
Conference on Disarmament

English

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

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 26 March 2019, at 3.05 p.m.

President: Mr. Robert A. Wood(United States of America)



The President: Good afternoon, I call to order the 1499th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

Today, United States Assistant Secretary of State for International Security and Non-Proliferation, Dr. Christopher Ford, will address the Conference on the topic of creating an environment for nuclear disarmament. Conference Ambassadors from Brazil, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland have kindly agreed to add their views to the substantive discussion. These speakers will deliver their remarks, followed by an open discussion from the floor on today's topic.

Following the open-floor discussion on creating an environment for nuclear disarmament, I will suspend the meeting as Assistant Secretary Ford departs the Council Chamber and our distinguished colleagues from Brazil, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom return to their seats. I will then reopen the meeting for any other comments beyond today's designated topic.

With that explanation, I would now like to briefly suspend the meeting and welcome Dr. Ford. I would also like to invite our esteemed colleagues to take their place here on the dais.

The meeting was briefly suspended.

The President: Distinguished colleagues, I would like to welcome Dr. Christopher Ford, United States Assistant Secretary of State for International Security and Non-Proliferation at the United States Department of State. You have the floor, Sir.

Mr. Ford (United States of America): Mr. President, Excellencies, it is a pleasure to be able to speak to you today. As many of you no doubt already know, the United States is presently in the process of developing implementation plans for a path-breaking new initiative that is aimed at bringing countries together in a constructive dialogue exploring ways in which it might be possible to ameliorate conditions in the global security environment so as to make that environment more conducive to further progress towards – and indeed, ultimately to achieve – nuclear disarmament.

This initiative is a new one, and it represents both a conceptual break from and an effort to build upon the remarkable progress that has been made in bringing down our own nuclear arsenal – for example, since the end of the cold war, a very dramatic reduction that, one should never forget, has already gotten us to the point of having brought ourselves down to perhaps only about 12 per cent of our cold war peak. That is to say, an 88 per cent reduction. Learning insights from that is important, and this basic insight, which animates our own initiative, is that these impressive reductions in nuclear arsenals did not bring about the end of cold war tensions, but rather resulted from them, from the easing of those tensions.

To be sure, this is not, in some respects, a new understanding. In fact, it was recognized explicitly in the text of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons itself more than half a century ago. As you will recall, the preamble to that treaty calls for easing tension and for strengthening trust between States “in order to facilitate” disarmament. But this insight, I would submit, about the centrality of security conditions is one that some folks may have forgotten during earlier post-cold war years, during which the nuclear super-Powers had the luxury of being able to coast forward in implementing sweeping disarmament steps for a long time merely on the strength of an easing of tensions that had at that point already occurred.

Now, with that fairly obvious understanding, but an important one, firmly in mind, the challenge that we all confront today is how to imagine the disarmament enterprise continuing to move forward in a world in which the prevailing security conditions have been worsening, rather than improving. In the face of these questions, our new initiative, which we have entitled Creating an Environment for Nuclear Disarmament (CEND), aims to help the international community find a path forward by setting in motion a “Creating an Environment” working group process. Under its auspices, participating countries would work together first to identify a number of key questions or challenges that would need to be overcome along the road to eventual disarmament and then to explore possible answers to those questions.

We do not anticipate that this will be a magical panacea, of course, for the security challenges of the modern world that would have to be addressed along the path to disarmament are surely many and daunting. But we do firmly believe that it is important to try to find a way forward, and we are convinced that whatever pathway may exist is one that necessarily runs first and foremost through addressing the security challenges that motivate nuclear weapons acquisition and nuclear weapons retention. We are also convinced that this is a challenge that all States need to address together, as article VI of the Treaty makes clear in requiring, for instance, that all parties to the Treaty pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures for disarmament, rather than addressing itself solely to any particular States or subcategory of States. Indeed, with the global elimination of nuclear weapons being explicitly the ultimate objective, it is clear to us that efforts to achieve this must include non-parties to the Treaty as well.

Many of you probably know this already, but I do think it is useful to repeat these basic points here in the Conference on Disarmament – which in so many ways has unfortunately been stymied in its efforts to develop new disarmament initiatives precisely because persisting regional and global tensions continue to drive certain members to impede progress out of fear that, under prevailing security conditions, such agreements would run counter to their perceived national interests. Repeating these points here in Geneva, I think, is also important because recent events, such as the impending collapse of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty as a result of Russia's development and deployment of a growing arsenal of missiles prohibited under the Treaty that threaten the countries of Western Europe and East Asia alike, highlight the fact that without addressing some highly problematic trends in the global security environment, it will indeed be very hard, or perhaps impossible, to imagine a future for nuclear disarmament at all.

It seems clear now that traditional approaches to disarmament can no longer meet the pressing needs of today's world, nor can some of the more new-fangled approaches that have arisen out of some countries' frustration with the fact that even more disarmament has not yet occurred. Traditional approaches, at least of the sort that we were fortunate to be able to employ in earlier post-cold war years, have largely run out of steam, both because the many weapons made unnecessary by the end of cold war tensions have already been dismantled and because conditions in the global security environment are today worsening rather than improving.

Nor does the newer effort of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons itself, however desirous one might be of the end envisioned by that treaty, offer, in our view, a viable alternative. In part, this is because the Treaty's very structure assumes that one can declare nuclear weapons away without having first alleviated the problems of the underlying security environment that help drive nuclear weapons choices. But this is also because so much of the Treaty's advocacy discourse revolves around stigmatizing and demonizing the security choices of deterrence-reliant countries – that is to say, precisely those countries whose cooperation is essential for genuine disarmament efforts to bear fruit.

Now, please do not misunderstand me. We fully understand the frustrations that some have expressed as a result of disarmament still seeming so distant more than seven decades since United States officials first proposed the bold disarmament initiative of the Baruch Plan to the United Nations.

But precisely because these issues are so important, we believe they deserve to be approached thoughtfully and in a spirit conducive to the kind of dialogue that it will be necessary to have if indeed we are to live up to the exhortation of the preamble to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty to ease tensions and strengthen trust between States in order to facilitate disarmament. It is in order to set in motion just this kind of dialogue that we have proposed the CEND process, and we very much hope that countries of goodwill will join us in helping make this work. Recreating a security environment in which nuclear-weapon States find it in their mutual interest to advance nuclear disarmament will require political will and concerted efforts from all nations. Frankly, I believe that there is likely to be no path forward that does not involve sincere and constructive engagement by a broad range of parties.

So, in response to our announcement of the CEND initiative, it has been gratifying that quite a few countries from different regions of the globe have already expressed an interest in joining this effort. I am particularly pleased that our Dutch colleagues have geared up to organize an academic colloquium – which will take place in just a couple of weeks' time – that is specifically designed to generate thoughtful insights and ideas to contribute to this endeavour. With the global disarmament discourse now increasingly coming to recognize and to focus upon the challenges of ameliorating problematic international security conditions, I hope that these initial steps will help catalyse further ones in a sort of “virtuous circle”, perhaps to the point that even outside the specific discussions of the “Creating an Environment” working group process, a thoughtful and constructive new ecosystem, if you will, of complementary and mutually reinforcing initiatives can develop – upon the fruits of which all of us can draw in finding better ways to address the security problems that stand in the way of future progress.

Nevertheless, I know that in some quarters our initiative is still regarded somewhat warily. But I do hope that more and more countries will see fit to participate, not least because it is surely some of the countries that are most suspicious of any disarmament initiative proposed by a nuclear-weapon State that may have in some regards the most to offer in the kind of constructive dialogue that we envision and that we hope to bring about.

In this respect, I think we can perhaps learn something from the well-regarded International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification, which is of course a voluntary, working-group-type process that is now in the second phase of its ongoing effort to explore how it might be possible to verify the disarmament of nuclear weapons pursuant to some potential future disarmament agreement. Much of the value of the Partnership has stemmed from its ability to bring together countries that have very different relationships to nuclear weapons in order to explore that verification problem together, to their mutual edification.

The Partnership has, for example, been helping nuclear-weapon possessors better understand the degree to which meaningful verification might actually be possible; it has been helping dispel misconceptions among non-possessors as well about just how difficult verification can be and it has been helping all involved understand the degree to which such verification can in fact be done without spreading proliferation-sensitive knowledge. These are very important lessons, but such constructive lesson-learning benefits hugely from having a good breadth of participation. Nuclear-weapon States working only among themselves might be able to use their unique knowledge to devise very good ways to verify disarmament, for example, but non-nuclear-weapon States must also be able to trust the outcome, and the Partnership's collaborative exploratory process helps allow these questions to be explored together.

What we envision for Creating an Environment for Nuclear Disarmament and the associated working group is a loosely analogous range of participants, coming together in an initial plenary meeting to develop a constructive agenda and then meeting in a range of working groups to try to address the challenges that they identified as part of that agenda. Just as the Partnership has benefited from a diverse range of participants from across the issue spectrum – weapon States, non-weapon States, nuclear-alliance States, non-alliance States and so forth – so we would also like to see each of the CEND groups include a geographically and politically diverse group of participants appropriate for each question. All participation, of course, will be entirely voluntary, but as your own Governments evaluate whether and how you might be able to contribute, we would be delighted to see participants from across all of the world's relevant political divisions: weapon States, non-weapon States, developed countries, less-developed countries, nuclear-alliance States, Group of 77 States, States parties to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, States not parties to the Treaty and so forth. The price of admission, you might say, is no higher than simply having a sincere commitment to this kind of dialogue.

That, then, is a recap of our vision for this process, about which I do hope to have more to say in the near future, as our thinking matures and more countries become involved. We encourage wide participation, because this will increase the value of the process as a means through which the international community can begin to explore possible ways to

overcome the challenges that lie ahead of us if a path is to be found to achieve the world envisioned in the preamble and in article VI of the Treaty.

To those of you who have come forward already to be a part of this noble experiment, we thank you. To those of you considering doing so, we encourage you to make that interest known. I very much look forward to working with all of you in this great endeavour in the months and years ahead. And it is a pleasure to be able to speak to you here today. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President: I thank Dr. Ford for his statement. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Brazil.

Mr. De Aguiar Patriota (Brazil): First of all, I wish to thank the United States presidency for allowing me to address this chamber today, and I wish to thank Assistant Secretary Ford for also allowing me to provide my comments related to his presentation to this chamber on a very important issue.

I would like to start by indicating that, in this year's Annecy retreat, a retreat organized every year by the James Martin Centre for Non-Proliferation Studies in preparation for the 2019 session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Review Conference, I was given the opportunity to address the question of whether there is any common ground to be found in nuclear disarmament.

My short answer in Annecy – and whether I am in Annecy or here in the Conference on Disarmament, I try to provide the same answer – was that defending the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, its integrity and centrality to the disarmament and non-proliferation regime should be common ground. Respect for obligations flowing from the Treaty and for agreed commitments should also be a common point of departure. I noted, on the other hand, that the deteriorating international security environment seemed to affect the ultimate goals and, to a certain extent, the credibility of the Treaty. The deteriorating environment has become an overriding concern, shared by all. Actually, this negative perception seems to have become a commonality in and of itself.

Facing the facts, addressing the real world and responding accordingly could therefore provide a pathway for renewing our vows under the Treaty in the approach to the 2020 Review Conference and beyond.

Such is the gravity of current tensions that the launch of meaningful structured dialogue on nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and peaceful uses appears to be not only of the essence but also urgent. Because Assistant Secretary Christopher Ford could not make it to Annecy, he was unfortunately not present when I took up the "Creating an Environment for Nuclear Disarmament" (CEND) idea advanced by the United States and considered how a concrete structuring of the idea could be developed in an inclusive, progressive and, preferably, in my view, multilateral format.

Using language extracted from the Preparatory Committee working paper produced by the United States itself, I agreed that the proposed dialogue could improve the international security environment by enabling "further progress on reducing the role and numbers of nuclear weapons throughout the world" and "preventing a fully-fledged arms race between rival powers". In serious consideration of CEND, I speculated that taking it forward could be a relevant outcome in the current Treaty review cycle. We could shape the initiative in different ways. I imagined in Annecy that we could think of a process involving a group of governmental experts (not because I am chairing one) to structure and lay out the specific framework for this broad dialogue, beyond the confines of the Treaty proper – because we would not want to be limited by the Treaty's structure and procedures and because we would also want to include States not parties to the Treaty, in particular nuclear-weapon-possessor States.

Alternatively, we could think along the lines of a more inclusive General Assembly open-ended working group. Both options, of course, would provide a United Nations framework, a preference that I express and that is different from what Mr. Ford has suggested or hinted at today. One could think of Creating an Environment for Nuclear Disarmament as a pathway towards a renewed disarmament agenda along the lines of the

one proposed by the United Nations Secretary-General, but collectively discussed, formulated and owned by participating members themselves.

In any case, a possible framework for the dialogue would require careful negotiation on the venue, content, approaches, roles and participation. Importantly, as underlined by Assistant Secretary Ford himself, it should engage nuclear-weapon States, non-nuclear-weapon States and nuclear-possessor States. The goal could be a joint assessment of where the world's nuclear strategic stability and risk stand today and what relevant next steps we can take towards a world without nuclear weapons under the circumstances. We could agree to review and act upon critical commitments that are still pending, including the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, negotiation of a fissile material treaty, taking forward nuclear disarmament verification, discussing nuclear-weapon risk reduction, creating additional zones free of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction, particularly in the Middle East, making progress on negative security assurances etc. Many of these items are matters not only for the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty; they are also matters on the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament itself.

We could use the opportunity to reconcile divergences of views with respect to the fundamental obligation on nuclear disarmament contained in article VI of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the unravelling of existing arms-control agreements and the advent of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, while deepening our understanding and recognition of the unacceptable humanitarian consequences of any use or detonation of nuclear weapons. I would take the proponents of CEND at their word that a dialogue would require no more than sincere commitment to its stated goals.

The President: I wish to thank the Ambassador of Brazil for his remarks and now give the floor to the Ambassador of the Netherlands.

Mr. Gabriëlse (Netherlands): Thank you, Mr. President. Allow me at the outset to thank Assistant Secretary Ford for his presence and intervention, which will hopefully kick off an interactive debate on this important topic.

Looking at today's international security environment, there is ample reason to move forward on nuclear disarmament. As my Minister Sigrid Kaag noted in her statement during this year's high-level segment, "these difficult times require an extra effort, an effort by all of us to uphold our international norms, norms that contribute to lasting results in disarmament and therefore in international security". The norms established by the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty are clear. But differing perspectives exist on how to reach our common goal of a world without nuclear weapons. The Netherlands believes that only through open and frank discussions can we bridge the differences and find a common way forward. After all, nuclear disarmament is a process that needs to involve both nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States.

The launch of a dialogue called Creating an Environment for Nuclear Disarmament (CEND) should therefore be seen as an opportunity for all States to contribute. And I welcome the invitation from Assistant Secretary Ford in his address to participants from across the relevant issue spectrum – weapon States, non-weapon States, nuclear-alliance States and non-alliance States alike.

The Netherlands continues to advocate an approach where disarmament is carried forward in a progressive way, working on concrete issues such as verification, nuclear risk reduction and the start of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty, with the ultimate aim of arriving at "global zero".

The initiative for a process of creating an environment for nuclear disarmament, as outlined by Assistant Secretary Ford, seeks, in his words, to help the international community find a path forward and is an attempt aimed at bringing countries together for a constructive dialogue. This dialogue could contribute to rebuilding trust or even a search for a new path of détente. Dr. Ford's reference to the preamble to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which calls for easing of tension and strengthening of trust in order to facilitate disarmament, is worth noting here. That was a notion 50 years ago, during the cold war, and seems applicable today in a security environment that is so challenging and confrontational.

As I understand from his intervention, the CEND process is open for ideas and suggestions from different States, including States not parties to the Treaty. The process will be set into motion by creating a working group called the “Creating an Environment” working group. To me, this initiative, coming from one of the major nuclear Powers, has the potential to be a constructive and creative way forward. It will indeed be not a magical solution for all current challenges but an attempt to revitalize the constructive dialogue in order to overcome the current stalemate with the aim of taking steps forward on nuclear disarmament. For the CEND initiative to serve that call, it should not raise new barriers or set new conditions for the process. The initiative and the work in the “Creating an Environment” working group are an addition to that process, in no way diminishing States parties’ article VI obligations. We believe that only as such can this promising initiative contribute substantially to our joint efforts towards “global zero”.

It is in the spirit of having a broad and inclusive dialogue that the Netherlands will organize, on 15 April, a nuclear disarmament colloquium here in Geneva, and Dr. Ford already mentioned this. And allow me a bit on this colloquium – there will be some information available on the colloquium later here on the table.

Starting from the premise that the CEND process is a dialogue, as outlined by Dr. Ford, the Netherlands launched in February this year a call for abstracts with a view to gathering different ideas and perspectives on nuclear disarmament. In this way, the colloquium is following a bottom-up approach, open to any idea, in which the Netherlands acts as a facilitator of the dialogue. We have received a good response, including high-quality abstracts from academics originating from States both parties to the Treaty and not.

Based on these abstracts, we have invited 10 speakers, divided over three panels. These panels will address a broad range of topics, from institutions and collective actions for nuclear disarmament to the national calculus behind nuclear weapons as well as security and stability throughout the disarmament process. We hope that the panels will not only provide food for thought but also spark an interactive dialogue between academics and diplomats and contribute to the body of work on possible institutional arrangements and practical steps towards nuclear disarmament. Most of all, we hope the colloquium can stimulate the fostering of an ambitious but pragmatic can-do mindset on this most important subject. We hope to see all the Conference on Disarmament colleagues participating in the colloquium. My delegation remains available for any further questions. We very much appreciate that Assistant Secretary Ford will also be participating in the colloquium, as I understand.

Mr. President, let me stop here and conclude that I look forward to an interactive debate here in the Conference and outside this chamber.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of the Netherlands for his remarks and now give the floor to the Ambassador of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Mr. Liddle (United Kingdom): Thank you, Mr. President. First, like the two preceding speakers, let me thank you for taking the initiative for this discussion today and, in particular, Assistant Secretary Ford for his presentation to us this afternoon.

The United Kingdom views the Creating an Environment for Nuclear Disarmament (CEND) initiative as an important contribution to the pursuit of our shared goal of nuclear disarmament in general and to the 2020 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty review cycle in particular.

The debate on the extent or even the existence of the link between security and disarmament is one we are all familiar with. Dag Hammarskjöld spoke in 1956 of the:

shuttle traffic between improvement in the international atmosphere and disarmament. On the one hand ... disarmament is not likely to come about in an efficient, effective way short of a further improvement in the international situation. On the other hand, I do not think any single policy move will contribute more to an improvement in the international atmosphere than an agreement on even the most modest step in the direction of disarmament.

The United Kingdom's position on this question should be clear from the 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review, which says:

The United Kingdom's independent nuclear deterrent will remain essential to our security today, and for as long as the global security situation demands. ...

Other States continue to have nuclear arsenals and there is a continuing risk of further proliferation of nuclear weapons. There is a risk that States might use their nuclear capability to threaten us, try to constrain our decision-making in a crisis or sponsor nuclear terrorism. Recent changes in the international security context remind us that we cannot relax our guard.

The Strategic Defence and Security Review also says: "We will continue to build trust and confidence between nuclear and non-nuclear-weapon States, and to take tangible steps towards a safer and more stable world, where countries with nuclear weapons feel able to relinquish them." We view the CEND initiative as a welcome contribution to that end.

My own hope is that the Creating an Environment for Nuclear Disarmament initiative can be a way of looking at the question of security and disarmament in fresh ways. Much of our day-to-day discussion, here and in other forums, focuses on the next steps along the path to a world free of nuclear weapons. Most of us are clear about what we think they are: entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, for instance, or commencement of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty or the establishment of a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. Most of us also know the obstacles that are seen to be in the way of taking those steps. We have plenty of opportunities already to argue about all that; I do not think the value in the CEND initiative lies in rehashing familiar arguments. Instead, I hope that it could help us find new approaches. Are there new angles from which we can approach the familiar problems, which might help us unlock them? If the next steps we had previously identified are blocked for the foreseeable future, are there others we have not yet considered? Are there things we could do to improve the security context now, either in the general security environment or in terms of transparency and confidence-building measures that could build trust, reduce suspicion, ease tensions and clear the obstacles to resuming the immediate steps? Open discussions about nuclear-weapon States' doctrines and postures, for example, could reassure allies and adversaries alike that the threshold for the use of nuclear weapons remained high and provide an insight into each other's threat perceptions and other considerations on which they base their doctrines and postures.

In particular, I hope that the initiative could be an opportunity to look at disarmament through the other end of the telescope. We all talk about our shared goal of a world without nuclear weapons, but we do not tend to talk much about what that world would look like and, consequently, what we might have to do, working backwards, to bring it about. By way of illustration, I offer four questions that we might usefully begin to tackle through the initiative.

First: if nuclear weapons are essential for security now, what would guarantee security in world in which they had been given up? How would a world without nuclear weapons be different from the world that persisted in the decades before their invention, when world wars fought almost exclusively with conventional weapons claimed tens of millions of lives around the globe? If we can reach a common understanding of the military and security environment required to maintain peace and stability in a nuclear-weapon-free world, with undiminished and, preferably, enhanced security for all, we could start to map out the complementary steps required to reach it, along with the reduction and elimination of nuclear weapons.

Second: how would we ensure that State or non-State actors could not reacquire nuclear weapons once they had been given up by everyone else? How would we respond if they did? While nuclear weapons can be eliminated, the science behind them cannot be unlearned or the technology to build them forgotten. The possession of that knowledge and set of capabilities could lead to States positioning themselves as virtual nuclear-possessor States, which would be deeply destabilizing and lead to constant concern over a return to nuclear weapons. Is the current safeguards system, with the Additional Protocol at its

pinnacle, sufficient to guarantee that a nuclear-weapon-free world would stay that way? Would we need to find new ways of managing the nuclear fuel cycle? How could that be achieved in a non-discriminatory manner, without impacting the significant benefits of the peaceful uses of nuclear technology? Of course, work on nuclear disarmament verification is already under way, including through the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification that Dr. Ford referred to – it is an important contribution to nuclear disarmament – but thinking through what techniques and structures would need to be in place to manage a world without nuclear weapons is crucial to efforts to bring it about.

Third: working backwards, how would we prepare ourselves to take that final step to the elimination of nuclear weapons? It has been suggested that one of the key problems in nuclear disarmament is how stability and security are maintained at low numbers and how to get quickly from low numbers to zero. The proliferation risks could be even greater at that stage than they are at the current levels, given the marginal benefits to be accrued; verification and safeguards would be correspondingly even more critical.

Fourth, and finally: based on a better understanding of the nuclear-weapon-free world we are trying to create, what are the confidence-building and risk-reducing steps we can take today to start to make that a reality?

This is not to say that all these questions have to be answered as a precondition to nuclear disarmament. They are difficult, and inevitably our answers to them will evolve as we move along the path. But we cannot duck them, if we are serious about the total elimination of nuclear weapons. And the very discussion is part of creating an environment for nuclear disarmament. It should be clear, too, that these are questions that all States, not just nuclear-weapon States, have a role in helping to answer.

Mr. President, the United Kingdom welcomes the Creating an Environment for Nuclear Disarmament initiative and looks forward to contributing to it. It is a real opportunity for constructive, collaborative discussions about these intractable problems. No other forum currently exists where discussions can take place, and so the “Creating an Environment” working group proposed by the United States would, in our view, be a valuable addition to the disarmament landscape. I hope today’s discussion in the Conference on Disarmament can be a constructive contribution to establishing it.

The President: I wish to thank the Ambassador of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland for his remarks, and I will now open the floor to any delegation wishing to speak on the topic of creating an environment on nuclear disarmament. I will turn to the speakers’ list, then. First on my list is the representative of Pakistan.

Mr. Jadoon (Pakistan): Mr. President, allow me to begin by congratulating you on assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and assuring you of the full support and cooperation of my delegation.

We thank Dr. Christopher Ford, the United States Assistant Secretary of State for International Security and Non-Proliferation, for his opening remarks, introducing the Creating an Environment for Nuclear Disarmament (CEND) concept and the thinking behind the concept. We also thank the other speakers, the Ambassadors of the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Brazil, for their thoughtful contributions.

Mr. President, Pakistan can relate to the United States’ approach to the creation of an environment for nuclear disarmament, as we have consistently held the view that progress on arms control and disarmament cannot be delinked from the security challenges and concerns that force States to resort to nuclear deterrence for self-defence. As such, a dialogue on creating an environment for nuclear disarmament and the underlying issues that hamper this objective is indeed an essential one.

We agree that, for any serious effort towards arms control and disarmament, it is crucial to analyse the actual security conditions prevailing at the global and regional levels. For that reason, we believe that the geopolitical environments shaping the security perspectives of the key stakeholders, as well as conflict resolution, should be an important part of the conversations on creating an environment for nuclear disarmament. Conflicts exist not because of nuclear weapons. While there may be exceptions where a State’s

pursuit of nuclear weapons is driven primarily by considerations of status and power, in most cases States have been forced to rely on nuclear deterrence in the wake of existential threats to security, enduring conflicts, rivalry and mistrust.

We firmly believe that it is imperative to ensure that the conversations on this subject take place in the presence of all relevant stakeholders, since the security concerns of the States at the regional and global levels are interlinked. Moreover, the following aspects must constitute an integral part of any discussion on creating an environment for nuclear disarmament:

1. Security concerns and threat perceptions – covering traditional military threats, including nuclear as well as non-nuclear and non-military threats;
2. Efforts towards conflict resolution and addressing long-standing disputes;
3. Potential transparency and confidence-building measures. Pakistan believes that confidence-building measures and transparency measures should facilitate building of trust between States for them to take meaningful steps towards conflict resolution. Transparency and confidence-building measures could start with small steps that incrementally lead to more concrete agreements on restraint, avoidance of an arms race and arms limitation;
4. Regional asymmetries and destabilizing arms build-ups in both the strategic and conventional realms;
5. The nature of security doctrines, both offensive and defensive, and their role in strategic stability;
6. Role of extraregional players, their geopolitical objectives and the implications for global and regional strategic stability;
7. Discriminatory approaches in terms of application of non-proliferation standards and access to dual-use technology.

Mr. President, Pakistan views the United States proposal for the creation of an environment for nuclear disarmament as just outlined by the Assistant Secretary as an opportunity for all stakeholders to work constructively together towards addressing the underlying issues that have hampered meaningful progress on arms control and disarmament. We see it not as a precondition or prerequisite for progress on disarmament but as an unavoidable and essential part of that process.

Pakistan remains committed to the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world. We are ready to join negotiations towards this end in the Conference. The first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament agreed by consensus that, in the adoption of disarmament measures, the right of each State to security should be kept in mind, and at each stage of the disarmament process the objective would be undiminished security for all States at the lowest possible level of armaments and military forces.

Pakistan believes that nuclear disarmament can only be achieved as a cooperative and universally agreed undertaking, through a consensus-based process involving all the relevant stakeholders, resulting in equal and undiminished, if not increased, security for all States.

The President: I thank the representative of Pakistan for his remarks. I now give the floor to the representative of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Deyneko (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. President, colleagues, the Russian delegation welcomes Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Ford of the United States of America to the Conference on Disarmament. Mr. Ford is the second representative of Donald Trump's administration to speak at the Conference during the United States presidency. We consider this a sign of hope, demonstrating that Washington takes arms control issues seriously. It is encouraging that, unlike Ms. Poblete, the speaker today kept to a pragmatic tone, aimed at overcoming the divisions between nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon States. We are sure that, given his many years of diplomatic experience and in-depth knowledge of disarmament processes, Mr. Ford is capable of contributing to a resolution of the problem.

One example is the initiative of the United States to launch a new public-private partnership project, initially known as Creating the Conditions for Nuclear Disarmament. If we have correctly understood Mr. Ford, the proposal is to organize a series of track 1.5 dialogues that would bring together a small number of key players in the nuclear arena, including both government representatives and independent experts.

Distinguished colleagues, those of you who have taken part in the work of the First Committee of the General Assembly and events held from 2017 to 2020 under the review cycle of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons should be well aware of the position of Russia. The Russian delegation, at least following the entry into force of the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, has repeatedly pointed out that, after moving to new and significantly lower levels of strategic offensive arms, the possibilities for further reductions on a bilateral basis with the United States will be exhausted. In this regard, we have advocated the gradual inclusion in the disarmament efforts of Russia and the United States of the remaining nuclear-weapon States and of States with military nuclear capabilities. This was primarily a question of beginning multilateral dialogue on nuclear disarmament.

In principle, although this approach was stated in general terms, it had a lot in common with the initiative of the United States. However, the latter initiative raises many questions, including: who will decide on the range of participants? What criteria will be used to select them? How will the agenda, the programme of work and the list of speakers be drawn up? Who will prioritize the topics and the order of their consideration? How will the conclusions and recommendations be agreed and what status will they have? And so forth. Several of the answers were given in Mr. Ford's intervention, while others still need to be clarified.

By definition, no such questions or any others should arise concerning the thoughts we expressed about the British draft decision of the Conference. Here I will briefly recall their main point, which is to combine within a single subsidiary body of the Conference the three nuclear-related items on the Conference agenda. As we have said before, this would allow us to take a comprehensive view of the issue of nuclear disarmament, in all its aspects and considering all the factors affecting strategic stability and global security.

Our policy approach and an assessment of the overall situation of arms control, including with regard to the crisis around the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, was set out by the Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Sergey Lavrov, at the meeting of the Conference on 20 March, which you all witnessed.

I will personally add the following: that part at the end about factors reflects one of the fundamental principles of progress towards a nuclear-free world, enshrined, by the way, in the action plan agreed by consensus at the 2010 Review Conference. In general, the Russian idea is in line with the spirit if not the letter of action 6 of the plan. Not to mention that the outline we put forward essentially repeats the British proposal of 2016 for a programme of work of the Conference on Disarmament, which was supported by most delegations.

We thought that, in a context of accelerating erosion of the international arms control architecture, the launch of multilateral dialogue on nuclear disarmament, as called for by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, would be particularly relevant. I wish to emphasize that the Conference on Disarmament was not chosen at random. Owing to its profile, its mandate and the composition of its membership, which includes all the key players, the Geneva Conference is the optimal if not the only forum that can seek to resolve this pressing issue.

However, our invitation to engage in a substantive and professional discussion about the most critical problem in international security did not receive an adequate response from the Conference participants. Most of those here present chose a different option, to discuss only certain aspects of nuclear disarmament, individually and in isolation from the general strategic context and the tectonic changes occurring in the world. This is what all those who have taken the floor today have been talking about.

In conclusion, I would once again stress our commitment to serious dialogue on all Conference agenda items in a format agreed by the delegations. We emphasize our

determination to cooperate constructively with the United States presidency, with the six Presidents of the 2019 session and with all delegations in order to get the Conference back to substantive negotiations.

Lastly, I would like to add another couple of points: firstly, distinguished colleagues, all of us here in this chamber are parties to the Conference on Disarmament, established pursuant to a decision of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. Why should we reinvent the wheel? The Conference has all the necessary and sufficient conditions to begin work based on an agreed, balanced and comprehensive programme of work or on a mutually acceptable decision, including work on the subject of nuclear disarmament.

The President: I thank the representative of the Russian Federation for his remarks. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of France.

Mr. Hwang (France) (*spoke in French*): Thank you, Mr. President. Allow me, first of all, to welcome the presence today in the Conference on Disarmament of Christopher Ford. I thank the United States presidency for the opportunity to raise a subject of great importance to my country. This topic is the link between the changing strategic and security context and the issue of disarmament. In the face of new global challenges, the world needs effective multilateralism. That is why France continues to believe that the international community must invest more than ever in a vision in which power relations are regulated by law. We must redouble our efforts to preserve existing instruments for the control of conventional and nuclear weapons.

However, we cannot ignore the changes in our strategic environment. Early last year, we presented here in the Conference on Disarmament the “Strategic Review of Defence and National Security”. That Review depicts a deeply unstable and unpredictable multipolar environment characterized by a persistently high level of terrorist threat, simultaneous crises, the growing military assertiveness of established and emerging powers, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery, the weakening of multilateral frameworks and the acceleration of technological breakthroughs. These developments affect the capabilities of armed forces in all environments, including cyberspace, which has become a potential area of confrontation in its own right, and outer space, which is turning into one. The work of the Group of Governmental Experts, led by our Brazilian colleague, is informative in that regard. In recent years, we have seen a trivialization of the use of chemical weapons in the context of the conflict in Syria. Similarly, the biological risk continues to increase. The proliferation crisis in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea and the desire for nuclear proliferation on the part of some regional Powers is exposing us to the emergence of genuine military nuclear multipolarity.

The analysis described in the “Strategic Review” acknowledges the mounting tensions of all kinds and the complexity of our new strategic environment. And here I would like to say that this is no excuse for inaction. That is why your initiative, Mr. Ford, is timely; it is welcome and we believe that there is indeed potential for progress in our thinking and action. We must indeed be ready to meet the many challenges ahead of us in a responsible, realistic and determined manner, but also in a multilateral and consensual manner. For a simplistic approach to disarmament, an approach that ignores contemporary military realities, as well as technological breakthroughs, capability developments and new threats, cannot produce any concrete progress. Worse, it could be counterproductive and even dangerous.

Mr. Ford, you mentioned the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. I fully agree with your analysis and I would like to add that for us, as you know, this instrument is more than window dressing, it is a threat to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty insofar as it calls into question the spirit and the letter of that Treaty. At a time when the international security environment is continuing to deteriorate and the nuclear phenomenon is making a strong comeback, it is important to reaffirm unambiguously the decisive nature of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty for international security. That instrument remains the cornerstone of global strategic stability; it is an irreplaceable defence against the risk of nuclear proliferation. When it comes to nuclear disarmament specifically, we have a road

map that remains valid. The United States and Russia still possess 90 per cent of the world's nuclear weapons stockpile, and efforts to reduce it must continue. Those two countries must continue their efforts to preserve the new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty until 2021 and renew it until 2026, and start negotiations on a replacement treaty now. That road map also indicates the importance of the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which is a priority. France encourages those States that have not already done so to sign and ratify that instrument.

In addition, as you know, we believe negotiations should start without delay, here in this forum, on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, on the basis of document CD/1299 and the mandate contained therein. You mentioned the work on nuclear arms verification. We also believe that it is important for confidence-building and deserves to be continued, both in the framework of the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification and that of the Group of Governmental Experts, which is due to meet this month in Geneva.

To conclude, I would say that it is possible to undertake work on reducing the strategic risks associated with nuclear weapons on the basis of transparency in nuclear doctrines, dialogue between political and military leaders, crisis communication instruments and reassurance measures. Furthermore, as we approach the third session of the Preparatory Committee for the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the 2020 Review Conference, which coincides with the fiftieth anniversary of the entry into force of the Treaty, it is our collective responsibility to reaffirm the authority of the Treaty and to recall the achievements made within that framework. We want the 2020 NPT Review Conference to be a success.

France is convinced that only an approach based on a realistic analysis of our strategic environment, which could be achieved by your initiative, can help us to make progress towards disarmament, taking into account the principle of undiminished security for all. We must give credibility to our common ambition in disarmament and arms control, and reintroduce into our community the strategic culture that has been lacking in recent years.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of France for his remarks. I want to turn the discussion over to our panellists for them to respond, because there have been some very interesting comments, thoughts and questions that have been raised, and then I will turn back to the speakers' list. Dr. Ford, would you like to respond to anything that has been said?

Mr. Ford (United States of America): Thank you very much, Mr. President. I would say, first of all, on the whole, listening to the contributions that you all have been making these last few minutes, that I am very encouraged by the degree of thought that has clearly gone into these questions, and I see this as a sign of hope for what can be done if, or rather when, we are able to bring partner countries together to have these kinds of discussions on an ongoing basis to try to address a particular aspect of the many challenges that lie in front of us along the pathway to the ultimate objective of nuclear disarmament. A very hopeful sign it is, then, and clearly, I think, a positive one.

With respect to the questions posed to me by my Russian colleague, I must confess that, given Russia's decision to pull out of the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification, I had expected the discussion to be a bit more critical. Had it been so, I would have been prepared to follow my colleague from last week in pointing out the degree to which some of the very conditions that it is our objective to try to work the international community past are ones that, to some degree, are the creation of Russian behaviour. But I was pleased at the seriousness with which the questions were posed – and I look forward to continuing this discussion with our Russian colleagues.

I would say simply, for the moment – although I do hope in the next few weeks to be able to say something in more detail about how we envision the operationalization of the Creating an Environment for Nuclear Disarmament (CEND) concept – that in terms of who the participants are, no one can or should be forced to be part of this. We envision it as an entirely voluntary exercise. As I have said, the price of admission, if you will, is simply a

commitment to honest, good-faith dialogue in trying to find ways forward that help ameliorate the conditions that stand in the way of more disarmament progress, so I hope that it will be broad on that basis.

In terms of what its agenda is likely to be, I would suggest that the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification model, notwithstanding the non-participation of Russia and China, offers a pretty good example. What was done in that context was to bring the participating countries together for a plenary session at which it was decided what the agenda needed to be. It was not something that outside participants were in any position to force upon them – it was bringing together well-intentioned experts with a mission of looking at somehow making progress on the disarmament verification challenge, and they got together in order to identify which questions it would be most interesting and valuable for them to try to address. They then proceeded to build the agenda for the Partnership on the basis of those initial discussions.

To our eye, that seems like a pretty good model for how to approach this in the CEND initiative. We will certainly try to come to the table from the United States with our own thinking about what the right questions are to try to answer, but this is not a situation in which we either can or should dictate those results to anyone. We hope that our suggestions will be taken seriously, just as we will take others' suggestions seriously. It is to be hoped that, through a collaborative process of agenda setting, this group will be able to identify the very issue items and priorities to which our Russian colleague referred. Frankly, thinking in terms of United States-Russian history, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty itself stands to me as a good example of how it is possible to think constructively about shared interests and finding a way that serves the massive collective benefit of mankind, notwithstanding the particular challenges that there may be in the day-to-day relationship.

The Treaty of course was negotiated at a time of very great cold war rivalries, but Moscow and Washington were the lead drafters for most of the process and did extremely good work together, notwithstanding all the other problems that they had. That perhaps is a model that we can import into the CEND process, where I hope that the dialogue in which we will be engaged together will also be an example of how shared interests can be built upon in this kind of dialogue process, even if we are not, at least initially, able to solve all the other problems that beset us. I thank all of you for your constructive engagement already on these issues, and I think this is a great sign of what we can expect from this working group process.

The President: Thank you, Dr. Ford. Ambassador Gabriëlse, would you like the floor?

Mr. Gabriëlse (Netherlands): Thank you, Mr. President. First of all, I thank the colleagues for their constructive interventions. I think one objective of Creating an Environment for Nuclear Disarmament seems to have been reached – namely, starting a constructive dialogue. As I said in my intervention, we see it as a bottom-up approach, so this is the beginning of a dialogue. We hope that we will continue the process with the participation of scholars and other participants outside this room. I think this is welcome.

I also noted that States parties to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and States not parties thereto have intervened. That is also very positive. With respect to not making progress in the Conference on Disarmament, I am tempted to react to the Russian delegation, but let us not go into an evaluation – it is just to say that we share the disappointment that we could not have that discussion that we are all looking for and hoping to have in the subsidiary bodies. It was heartening, however, that there was so much support and also that Minister Lavrov gave his support to the subsidiary bodies and the discussions therein. I think this is a good start and I want to thank the colleagues and the President who made it happen. Thank you.

The President: I thank you, Ambassador Gabriëlse. I should note that, unfortunately, Ambassador De Aguiar Patriota has had to leave. He is chairing another important meeting at this moment. Ambassador Liddle, would you like to add anything?

Mr. Liddle (United Kingdom): Thank you, Mr. President. Perhaps just one remark. Like previous speakers, I am very encouraged by the beginnings of this discussion that we have had today. I think on the question of the appropriate forum for this, my hope for Creating an Environment for Nuclear Disarmament would not be that it would replace the Conference on Disarmament or try to supplant it in any way. The Conference has an important role in discussing these issues, but we must not forget that the Conference is primarily a negotiating forum and that our business is to negotiate the instruments and the measures that will take us further along the pathway to nuclear disarmament. I therefore think the idea that a discussion on these sorts of wider issues in the Conference must necessarily supplant negotiations or technical work on important steps towards, for example, a fissile material cut-off treaty or negative security assurances would be very unfortunate, and if that is what the Russian delegation meant, then that would be a pity.

This is a very important discussion to have – it is important for the Conference to play a role in it, but I think the model of doing it elsewhere with the engagement of more States but also experts and civil society and other people not involved in the delegations in this room would be a very important initiative.

The President: Thank you, Ambassador Liddle. I will now return to the list of speakers. The next speaker on the list is the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Ali Abadi (Islamic Republic of Iran): Thank you very much. First, I just wanted to emphasize the mandate of the Conference on Disarmament and the need to preserve its structure in order to negotiate disarmament, as we all hope to have a nuclear-weapon-free world.

Second, I wanted to repeat that most of the 13 practical steps and 22-point action plan on nuclear disarmament agreed to in the Final Documents of the 2000 and 2010 Review Conferences have not been implemented. Those agreed measures continue to be valid until their objective is realized. We are not in a policy vacuum. We need to fulfil the obligations that have already been taken on. But we are deeply concerned that the objective of nuclear disarmament has not yet been realized and that article VI of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty has not been implemented. Under article VI, the nuclear-weapon States have undertaken to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to nuclear disarmament. We regret that the negotiations on effective measures relating to nuclear disarmament have not been pursued by the nuclear-weapon States, in non-compliance with article VI. The continued failure of the nuclear-weapon States to meet their legal obligation under article VI of the Treaty to negotiate effective measures on nuclear disarmament has created a crisis of confidence in the capacity and ability of the Treaty to deliver on its promise of nuclear disarmament and has put the Treaty under great stress.

The implementation of article VI obligations is not conditional. I therefore re-emphasize that the unconditional nature of the nuclear disarmament obligation in article VI was clarified in the Final Document of the 2000 Review Conference, in which the nuclear-weapon States agreed that they have an unequivocal obligation to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals, leading to nuclear disarmament. We are concerned about the lack of progress in the implementation of the action plan on nuclear disarmament adopted by the 2010 Review Conference. Urgent action by the nuclear-weapon States is required to implement the steps leading to nuclear disarmament agreed to in the Final Documents of the 2000 and 2010 Review Conferences. The nuclear-weapon States, in particular the States with the largest nuclear arsenals, have a special responsibility to lead efforts to achieve nuclear disarmament, but we are witnessing a clear setback in this respect.

Discussing policies that could prevent the use of nuclear weapons and lessen the danger of nuclear war were the other steps that the nuclear-weapon States committed to make progress on. Have such discussions taken place at all? If yes, what has the result been? The cessation of all nuclear test explosions constitutes an effective nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation measure. It contributes to the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and the process of nuclear disarmament, leading to the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. In this regard, the 2000 Review Conference recognized the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty as a core element of the international nuclear disarmament and

non-proliferation regime. In accordance with action 10 of the 2010 action plan, all nuclear-weapon States undertook to ratify the Comprehensive-Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. The nuclear-weapon States have a special responsibility to encourage annex 2 countries to accede to the Treaty, in particular those that have not acceded to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and continue to operate nuclear facilities without proper safeguards.

Without addressing the concern regarding the maintenance by certain nuclear-weapon States of the operational capacity to resume test explosions on short notice or conduct nuclear-weapon tests by computer simulations and other alternatives, the objective of the Test-Ban Treaty to end the development of advanced new types of nuclear weapons and qualitative imbalances in existing nuclear weapons would not be effectively realized. Modernization plans and the build-up of nuclear weapons present a dangerous obstacle to the nuclear disarmament process. Certain nuclear-weapon States are engaged in massive nuclear-weapon modernization projects. They are also developing new types of nuclear weapons for new military missions. Policies that have nuclear deterrence as a main objective and that are relied on for security are thus the main constraints now. It is therefore necessary to change the military doctrines as part of which weapons of mass destruction, specifically nuclear weapons, are relied on for national security.

So, we are not in a policy vacuum. We have article VI. We have an action plan that was developed and agreed to in 2000 and re-emphasized in 2010. We are waiting for the objective of a nuclear-weapon-free world and real progress in that respect. But we are witnessing, on the contrary, the investment of billions of dollars in the modernization of nuclear weapons. And very clearly, even in these meetings, there are expressions of reliance on doctrines that rely on nuclear weapons as a security doctrine.

The President: I now give the floor to the Ambassador of China.

Mr. Li Song (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Thank you Mr. President. Since the Conference opened today, many speakers have spoken in depth and extensively about the international security environment, the role of the Conference and arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation policies. Since your assumption of the presidency, you have led all parties in an exchange of views on the strategic security situation and today's topic, the concept of creating an environment for nuclear disarmament, which has resulted in some particularly lively discussions. I would like to share the views of China on these issues, from the following perspectives.

First, there is the relationship between the international security environment and a country's way of thinking about strategic security policies. In the 1990s, the Conference successfully negotiated and reached agreement on the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, and it extended the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons indefinitely. The system for international disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation system was as a result continuously improved and strengthened. The international community made a concerted effort to finally achieve a world free of nuclear weapons and to maintain lasting peace and security. These achievements were mainly attributable to the end of the cold war, as the cold war mentality was no longer the basic reasoning followed by the major powers in formulating and implementing their strategic security, arms control and weapons development policies. In the ensuing two decades, the international security environment underwent a complex evolution and patterns of international relations and the strategic security policies of many countries underwent profound changes.

Looking at the world today, we see that unilateralism and protectionism are continually on the rise, the international multilateral order and global system of governance face challenges and the world now faces critical choices: unilateralism or multilateralism; confrontation or dialogue; and isolation or openness. These negative developments have left the international community at a loss and have resulted in greater instability and uncertainty in the international arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation processes. The basic reason for this is a return to the cold war mentality. Cold war thinking has once again become the basis upon which the major powers scrutinize the international security environment and formulate their strategic security policies. In the face of the new changes in the international security environment, it is useless to level accusations or complaints; all

sides must do some soul searching and ask what changes their own country's security policies have brought about in the international security environment. What new changes will their country's foreign policy in respect of security policy bring about in the international security environment?

Mr. President, the changes in the international environment are a reflection of how the international situation has changed in the field of strategic security. They are bound to lead to some profound reflection on the part of all parties. They also make it all the more necessary for all States to hold frank and in-depth discussions on the objectives of global strategic stability, maintenance of international peace and security and the promotion of disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation. China believes that the more our times are marked by such changes, the more all countries must together advocate multilateralism, faithfully honour their international commitments and defend the authority and effectiveness of multilateral mechanisms, and the more all countries must engage more deeply in dialogue and cooperation, based on mutual respect, equality and trust, and facilitate new international understanding among all States in the fields of strategic security and arms control. It is all the more necessary to show sufficient wisdom and reason, to positively seek common ground while respecting differences and to strengthen the spirit of cooperation.

These considerations leave us convinced and determined; China is thus actively committed to maintaining and strengthening the authority and effectiveness of the Conference, it actively encourages the Conference to re-establish subsidiary bodies this year, to start substantive work at an early date. We are opposed to the politicization that tends to interfere with or even undermine the normal operation of the Conference. We have actively promoted the sustained and improved communication among the five nuclear States to maintain strategic stability and to strengthen the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) mechanism and to strengthen coordination and cooperation. We have taken part in the preparatory process for the tenth Review Conference of the NPT and are committed to working with all member States to ensure the success of this important event, which marks the fiftieth anniversary of the Treaty's entry into force. In our view, in the fields I just mentioned, the various parties have different views and concerns, different interests and requirements, and that is normal. As long as we all insist on conducting a dialogue based on equality and mutual respect and seeking cooperation on the basis of the greatest common denominator, with the shared objective of maintaining and strengthening existing international mechanisms, we can prevent differences from becoming obstacles to unity and cooperation and avoid divisions among United Nations member States in the fields of international security, arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. China believes that the reform of the existing global security governance system should not be carried out over and over again, nor should we start from scratch. It should keep pace with the times, strengthening and perfecting the existing mechanisms.

As for the topic we are discussing today, the concept of creating an environment for nuclear disarmament put forward by the delegation of the United States, I think that within the arms control mechanisms in the United Nations framework, including within the Conference and the NPT, this topic will in future be the subject of some lively discussions. We see the United States position as a contribution to implementation of article VI of the NPT and to the international nuclear disarmament process. I have also listened attentively to the comments made just now by our colleagues about the ideas put forward by the United States. I very much agree with a number of the positions expressed by the delegations of the Russian Federation, France and the Islamic Republic of Iran, which spoke as a member of the non-aligned movement. We believe that, in the new international environment, efforts must be made to promote the international nuclear disarmament process, paying attention fully to the process's continuity and succession. The international community, and especially the large number of non-nuclear-weapon States, but also the nuclear-weapon States, has for decades now made joint efforts to promote nuclear disarmament, so we must build on this foundation. That is why the statements just made by some of our colleagues mentioned the commitments made by all parties in the NPT review process and also mentioned that the two countries possessing the largest nuclear weapon arsenals still have a special and primary responsibility in the field of nuclear disarmament. They also mentioned that all members of the Conference are still making very many efforts

to advocate and support nuclear disarmament, in accordance with the Conference's agenda. That being the case, I think that, if everyone has the sincere will to promote nuclear disarmament, we should continue making full use of existing mechanisms and continue these discussions in forums, including those of the Conference. For example, we have recently worked actively to promote the establishment of subsidiary bodies within the Conference. If we had established a subsidiary body for the topic of nuclear disarmament last week, much of the content of our current discussion could be addressed within the framework of that subsidiary body.

In short, China is ready to assume its responsibilities as a party to the NPT. It is willing to work together with the vast number of States that are members of the NPT to always bear in mind and continue to conscientiously implement the commitments made as part of the NPT review conferences. We are also prepared to work together with the member States of the Conference to make full use of this forum, the sole multilateral forum for negotiation and discussion of disarmament, to make our contribution to push forward towards the common goals that we share today.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of China for his remarks. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Australia.

Ms. Mansfield (Australia): Thank you very much indeed, Mr. President, and my thanks, too, to Dr. Ford and our colleagues for their presentations this afternoon. I think it is really useful to breathe some fresh air in – even if we cannot open the curtains, we can bring some new ideas in. It is always positive to encourage good discussions, and anything that is an initiative that seeks to build trust and get us talking, even if it is about small, incremental steps in the right direction, is a good thing.

I would be interested, too, in comments you might have about increasing diversity within the Conference on Disarmament. I think that, as the proposal you have put forward is inclusive, open to anyone to put their hands up to join in, it would be great to ensure that there is geographic diversity – you have talked about nuclear-weapon-States, non-nuclear States and nuclear-possessor States – but also diversity more generally. If I might mention it, it does look like an all-male panel from where I am sitting. Being inclusive, bringing in views, has got to be good thing. There clearly is a degree of sclerosis, which is not to turn our backs on history and not to say that there are not some very good things that the Conference has achieved. But I do not think that it makes sense to keep doing the same thing and expecting a different result. If this is a way of bringing some fresh approaches, I would be very interested in hearing the further information that Dr. Ford is going to bring to us in due course about some of the practical ways we could take matters forward. Thank you very much indeed to all of you for your terrific contributions today.

The President: I would like to thank the Ambassador of Australia for her remarks. Let me now pass the microphone over to the Ambassador of Japan.

Mr. Takamizawa (Japan): Thank you, Mr. President, and thank you, Dr. Ford, for making a presentation on Creating an Environment for Nuclear Disarmament. To be frank, Creating an Environment for Nuclear Disarmament has been around for almost a year, so I would like to hear a much more concrete proposal. Having said that, I think it is really important for countries to provide creative input or to work in a manner that can create a richer and much more inclusive and focused agenda, which is different from that of other disarmament machinery, including the Conference on Disarmament.

The significance of the Conference may be the broadly defined and focused agenda. We can also utilize creative input from scholars, government officials and academia and the expertise of the United Nations disarmament machinery. This is a really important endeavour – the question is whether this enterprise or initiative can be sustained towards 2020 or beyond. That is the first point. I really want to support this idea, but I would like to propose some points. You have already touched on them, but I would like to reiterate their importance.

The first is what you just talked about: the implementation plan. Implementation is very important. Creating an Environment for Nuclear Disarmament should lead to

something specific, to implementing something that makes a meaningful contribution to nuclear disarmament. That is the first point.

The second is the importance of the interactive nature of the working group. I understand that we really do not know how hard it has been for the nuclear-weapon States to reduce their stocks of nuclear weapons or how to ensure the safety and security of nuclear weapons and how to maintain a nuclear posture, to maintain proper deterrence. But what we really want to know is that it has an interactive nature or involves information-sharing or discussions, taking questions seriously, to respond to our concerns or our ignorance. This kind of setting can be a good vehicle to increase the level of understanding of nuclear postures and doctrines and so forth, so I really want the discussion in the working group to be of an interactive nature.

Finally, a further point concerns the timeline and the phased approach. And I think that drawing up a list of priorities would be important. Highlighting which topics should be given priority is a difficult element, but I hope that a timeline is clear enough for the participants to participate actively. It is very important to have outreach activities or to share information with those unable to participate in the working group's discussions.

In the case of the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification, I see a lot of progress has been made from the beginning to the current status. Such phased or inclusive or inclusive approaches should be maintained or added to this initiative. And I really want to be active in interacting with this initiative, so that we have a very good outcome in the coming years.

With regard to the Conference, I think that we can discuss this issue if the United States is willing to share the progress made by Creating an Environment for Nuclear Disarmament or the "Creating an Environment" working group in the Conference or other forums. The principle Dr. Ford has given a presentation on is a really good idea that the Conference can utilize or not, so that we can make substantive progress towards nuclear disarmament. Thank you, Mr. President and Dr. Ford.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Japan for his remarks. Before continuing with the speakers' list, I would like to turn the floor over to our panellists, who will respond to some of the issues that have been raised.

Mr. Ford (United States of America): Thank you for all these interventions. With respect to some of the questions that were just raised a moment ago, I would completely agree that it will be very important to be as interactive as can be in the Creating an Environment for Nuclear Disarmament (CEND) process. I am certainly looking forward to that. I think that is a very good and a very productive way to explore things, like what we are experimenting with today, to some degree. Incidentally, I wanted to thank the President of this great assembly for his creativity in organizing and making possible a more interactive format here today, for which I am very grateful.

I would agree also that outreach from the "Creating an Environment" working group process to those who do not happen to be there or perhaps who are still deciding whether to participate or who have for some reason opted not to do so – outreach to let them know what ideas are bubbling up through that process – is also a very good suggestion. And I would completely agree that it is important to have the CEND process be one that is sustainable, not just up to 2020 but, of course, far thereafter. It would benefit from having an independent existence; it should not be seen as just an institution connected to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty for a number of reasons, not the least of which is the fact that it needs to include participants that are not Treaty parties if we are to have the kind of dialogue about the future of nuclear weapons in the world that we would like to have. We probably very much agree with the comments in that respect.

Most broadly, as I indicated before, I have been very encouraged by the tone and tenor of these discussions here today. I had expected a little bit more of an allergic reaction to creativity and talking about disarmament, and it has been a pleasure to see less of that allergic reaction than I had expected. I am also glad for the comments of our Chinese colleague about the degree to which, as he was describing it, the Conference on Disarmament's achievements in the 1990s – I had made the point that the arms reductions

since the end of the cold war stemmed from a change in the underlying security conditions – in some respect, also stem from that great strategic windfall of the easing of tensions and strengthening of trust that were part of the end of the cold war. That is an important thing to bear in mind, and I think we should take that as a point of inspiration, if you will, as we think about how to develop the kind of dialogue and discussion that will help make the world a place in which more of that sort of progress will be possible.

In that respect, I am, finally, reminded that I was remiss in not responding to another one of my Russian colleague's questions about the status of the recommendations that would come out of the working group. My answer to that is that I do not know that we should try to dictate that in advance. We would have to see what the participants themselves think should be done with whatever it is that they come to decide. But I did want to make the point that I think that this process, whether or not it comes to consensus recommendations, for example, can still be enormously valuable, partly in order to develop ideas that would then feed into other forums and into discussions here at the Conference or perhaps the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty review process.

The opportunity for that kind of dialogue that we envision in the "Creating an Environment" working group is an opportunity for countries to brainstorm ideas, to bring together experts and non-traditional stakeholders, as our British colleague has mentioned, to come up with more creative thinking on these subjects. That itself can be something that gets fed into other forums and other discussions to enrich those activities and make them more productive as well. That is a very viable way to think about it, and I think the Dutch colloquium shows the way to do that already, as it itself will bring together academic participants to think through some very thorny and fascinating intellectual challenges in order to feed whatever insights they may have into the CEND process itself as well as into these broader discussions. This could be a model, in a sense, for how all these things can work together and reinforce each other and make this entire process one of which I hope that we will end up being very proud. Thank you very much.

The President: Thank you, Dr. Ford. Ambassador Gabriëlse, you have the floor.

Mr. Gabriëlse (Netherlands): Thank you, Mr. President, and thanks to colleagues again for their interventions. With respect to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty review cycle, the intention was not for the Creating an Environment for Nuclear Disarmament process to be an alternative or something of that sort. Having this constructive dialogue could, I think, be an addition; it can have a positive impact on the Treaty review cycle. I fully agree with the Chinese colleague when he referred to "seeking common ground and the need to overcome differences". He also mentioned the importance of dialogue among the five nuclear-weapon States, which can help both the Treaty review cycle and this process. As for outreach, I agree with Dr. Ford that it will take place. I hope that you can also see the colloquium as a form of outreach – it is an invitation for many actors in this room and outside it to be part of the process.

With respect to the subsidiary bodies, yes, I agree with our colleague from China: it is a missed opportunity that we could not have the continued dialogue in the subsidiary bodies in this house. Unfortunately, it went as it went, but this dialogue is constructive and really good. On the timeline: there is no timeline, since we see it as a bottom-up approach, meaning that it will be difficult to have a timeline in advance. I also do not see a direct link with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty review process of 2020 or 2025. As a bottom-up approach is being taken, we have to see how it develops, including over time.

The President: Thank you, Ambassador Gabriëlse. Ambassador Liddle, would you like to make some remarks?

Mr. Liddle (United Kingdom): Thank you, Mr. President. I agree with everything that has been said so far but would just emphasize two of those points, I think. One is the point on inclusivity and diversity: this has to be a very inclusive, transparent process that brings in all sorts of different perspectives. And to echo the point that the Ambassador of Japan made, which was that as well as being an interesting forum for discussing more general ideas about how nuclear disarmament is impacted by the external environment, it should also lead to tangible proposals and outcomes which could then indeed come back to the Conference on Disarmament or other bodies for further technical work to bring them to

fruition. I would hope, then, that it would be a sort of ideas factory that would help to contribute to the overall disarmament process.

Mr. Ford (United States of America): My apologies. I am taking advantage of the interactivity here. I neglected to say that the point about the breadth and diversity of participation in the "Creating an Environment" working group process is a very important one. Here is where I would suggest that many of you can be very helpful – I am just guessing but I imagine that there are participants whose role in this process would be enormously valuable who are less likely to be swayed to become involved and to add that value if I am the one asking them than if it is one of you all, so if you think this is a valuable piece of the puzzle, I would encourage you to be evangelists for involvement to make sure that we get the diversity of perspective and position and country of origin or whatever else it may be – that it would be very valuable to have. I would thus ask for and encourage your help in making sure that promise of the process is fulfilled, as we all hope it will be.

The President: Thank you very much. I will now return to the list of speakers. The next speaker is the Ambassador of Mexico.

Ms. Flores Liera (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Mr. President. This is the first time I have taken the floor under your presidency, so allow me to congratulate you and offer you the cooperation of Mexico in the exercise of your duties. We also thank Dr. Ford for being here today and for presenting this initiative, which aims to promote dialogue. We also thank the speakers, Ambassador De Aguiar Patriota, Ambassador Gabriëlse and Ambassador Liddle, for their comments, which are undoubtedly enriching this meeting. Mexico agrees that, in an environment where tensions are rising, dialogue and multilateral initiatives are the only options we have for finding solutions to common challenges, and so we are very grateful for this initiative precisely because it allows us to try to understand one other and progress towards a common goal.

I would simply like to make two points, since we see this process, as you have mentioned, as an additional input that is not linked to the work of the Conference on Disarmament but which could eventually result in progress; however, the mandate of the Conference is of course clear, and discussions will be conducted in another forum, as indicated. So I will not miss this opportunity, Mr. President, to encourage you to continue your efforts so that we can make progress in drawing up a programme of work for this year in the Conference on Disarmament.

My second point, which has basically been answered by the speakers, was: what is the relationship between this process and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) review conference cycle? Dr. Ford has already told us that they are separate. Obviously, the two will be linked; but I would like to stress the importance of the period ahead, because in 2020 we will review the implementation of the NPT, and we have made practically no progress on article VI. Therefore, I believe that if this dialogue can have any positive effect, it is specifically to influence understandings that will allow us to reaffirm the validity, importance and central role of the NPT and, in this context, article VI.

So, basically, the last question I want to ask is about the colloquium, which will be taking place on the initiative of the Netherlands, because this will be the first space for us to discuss this process openly and to present initiatives. Ambassador Gabriëlse told us that invitations will be sent to academics and a wide audience and that some topics have already been chosen for discussion. I would like to ask: what will the next steps be? How could a State submit an initiative or ideas for dialogue? What follow-up might there be, and how could those ideas be translated into concrete initiatives that would allow us to make progress within the framework of the NPT review process? We would like to thank you once again for this discussion and we hope to continue to make progress in the framework of the colloquium that we will soon be holding.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Mexico for her remarks and for the kind words addressed to the President. I now give the floor to the representative of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Deyneko (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Distinguished colleagues, I think you are very well aware that Russia has, for a long time now, been consistently and insistently advocating interactive dialogue at the Conference on Disarmament on any issue related to its mandate. I would therefore like to welcome Assistant Secretary of State Ford's stance in favour of such a dialogue. I have one small comment in that regard, since Mr. Ford touched on the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty.

Our question about how to agree on conclusions and recommendations was not an idle one, and I will illustrate it with the example of the Treaty. The United States of America is accusing Russia of possessing a missile with a prohibited range of 500 to 5,500 km. That is the claim of the American delegation. We respond by saying, and missile flight tests have confirmed our statements, that it has a maximum range of 480 km. That is an example of how we can see the same problem differently. And neither the United States nor those colleagues who have stated in this chamber that they have their own independent sources demonstrating that the missile falls under the provisions of the Treaty and must be destroyed have provided specific data with an accuracy to within even 10 km, showing for example that the Russian missile can travel 550 or 1,050 or 2,050 km. Without that, any talk of threats to transatlantic security is empty words. That was by way of an example.

I do not now want to get into a discussion on a matter which has long been part of our bilateral relations with the United States and a subject of dialogue. We are not intending to continue that discussion. But I do have a question. Mr. Ford, does your intervention constitute an open invitation to States parties to the Conference, all States parties without exception, to join your initiative?

The President: I thank the representative of the Russian Federation for his remarks. Is there any other State that would like to take the floor to discuss this subject? The representative of Cuba has the floor.

Mr. Delgado Sánchez (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you, Mr. President. First of all, we would like to express our appreciation for the respectful and pragmatic way in which the panellists have addressed the Conference on Disarmament. This is the kind of professional dialogue that should form part of the way ahead. Although words cannot be dissociated from facts, nor from the general context of action by States, as more than one colleague here has rightly said, we cannot talk about efforts aimed at disarmament while we increase our defence budgets. In 2017, 1.74 trillion dollars was poured into military spending, the highest figure since the end of the cold war. Humanity continues to be threatened by the existence of approximately 14,400 nuclear weapons, of which 3,750 are deployed and almost 2,000 are on operational alert. The modernization of the nuclear arsenal to increase its lethality itself undermines efforts to reduce nuclear weapons, especially when some 100 warheads of this type would be enough to cause a nuclear winter and put an end to humanity.

Cuba supports full implementation of and compliance with the obligations contained in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and, while it views innovative ideas with positive encouragement, it believes that the lack of progress in fulfilling these Treaty obligations is due not to a lack of innovative ideas, but rather to a lack of political will on the part of States. We agree that the international community cannot remain passive or silent on the importance of full compliance with the Treaty on the basis of all its pillars, without cherry-picking, and, in particular, in compliance with the nuclear-weapon States' obligation to move towards complete nuclear disarmament.

We agree that we must build an atmosphere of trust and, especially, not destroy existing trust so, while dialogue per se is undoubtedly positive, it would not appear to be helpful to reinterpret clearly established international obligations or to ignore existing forums, especially when there is evidence that certain nuclear-weapon States are strengthening the role of nuclear weapons in their defence and security doctrines. These doctrines show that such States are increasingly ready to consider the use of nuclear weapons, even as so-called responses – and here I quote – to strategic non-nuclear threats.

We have no doubt that nuclear disarmament is a critical disarmament issue, so we must be very careful when designing new formats for it and above all pay due attention to timing. When implementing these initiatives, we must, in our view, avoid steering debates

towards our national priorities and objectives and ignoring inclusive multilateralism, because this could turn a dialogue into a monologue and the monologue into yet another unilateral imposition, which would not help the very endeavour that the panellists wished to reflect in their statements. We sincerely thank them for their comments on these issues and have noted with interest all the points raised by panellists and colleagues here today.

The President: The next speaker on my list is the Ambassador of Spain.

Mr Herráiz España (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you, Mr. President, and we would also like to thank Dr. Ford for the presentation he has just given us on this initiative, which we already knew about, but which in any case seems to be a breath of fresh air in a landscape devoid of concrete proposals and initiatives and against a backdrop of international tensions and difficulties regarding security and strategic stability with which, unfortunately, we are all very familiar. The truth is that this initiative is welcome because it seeks to include the security dimension in the debate on disarmament expectations.

We have always understood that a realistic approach to disarmament must include not only a security dimension but also a humanitarian dimension, and we are of course pleased this afternoon to see that some delegations that defend the humanitarian aspect of disarmament with extraordinary enthusiasm are also, fortunately, prepared to take part in this initiative which contains a security dimension. I believe that this variety, this heterogeneity, this richness of participation gives cause for optimism that this initiative will permit constructive dialogue in good faith, because I believe that multilateralism, as the only option for a hope of disarmament, needs to incorporate this good faith and inclusive participation. Let's see what we can get out of this without causing any negative overlap with the Conference on Disarmament. I believe that this initiative may have a complementary value, a value of enrichment, and that it is an opportunity for us. I think that all countries have to recognize it as another opportunity. We will see if it is satisfactory, but I believe that to discount in advance the constructive possibilities that it offers is a course of action which, given the dearth of initiatives we have today, would certainly not be a good one to follow.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Spain for his remarks. Is there any other delegation that would like to take the floor under this subject matter? If not, I will turn the microphone over to our panellists for their closing comments.

Mr. Ford (United States of America): Thank you, Mr. President. With respect to the question presented by our Russian colleague – of course, you will not be surprised to know that I am personally, strongly, of the view that the collapse of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty as a result of Russia's violations is one of the very unfortunate conditions in the security environment that makes it harder than it should be to think about the future. It did not have to be this way and it is terribly unfortunate that it is this way. The Treaty was of course the first and only arms control agreement ever to eliminate an entire class of delivery systems, and seeing it fall apart like this as a result of Russia's violations is indeed a very unfortunate thing for the entirety of the disarmament enterprise, as well as for arms control in particular. But in response to his question about to whom this process is envisioned to be open, I would repeat what I said before about the price of admission simply being a willingness to engage in good faith in honest dialogue about these sorts of things. We do not want to be summarily ruling out anyone willing to approach these things in that spirit and have a serious engagement with other parties on how to devise ways to make the security environment one in which it is more possible than before to imagine moving forward on these issues towards the ultimate vision that so many countries share and is expressed in article VI of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, albeit not exclusively there, and in the preamble to the Treaty.

With respect to the question from Mexico about the relationship between Creating an Environment for Nuclear Disarmament (CEND) and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty processes, I would say that they are separate but not unrelated, and while it is definitely the case that it would be a good thing either way to proceed with something like the CEND process and build that kind of dialogue, I also would very much like to see it moving forward in such a way as to provide positive feedback for the Treaty review process. I think this can be very complementary and I certainly hope that we will have this process

well under way significantly in advance of the 2020 Review Conference, so that it can be clear to all what is under way here. I would thus encourage countries to come together with that objective, among many others, in mind. And I would say that for States that happen to be parties to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty – and not all are, of course – keeping the objective of making these two initiatives, these two efforts, complementary is a very important one because it can help lead us back to what I believe Ambassador De Aguiar Patriota referred to as a renewal of vows under the Treaty. That is one of the things that I would love to see come out of the 2020 process, and I think the focus on a viable, realistic and honest disarmament path forward that the initiative Creating an Environment for Nuclear Disarmament can help provide can be one of the things that can get us to that kind of renewal of vows.

In our view, it is very important to remember all the benefits that the Treaty has brought over the years: its security benefits in preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons, which are security benefits that accrue to all States parties, its benefits in providing a strong foundation for the peaceful sharing of nuclear technology and its benefits as the foundation, frankly, for being able to move forward in the disarmament arena as well, because of course it will be very difficult to imagine any future for disarmament if it were not quite clear that the institutions of the non-proliferation regime were robust enough to keep new arrivals from getting into the nuclear-weapon business. I therefore see the Treaty as a foundation for all that and would say that it is very important for all of us to remember all those benefits that it provides in those multiple ways, to reaffirm our commitment to the Treaty as part of that renewal of vows and then, of course, to rededicate ourselves to making sure that all this works over the next half century at least as well as it has worked over the last half century. If we can do that we will have succeeded indeed in 2020, and I hope and think that the CEND initiative can provide additional input to help make that work and can have its own independent viability as we work together to try to find ways forward in the disarmament arena in the years ahead, not necessarily only through the treaty process.

Thank you once again, Mr. President, for your indulgence with me in this process. I found it enormously useful and I am grateful for all the interaction that we have been privileged to have today.

The President: Thank you, Dr. Ford. Ambassador Gabriëlse, you have the floor.

Mr. Gabriëlse (Netherlands): I thank the colleagues for this interactive dialogue. With respect to the question from our colleague from Mexico, the initiative was launched a year ago in Annecy. For the colloquium that we are organizing, we mainly act as a facilitator of dialogue, broader dialogue, so scholars will be brought in. We have no plan for follow-up, but the colloquium itself might discuss it, so let's see what comes out of it. What we have on the table is what we heard today – a proposal to establish a working group or groups and to take the dialogue further. As we see it as a bottom-up approach, however, we do not know exactly how the process and the discussion will develop, but we hope that with the colloquium and as facilitators, we can help move the process forward. Again, thank you very much, Mr. President and colleagues, for this dialogue.

The President: Thank you, Ambassador. Ambassador Liddle, the floor is yours.

Mr. Liddle (United Kingdom): Thank you, Mr. President. And let me echo the thanks that have already been expressed to you and to Dr. Ford and to everybody who has participated in this discussion. I think it has been a refreshing exchange of views that bodes well for the success of this initiative, which I wholeheartedly welcome.

Allow me to reflect perhaps on something our Cuban colleague said, because I think it is an important illustration of why we need a dialogue like this that focuses on the environment for nuclear disarmament. We recognize, of course, the concern with which all countries view the world situation and have to find a way of understanding why the situation is as it is. Why are countries feeling as if they have to review their nuclear arsenals, their nuclear doctrines? What are the threat perceptions that are driving that investment?

Speaking for a nuclear-weapon State, I would say that all of us have other uses for our defence budgets. We have to invest in these weapons because we see them as important

for our security, and I think it is important to understand why that is. It is also important, of course, for us to understand the concerns of others. That is why this dialogue is so important.

But I wanted to pick up on the question of political will. I would hope that this discussion would also get us beyond the simple accusation that it is a lack of political will that is stopping us from making progress in disarmament. We did not even have the political will in this body two weeks ago to set up subsidiary bodies, so I think the idea that it is a lack of political will that is the only barrier to the total elimination of nuclear weapons is rather far-fetched. What we need to understand is why the security situation is as it is, why countries make the security choices that they do and what we could do collectively to change the environment so that countries would be able to make different security choices.

I think that is a very important discussion and we are willing to play our full part in it. Thank you.

The President: Thank you, Ambassador Liddle. And I want to thank all of our panellists today – Dr. Ford, Ambassador Gabriëlse, Ambassador Liddle and, of course, Ambassador De Aguiar Patriota – for taking part in this discussion. Allow me now to suspend the meeting for a short moment in order to escort Dr. Ford from the Chamber and allow time for our distinguished colleagues to return to their seats.

The meeting was briefly suspended.

The President: The representative of Belarus has the floor.

Mr. Nikolaichik (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. President, my delegation did indeed ask to speak in order to read out the following statement in support of the Conference on Disarmament on behalf of a group of member and observer States. I will read it in English:

(spoke in English)

We reiterate our commitment to the Conference on Disarmament as the single multilateral negotiating forum for dealing with disarmament. Being an integral part of the United Nations disarmament machinery, the Conference has made a tangible practical contribution to maintenance of international peace and security.

While reiterating our commitment to the Conference, we remain concerned with the stalemate. If this situation is allowed to continue, it risks undermining the credibility and relevance of this body. Efforts by previous presidencies to reach a consensus on the programme of work must be continued. Furthermore, endeavours to contribute to this process deserve appreciation.

At present, the primary shared objective of the Conference is to come to a consensual agreement on a programme of work based on the Conference agenda. In doing so, Presidents of the Conference, as well as delegations participating in the Conference, must honour its foundations embodied in the rules of procedure, including the principle of sovereign equality of States. Any attempts to politicize the institution of the Conference presidency are unacceptable. Member States of the Conference should make every effort to refrain from actions that could further exacerbate already existing tensions and further entrench the stalemate in the Conference.

We therefore should oppose the emergence of new division lines and a further downward spiral of the Conference. We urge all member States of the Conference to redouble their efforts to overcome its stagnation and to resume substantive work in the Conference without further delay.

(spoke in Russian)

This statement has been made on behalf of the delegations of Belarus, China, Cuba, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Iran, Myanmar, Russia, Syria, Venezuela, Zimbabwe, Bolivia and Nicaragua. We invite all interested delegations to associate themselves with it.

The President: I thank the representative of Belarus for his remarks. Is there any other delegation that would like to take the floor? The Ambassador of Mexico has the floor.

Ms. Flores Liera (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you, Mr. President. Just one question. On a previous occasion you informed us that consultations were under way for the adoption of a programme of work. I would like you to update us on the progress achieved and, in particular, on the activities that we will be carrying out, with a view to future meetings.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Mexico for her remarks and her question. Let me just say that over the last several days, my delegation has engaged in consultations with a number of delegations here. Most recently, yesterday, I had conversations and meetings with the Ambassador of China and with the representative of Pakistan. So far, as a product of my consultations, I have not seen any progress yet that indicates we may be able to move forward on a programme of work. I have not given up hope in that regard and will continue to consult, but, to date, I unfortunately do not have any good news to give you. Again, however, we will continue to consult on possible ways to move forward towards a programme of work.

Let me just say a few things about next week. We are looking to have a discussion on the issue of the role of nuclear deterrence at next week's plenary meeting and, on that occasion, I will be inviting members from the United States delegation to the Conference on Disarmament to speak. That is the plan right now. The final plenary meeting of our presidency, as I have said before, will focus on the issue of transparency. Once we have the confirmed panellists for that session, we will make that information available.

We have a Preparatory Committee session coming up, so the next part of the session will begin on 13 May. My apologies. Let me read the script. When I go off script is when I get in trouble. This of course was the last plenary meeting of the first part of the 2019 session of the Conference. The second part will start on 13 May, and the first plenary meeting of the second part will take place on 14 May. As I said, on that occasion, I intend to have a meeting devoted to the issue of nuclear deterrence. I understand the representative of the Netherlands has asked for the floor.

Mr. Vogelaar (Netherlands): Thank you, Mr. President, for giving me the floor. I would like to briefly remind colleagues that our colloquium will take place on 15 April, as already mentioned by my Ambassador. All delegations should have received the invitation by email yesterday, but a paper copy of the invitation, including the programme as it stands now, is on the table in the corner of the Council Chamber. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President: I thank the representative of the Netherlands for his remarks. Again, just to repeat, the second part of the 2019 session will start on 13 May and the first plenary meeting of that second part will be on Tuesday, 14 May. As I have said, that plenary meeting will be on the issue of the role of nuclear deterrence, and I have invited some representatives of the United States delegation to address that issue. Let me also just thank the secretariat, conference officers, the interpreters and all the staff who supported us.

Until the next plenary meeting, I thank you all. This meeting is adjourned.

The meeting rose at 5.45 p.m.