cooperation and accommodation in order to achieve the successful conclusions of this session and to refrain from polarizing or politicizing the work of the Conference for the sake of people the world over.

In conclusion, I would like to call on all member States to work together and to demonstrate a constructive spirit and flexibility to enable the Conference on Disarmament to move forward so that it can declare the 2019 session a success. I strongly believe that, together, in a spirit of cooperation and compromise, we can overcome the challenges that we face today.

**The President:** I thank Mr. Kyaw Tin for his statement. Allow me now to suspend the meeting for a short moment in order to escort Mr. Kyaw Tin from the Chamber.

*The meeting was briefly suspended.*

**The President:** The meeting is resumed. Distinguished colleagues, I would like to extend a warm welcome to our distinguished guest, His Excellency George Ciamba, Minister Delegate for European Affairs of Romania. You have the floor, Sir.

**Mr. Ciamba (Romania):** Mr. President, Mr. Secretary-General, distinguished delegates, I am pleased and honoured to come before you with a strong message of support for the work of this unique forum in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation, in particular at this time when Romania is holding the Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

Allow me congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the current presidency and your dedication to the accomplishment of this task and, at the same time, to pledge Romania's full support for your work for the benefit of the Conference. Let me also commend the Ukrainian presidency for the efforts that it has made to move the Conference on Disarmament forward.

Allow me now to highlight some issues of particular importance for my country, drawing assessments from statements made before the European Union.

As a country which highly values the notion of peace through diplomacy, Romania strongly believes in the power of effective multilateralism and international cooperation. At a time when new and old challenges are threatening global security, it is our responsibility to strengthen the rules-based international system by seeking multilateral solutions that will enable us to achieve a more stable global environment. Standing ready to bring our own contribution to the fore in collectively addressing today's global challenges and to foster greater respect for multilateralism and international law, Romania has put forward its candidature for a non-permanent seat in the Security Council for the 2020–2021 term.

Forty years ago, the Conference on Disarmament was established with the purpose of serving as a driving force for building a safer world and a better future. Despite the difficulties faced by this forum, we believe nonetheless that we should stay the course, and draw inspiration from this bold vision, in particular during this anniversary year.

The Conference on Disarmament has its unique role and place in the framework of international bodies that deal with non-proliferation, disarmament and related issues. It has a proud history and a remarkable track record of negotiating landmark disarmament and non-proliferation agreements. Its negotiating role must be preserved and reinforced.

I am here today to underline once more that Romania strongly supports efforts to overcome the stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament and to advance the multilateral disarmament agenda. We support the adoption of a programme of work leading to the resumption of the Conference's mandate as a negotiating body and do not oppose any constructive ideas and proposals which could lead to consensus and guide us to substantive work. I take this opportunity to thank you, Mr. President, for the draft decision of 21 February, designed to build upon last year's work and to advance the work of the Conference. We are ready to support the proposal, as we want to be part of the solution, with an open mind and flexibility.

It is our view that, if the Conference on Disarmament is to regain its place as a relevant negotiating body, we should proceed with immediate action. To ensure an irreversible nuclear disarmament process, one of our key needs is the negotiation in the Conference on Disarmament of a fissile material cut-off treaty. Romania has stated on several occasions that the commencement of negotiation of such a treaty is the next step in the process of advancing nuclear disarmament and preventing proliferation. We hope that the report of the high-level fissile material cut-off treaty expert preparatory group will also contribute to facilitating the commencement of negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament.

We are also convinced, as we have stated every year, that the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty would mark a further step towards a safer and peaceful world.

There can be no doubt that Romania remains deeply committed to the principles of multilateralism and to a rules-based international order. We remain deeply committed to the upholding and the full implementation, in letter and spirit, of current arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation agreements. When we express our support for the preservation of the effectiveness and viability of agreements, we expect full compliance and enforcement of the treaties. In this context, we encourage Russia to take steps to return to full and verifiable compliance with the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty in the next six months.

We have been seriously concerned by the violation of international obligations and the development of nuclear and ballistic programmes which threaten international peace and security and the global non-proliferation regime. In this context, we welcome the diplomatic demarches for a peaceful solution regarding the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, and we continue to underline the need to have tangible and verifiable steps from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to demonstrate the political will for a complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization.

We also welcome the work by the International Atomic Energy Agency in monitoring the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, based on a robust technical mechanism. In support of that work, and as a tangible contribution to multilateralism, Romania, in its position as President of the Council of the European Union, will organize in Vienna, on 3 April, a workshop on nuclear security: from political commitment to practical implementation. The aim is to promote awareness on aspects of nuclear security related to the benefits of nuclear applications, to deepen the global nuclear security dialogue and to encourage an open exchange of views on lessons learned and best practices.

Likewise, in Geneva in June 2019, and together with the Implementation Support Unit of the Biological Weapons Convention, Romania will organize a seminar on promoting advances in biotechnology and preventing their misuse in the context of the 2030 Agenda.

In view of the forthcoming third session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, I would also like to deliver a message of strong support for the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, as the cornerstone of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. Romania remains committed to a progressive and pragmatic approach in achieving nuclear disarmament and believes that the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty remains the best route for the process of working towards a world without nuclear weapons, a route which allows no shortcuts.

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty has stood the test of time remarkably well, charting a clear path to making our world a safer place. This work must continue. In 2020, in the light of the fiftieth anniversary of the Treaty's entry into force, efforts to minimize divisions and to ensure continuous dialogue are needed if we want to bring progress.

Let me conclude by reiterating our strong conviction that the Conference on Disarmament must recover its unique role for a safer and more peaceful world. Romania is convinced that it is up to us, the member States, to engage politically and to prove that the multilateral level is the most appropriate for tackling differences and that the Conference on Disarmament has the potential to deal with global disarmament challenges.

Let us seize the opportunity afforded by this year's fortieth anniversary of the Conference to make that breakthrough a reality.

**The President:** I thank Mr. Ciamba for his statement. Allow me now to suspend the meeting for a short moment, in order to escort Mr. Ciamba from the Chamber.

*The meeting was briefly suspended.*

**The President:** The meeting is resumed. Distinguished colleagues, I would like to extend a warm welcome to our distinguished guest, His Excellency Yuri Sterk, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria. You have the floor, Sir.

**Mr. Sterk (Bulgaria):** Distinguished Mr. President, distinguished Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, Excellencies, it is an honour to address the Conference on Disarmament, the world's sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum.

The centenary of the establishment of the League of Nations and the fortieth anniversary of the Conference on Disarmament are memorable events that warrant a thorough review and reflection.

The long-standing stalemate which is the Conference's legacy from previous years continues, unfortunately, to shape our current discussions. What is needed now is sustained political commitment and willingness to seek common ground from all members of the Conference on Disarmament in order to keep this international body relevant and make it deliver again, in conformity with its mandate.

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty remains the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime, an essential foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament in accordance with its article VI. Although much has been achieved, progress is not as significant as we would have wanted it. It is now up to us to speed it up. A successful outcome of the Review Conference in 2020 will depend upon our determination and our ability to maintain a pragmatic approach and constructive spirit in order to advance our shared goal of a world without nuclear weapons.

While we support this strategic goal, it is our strong belief that the only feasible way to achieve universal verifiable and irreversible nuclear disarmament is through an incremental approach based on practical steps. Tangible progress towards a world without nuclear weapons will be accomplished only by taking into consideration the complex security environment and the overall strategic context.

Entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban-Treaty is another building block in the construction of a world without nuclear weapons. More than 20 years after its opening for signature, the efforts of the international community are still required for its entry into force. Bulgaria, which is an Annex II State, is among those which have signed and ratified the Treaty. Once in force, the Treaty will provide a legally binding global ban on nuclear explosions of any kind. For that reason, we call upon all States that have not yet done so to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban-Treaty without any further delay.

In particular, this is relevant to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We still expect that country to take tangible and credible steps in the direction of complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization and to maintain its declared suspension of the testing of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles. We consider as a positive sign the second summit meeting between the United States and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea

Summit, taking place at this very time in Viet Nam, and we hope to witness constructive and fruitful endeavours towards the complete, irreversible and verifiable denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

A fissile material cut-off treaty remains among our top priorities in the nuclear disarmament field. We share the view that it is essential to commence negotiations on such a treaty as soon as possible, since this is, without any doubt, the issue most ripe for negotiation or for work towards negotiation. The work being done by the high-level fissile material cut-off treaty expert preparatory group is profound and forward-looking proof of this idea.

Against the backdrop of current international tensions, Bulgaria shares the concerns about the increasingly volatile security environment. Numerous multilateral treaties and forums on non-proliferation and disarmament are similarly suffering from lack of consensus, stalemate and even violations.

The Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, which for decades has been crucial to upholding the security of the Euro-Atlantic area, is just another example of the crisis of multilateralism. Regrettably, a situation where only the United States was abiding by the Treaty was not sustainable. We therefore urge Russia to act in a responsible way, thereby restoring the necessary conditions to keep the Treaty in force.

As a co-founder of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and a committed State party to the Chemical Weapons Convention, Bulgaria regards it as its duty to prevent the use of chemical weapons or chemicals used as weapons by anyone, anywhere and under any circumstances. We are ready to support efforts aimed at ensuring that all those responsible are held accountable.

Regrettably, at its fourth special session to review the operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Conference of the States Parties did not succeed in adopting a consensual official report because of the resistance of a very few countries. Nevertheless, as a member of the Executive Council of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in 2019–2021, Bulgaria will spare no effort to ensure the full and effective implementation of all decisions taken, including those adopted by the Conference of States Parties at its fourth special session in June 2018.

Mr. President, in conclusion, allow me to congratulate once again the United Kingdom presidency for a very dynamic start. We wish your presidency team every success in its efforts to ensure that the Conference on Disarmament builds on the work of 2018 and achieves outcomes in 2019 that are more tangible and less disputable than those of 2018. There are no easy solutions to complex problems. Nevertheless, we believe the solutions are at hand and that we need only seize them by acting wisely and in good time.

**The President:** I thank Mr. Sterk for his statement. Allow me now to suspend the meeting for a short moment in order to escort Mr. Sterk from the Chamber.

*The meeting was briefly suspended.*

**The President:** The meeting is resumed. Distinguished colleagues, I would now like to invite His Excellency Gennady Gatilov, Ambassador of the Russian Federation, to address the Conference. You have the floor, Sir.

**Mr. Gatilov** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): First of all, I would like to express my satisfaction at the fact that the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Antonio Guterres, has addressed a plenary meeting of the Conference for the second year running. This demonstrates the particular attention that the Secretary-General devotes to the issues of disarmament and non-proliferation, as well as his understanding of the Conference's role as the sole multilateral negotiating forum in this area. We hope that Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu, his High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, will show the same commitment to the Conference.

As participants in this Conference, we appreciate the support of the Organization's top-level management for collective efforts to restore its viability. Despite all the difficulties, the situation is far from hopeless. For a number of years, delegations have repeatedly put forward proposals and ideas that could form a basis for compromise. The

latest example is the draft programme of work prepared by the Ukrainian presidency as the first presidency of this year. We count on its successors, including our colleagues from the United Kingdom, to continue efforts to produce a mutually acceptable programme of work.

With regard to the draft decision of the Conference on the subsidiary bodies submitted by the current presidency, the Russian delegation has already made some comments, both within the Conference and in bilateral talks. I will not go into details, but these are the main points.

First, there must be a direct link between the Conference's agenda, adopted by consensus, and the activities of the subsidiary bodies. Achieving this is straightforward: it simply requires the work of these bodies to be structured around agenda items, as at the 2018 session. In order to maintain a balanced approach, we are in favour of establishing a stand-alone subsidiary body on items 5 to 7 of the agenda, as was done last year.

Second, we share the concern at the continuing erosion of the international arms control architecture, particularly in the nuclear field, as referred to by many speakers, including the Secretary-General. We support his call for multilateral dialogue on nuclear disarmament. The time is ripe for a comprehensive analysis of the state of play in this sphere, taking into account all factors affecting strategic stability and global security.

Deliberations on such a complex and multifaceted topic will be neither simple nor brief, given the contradictory and sometimes mutually exclusive approaches of delegations and groups. However, there is no alternative: if political and diplomatic means fail, States have to resort to military measures. I hope that I do not need to explain to anyone what the consequences of this could be.

In this regard, and taking into account the concerns of Conference participants regarding the excessive burden on delegations, we have suggested that consideration be given to combining the three "nuclear" items on the Conference's agenda under a single subsidiary body. Such a step would enable the issue of nuclear disarmament to be examined from all angles, rather than dealing with individual aspects in isolation from the overall strategic context.

Third, in the absence of any international legal restrictions, it is time to stop ignoring the growing threat of outer space becoming a new arena for military confrontation. It is important to focus on those aspects that are directly relevant to the Conference as the sole negotiating body in the field of disarmament, avoiding duplication with other specialized forums.

One of the options for moving forward is the Russia-China proposal for a draft Treaty on the Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space and of the Threat or Use of Force against Outer Space Objects. Our starting point is that the notion of pre-emptive disarmament set out in the treaty directly correlates with the Secretary-General's ideas on "disarmament that saves lives". We are ready to consider any constructive alternatives aimed at preventing an arms race in space. However, it must be observed that so far none exist.

Fourth, judging by the statements made during the high-level segment, the task of preventing terrorism involving weapons of mass destruction (WMD terrorism) also remains pressing. Back in 2016, the Russian Minister of Internal Affairs, Sergei Lavrov, suggested that the Conference should draft a convention to prevent acts of chemical and biological terrorism. In our view, such a convention, the draft elements for which have been submitted to the Conference, would enable us to significantly increase the effectiveness of collective efforts to combat the dangerous evils of WMD terrorism.

Fifth, many speakers have called on Conference participants to return to substantive work without delay. We fully agree. Tackling issues of substances should be our top priority. It would make sense to discuss procedural matters, specifically the post of special coordinator for working methods and membership, separately so as not to divert attention from the really important substantive issues.

And finally, restoring a business-like atmosphere within the Conference, based on principles of mutual respect, equality and the sovereign rights of delegations, in accordance

with the rules of procedure, would help us to succeed in the tasks before us. Like many others, we share the concerns about the politicization of the Conference and attempts to focus on questions that lie outside its competence.

Once again, we emphasize our readiness to engage in serious dialogue on all items on the Conference's agenda in the format agreed by delegations. We reaffirm our commitment to cooperate constructively with the United Kingdom presidency, the six presidents of the 2019 session and all delegations in bringing the Conference back to meaningful negotiation.

**The President:** I thank Ambassador Gatilov for his statement.

Distinguished colleagues, I would now like to invite His Excellency Esmaeil Baghaei Hamaneh, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Islamic Republic of Iran, to address the Conference. You have the floor, Sir.

**Mr. Hamaneh** (Islamic Republic of Iran): I appreciate the opportunity given to me to address the high-level segment of the Conference on Disarmament today. This Conference, along with its predecessors, has made major contributions to the cause of international peace and security by taking key steps towards a world free from the threat of weapons of mass destruction. The Conference on Disarmament is credited for establishing critical treaties prohibiting chemical and biological weapons, and for containing the horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons and constraining nuclear test explosions.

While there is still a long way to go, however, the Conference on Disarmament has remained deadlocked over its programme of work for more than two decades. The Conference on Disarmament is badly paralysed and unable to serve its crucial mandate. My delegation urges the Conference to agree on a balanced and comprehensive programme of work on core issues without further delay.

The prevailing international security climate should compel us all to prioritize nuclear disarmament as a most urgent security concern, since nuclear weapons continue to pose an existential threat to humanity and non-compliance with nuclear disarmament obligations has seriously undermined faith in the capacity of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty to realize its ultimate goal of nuclear disarmament. The commencement of negotiations on nuclear disarmament is, therefore, the most urgent task that the Conference on Disarmament needs to undertake. The dangerous logic propagated by nuclear Powers that they need nuclear weapons for their security and deterrence would simply exacerbate the existing sense of insecurity and could lead to further proliferation of these weapons both horizontally and vertically.

The very distressing situation prevalent in the field of nuclear disarmament is largely a consequence of the aggressive nuclear posturing of the United States, coupled with its reckless disdain for bilateral obligations and multilateral commitments. It is a policy that stresses the utility of retaining nuclear weapons indefinitely; threatens to strike non-nuclear-weapon States and in response to non-nuclear threats; pursues the deployment of new low-yield devices; and plans to spend \$1.2 trillion in 30 years on a tremendous build-up and modernization of nuclear arsenal. This policy is being pursued at the expense of collective global security and in material breach of the United States obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. It is provocative, irresponsible and destabilizing. It has revived the nuclear arms race and raised the risk of nuclear war.

Having listened attentively to the statements delivered by high-level delegates for the past two and a half days, we can feel a sense of common concern and frustration shared among almost all member States about the future of multilateralism. The disrespect by the United States for the collective will and shared concerns of the community of States, euphemistically referred to as "unilateralism", presents the gravest threat to the objective of nuclear disarmament and the future of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. This policy is part of systematic attempts by the current United States administration to undermine the value, significance and efficacy of multilateralism; to incapacitate multilateral institutions, to undercut international agreements, and to invalidate the oldest principle of international law, namely *pacta sunt servanda*. The Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty is the most recent casualty of this trend.

The Islamic Republic of Iran has shown its genuine belief in multilateralism and its respect for the outcome of collective negotiations aimed at resolving security concerns. In contrast, however, the unwarranted withdrawal by the United States from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action in material breach of its commitments and in stark violation of a Security Council resolution represents a living example of a vicious attack against multilateralism. Not only does that country continue systematically to violate its commitments under Security Council resolution 2231 (2015), but it also brazenly calls on others to violate that same resolution. This is an unprecedented example of a Security Council permanent member working obsessively against a consensus resolution initiated and supported in the first place by itself.

Nonetheless, the Islamic Republic of Iran has shown utmost resilience and restraint, and continued to implement the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action despite malign activities by the other side. Iran's impeccable performance record has been confirmed time and again by the International Atomic Energy Agency. This not only indicates the peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear programme but also proves our long-maintained argument that the whole furore stirred up over Iran's nuclear programme was a pretext to put political pressure on our nation.

It is very disappointing, though, that some other participants in the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action have failed to do enough to preserve its balance by compensating for the wrongful act perpetrated by one of the group of European Union and non-European Union parties involved. Could a multilateral agreement be executed forever by one side only? I doubt it. And the consequences should be borne primarily by those who withdrew from it impulsively along with those who failed to take appropriate action to fulfil their respective commitments.

The unilateralism of the United States has also blocked international efforts to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. The risk of nuclear proliferation in our region continues to exist as long as the United States and its western allies keep appeasing the real source of proliferation, the illicit nuclear weapons stockpile by the Israeli regime.

There is no alternative to multilateral cooperation and collective interaction for the task of addressing our common security challenges. We have to shield multilateralism and multilateral institutions against the whim of unilateralism. This is the only way to protect the rule of international law and to enable it to flourish. I would like to seize this opportunity to commend the Secretary-General for his strong commitment to disarmament and for his initiative to restore the role of disarmament as an integral component of multilateral work to maintain international peace and security.

The year 2019 is a critical year for the Conference on Disarmament as we are facing increasing security challenges worldwide plus sabre-rattling and war-mongering sentiments in various quarters. The Conference on Disarmament itself is going to be chaired, on the rotation basis, by two Security Council permanent members and nuclear States. We believe that it is a good opportunity for the majority of the Conference's members who care about nuclear disarmament to urge both rotational Presidents to live up to their responsibilities and work constructively with other members to finalize a balanced and comprehensive programme of work. We should avoid politicizing the Conference on Disarmament and respect its rules of procedure.

Lastly, while we welcome participation by all interested States in the Conference on Disarmament deliberations, we do not see any linkage between the long-time stalemate in the Conference and its membership or methods of work. In fact, the Conference's groundbreaking achievements were made possible by the same rules of procedure and methods of work and when it had even fewer members than it has today. We believe that the Conference on Disarmament needs to allocate its time and energy to the most immediate concern, which is nuclear disarmament and other substantive core issues. We stand ready to work with you, Mr. President, and with other delegations to have a fruitful outcome in 2019.

**The President:** I thank Ambassador Hamaneh for his statement. I now wish to suspend the meeting until the arrival of our next distinguished speaker for this session, His

Excellency Jorge Arreaza Montserrat, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, who is scheduled to speak at 12.45 p.m.

*The meeting was briefly suspended.*

**The President:** The meeting is resumed. Distinguished colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to extend a warm welcome to our distinguished guest, His Excellency Felix Plasencia, Deputy Minister for Multilateral Affairs of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. You have the floor, Sir.

**Mr. Plasencia** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, it is an honour for me to address the member States of the Conference on Disarmament on behalf of the people and the Government of Venezuela, led by President Nicolás Maduro Moros. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela attaches the utmost importance to the Conference on Disarmament given its special powers to negotiate multilateral agreements on disarmament. The high-level authorities in this forum have shown their commitment to multilateralism, which is today under siege from a handful of proponents of unilateralism. The international community is increasingly concerned about the fulfilment of the objective of this forum, which seeks arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation.

This year marks the centenary of the establishment of the League of Nations, the forerunner to the United Nations, which was created to ensure the survival of the human race and to avert and prevent another world war.

We wish to mark the fortieth anniversary of the Conference on Disarmament, which was set up to host multilateral negotiations on all types of weapons and issues related to non-proliferation, restriction and control. We are facing a complex situation as a result of progressively tense international relations, regional conflicts and terrorism, and the spread of xenophobia and racism. The restoration of the Monroe Doctrine with its imperialistic tendencies is putting international peace and security at risk. In this context, regrettably, the Conference has proved unable to overcome two decades of deadlock, as it has not fulfilled its mandate to reach multilateral agreements concerning the items on its agenda. The Conference must fully achieve its objective by urgently adopting a comprehensive, balanced and complex programme of work with a negotiating mandate that takes account of disarmament-related priorities.

The process of consultations in this regard must be transparent, inclusive and respectful, ensuring the participation of all member States. The discussion of substantive matters cannot be contingent upon issues of procedure, still less where there are the usual political intentions. Focusing on certain States' internal affairs in this forum only leads to undesirable politicization and deadlock.

Mr. President, we must move towards total and complete nuclear disarmament, which requires a commitment from all States – nuclear-weapon States most of all. The security of non-nuclear-weapon States must be guaranteed against the potential use of such weapons through negative security assurances.

The 2020 Review Conference will mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Nuclear-weapon States must meet the commitments set out in the Treaty, whose objective is to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons, foster cooperation in the peaceful use of nuclear energy and achieve nuclear disarmament. The Treaty has reached a historic milestone as the only legally binding instrument aimed at achieving the goal of disarmament by the nuclear-weapon States, in accordance with its article VI. The changes brought about by recent scientific and technological developments in warfare, especially in outer space, need to be addressed early on by strengthening the legal regime as expressed in the negotiations for a potential multilateral treaty banning the deployment of weapons there.

Mr. President, within the framework of the Second Summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States held in Havana, Cuba, on 28 and 29 January 2014, Latin America and the Caribbean was declared as a zone of peace. The commitment was reaffirmed at the Fifth Summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States in Punta Cana, Dominican Republic, on 25 January 2017.

Venezuela is resolutely committed to that cause. We hope that other regions of the world will follow the example of setting up peace zones. We reiterate our call for all peace-loving countries to keep Latin America and the Caribbean a zone of peace in order to prevent war. Calls from the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries to establish a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction are laudable.

Nuclear weapons pose a serious threat to life on our planet owing to their destructive potential. Developing and upgrading such weapons requires inordinate amounts of money that could otherwise be used to promote peoples' economic and social development, particularly the eradication of poverty and the elimination of diseases afflicting humanity, in line with the objectives of the 2030 Agenda. International peace and security are at risk, while vast financial resources, which are needed to ensure cooperation for sustainable development, are used in the production of fissile material and the development of new war technology. There is an inexorable link between complete disarmament and our countries' development.

Mr. President, Venezuela will hold the presidency of the Conference from 27 May to 23 June 2019, in accordance with the rules of procedure. These rules need to be upheld in order to ensure transparency and equal opportunities for all States members of the Conference. Venezuela will consider and assess with an open mind the initiatives and proposals made by States to devise new rules in areas vital to disarmament. We intend to strengthen any initiative conducive to regional and world peace. We want a world without violence and with social justice, in a framework of democratic freedoms. We advocate the peaceful resolution of disputes in accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations. We demand respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States. We invite all countries to join efforts to overcome the deadlock in the Conference.

Venezuela attaches great importance to its participation in the work of this forum for negotiating multilateral instruments on disarmament. Let me assure you that when it holds the presidency, the Venezuelan delegation will discharge its duties in an impartial and transparent manner and will help to create a constructive environment of trust in which to address all of the items on the Conference's agenda.

Thank you very much.

**The President:** I thank Mr. Plasencia for his statement. Allow me now to suspend the meeting for a short moment in order to escort Mr. Plasencia from the Chamber.

*The meeting was briefly suspended.*

**The President:** The meeting is resumed. Ladies and gentlemen, that concludes the list of our high-level speakers for this high-level segment. While we still have interpretation available, would any other delegation like to take the floor? I recognize the United States of America.

**Mr. Wood** (United States of America): Mr. President, I am taking the floor to exercise my right of reply to respond to the propaganda that was just spewed by the representative of the former Maduro regime. This type of propaganda is typical of a regime that has no credibility in the international community, has no moral or political legitimacy and realizes that the Venezuelan people are sick and tired of being denied food, medicine and dignity.

The violence perpetrated by the former Maduro regime over the weekend against Venezuelans was sickening and demonstrates how far the former regime will go to deny humanitarian supplies to Venezuela's neediest. It is a travesty that the former regime continues to try to pin the blame for the disastrous situation in Venezuela on everyone except itself. Well, all responsible world citizens, most importantly Venezuelans, know that the corrupt and dictatorial former regime of Maduro is to blame and must be held accountable.

The collapse of democratic order in Venezuela and the country's ongoing humanitarian, economic and political crises have forced millions of Venezuelans to flee their country since 2015. This mass migration is the largest ever in the western hemisphere, creating significant security challenges for nations across the region.

The United States supports the Venezuelan people as they seek to restore their democracy. The United States is not alone. A number of countries have voiced their concerns and many have taken steps, including recognizing Juan Guaidó as interim President.

The former Maduro regime should not be allowed to continue to represent the Venezuelan people and to conduct its malign behaviour with impunity. My Government again calls on representatives of the former Maduro regime not to assume the presidency in this chamber reserved for the Government of Venezuela.

A little earlier, once again, a representative of the world's leading State sponsor of terrorism addressed a multilateral forum to lecture on multilateralism and responsible behaviour. Let us be clear, Iran is in no position to lecture anyone on anything. This is a country that has repeatedly threatened the destruction of Israel. Forty years ago, it took American diplomats hostage for 444 days: something Americans will never ever forget. It has engaged in covert work on a nuclear weapons programme. It has carried out countless terrorist attacks around the globe against innocent civilians. It finances terror groups in the Middle East and beyond. It is developing and exporting ballistic missiles to terrorist groups such as the Houthi rebels in Yemen and Hizbullah in defiance of the international community. The list goes on.

Needless to say, the economic sanctions that my Government has put into effect will make it exceedingly difficult for Tehran to carry out and finance dastardly terrorist acts in the future.

Allow me to take up the issue of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action once more, since it has been raised a few times over the last few days. My Government is focused on a comprehensive approach that keeps an Iranian nuclear breakout permanently out of reach. This is something that the flawed Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action was incapable of doing. My Government's approach addresses Iran's ballistic missile programme, support for terrorism, destabilizing regional behaviour and human rights abuses.

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action was agreed upon in the hope that it would lead to an improvement in Iran's behaviour in other areas but this has not happened. Instead, Iran's behaviour has become more aggressive, threatening the United States and our interests under the cover of the deal. For these reasons, President Trump withdrew the United States from the Plan, which failed to protect America's national security interests. We now aim to bring all necessary pressure to bear to change Iran's behaviour and pursue a new framework that could resolve our concerns.

So, colleagues, the next time that one of the regime's representatives takes the floor to spout off about how Iran is such a committed multilateralist and peace-loving nation, my advice would be simply just to tune out.

**The President:** I thank the distinguished Ambassador of the United States for his statement and I give the floor to the distinguished representative of the Russian Federation.

**Mr. Deyneko** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are nearly at the end of our meeting. Obviously, we would like to exercise our right of reply, but we are prepared to be flexible: either we can read our statement now, if the interpreters will stay longer, or we can deliver it tomorrow during our ordinary plenary meeting, but as a right of reply. Now?

A few distinguished guests in this hall have once again reiterated their by now familiar views on Russia's supposed responsibility for violating the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF Treaty). We have commented on this situation more than once, but in this case I would like to read an extract from a speech by the President of the Russian Federation. As you know, in Russia, as in many other countries, the Head of State is also Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, so this is not some expert analysis, or even a speech by the Minister of Defence or Chief of the General Staff. This is how the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation himself sees things with respect to the INF Treaty.

"The withdrawal of the United States of America from the INF Treaty is the most pressing issue, attracting the most discussion, which is why I need to talk about it in

a little more detail. It is true, of course, that there have been significant changes in the world since the Treaty was signed in 1987. Many countries have developed and continue to develop these weapons, but not Russia or the United States – we have been limiting ourselves in this respect, of our own free will. This state of affairs might raise questions. Our United States partners should have been honest about things, rather than make far-fetched accusations against Russia to justify their unilateral withdrawal from the Treaty. It would have been better if they had done what they did in 2002, when they walked away from the Treaty between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems (ABM Treaty) and did so openly and honestly. Whether that was good or bad is another matter. I think it was bad, but they did it and that is that. They should have been honest this time, too. What are they actually doing? Violating the Treaty themselves, then looking for excuses and blaming other people. But they are also mobilizing their satellites, who may be cautious but will still make noises in support of the United States. At first, the United States began developing and using medium-range missiles, calling them ‘target missiles’ for missile defence to deflect attention. Then they began deploying Mk-41 universal launch systems in Europe, which make it possible to use Tomahawk medium-range cruise missiles for combat.

“I am talking about this and taking up time purely because we must respond to the accusations levelled at us. Even as it did so, the United States was blatantly ignoring the provisions of articles IV and VI of the INF Treaty in their entirety. According to article IV (1), and I quote: ‘Each Party shall eliminate all its intermediate-range missiles and launchers of such missiles ... so that ... no such missiles [or] launchers ... shall be possessed by either Party.’ Article VI (1) states that: ‘Upon entry into force of this Treaty and thereafter, neither Party shall ... produce or flight-test any intermediate-range missiles or produce any stages of such missiles or any launchers of such missiles ...’.

“By using medium-range target missiles and deploying launchers in Romania and Poland suitable for launching Tomahawk missiles, the United States has directly and flagrantly violated the provisions of the Treaty. These launchers are already stationed in Romania, and what happens? Nothing, or so it seems. We are hardly surprised by this, but people should be aware and understand what is going on.

“I have already said this but I want to repeat it because it is very important: Russia does not intend – let me repeat this – Russia does not intend to be the first to deploy such missiles in Europe. If they really are going to be built and delivered to Europe, and the United States plans to do so – at least, we have not heard otherwise – it will dramatically exacerbate the international security situation and create a serious threat to Russia, because some of these missile types could reach Moscow in just 10 or 12 minutes. This is a very serious threat to us. If that happens, we will be forced, let me stress, forced to envisage an equivalent or asymmetrical response.

“I am saying this directly and openly now, so that no one can blame us later, so that everyone will be clear in advance about what is going on here. Russia will be forced to build and deploy types of weapons that can be used not only against the territories from which the direct threat to us comes, but also against the places where the decision-making centres for the missile systems threatening us are located.

“The important thing, and a good deal of this information is new, is that the technical specifications of our weapons will fully reflect the threats being made against Russia, including in terms of flight times to these decision-making centres.

“We have the know-how to do this and we will implement these plans without delay once the threats to us become real. I do not think we need any further, irresponsible exacerbation of the current international situation. We do not want this.

“What would I like to add? Our American colleagues have already tried to gain absolute military superiority with their global missile defence project. They need to let go of such illusions. Our response will always be efficient and effective.

“The work on next-generation weapons systems that I spoke about in my 2018 address continues steadily, according to schedule and without disruptions. Serial production of the Avangard system has begun. This year, the first regiment of the Strategic Missile Troops will be equipped with Avangard. The unprecedentedly powerful Sarmat super-heavy intercontinental missile is in the test phase. The Peresvet laser weapon and aviation systems equipped with Kinzhal hypersonic ballistic missiles have proved their unique characteristics on combat alert test missions. The Burevestnik nuclear-powered cruise missile, which has an unlimited range, is being tested successfully.

“I think I can also inform you officially about another promising innovation: Tsirkon, a hypersonic missile that can reach speeds of approximately Mach 9 and strike a target on land or in water from more than 1,000 km away. All this comes at no additional cost to us.

“To conclude the subject of the unilateral withdrawal by the United States from the INF Treaty, I would like to say this: in recent years the United States has been pursuing a policy toward Russia that can hardly be described as friendly. Russia’s legitimate interests are being ignored; there is constant anti-Russia campaigning in various forms; and more and more sanctions, which are illegal under international law, are being imposed without any provocation whatsoever. The treaty structure underpinning international security, which has been taking shape for decades, is being dismantled singlehandedly, and Russia is again being referred to as pretty much the main threat to the United States.

“Let me say outright: this is not true. Russia wants to have proper, equitable, friendly relations with the United States. Russia is not threatening anyone, and all our security actions are purely responsive and defensive in nature. We are not interested in confrontation, especially with a global power like the United States. However, it seems that our partners have failed to notice the depth and pace of change around the world and where things are headed. They continue with their destructive and clearly misguided policy. This is hardly even in the interests of the United States itself. But it is not for us to decide.

“We can see that we are dealing with enterprising and highly talented people, but within the United States’ ruling class, there are also many people who have excessive faith in their exceptionalism and supremacy over the rest of the world. Of course, they are entitled to think what they want. But can they do the sums? Maybe they should work out the range and speed of our next-generation weapons systems. Let them do the sums first, then take the decisions that might create additional serious threats to our country and will obviously prompt Russia to respond. The security of our country will be guaranteed, definitely and unconditionally.

“I have already said this, incidentally, but I will say it again: we stand ready to engage in disarmament talks, but we will not carry on banging on a closed door any longer. We will wait until our partners are ready and realize that equitable dialogue is needed on this issue.

“We need peace for sustainable long-term development. Our efforts to enhance our defence capability are intended to ensure the security of this country and its citizens so that nobody will consider launching an aggression against us, or even attempting to pressure us.”

This was part of an address given by the President of the Russian Federation to the Federal Assembly. We will leave copies in English at the documents desk for anyone who would like to read it in more detail.

**The President:** I thank the distinguished delegate of the Russian Federation for his statement. We must now, I am afraid, release the interpreters. I have three more speakers on the list. I propose to give them the floor at the beginning of our meeting tomorrow morning. This therefore concludes our business for today. The next meeting of the Conference on Disarmament will take place tomorrow, Thursday 28 February, at 10 a.m., at which we

shall hear the remaining speakers on the list for today and also discuss the draft decision and the working paper circulated by the secretariat on 21 February.

I would like to thank the interpreters for giving us the extra few minutes to conclude our business.

The meeting is adjourned.

*The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.*