

# Conference on Disarmament

English

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**Final record of the one thousand five hundred and first plenary meeting**

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Wednesday, 22 May 2019, at 10.30 a.m.

*President:* Mr. Robert A. Wood ..... (United States of America)*later:* Ms. Cynthia Plath ..... (United States of America)

**The President:** I call to order the 1501st plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen, before we proceed with our order of business for today, we have received a request to participate in the Conference as an observer, as of yesterday, Monday, 13 May 2019, at 3 p.m. This request is contained in document CD/WP.617/Add.6 available on your tables. Any requests for non-member States received after the mentioned date will be presented for your consideration and decision at the next plenary meeting. May I take it that the Conference decides to invite the State to participate in our work in accordance with the rules of procedure?

*It was so decided.*

**The President:** Distinguished colleagues, as previously announced, this morning will be devoted to the issue of transparency. We will hear from Dr. Heather Williams of King's College London and member of the delegation of the United States of America to the Conference. We will also hear from Ms. Vanessa Wood of the delegation of Australia to the Conference in light of Australia's holding the Chair of the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative. Finally, we will have a presentation by Ms. Trine Heimerback, Deputy Permanent Representative of Norway, per Norway's role as Chair of the Group of Governmental Experts to consider the role of verification in advancing nuclear disarmament. I would also like to welcome the observers who join us today from the balcony.

Following the panellists' presentations, I intend to open the floor for a discussion on the substantive topic of today's session. Once our discussion concludes, I will then open the floor for any other matter delegations would like to raise.

I would now like to give the floor to our first panellist, Dr. Heather Williams of the United States delegation and King's College. You have the floor, Madam.

**Ms. Williams** (United States of America): Thank you very much. I really want to thank the United States delegation, particularly Ambassador Wood, for the invitation to speak to you all today on the issue of transparency, specifically transparency within the process being pursued by the five permanent members of the Security Council, the P5 process. We face a bit of a paradox around the issues of transparency in the five nuclear-weapon States, because I would suspect that all five would argue that their nuclear doctrines are perfectly clear and that they are fully transparent; and yet misunderstanding persists on multiple fronts, and many say that they want more transparency.

The past year saw positive momentum within the Process under China's leadership around this issue of transparency of doctrine, but more can be done in terms of transparency, and non-nuclear-weapons State certainly expect more to be done on this topic.

I will begin with an overview of the current state of play and progress that we have seen towards transparency and I will include a bit of a scorecard from an academic perspective. Then I will discuss opportunities for the five permanent members of the Security Council to improve transparency and specific opportunities around the risks and opportunities of emerging technologies.

But to give you the bottom line up front, I want to highlight the importance and the benefits of additional transparency in terms of risk reduction. Directly, further transparency can help avoid miscalculation, create crisis communication channels and lay the groundwork for further progress towards arms control and disarmament when the security environment permits. Indirectly, transparency builds trust; it demonstrates a commitment to dialogue and to nuclear responsibility, so I hope that I can offer some specific ideas for further transparency and look forward to your feedback on them.

When we talk about transparency, I identify five different ways that States can demonstrate it: the first is through reporting; second, clarity of doctrine to include declaratory policy; third, through arms control and other confidence-building measures; fourth, verification activities; and, lastly, engagement with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), experts and academics.

So what is the progress to date? In terms of reporting, I would argue that the United Kingdom actually provides the most in-depth reporting and also, importantly, the United Kingdom allows opportunities to discuss its national reporting and engages extensively

with outsiders. Until recently, the United States also published its stockpile numbers, which is another idea for further transparency. Other nuclear possessors have a different level of reporting and do not do it to the same level of detail as the United Kingdom in particular.

In terms of clarity of doctrine, I would argue that the United States doctrine actually has the greatest level of detail about its declaratory policy, specifically stating that it would consider nuclear-weapon use in response to cyberattacks on nuclear command and control. The United States is also the only country to have said that it will always keep a human in the loop in the nuclear decision-making process and that it will not put nuclear weapons on fully autonomous systems. I would also say that Russia should be commended for how it has attempted to clarify points in its nuclear doctrine and rectify misperceptions, particularly around the issue of whether or not its doctrine is one of “escalate to de-escalate”, which Russia has repeatedly said is not the case.

In terms of arms control and confidence-building measures, we need to seriously consider the ramifications in the breakdown of arms control agreements. We are facing an unprecedented era without verification of strategic weapons systems. This will result in a lack of data exchanges and a lack of forums such as the Bilateral Consultative Commission, which are important venues for increasing transparency. Other nuclear possessors stay regularly engaged in forums such as track 1.5 dialogues, but this is perhaps the area of transparency where the most work can be done and the area that is at greatest risk.

In terms of verification of disarmament, the United Kingdom–Norway initiative has set an important precedent, and others are following, including the Quad initiative with the United States, the United Kingdom, Sweden and Norway, the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification and the upcoming disarmament exercise this autumn between Germany and France.

The last area of transparency is in terms of engagement with NGOs, and on this I will fully admit I can only speak from my personal experience, but the United States regularly engages with a diverse group of NGOs, to include regularly meeting with the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons and other supporters of the nuclear ban treaty at Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty meetings. The United Kingdom also regularly invites NGOs and academics to engage with its nuclear policy community and with its reporting. I can only speculate as to how transparent France, China and Russia are with their own new NGO communities, but in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty settings at least, I have found the United States and the United Kingdom to be extremely forthcoming.

Hopefully, this captures current efforts at transparency, particularly recently around transparency of doctrine within the P5 process, the process being pursued by the five permanent members of the Security Council, but, again, more can be done. What are our ideas to further increase transparency, particularly within the five nuclear-weapon States, and build on the positive momentum that we saw in Beijing, and as the United Kingdom takes over leadership of the process? I will offer some short-term and long-term potential objectives.

In the short term, countries can take steps unilaterally to increase their transparency. The P5 countries can engage in disarmament verification initiatives to promote transparency and trust with non-nuclear-weapon States and make a practical contribution towards a world without nuclear weapons. Additionally, they can take further steps to clarify their nuclear doctrines. For example, I believe that the United Kingdom can and should write a new white paper to clarify its nuclear doctrine. A recent House of Lords inquiry dealt with the issue of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and disarmament and, to be frank, representatives of the United Kingdom Government gave differing information about what the United Kingdom’s declaratory policy is, so confusion can exist internally as well.

As a group, among the P5 States, the United States and Russia can revive strategic stability dialogues, and if they are successful they could be expanded to the rest of the P5 States. In the next meeting of the five nuclear-weapon States, all members should commit to continue the P5 process beyond the 2020 Review Conference. And the United Kingdom, as the leader of the P5 States going into the Review Conference, should provide extensive and detailed reporting about the discussions held by the P5 States to all parties to the Treaty and to non-nuclear-weapon States. Additionally, the P5 States can issue a joint statement

committing to continuing to promote transparency around doctrines, committing to the Treaty and perhaps also being a little bit more ambitious in committing to something like a moratorium on testing.

Over the long term, the P5 States should develop an agenda to reduce risk, ensure continued transparency measures, such as a transparency of doctrine, to avoid miscalculation and provide information on safety and security efforts. Again, however, an important aspect of transparency is who is in the room. With whom are you being transparent? The P5 States should invite non-nuclear States or States not parties to the Treaty, groups such as the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative, NGOs and civil society to participate in and observe their discussions.

In the recent House of Lords inquiry, Des Browne, who was one of the founders of the P5 process, lamented that it had turned into a “cartel” and that it was just a discussion that the P5 States were having among themselves rather than being fully inclusive. 2020 presents a unique opportunity for transparency and to try to avoid this perception that the P5 States are a cartel.

One initiative that is particularly worthy of a further detailed conversation is on emerging technology, so now I would like to offer a few ideas around this. This would be a series of dialogues on emerging technology.

The risks that we see from technologies such as cyber, artificial intelligence and hypersonic glide vehicles are still not fully understood, but we suspect that they will be particularly risky to nuclear command and control systems. Cyber and artificial intelligence could potentially increase risks of miscalculation in nuclear decision-making. In the United States, the Nuclear Posture Review, as I said, made it clear that non-nuclear attacks can lead to nuclear escalation. Additionally, dual-use capabilities, such as with cruise missiles and hypersonic missiles, reduce transparency and increase ambiguity.

What are our opportunities for this? The first opportunity and the first step need to be scoping the problem. What are the technologies we are talking about?

In particular, this will require engaging with the private sector and industry, which, to be frank, is doing the most innovative work in many of these technologies. This might include a track 1.5 dialogue to understand the risks and, again, to increase transparency. Additionally, the P5 States could issue a joint statement pledging not to use cyberweapons to target each other’s nuclear command and control systems and could also issue a statement limiting the role of artificial intelligence in nuclear infrastructure, particularly command and control, and start exploring opportunities to incorporate hypersonic glide vehicles into arms control frameworks. Additionally, they could take further steps to clarify their nuclear postures and doctrines, particularly declaratory policy, in response to emerging technologies and threats to nuclear systems.

In addition to the P5 process, numerous other initiatives may be helpful forums for increasing transparency around emerging technologies, such as the United States initiative on creating an environment for nuclear disarmament, work by the German Foreign Office, specifically on emerging technologies and arms control, and the Swedish “stepping stone” approach, which is soon to be launched.

To wrap up, I also want to be very practical and frank about this; I recognize the challenges of transparency. Geopolitical tensions and disputes among the P5 States still exist, as we are all aware. There is a strong legacy of distrust that is going to be difficult to overcome for all parties involved. There are also enduring misperceptions. But an additional challenge will be that many non-nuclear-weapon States will argue that further transparency measures within the P5 process are just not good enough, that they do not demonstrate an effort made in good faith, and that, too, must be recognized. But what is obvious, however, I hope, is the value of transparency on the part of the P5 States and how it should be encouraged and facilitated in forums such as this one. Progress to date should be commended, particularly China’s role in its recent meetings of the five nuclear-weapon States, but we should also be exploring opportunities to expand on that and build on what is potentially positive momentum.

**The President:** I thank Dr. Williams for her presentation. I would now like to welcome Ms. Vanessa Wood from the delegation of Australia to the Conference on Disarmament.

**Ms. Wood** (Australia): Thank you, Ambassador, and thank you, Dr. Williams. There is a lot in that for us to think about.

I was thinking about what I might say in the Conference on Disarmament on transparency, the kinds of questions it is useful for everyone to mull over, so we can have a bit of a discussion later. Why does transparency matter? How does reporting help us? What are our expectations about reporting and why? And how do we use the information provided? What are the security constraints and why? And if non-nuclear-weapon States understand this better, can we make suggestions about what information we would find useful? How do we ensure a continuous dynamic process? Does reporting need to be comparable, and is this even possible? Can we improve the accessibility of information? How to keep reporting costs and burdens manageable but useful? And how is this relevant to the Conference?

As Ambassador Wood already said, Australia is the current coordinator of the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative, a 12-country cross-regional group focusing on implementation of the action plan agreed at the 2010 Review Conference. Work on transparency in reporting has been a flagship issue of the Initiative, so I will outline some of the Initiative's recent work on transparency at the most recent session of the Preparatory Committee. But I do note that there are many other Initiative members in the room and I encourage them to provide their perspectives, as we are a very diverse group.

Not everything I say will be from the perspective of the Initiative. I will also offer some observations and reflections to encourage interactive discussion and ways of thinking about this as a community, including in the Conference on Disarmament. So, what has the Initiative done on transparency and reporting and why?

At the heart of the Initiative's efforts to enhance transparency has been encouraging the States parties to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) to increase reporting on Treaty implementation – and I would note that the Initiative's efforts are targeted at both nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon States. We also encourage reporting across all elements of the Treaty. We think that submission of national reports and discussion of these reports can promote mutual understanding among States. Our recent working paper, presented to the Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Review Conference, emphasized that efforts to enhance transparency, including explaining and exchanging information about nuclear doctrine, strategy and capability, contribute to confidence-building and can enable further reductions in nuclear weapons. Reporting, then, can demonstrate tangibly the commitment to transparency and accountability of the five nuclear-weapon States that are parties to the Treaty, which can be key to building trust and momentum on different fronts towards the 2020 Review Conference and beyond.

Since 2012, the Initiative has seen agreement to a standardized reporting form as fundamental to any effort to promote greater reporting. Such a form could provide a baseline and common frame of reference for measuring progress on the implementation of the Treaty. Leading up to 2020, the Initiative has encouraged all States parties to report to the 2020 Review Conference using the standardized reporting form that the Initiative proposed in 2017 and 2018. We have also proposed the allocation of sufficient dedicated time to focus specifically on the issue of national reporting on Treaty implementation. That discussion time could be used to consider a range of issues, such as identifying and removing any barriers to optimal reporting and agreeing on a reporting form or forms to be used by States parties in future.

At the most recent session of the Preparatory Committee, the Initiative took on feedback. We refined our reporting template through a matrix of topics to be reported by nuclear-weapon States, non-nuclear-weapon States with advanced nuclear capabilities and non-nuclear-weapon States without advanced capabilities. That was to better target reporting for each category to avoid placing an unnecessary reporting burden on States. We would like to see the matrix, together with the reporting template, inform agreement at the 2020 Review Conference on a reporting format to be used for the next review cycle.

Turning to some reflections, I think there are pros and cons to standardized reporting, and some of these were raised at the Preparatory Committee session. On the one hand is the argument by the Initiative that standardized regular reporting allows progress to be measured across commonly agreed objectives, the 2010 action plan, and that results can be compared across States parties and progress measured over time. The NPT nuclear-weapon

States already have a standardized reporting template, but is it enough? It was agreed in 2013, before my time, so I would welcome hearing a bit more about the history of how it was arrived at, whether it is being used and whether there were consultations with non-nuclear-weapon States about what they would find useful.

Some question whether it is useful or even possible to make comparisons across the NPT nuclear-weapon States. The more we understand about doctrine and views on strategic stability, the more we understand about how different each nuclear-weapon State is. Do we risk missing important information if we are too rigid about a standardized template? And how do we ensure that reporting is not too burdensome, particularly for non-nuclear-weapon States? And this is an issue not just for the Treaty but also across all the arms control conventions with reporting obligations. And looking at the latest session of the Preparatory Committee, only 9 out of 191 States parties submitted reports to the Preparatory Committee. That is 4 per cent of States parties. Two were nuclear-weapon States. I am not saying that every State party needs to report at every session of the Preparatory Committee, but regular reporting of new information should reduce the burden and, more importantly, contributes to a culture of openness, information-sharing and best practice that builds confidence.

Echoing Dr. Williams, I would like to commend in particular the United Kingdom's approach to its national report. It was put out as a draft, and the United Kingdom very actively asked for feedback with a view to refining the final report for submission at the Review Conference. There was very good discussion in the Preparatory Committee on the United Kingdom's report. I also welcome very much the fact that China reported and the intention of other nuclear-weapon States to report to the Review Conference. I would encourage them to submit those reports early, so that States parties have time to digest the information.

Reporting is not the only way to be transparent. It has been the Initiative's focus, but there are other ways. I would welcome China's successful coordination of the P5 process engaged in by the five permanent members of the Security Council and the news that those five States will hold a joint event on nuclear doctrine at next year's Review Conference. The side events that the United States has held on a few occasions on its Nuclear Posture Review have been very useful, but I think this is the first time there will be a joint event, and I recommend that there be enough time set aside for it. I would note that others also make information on security policies available online and make statements in the Conference on Disarmament. At the Preparatory Committee session, France in particular put out a document on its nuclear doctrine and forces.

It is really critical that we engage actively with the content of the reports and that we recognize and appreciate when countries are being transparent, so that this can be a dynamic dialogue among States parties. The Initiative is not rigid in its approach, and one of the reasons we engage regularly with the NPT nuclear-weapon States is that we want to hear feedback and we want to hear what they think is possible and why. A way to think about transparency is in terms of behaviour and a culture of openness.

A standardized reporting template can be seen in either expansive or reductive terms. We would prefer it to be seen as not limiting the information that nuclear-weapon States provide. There should be flexibility to provide more detailed information, and this is to be encouraged. And if there are reasons why nuclear-weapon States think certain information cannot be provided, it would be helpful to understand why. There is also a practical question on accessing the information easily – I do not find the NPT website very user-friendly. It would be good if there was one place on the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs website where NPT reports were stored, so that you could quickly access reports by States parties over time. There is meant to be a place for the nuclear-weapon States, but I am not sure that it has really worked.

At the recent session of the Preparatory Committee, I was actually really encouraged by the discussion on transparency. It was my third session, and for me that was the most substantive discussion we have had during the review cycle. The Initiative had a good discussion with the NPT nuclear-weapon States, the Non-Aligned Movement and the New Agenda Coalition. We saw a positive active approach by the United Kingdom, China's report, really good discussion at side events and the statement by the five permanent members of the Security Council. And looking at the statements from the Preparatory

Committee, there were several references to the importance of open and constructive dialogue, including in the statement of the P5 States delivered by Ambassador Fu Cong.

We got some really useful feedback at the transparency side event. Someone said the template in the matrix actually helps countries with internal coordination, as it helps build an internal routine and it is good for domestic stakeholders to get used to what information is needed. But what is really important is the dialogue about the reports themselves – that is, about why some information is included and some is not. Understanding this helps us build our understanding on other important issues like verification and risk reduction. We also heard that flexibility of format is important. In the past, some countries have reported on things that were not listed but were still useful. In addition, we heard that even if the Initiative template is not used, it is still a valuable checklist that can inform reporting. The narrative about how to read changes in reports is also really important – it is useful for a country to explain why things have actually changed in its report from year to year.

How, then, is this all relevant to the Conference on Disarmament? I would say it is absolutely relevant. I know that we have an item on transparency in armaments that has been on the Conference agenda for years, but since I have been here, we have not really discussed it substantively. I think the original intention was that it was more about the United Nations register and conventional weapons, but there is no reason that we cannot discuss transparency more broadly in the Conference as part of the pathway to negotiations. It is also an opportunity for non-nuclear NPT States parties to show similar levels of transparency.

In conclusion, I would encourage us all to think about and approach transparency broadly, as more than accessing information and as part of a process of trust.

**The President:** I thank Ms. Wood for her speech. I would now like to give the floor to Ms. Trine Heimerback, Deputy Permanent Representative of Norway.

**Ms. Heimerback (Norway):** Thank you, Mr. President. It is a pleasure to be here to speak on a topic that has been an important priority for Norway for several years – namely, nuclear disarmament verification. As you may know, the Group of Governmental Experts to consider the role of verification in advancing nuclear disarmament recently concluded its work and adopted a consensus report. The Group was chaired by Ambassador Knut Langeland of Norway.

General Assembly resolution 71/67 requested the Secretary-General to establish a group of governmental experts of up to 25 participants on the basis of equitable geographical distribution to consider the role of verification in advancing nuclear disarmament. This resolution also mandated the Secretary-General to collect the views of Member States on the development and strengthening of practical and effective nuclear disarmament verification measures and on the importance of such measures in achieving and maintaining a world without nuclear weapons.

The Group, which operated by consensus, held three sessions in 2018 and 2019 here in Geneva. It decided at its first session that it was necessary to consider what nuclear disarmament verification and principles for such verification consist of, how such verification may be carried out and who could carry it out. At its first session, the Group also heard presentations on verification in the context of bilateral and multilateral agreements and on recent and ongoing initiatives and exercises in nuclear disarmament verification.

The Group then examined concepts and had an in-depth exchange of views on the role of verification in advancing nuclear disarmament. The discussions were guided by the report of the Secretary-General and showed that members of the Group had diverse perspectives on the issues at hand. Yet the deliberations facilitated convergences on a number of topics which enabled the Group to derive some consensus conclusions and recommendations.

The members of the Group were encouraged to produce working papers. In total, 17 such papers were produced. They were considered at the Group's second and third sessions and are all available online.

In the general discussion, it was recognized that it was not within the Group's mandate to create a specific verification regime and that such a regime must be linked to

specific treaty obligations. However, the Group observed that effective verification could contribute to trust and confidence. A number of experts emphasized that the Group's work on nuclear disarmament verification might facilitate future disarmament processes and that a credible multilateral verification regime in which all States have confidence will be essential for achieving and maintaining a world without nuclear weapons. The Group discussed the institutional set-up, support structures and capacity-building in nuclear disarmament. More work is needed on these elements. The Group had a comprehensive discussion of the conceptual understanding of nuclear disarmament verification.

There were converging views on a non-exhaustive list of seven principles of nuclear disarmament verification: (1) conformity with international law; (2) parties to specific treaties decide nuclear disarmament verification measures; (3) conformity with legal non-proliferation obligations as well as safety and security requirements and the need to protect otherwise sensitive information; (4) nuclear disarmament verification must be effective in ensuring compliance with treaties and efficient use of resources must be kept in mind; (5) clarity – a specific treaty should be clear about the obligations of the parties to it; (6) a future nuclear disarmament verification regime must be non-discriminatory; and (7) verification arrangements should correspond to the purpose, scope and nature of the agreements.

In considering the role of verification in advancing nuclear disarmament, the Group concluded that:

- Advancing nuclear disarmament is an ongoing undertaking and that there is a need for continued international examination of the issue in all its aspects, including verification
- Verification is essential to the process of nuclear disarmament and to achieving a world without nuclear weapons
- The role of verification in advancing nuclear disarmament will be determined on a case-by-case basis in the context of the negotiations of a legally binding agreement in the area of nuclear disarmament
- A credible verification regime in which all States have confidence will be essential for maintaining a world without nuclear weapons
- Confidence-building measures may complement nuclear disarmament verification arrangements between the implementing parties to a specific treaty
- Engagement in nuclear disarmament verification must be strictly in line with applicable international, legal and non-proliferation obligations as well as other legal requirements
- All States could contribute to aspects of nuclear disarmament verification and no State is restricted from developing verification techniques and methodologies

In its consensus report, the Group recommended that:

- United Nations Member States, as well as relevant parts of the international disarmament machinery, in accordance with their respective mandates, consider the report
- Further work related to the role of verification in advancing nuclear disarmament, taking into account the Group's report, be considered

During the deliberations, a number of proposals on possible next steps were put forward by experts for consideration. While there was no agreement on those proposals, they generated substantial discussion. Some of them were:

- Further conceptual work on a definition of nuclear disarmament verification
- Clarification of the scope, governance and financing of nuclear disarmament verification, in addition to related institutional matters
- Establishment of a group of governmental experts to consider elaborating, in a working paper, on the concept of a group of scientific and technical experts



- Establishment of a group of governmental experts to build on the work of the current Group on conceptual and technical aspects regarding nuclear disarmament verification
- Consideration, in a working paper, of a voluntary funding mechanism for capacity-building (a nuclear disarmament verification trust fund)
- Efforts by the United Nations Secretary-General to seek the views of Member States on being involved in capacity-building in nuclear disarmament verification

Norway will work with interested States on taking forward this work and will introduce a resolution to the General Assembly in New York at the First Committee this coming fall.

**The President:** I thank Ms. Heimerback for her speech. I will now open the floor to those delegations wishing to speak on the topic of transparency. The first speaker on my list is the Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Morocco.

**Mr. Zniber (Morocco)** (*spoke in French*): Thank you very much, Mr. President. Since this is the first time that my delegation is taking the floor under your presidency, I would like to congratulate you on the way that you have chaired the Conference and on the timely and interesting discussions you have initiated. We would also like to thank our colleagues from the Australian and Norwegian delegations and Ms. Williams from the delegation of the United States for providing very useful clarifications of their views on transparency in the field of disarmament.

We welcome the choice of this topic, which, as everyone knows, is item 7 on the agenda of this session and was the subject of a fruitful exchange between delegations participating in subsidiary body 5 at the previous session of the Conference.

In our view, transparency in the field of disarmament necessarily entails taking steps to build and strengthen trust through the voluntary exchange of information in order to establish mutual understanding and certainty, reduce misunderstandings and errors of judgement, and clarify intentions with the ultimate aim of reducing the risk of triggering an armed conflict and endangering security and peace. Such steps can also serve as a reference and basis for implementing legally binding measures in the field of disarmament.

It is in this spirit that, in recent years, my country has firmly undertaken and worked modestly to ensure that the principles of transparency and trust in the area of disarmament prevail. In that regard, we have attached great importance to the exchange of information, good practices and experiences and to strengthening international and regional cooperation. The Kingdom of Morocco has demonstrated this commitment by participating in, and organizing, several activities and events aimed at promoting transparency in the field of disarmament.

Please allow me to cite some examples of activities of this kind that have been initiated, organized or supported by my country. In May 2017, a peer review exercise on the implementation of the Biological Weapons Convention was held in Rabat and Casablanca and, in May 2018, Morocco hosted the sixteenth regional meeting of the national authorities of the African States parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention, a detailed account of which I gave at one of the plenary meetings of our Conference here in Geneva. Third, a training symposium on best practices in the areas of export control and related border security was held in February 2016 with a view to ensuring that Morocco met its commitments under General Assembly resolution 15/40 and formally adhered to the practices of multilateral export control regimes. Fourth, an interministerial workshop attended by authorities from Morocco and the United States was held quite recently, in November 2018, within the framework of the Proliferation Security Initiative. Fifth, in March 2017, in Marrakech, the Governments of Morocco and the United States co-organized an international symposium on combating arms trafficking across land and maritime borders that brought together representatives of over 60 countries, including from Africa and the Middle East. Sixth, Morocco has taken part in a number of summits on nuclear security and meetings held within the framework of the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism, in which it participates as an active member and as the chair of some of the working groups.

Against the background of deteriorating international security that we are unfortunately witnessing, polarization is on the rise, the main aspects of the international arms control system are increasingly being called into question and regional tensions and proliferation crises are re-emerging. It is therefore more crucial than ever for us to reaffirm our commitment to the virtues of collective dialogue, transparency and multilateralism, particularly in the field of disarmament. That is why we are echoing the calls already made for the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty to be maintained. This is a matter of urgency. It is a question of preventing a new large-scale nuclear arms race. The disappearance of this Treaty would make the world less secure and more unstable. We also call for the extension and strengthening of the new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, which, as we know, will expire very soon, in 2021. Such initiatives would be a strong sign of commitment to the virtues of dialogue and a prelude to the establishment of the appropriate conditions for launching negotiations on legal instruments on disarmament, which would promote the transition from a culture of force and confrontation to a culture of tolerance and dialogue, that is, a culture of peace of the sort that must naturally govern our work in the Conference here in Geneva.

Given the obvious catastrophic danger posed by nuclear weapons, Morocco wishes to highlight the need to tackle this global threat by taking courageous, progressive and urgent actions to bring about their prohibition. To this end, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, including the transparency measures for which it provides, must also be fully implemented. In that regard, the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones is an important milestone for us on the road to nuclear disarmament. Morocco stresses its commitment to the effective implementation of the 1995 resolution calling for the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all weapons of mass destruction, which is now more urgent than ever. Furthermore, the conclusion of treaties providing for negative security assurances, transparency, and the prevention of an arms race in outer space, as well as the conclusion of a verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, as a step towards disarmament, are of central importance to my delegation, which calls on all members of our Conference to show the flexibility and transparency needed for us to move forward together towards our common goals.

**The President:** I thank the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Morocco for his statement. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Liddle** (United Kingdom): Thank you very much, Mr. President, and thank you very much for organizing this important discussion today. I also want to thank Dr. Williams, Ms. Wood and Ms. Heimerback for their presentations as well, which were excellent.

Mr. President, let me begin by echoing what others have said to commend China's efforts as coordinator of the process being followed by the five permanent members of the Security Council (P5 process) and to increase the transparency of that process, in particular with respect to the civil society element of the conference in January in Beijing. As the United Kingdom picks up the baton of coordinating the P5 process, I want to commit to building on that over the coming year, and we will examine Dr. Williams's proposal carefully. We particularly look forward to participating in the side event on nuclear doctrines at the Review Conference, as announced by Ambassador Fu in New York. I would also like to underline the importance of verification as set out by both Dr. Williams and Ms. Heimerback.

Mr. President I wanted to intervene, however, to go into a bit more detail on the United Kingdom's national transparency measures, which Dr. Williams referred to in her presentation. As mentioned, the United Kingdom tabled its draft national implementation report at the Preparatory Committee session in New York earlier this month. It was a comprehensive statement of the United Kingdom's national measures on disarmament, non-proliferation and peaceful uses of nuclear energy. It was a cross-government exercise that involved officials from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Ministry of Defence and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy as well as nuclear regulators and other agencies. It followed the standard reporting form agreed on by the nuclear-weapon States in 2013.

We presented this draft report at a side event at the Preparatory Committee meeting and we have already held a consultation with civil society in the United Kingdom on it. We will be holding a further consultation at Wilton Park in September. This is the start of a

process. We wanted to present a draft report now in order to begin a year-long consultation in which we can gather feedback from other States and from civil society. At our events, we have already had good ideas about what more we could say and we will reflect further on whether we can and, if not, say why not. Even putting together this draft report was a lot of work. It shows, I think, that we take our responsibilities in this regard seriously. It is also, I recognize, a lot of work for others to read and to analyse, so we need to be clear on the value.

Why do we spend all this time and effort reporting on our transparency initiatives? The first answer is because we have committed to it. Actions 5, 20 and 21 of the 2010 action plan explicitly commit us all to greater transparency. Second, because, as action 5 says, it increases mutual confidence not only among nuclear-weapon States but also between non-nuclear-weapon and nuclear-weapon States. This is important, of course, for everything that we do. Third, because transparency is a core principle of nuclear disarmament, along with irreversibility and verifiability. Indeed, as the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative working paper presented to the Preparatory Committee pointed out, transparency underpins the other two principles. Fourth, because it is a starting point for dialogue, it establishes the baseline facts and it prompts questions and explanations about our capabilities, our doctrines and our actions. Fifth, for accountability. We have to be accountable to our fellow States parties for our progress against past commitments but also to our domestic public for how we organize our national defence and how we uphold the international rules-based system. Finally, I would like to emphasize, as Ms. Wood said, that it is a common responsibility of all States, not just nuclear-weapon States, to contribute to transparency, including by reporting. As such, I would like to welcome the efforts outlined by the Ambassador of Morocco just now.

There are, however, of course, limits to transparency. There are sometimes good reasons for not sharing certain information. There are proliferation risks. There are risks in exposing national security information which might be valuable to State or non-State adversaries. There is also an element of deliberate ambiguity in our deterrence posture, which is an important part of deterrence, as we discussed last week.

When we drafted our national report, although we followed the 2013 common template agreed on by the five permanent members of the Security Council, we used the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative template as a checklist. If we did not include a particular issue, it was a conscious decision not to, but I agree with Ms. Wood that we could use our reporting to explain why we cannot say certain things. I will finish with a few questions.

The first is: how do we balance consistency and comprehensiveness? Consistency is important for comparability, both across States and within States over time, but things change, including the issues that we might feel it is important to report on or the issues that non-nuclear-weapon States or civil society would like us to report on. So achieving a balance between consistency and flexibility and comprehensiveness is important. Second, what do the non-nuclear-weapon States want out of transparency? What do you find valuable and why? Third, how do we encourage greater transparency from States outside the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty? The Treaty has developed over time a comprehensive dialogue on transparency, but of course there are States outside the Treaty, and greater transparency from them would be very welcome.

Let me finish, Mr. President, by again underlining the value of this exchange today and our continued commitment to this discussion.

**The President:** I thank the Ambassador of the United Kingdom for his statement. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of France.

**Mr. Hwang (France)** (*spoke in French*): Thank you, Mr. President, and thank you to the speakers for their presentations. My delegation has prepared a statement but, before I deliver it, I would like to respond to the statements made earlier this morning. To be perfectly frank I must say that, before I entered this room, I was unaware that nuclear transparency was a beauty contest. If it is, however, then I think it should be undertaken seriously and in a systematic and informed way. The speaker from King's College London, whom I thank for her presentation, handed out gold stars and good grades but gave none to my country. This is a matter of regret. She gave them to the United Kingdom and the United States of America. I hope that I will win the competition next time but I encourage

Ms. Williams to read the 80-page document that delegations will find at the back of the room, which we distributed at the third session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Although it is long, it is in English so it is quite accessible to everyone. It provides a summary of all the efforts to ensure transparency that my country has made in recent years, not only in the context of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which is important, of course, but also in our national parliament and in other forums such as this Conference, which is indeed a useful platform for informing the international community about our nuclear disarmament efforts.

Having said that, I am going to enter this beauty contest because it has to be done, and I am going to make a few points about where we stand on the issue of nuclear transparency. As you know, we see transparency as a key component of the step-by-step approach to nuclear disarmament and, more generally, to the implementation by States of their non-proliferation obligations.

My country, France, has taken several unprecedented steps to promote transparency. First, with regard to the French forces, I would like to stress that my country is the first State to have made public the total number of weapons held in its nuclear arsenal rather than just the number of strategic operational weapons deployed. In a speech made in 2015, the President of the Republic, Mr. Hollande, announced that the French arsenal contained no more than 300 nuclear weapons. The composition of this arsenal was also specified: France has three batches of 16 missiles carried by four submarines and 54 enhanced medium-range air-to-surface delivery vehicles. It has no undeployed nuclear weapons. French nuclear weapons are not targeted. In addition, under the Hague Code of Conduct, advance notice is given of all space and ballistic missile launches.

Second, France promotes transparency in relation to its doctrine, which is perfectly clear and regularly and publicly outlined by the public and political authorities at the highest level. In that regard, I refer you to the speech made by my delegation last week during the Conference's informal meeting on nuclear deterrence. In addition to our work at the national level, we actively engage in the strategic dialogue on doctrines that takes place between the five permanent members of the Security Council and I agree with my British colleague that, in this respect, China played an important role when it coordinated work in this area, which it did until last month. This dialogue benefits not only the five permanent members of the Security Council but also other States and this is precisely why we engage with the countries participating in the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative and other non-nuclear-weapon States, with which we believe it is essential to establish a dialogue of trust. In that regard, I would like to thank Ms. Wood for outlining the progress made in promoting cooperation between the countries participating in that Initiative and the five permanent members of the Security Council, particularly on the issue of nuclear transparency.

In general terms, transparency, including dialogue on nuclear doctrines and stances, can greatly contribute to reducing risks, especially those related to the intentional use of nuclear weapons based on errors of judgment or calculation. For this reason, we will continue to advocate for more in-depth dialogue on these subjects and the establishment of specific trust-building measures that contribute to reducing strategic risks. In particular, we would like the 2020 Review Conference to be the occasion for the other permanent members of the Security Council to participate in a specific event on doctrines that would contribute to these efforts to promote nuclear transparency.

Third, I would like to point out that transparency in specific disarmament measures is also important. France is the only nuclear-weapon State to have irreversibly dismantled all its facilities for the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons. In 2008 and 2009, it organized several unprecedented visits to the Pierrelatte and Marcoule sites to allow diplomats, international experts and journalists to observe the dismantling of the facilities for producing fissile materials for weapons that were housed at these two sites. In 2015, members of the Conference visited the Luxeuil air base within the framework of the measures taken to reduce the country's airborne nuclear systems by one third. A similar visit was paid to the plateau d'Albion, which housed the surface-to-surface systems that France has also dismantled. Further visits will be organized next year for Conference colleagues. Reporting forms part of the efforts made by States to promote transparency. During the previous review cycle of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, my country coordinated

the efforts made by the permanent members of the Security Council to harmonize their reports in accordance with the 2010 action plan. Thus, the group's reports have a uniform structure and include identical headings covering the three pillars of the Treaty. France will submit its national report on its implementation efforts to the 2020 Review Conference.

We actively participate in the various forums dealing with the verification of nuclear weapons, including the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification and the Group of Governmental Experts to consider the role of verification in advancing nuclear disarmament. I would like to thank the Norwegian representative for presenting the results of the latter group, which recently completed its work, and we strongly encourage efforts to follow up that work. Within the framework of phase two of the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification, France and Germany have embarked on a joint technical exercise in the area of disarmament verification. This Franco-German exercise, which is known as NuDiVe (for nuclear disarmament verification), will take place in late September 2019 and will bring together some 20 participants of around 10 nationalities at the Jülich research centre in Germany. The exercise will involve the implementation of inspection procedures to prevent nuclear material from being misappropriated when a nuclear weapon is dismantled. It will play an effective part in the efforts made by France to improve transparency.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate that an exemplary attitude to transparency in the areas of doctrine, the status of forces and implemented disarmament measures is essential and should accompany our efforts at every stage of the disarmament process towards the achievement of a world free of nuclear weapons. We encourage all nuclear-weapon States to make the same efforts with regard to truth and transparency.

**The President:** I thank the Ambassador of France for his statement. I now give the floor to the representative of Pakistan.

**Mr. Jadoon** (Pakistan): Thank you, Mr. President. We thank the three panellists for their thoughtful remarks on issues related to transparency and nuclear disarmament verification.

At the Conference on Disarmament plenary meeting held on 26 March regarding the United States initiative Creating an Environment for Nuclear Disarmament (CEND), my delegation outlined seven items that, in our view, should constitute an integral part of those discussions. One of those related to potential transparency and confidence building measures. We stated: "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."

Several regions of the world have benefitted from the application of certain principles and guidelines in the areas of arms control and evolved appropriate transparency and confidence-building measures. It is important to recall and reiterate some of the relevant core principles agreed on by the United Nations in that regard, which include: (1) preservation of balance in the defence capabilities of States at the lowest level of armaments and military forces; (2) the special responsibility of States with larger military capabilities in promoting agreements for regional security; (3) undiminished security; and (4) the pursuit of disarmament measures in an equitable and balanced manner.

Transparency and confidence-building measures have particularly proved their efficacy over the years at the regional and subregional levels and also have a positive correlation with international peace and security. As General Assembly resolutions and Disarmament Commission guidelines have affirmed, confidence-building measures at the regional level have to be tailored to the specifics of the region and should begin with simpler agreements on transparency and risk reduction, enabling the States concerned to eventually pursue more substantive arms control and disarmament measures.

Mutually agreed transparency and confidence-building measures can lead to the creation of favourable conditions; however, they should not become an end in themselves. Over the long term, these measures should also contribute to conflict resolution. However, if, with the passage of time, the conflicts continue to fester, then these measures may lose their efficacy.

Although transparency measures can help build trust and confidence, there should already be a degree of trust between States to agree on transparency and confidence-building measures in the first place. The real challenge is to find a balance between these two competing considerations. The fundamental prerequisite for such measures is the willingness of States to talk to each other.

Mr. President, transparency measures also need to be balanced against the need to protect sensitive information that is of military and national security concern and a strategic and operational imperative for certain deliberate ambiguity, as very aptly noted by the Ambassador of the United Kingdom in his remarks.

Pakistan considers itself privileged to have spearheaded initiatives on confidence-building measures at the United Nations for several years now. A practical expression of its commitment to transparency and confidence-measures is reflected in the resolutions Pakistan tables every year in the First Committee, including a resolution on confidence-building measures in the regional and subregional context.

Mr. President, to turn to the topic of nuclear disarmament verification, it goes without saying that verification would be an essential and extremely vital element for ensuring compliance with any future agreements on nuclear disarmament. Verification would be indispensable for building confidence regarding both the achievement and maintenance of a world without nuclear weapons.

The consensus Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (1978) states:

Disarmament and arms limitation agreements should provide for adequate measures of verification satisfactory to all parties concerned in order to create the necessary confidence and ensure that they are being observed by all parties. The form and modalities of the verification to be provided for in any specific agreement depend upon and should be determined by the purposes, scope and nature of that agreement. Agreements should provide for the participation of parties directly or through the United Nations system in the verification process.

The Disarmament Commission, in 1988, agreed on the Sixteen Verification Principles, one of which states that “determinations about the adequacy, effectiveness and acceptability of specific methods and arrangements intended to verify compliance with the provisions of an arms limitation and disarmament agreement can only be made within the context of that agreement”.

Mr. President, it is our view that nuclear disarmament verification can be best addressed in the context of a specific treaty regime, not in an abstract manner or as an end in itself. Verification has to be rooted in specific treaties.

Nonetheless, we see value in the conceptual exploration of this issue in a representative body that includes all the relevant stakeholders. While the most suitable forum for this work remains the Conference on Disarmament, the 25-member Group of Governmental Experts established pursuant to General Assembly resolution 71/67 made a substantive contribution to the topic – a very valuable contribution. It was the first body of its kind within the United Nations framework that was mandated to specifically consider the role of verification in advancing nuclear disarmament. It contributed to an understanding of the challenges associated with nuclear disarmament verification and to the identification of certain principles that should govern that work.

The conclusions reached by the Group in its consensus report acknowledged, *inter alia*, that “the role of verification in advancing nuclear disarmament will be determined on a case-by-case basis in the context of the negotiations of legally binding agreements in the area of nuclear disarmament”. A Pakistani expert participated actively in the Group and made substantive contributions to its work. We were pleased with the consensual adoption of the Group’s report and appreciate the very able stewardship provided by Norway, especially the skilful leadership of Ambassador Knut Langeland and his team, with the excellent support of the Office for Disarmament Affairs and the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, particularly Ms. Silvia Mercogliano and Mr. Wilfred Wan.

Mr. President, lastly, while we believe that transparency, confidence-building measures and a shared conceptual understanding of nuclear disarmament verification can

contribute to building confidence and laying the foundation for nuclear disarmament, they should not be seen as a precondition for the commencement of substantive work on this issue in the Conference, in accordance with Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.

**The President:** I thank the representative of Pakistan for his statement. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of China.

**Mr. Li Song (China)** (*spoke in Chinese*): Mr. President, the discussion you are presiding over today is about the issue of transparency. I too would like to share with you the views of our delegation. Today's discussion should still be held under the relevant agenda item of the Conference.

"Transparency in armaments" was recognized and endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly as an important concept in the field of arms control and disarmament after the end of the cold war. The historical background at that time was that the international security environment characterized by military confrontation between the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Warsaw Pact had improved considerably, and the overwhelming number of United Nations Member States fervently hoped that the superpowers would abandon the cold war mentality and take practical steps to enhance strategic mutual trust, advance bilateral nuclear disarmament and promote international and regional peace, security and stability.

Transparency is not an end in itself, but a means to enhance trust, avoid misjudgment and ease tensions. As the national conditions, policies and strengths of different countries vary greatly, obviously, there is no universally applicable standard and requirement for transparency. Is transparency good for national security? What kind of transparency can actually help to improve security? Different countries have different perspectives, experiences and positions. The necessary preconditions for transparency are that all countries have a sufficient basis for mutual trust and respect for each other's security concerns and that they are committed to common security. If we do not ensure these preconditions, or if we disregard them, transparency becomes hypocritical and meaningless, and will become a tool for strong-arming the weak.

Mr. President, transparency can never exist alone, in a vacuum. It is closely related to the international security environment and national security policies. The international security environment is now facing the biggest change since the end of the cold war. Instability and uncertainty are on the rise, and hegemony is being expressed in new forms, as unilateralism and strong-arm tactics. Cold war thinking has returned and has become the basis for compliance with a certain country's security strategy and corresponding policies. That country has placed its own strategic advantage and security interests above the integrity and rules of the international community. It constantly subverts and withdraws from international treaties and mechanisms, strengthening its strategic offensive and defensive capabilities, worsening tensions, provoking an arms race and undermining strategic stability. For the Conference to discuss transparency in these conditions, as if nothing has happened outside of this forum, is extremely ironic.

In today's international security environment, one prominent feature is the sense of insecurity. Specifically, the United States is constantly stressing that other countries are, for it, a source of insecurity. This is truly baffling. I sincerely hope policymakers and those with vision and influence in this field in the United States can take a look at their own country's security environment from another angle. If you regard a large number of countries as enemies, you create enemies for yourselves, despite the fact that the countries in question most probably had no intention of becoming your enemies. It is reminiscent of Cervante's Don Quixote, armed to the teeth and tilting at windmills. With this kind of attitude informing it, the national security strategy itself constitutes a potential threat to international peace and security.

Mr. President, last week, I presented a comprehensive introduction to my country's nuclear strategy and its position and proposals for nuclear arms control and other issues. The reason I did this is because, for some time, the United States has repeatedly levelled accusations about my country's legitimate and justified development of national defence, asserting that China should join in arms control agreements between the United States and the Russian Federation. On the day after my intervention, a senior official of the United States Government once again stated publicly that China lacked transparency on issues

such as the modernization of its nuclear forces, which raised questions for the United States about my country's intention to develop its nuclear arsenal. I can only say that this is a classic example of projection of one's own logic on others. I would like to take this opportunity to state that China is not the United States, nor will it become the United States; the policy it pursues is not the nuclear strategy and policy of the United States. These accusations levelled by the United States against China are groundless. The United States is using other countries as a pretext to avoid its own international responsibilities. There is simply no basis or requirement for trilateral arms control negotiations between China, the United States and the Russian Federation, and China will never take part in them.

China has always believed that transparency in intentions and policies is the most meaningful and real transparency. The nuclear strategy and policy of our country are the most transparent of those of any of the nuclear-weapon States. As I explained in my speech last week, China is firmly committed to peaceful development and pursues a nuclear strategy of self-defence. Our country has unconditionally committed itself not to be the first to make use of nuclear weapons and not to use or threaten the use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States and in nuclear-free zones. China, in its strategy, has never had any hidden agenda, and no country will be threatened by our country's nuclear weapons.

Mr. President, China maintains that nuclear transparency must follow the important principle of undiminished security for all. It must fully take into consideration the security environment faced by all countries and be implemented by all countries on a voluntary basis, in accordance with their national conditions. Countries must fully consider each other's differences in nuclear strategies and strengths and accept that there are differences in the degree and focus of their transparency. On the basis of these principles, China will continue to take the necessary steps in the field of nuclear transparency, including through active promotion of and participation in the dialogue among the five nuclear-weapon States on strategic security and their respective nuclear policies and strategies. It will encourage all parties to view each other's strategic intentions with objectivity, avoiding misunderstandings and misjudgments, enhancing strategic mutual trust and maintaining security for all. In the current international security environment, it is particularly important that the five nuclear-weapon States should push for coordination among the major powers rather than competition, and win-win cooperation instead of a zero-sum game, so as to make a proper contribution to the promotion of world peace and stability. It is our hope that the countries concerned will join China in this endeavour.

At the recently held third session of the Preparatory Committee for the Tenth Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, China once again submitted its national report on the implementation of the Treaty, which comprehensively introduced the country's policies, proposals and specific measures in this field, including in respect of nuclear transparency. The report and the full texts of the statements I have been delivering to the Conference this week and last will be posted on the website of the Chinese delegation in Geneva. We invite all parties to consult these texts with a view to gaining a better understanding of our position.

**The President:** I want to thank the Ambassador of China for his very revealing remarks on transparency. Before I turn to the next speaker on my list, I would like to give our panellists an opportunity to respond to some of the comments. Dr. Williams, is there anything you would like to say?

**Ms. Williams** (United States of America): One comment to echo the Chinese Ambassador – how to choose to be transparent is obviously going to be different. I think of transparency as more of a buffet than a tasting menu. You do not have to do everything; you can choose. The Ambassador of the United Kingdom offered a really helpful suggestion in that States are not going to choose the full tasting menu. They are going to be specific. It might be useful for them to be transparent about non-transparency and to explain why some issues simply cannot be talked about. That could perhaps involve addressing some of the security concerns that some countries have. I would be particularly curious about how that could be incorporated into the process being followed by the five permanent members of the Security Council and if reporting forms allow an opportunity to capture that.

**The President:** Thank you, Dr. Williams. Ms. Wood, would you like the floor?



**Ms. Wood** (Australia): Thank you. I do like a buffet. But I think what this discussion shows is that this is really the start of a conversation in the Conference on Disarmament. It is something that we have taken a bit further in the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. There have been some really good ideas floated by the panellists, and our job now is to take some of them and see whether there is room in the Conference for us to do some of these things. It is the start of a conversation.

I welcome the statements by France and the United Kingdom and by China and Morocco and the sharing of information. I welcome China's explanation regarding the item on the Conference agenda. I would agree that transparency is absolutely not a stand-alone issue, which is why it is so important that we talk about it. We see today that there are indeed very different views about how to approach transparency, which is why it is such a useful topic for us to take forward in the Conference.

**The President:** Thank you, Ms. Wood. Ms. Heimerback, do you have any comments?

**Ms. Heimerback** (Norway): Thank you. And thank you for the kind words about the Group of Governmental Experts to consider the role of verification in advancing nuclear disarmament. We believe in this work. I would just take another opportunity to encourage member States to really engage in the work when we take it to New York and the First Committee in the fall. We look forward to working with all of you there.

**The President:** Thank you, Ms. Heimerback. I will now turn back to our list of speakers. I now have the representative of the Russian Federation.

**Mr. Belousov** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. President, distinguished colleagues, the Conference on Disarmament has accumulated a lot of experience in consideration of the "Transparency in armaments" agenda item, particularly during the 1990s. For example, from 1992 to 1994, the Conference had an Ad Hoc Committee on Transparency in Armaments and in 1998 the Special Coordinator led substantive discussions on the topic. Meaningful discussions on the issue took place between 2013 and 2015. However, recently delegations have rarely addressed the matter and it has been discussed only sporadically, although in our view the issue of transparency as such is worth rethinking in the current context of arms control and non-proliferation.

I would note that the subject of today's meeting as announced by the presidency of the United States of America appears to be much broader than the corresponding item on the Conference agenda, which is backed up by the presentations we have heard. In that regard, I would like to thank the speakers for their substantive statements.

For my part, I would like to share a number of thoughts. It should first be noted that voluntary transparency measures are one of the major tried and tested methods of facilitating a deeper understanding of the positions of States, that they assist with the formulation of joint actions to counter contemporary threats and challenges to regional and international security and that they provide additional guarantees of compliance with agreements on arms control, disarmament and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

However, I would be wary of claiming that transparency and confidence-building measures play a key role in arms control and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, even if this has been much discussed in recent years. We are not trying to downplay the role of transparency and confidence. On the contrary, we believe that in various combinations and formats they can make a significant contribution to easing tensions and preventing conflicts. However, we are calling for a balanced assessment of their feasibility and effectiveness, which depend on a wide array of factors.

Perhaps the most positive example of transparency measures currently implemented is the Register of Conventional Arms, under which States provide information on an annual basis about the transfer of small arms and light weapons and other interrelated information. The positive impact of this transparency measure is clear.

Of course, we know of examples of legally binding instruments under which voluntary measures are agreed and implemented, which are not traditional verification mechanisms but nonetheless increase confidence in the fulfilment by the parties of their obligations. The most obvious example is the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention.

Its existing system of confidence-building measures, based on the annual provision of information about national biological facilities and programmes, helps to enhance openness between parties to the Convention. However, it obviously does not ensure 100 per cent confidence that the Convention is being upheld. And, of course, the implementation of confidence-building measures does not take the critical issue of developing a reliable verification mechanism for the goals of the Convention off the agenda.

Furthermore, transparency generally requires the exchange of information or the provision of data that may be sensitive and often also confidential. A legitimate question then arises of how to protect such information from leaks. This aspect of non-proliferation must be taken into account when implementing measures designed to increase openness. Examples are easy to find. I will simply mention the initiative discussed long ago under the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapon or more precisely its Amended Protocol II, to establish a database on improvised explosive devices. The information it would contain could help counter the threat of these lethal objects. However, realization of the idea is blocked by concerns, including from us, that access to the database could be obtained by unauthorized users, including terrorist organizations.

Therefore, it must be admitted that the scope for implementing transparency measures is fairly limited. Their field of application is even narrower when it comes to nuclear disarmament. This is one of the reasons for our cautious attitude to the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification.

I will immediately make one thing clear: we remain convinced that restoring the atmosphere of constructive cooperation within the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty community would facilitate the search for mutually acceptable compromises for the 2020 Review Conference and help safeguard the integrity of the Treaty and strengthen its regime.

Russia is constantly informing the international community of the steps it has taken towards the reduction and limitation of nuclear weapons, including under the Treaty, at the Conference and in other international arenas. Since 2014, as part of the Treaty review process, Russia, like the other nuclear-weapon States, has regularly submitted national reports prepared using the standardized template adopted. The agreed standard reporting frameworks remain absolutely relevant today and do not need adjusting.

In this context, I would also like to point to the regular exchanges of views on nuclear doctrines held among the five nuclear-weapon States, which should certainly be seen as an attempt by the participants of such events to avoid false interpretations of the role of nuclear weapons in their military planning through open expert debate.

And yet it must be acknowledged that, in the overwhelming majority of cases, transparency and confidence-building measures can play only a supporting role, given that they are voluntary in nature and relatively limited in effectiveness.

Now, in a matter as sensitive as national security, relying exclusively on the goodwill of another State or on some kind of gentlemen's agreement would be irresponsible to say the least. Clear legal guarantees are required. That is why international law on arms control and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is primarily treaty-based. That means that we can talk about a clearly defined set of obligations and the mechanisms for their verification, which have been agreed upon by the parties under the appropriate agreements and conventions.

Our approach to verification issues is well-known. Control and verification procedures cannot be considered in isolation from specific agreements on arms reduction and limitation and must be aligned with the subject and scope of the restrictions or prohibitions they contain.

We did not pull this conclusion out of thin air but rather based it on the very significant experience that Russia has acquired in the process of implementing the verification mechanisms for treaties on arms control, including those on nuclear disarmament.

It must be recalled that nuclear disarmament verification concerns an extremely sensitive subject and that significant proliferation risks can arise. That is why auxiliary controllers who are not parties to the relevant agreements should not be involved in verification activities, especially since such inspectors can be representatives of non-

nuclear-weapon States or non-State actors, which would be in direct contravention of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. It would be unacceptable for verification measures to damage the nuclear non-proliferation regime, including through dissemination of the relevant knowledge and technologies.

In that case it is clearly not appropriate to speak of transparency. As mentioned in the conclusions of the recent final report of the Group of Governmental Experts to consider the role of verification in advancing nuclear disarmament, confidence-building measures may only complement the verification measures agreed upon by the parties to the relevant agreement.

In conclusion, I would like to note that the applicability and effectiveness of transparency measures are not immune from the political conjuncture or from the subjective assessment by States of efforts undertaken by other countries to address questions or concerns about their fulfilment of obligations in the area of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. I will mention just two indicative incidents. The first is the openness and willingness to cooperate with the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons demonstrated by the Government of Syria ever since Damascus acceded to the Chemical Weapons Convention on all matters related to the Syrian chemical dossier. However, for some strange reason, this willingness is interpreted by Western countries not in favour of Syria but against it. Moreover, essentially only one argument is advanced, which is that the supposedly “criminal” regime of Bashar Al-Assad is not trustworthy. The consequences of this position have already led to a split in what was once the most effective disarmament organization. The Russian Federation has stressed on multiple occasions that we are opposed to such an unjustified destructive approach to tackling problems in the field of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation.

The second example is from the very recent past. By means of an active propaganda campaign, the United States has tried to persuade the international community that Russia is responsible for undermining the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty. For that reason, a story was put about regarding the new Russian 9M729 missile, which, by the way, has never fallen under the scope of the Treaty owing to its tactical and technical characteristics. In order to allay American concerns, we opted for unprecedented transparency and conducted a live demonstration of the missile, along with a detailed presentation of its equipment. However, the United States and its closest allies, convinced as they were of being in the right, simply ignored our transparency. As a result, on 2 August 2019, a Treaty which is a cornerstone of European security will cease to exist on a whim of the United States of America.

Therefore, the politicization of transparency in the framework of specific agreements has a major impact on the issue.

**The President:** I thank the representative of the Russian Federation for his statement. The next country on my list is the Islamic Republic of Iran

**Mr. Azarsa** (Islamic Republic of Iran): Thank you. We still struggle to understand the end result and overall utility of panel discussions at a time when member States are eagerly waiting for a workable programme of work for 2019. This practice does not seem to lead to any movement in terms of breaking the long stalemate imposed on the Conference on Disarmament. On the contrary, it has sometimes even contributed to unnecessary and misleading discussion. In last week’s informal plenary meeting, for example, one of the United States panellists referred to Iran in the context of nuclear deterrence, as if Iran had nuclear weapons. It was absurd that many delegations were confused about the concept of nuclear deterrence.

In general, issues such as nuclear deterrence and transparency should not replace the unique mandate of this forum, which is dedicated to negotiating legally binding instruments. Therefore, the substance of the panel discussion, as well as the way it proceeds, is not acceptable to my delegation. Such deliberative exercises should have their own time and venue, given that, in line with what I said in last week’s plenary meeting, we are concerned that injecting irrelevant and confusing concepts and notions into the work of the Conference is counterproductive, not without consequence and misleading.

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

**Mr. Beerwerth** (Germany): Thank you, Mr. President. I would like to thank you for organizing this meeting today on transparency and verification, and as other speakers have done before, I would like to thank the panellists for their excellent presentations.

It is a little less than 12 months before the 2020 Review Conference, and this is why, when speaking on nuclear issues, it is of the utmost importance that we make progress on the nuclear issues in the remaining time. One step in that direction could be some progress in the field of transparency and confidence-building among States. Yes, some may say that the international security environment is not really conducive to progress anywhere right now. And I agree. The international security situation is not particularly pleasant in some respects. However, under these circumstances, it is more important than ever, and I think we all have a special interest in making progress in an area such as transparency, since transparency, as several speakers have said, is key to building trust and lowering risk, and since it decreases the risks associated with miscalculations. At the same time, transparency is no substitute for disarmament. And I do not need to recall that disarmament is the core issue we are tasked with here in the Conference on Disarmament.

In very practical terms, Mr. President, more progress, we believe, is possible and desirable, as has been outlined by several speakers, both from the panel and from the floor. I do not want to repeat what my dear colleague, Vanessa Wood, has said about what the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative has been doing, but I would like to say that the nuclear-weapon States have different levels of transparency on doctrines. On the one hand, we very much appreciate the increasing transparency brought about through the process being followed, under the Chinese presidency, by the five permanent members of the Security Council, and we are certain that this will continue under the incoming United Kingdom presidency. However, more exchanges between the nuclear-weapon States and the non-nuclear-weapon States would also be highly desirable. We look forward to some of the ideas floating around on implementing such enhanced transparency on doctrines being put into practice.

Verification, Mr. President, is also one of the domains where we have made some progress. Germany focuses on two strands. One of the strands has already been mentioned by the French Ambassador. In the context of the national partnership for disarmament verification, we have focused on technical questions and, together with our French partners and friends, we are organizing a verification exercise in September, to which invitations will be forthcoming. Secondly, we are pleased that at least at its third and last meeting, the Group of Governmental Experts to consider the role of verification in advancing nuclear disarmament, which focused on a host of aspects, the role of verification in advancing nuclear disarmament was highlighted and a final document was agreed upon.

From our point of view, the document could have been even more elaborate and more specific, but we understand that there are limits to what the Group could do, in particular because it is impossible to ignore that speaking about verification within a specific context of the disarmament treaty has its pluses. Germany actively contributed to that Group, for example by submitting a working paper on the structural elements of nuclear disarmament verification.

**The President:** I thank the Ambassador of Germany for his statement. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Japan.

**Mr. Takamizawa** (Japan): Mr. President, thank you for giving us an opportunity to talk about the very important issues of transparency and verification in the Conference on Disarmament in a very interactive manner. We have a lot of differences, but that is why we need to have an interactive dialogue.

First, with regard to the significance of mutual transparency, I think that, even if it is secondary, transparency is the basis of very many issues, including work on nuclear disarmament in a collective and cooperative spirit. The reason is that nuclear weapons are based on the concept of deterrence. That is why we discuss deterrence from different angles. At the same time, in order to achieve nuclear disarmament, we need to understand where the nuclear-weapon and other nuclear-armed States are in their thinking, because the humanitarian consequences are so great that nuclear weapons should not be used. That is why the total elimination of the nuclear weapons is our common goal. Transparency can give us an opportunity to talk about civility and respect with each other and have fact-based discussions. Although facts are seen differently from party to party, we certainly believe the

facts each nuclear-weapon State can provide us. I would thus like to focus on the importance of transparency.

Second, I would like to talk about the attitude issue. I think that there is certainly sensitivity, and we need to understand the sensitivity of information in respect of both transparency and verification. But what non-nuclear-weapon States are really interested in hearing is why you are not disclosing this sensitive information. The “why” is very important, and it is related to the attitude of the non-nuclear weapons States and to how serious they are about engaging in this area. Sometimes, we know that is the problem of the nuclear-weapon States; that can be understandable. That is the kind of reaction I had to issues related to verification, nuclear deterrence and nuclear postures. The nuclear-weapon States’ attitudes, then, are what we really respect. Another component of this attitude is the interactive nature of discussion. We do not know very well what you are doing, but when it is explained, we have very legitimate questions to ask, so please respond to these questions in a sincere and very convincing, if not necessarily detailed, way.

The third element that I would like to talk about is the importance of transparency in the context of risk reduction. In that sense, the Group of Seven’s Statement on Non-Proliferation and Disarmament, which is related to strategic risk reduction, contains a lot of points which have been discussed in the Conference and other forums. I really hope that other nuclear-weapon States not belonging to the Group of Seven or former Group of Eight and other countries agree on this concept, not necessarily on the substance but at least on a starting point that can be a good basis for both transparency and risk reduction.

I would like to respond to the Ambassador of the United Kingdom’s point on what the non-nuclear-weapon States want from this process. The 80-page French paper includes a lot of information, and China has published considerable material. Russia’s website is quite informative, as is that of the United States. We have access to many different types of information on the web or in meetings, but what is much more important is to be sure of your intentions. The non-nuclear-weapon States should be responding to your papers or reports. Please understand our position that the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative should be, for example, coming up with a common position to assess or to support your report in a manner that can be developed meaningfully in the context of non-proliferation or in the Conference. Non-nuclear-weapon States should be serious about responding to the nuclear-weapon States’ reporting. In that sense, Ms. Wood made an important point. A checklist is really important, but we need to say why something is a checklist. Some checklists are not really reflected in the paper, but that can be understandable. Sometimes, those points were really made by the nuclear-weapon States – we really do not know. But the checklists sometimes do not include many important points that the nuclear-weapon States might like to talk about. That is the interactive nature of this issue.

Finally, engagement and preparation are important, and I would like the nuclear-weapon States to consider producing a paper in advance of the side event on the margins of the 2020 Review Conference, so that we can respond to you in advance. We would appreciate having these elements elaborated in advance or being told what we need to read before the side event takes place.

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

**Mr. De Aguiar Patriota (Brazil):** Thank you very much, Mr. President, for holding these discussions. I also thank the panellists for their excellent presentations today.

I would like to state that thanks largely to the experience of the Brazilian–Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control, which works on the basis of maximum transparency and mutual verification between neighbours in respect of nuclear materials, Brazil has been in a favourable position to participate in and contribute to initiatives such as the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification, a partnership we value in spite of its being a restricted forum for such a fundamental conversation. The Partnership would of course have better outcomes, representation and legitimacy if it existed in a truly multilateral format, preferably within the United Nations system.

Brazil has enthusiastically engaged with the Group of Governmental Experts to consider the role of verification in advancing nuclear disarmament, convened pursuant to

General Assembly resolution 71/67, and I am glad Ms. Heimerback brought up the Group in the context of today's discussions on transparency. Within the Group framework, Brazil submitted a working paper proposing the establishment of a group of scientific and technical experts on nuclear disarmament verification mandated by the Conference on Disarmament and operating under its rules of procedure. Although the response to the idea was extremely positive in the context of the Group, a situation of consensus minus one prevented the Group from clearly endorsing a recommendation to pursue that course of action. I am glad, however, that Ms. Heimerback has indicated that Norway might be pursuing further action on this issue in the context of the First Committee at the General Assembly, so that might be an opportunity to continue considering this idea and the proposal made by Brazil.

The proposed group is premised on the notion that all States, nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon States alike, have a stake in nuclear disarmament discussions, negotiations and verification of compliance and the right to participate fully in them. Like the Group of Scientific Experts created for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty many years ago, which met for about 20 years within the context of the Conference prior to the commencement of negotiations on the Treaty, the similar group of scientific and technical experts on nuclear disarmament verification proposed by Brazil would be of a strictly technical nature, it would be in place for an appropriate duration and its composition would be equitable. It could work on technologies and methodologies to investigate and develop inspection techniques. The group could perform relevant research and explore different verification scenarios, without prejudice to the position of any State or the content of any future or existing comprehensive treaty on nuclear disarmament, while upholding the principles of non-discrimination, non-proliferation and the balance between the credibility and sensitivity of information. To assuage concerns that were expressed in discussions in the Group of Governmental Experts with respect to non-nuclear weapon States having access to confidential information, Brazil has proposed verification based on the concept of proliferation-resistant information.

Many States seem to agree that the high-level fissile material cut-off treaty expert preparatory group created pursuant to General Assembly resolution 71/259 has exhausted technical preparatory work on the verification of compliance related to a fissile material treaty. Little more is expected beyond commencement of negotiations on such a treaty whenever States parties agree to it. Setting up a group of the sort proposed by Brazil would therefore be the most viable and useful means of maintaining the momentum generated by the technical discussions on a fissile material treaty.

Furthermore, a group of scientific and technical experts on nuclear disarmament verification would ensure that future negotiations would not be limited to the non-proliferation dimension of fissile materials but would also include technically sound verification methodologies, mechanisms and inspection procedures for nuclear disarmament more broadly, in conformity with obligations contained in article VI of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to highlight certain elements of the proposal made by Brazil with respect to nuclear disarmament verification, which is very closely related to the subject of transparency that you brought up today in this body, Mr. President.

**The President:** I thank the Ambassador of Brazil for his statement. Would anyone else like to speak on this topic right now? If not, I will turn to the representative of Kazakhstan, who is next and the only other speaker on the list under any other matters.

**Mr. Baissuanov (Kazakhstan):** Thank you very much, Mr. President. As we are taking the floor for the first time under your presidency, I wish to congratulate you on the presidency and wish you every success in your endeavours.

Mr. President, Kazakhstan shares the serious concerns that are regularly expressed here in the Council Chamber and elsewhere about the inaction of the Conference on Disarmament and its inability to launch negotiations on any of its agenda items for the last two decades. We reaffirm our commitment to the resumption of negotiations in the Conference without further delay. We are confident that tangible progress in multilateral disarmament and in strengthening international regimes of arms control and non-

proliferation can only be achieved within the framework of the existing multilateral disarmament mechanisms, in particular the Conference on Disarmament.

Taking into account national security priorities of the member States, we call on the States participating in the work of the Conference on Disarmament to demonstrate political will in order to reach an agreement on a balanced and comprehensive programme of work and resume its substantive work on the core issues on the Conference agenda.

Mr. President, 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 the maintenance of international peace and security. Any attempt to politicize the work of the Conference is unacceptable. Member States of the Conference should make every effort to refrain from actions that could further exacerbate already existing tension and further entrench the stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament. We urge all member States of the Conference to redouble their efforts to overcome its stagnation and resume substantive work.

**The President:** I thank the representative of Kazakhstan for his statement. Before closing, I would like to give the floor to our panellists to see if they have any final comments they would like to make. It seems that is not the case. I understand that the Deputy Permanent Representative of Peru has requested the floor.

**Ms. Masana García** (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you, Mr. President. I must make a statement on behalf of a group of countries. I have the honour of making this statement on behalf of the following States: Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Guatemala, Honduras, Paraguay and Peru (members of the Lima Group). Our Governments wish to make the following known: (1) we do not recognize the regime of Nicolás Maduro in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela as it resulted from an election that did not comply with the guarantees and international standards of a free, fair, transparent and democratic process; (2) the Governments of the Lima Group recognize and support Mr. Juan Guaidó as the President of Venezuela under its Constitution; (3) we reaffirm our respect for the Conference's rules of procedure, in particular paragraph 9, which states that the presidency of the Conference shall rotate based on the English alphabetical list of membership; (4) notwithstanding the above, we do not recognize a presidency of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela held by representatives of the illegitimate regime of Nicolás Maduro and, in this particular case, we will not participate in the work of the Conference between 27 May and 23 June 2019.

**The President:** I thank the delegate of Peru for her statement on behalf of the Lima Group. Speaking in my national capacity, the United States shares the views expressed by the representative of Peru on behalf of the Lima Group. Would anyone else like to take the floor? You have the floor.

**Mr. Valero** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, I am speaking as the legitimate representative of a Government elected by direct, universal and secret popular vote. More than six million Venezuelan men and women voted for President Nicolás Maduro Moros. The delegation of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela deeply regrets the disrespectful behaviour of the delegation of the United States of America, which is taking advantage of its position as President of the Conference. The self-styled Lima Group is not a serious or credible political interlocutor; it is a minority group of countries that have come together for the sole purpose of attacking and hurting a brother country in their own region. Using the Conference to air issues of a national nature that are not part of its agenda serves only to maintain the deadlock in which this body finds itself. Instead of facilitating progress in the negotiation of a programme of work, the delegation of the United States and other lackeys have tried to use the Conference to interfere in our internal affairs.

The international community is aware of the supremacist, terrorist, xenophobic and racist Government of Donald Trump, which has threatened to stage a military invasion of the homeland of Simón Bolívar. Fortunately, this threat has been rejected by the vast majority of peace-loving countries that make up the United Nations. The illegal and anti-diplomatic behaviour of the United States delegation, and that of some others, is intended to tarnish not only our country but also the majority of delegations here present, who sincerely want, in good faith, to overcome the deadlock in the Conference.

Dear friends and peace-loving diplomats, the presidency of the United States delegation has failed. It has failed to fulfil its duty in accordance with Conference procedure. It has not succeeded in having Venezuela expelled from this forum and it has not prevented the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela from holding the presidency of the Conference. The democratic Government of Nicolás Maduro Moros is recognized by the vast majority of the countries in the world and by the Secretary-General António Guterres.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela will hold the presidency of the Conference from 27 May to 23 June 2019 and will show itself to be absolutely constructive, inclusive and respectful in its approach.

*Ms. Plath (United States of America) took the Chair.*

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Cuba.

**Mr. Pedroso Cuesta** (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you, Mr. President. Since an issue that is totally irrelevant to the agenda of the Conference has once again been raised in this forum, we are obliged to set out the position of Cuba on these matters. Just a few hours ago, a statement of the eighteenth meeting of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America – Peoples' Trade Agreement, which is made up of 11 countries in our region, was adopted in Havana. The ministers and heads of delegation present there expressed their concern at the rising level of aggression directed at our continent and the actions that undermine regional peace and security, especially the threats to use force against the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, which constitute dangers to regional peace, in opposition to the precepts contained in the Proclamation of Latin America and the Caribbean as a Zone of Peace, signed by the heads of State and Government of Latin America and the Caribbean, including those who had previously spoken at the second summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States in Havana on 28 and 29 January 2014.

In this regard, allow me to point out that we categorically reject all attempts to pervert the work of the Conference and obstruct, on spurious pretexts, the implementation of its objectives in violation of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law. We reject all ploys aimed at justifying the violation of the principles of the peaceful settlement of disputes, the prohibition of the use of force and the threat of its use, and respect for self-determination, sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference in the internal affairs of States.

Our delegation not only reaffirms its support for the constitutional President of Venezuela, Nicolás Maduro Moro, and for the Bolivarian and Chavist revolution and the civil-military union of its people, but also assures the distinguished delegation of Venezuela, and its Ambassador, of all our cooperation and support for the successful conduct of its presidency of the Conference as a country that loves peace and disarmament and rejects aggression and war.

**The President:** Thank you. I would like to give the floor to the representative of the Russian Federation.

**Mr. Belousov** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I will be brief. Firstly, we are categorically opposed to any attempt to use the Conference on Disarmament to settle inter-State political scores, which threatens to deepen a division between delegations that could completely disrupt the work of the Conference and lead to the collapse of the current session.

Secondly, the legitimacy of the current official delegation of Venezuela and of its representatives at the Conference is not in doubt and cannot be contested. Neither is there any doubt as to the legitimacy of the Venezuelan presidency in accordance with rule 9 of the Conference's rules of procedure.

Thirdly, the decision of a foreign State to recognize a certain person as the leader of another country does not give that person and his or her representatives legitimacy. That is the position of the Russian Federation. We ask that it be taken into consideration.

Fourthly, I would like to align myself with the statement of the representative of Kazakhstan, who called upon delegations to refrain from actions that could negatively impact the work of the Conference.



**The President:** Thank you. I now give the floor to the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

**Mr. Ju Yong-chol** (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Thank you, Madam President. My delegation is deeply concerned over the growing tendency of some countries to abuse this forum for political purposes. On several occasions, we have seen highly politicized attempts to turn the Conference on Disarmament into a platform for launching political accusations on selected Conference members and interfering in the internal affairs of individual countries. Today we saw another political attempt to deprive a fully-fledged United Nations Member State of its legitimate representation at the United Nations.

Such practices, in disregard of the rules of procedure of the Conference, will exacerbate divisions and confrontation among Conference members, thus undermining the deliberations we undertake to find a way to overcome the long-standing stalemate. We therefore call upon all member States to refrain from any action that could detract from our efforts to resume the substantive work of the Conference or undermine its work.

In terms of the issue of Venezuela, my delegation condemns all attempts by some countries to remove the legitimately elected President of Venezuela and interfere in its internal affairs, because they constitute a challenge to international justice and a flagrant violation of international law. My delegation also strongly opposes any attempt to deny the representatives of Venezuela their legitimate rights to represent their country at the United Nations.

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

**Mr. Al Ashkar** (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): Thank you. My delegation looks forward to Venezuela assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and will cooperate fully with it in the performance of its duties in order to achieve progress in the work of the Conference.

My delegation warns against attempts to politicize the Conference on Disarmament, since such action creates additional problems and generates an atmosphere of tension that is counterproductive. My delegation also deplores any interference in the internal affairs of Venezuela and considers that such behaviour constitutes a flagrant violation of international law and the Charter of the United Nations. Raising issues that fall outside the competence and mandate of the Conference will not lead to any progress in its work. On the contrary, it will extend the stalemate that has persisted for more than two decades and will increase tensions in the Conference.

**The President:** Thank you. I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

**Mr. Azarsa** (Islamic Republic of Iran): Thank you. My delegation believes that issues of a political nature should not appear in our discussions here in the Conference on Disarmament. If such issues were discussed in the Conference, the delegation of Iran would not be here. We are not here to judge other countries. The Conference should remain a special body dealing with nuclear disarmament, not a one-sided political body operating on double standards. I strongly invite other member States to observe the rules of procedure in full and to respect the presidency of Venezuela.

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

**Mr. Li Song** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Thank you Madam President. The Chinese delegation agrees with the delegations of the Russian Federation, Cuba and others. I have already set out the Chinese position on numerous occasions this year at the Conference. China believes that the Conference's work should not be subjected to politicization unrelated to its agenda. The equal rights of all members of the Conference must be fully respected. The Chinese delegation hopes that the Conference can carry out its work normally in the next four weeks and subsequently, it will participate in the Conference's work in the coming weeks in a positive and constructive manner.

**The President:** Thank you, Sir. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of India.

**Mr. Sharma** (India): Thank you, Madam President. India has taken the floor to underline its long-standing commitment to the objectives and goals of the Conference on Disarmament and its efforts to achieve these goals. The international community has high expectations of the Conference as the single multilateral negotiating forum for negotiating and concluding disarmament instruments.

In this context, India has welcomed and supported various efforts, including the establishment of the working group on the way ahead and the subsidiary bodies last year. India remains committed to the adoption of a programme of work for negotiating legally binding instruments on the core items on the Conference agenda and has been actively working with fellow member States towards this aim. It is a matter of regret that despite our sustained efforts, including those by the successive presidencies, the Conference has not been able to agree to a programme of work this year.

There is a need to revitalize the Conference and bring the focus back on substantive work. While doing so, we must strictly follow the rules of procedure, including the principle of consensus. It is important to avoid any attempts to politicize the Conference and the associated institutions, including the presidency. We can ill afford to bring extraneous considerations not related to our substantive work, which would only imperil the work of this august body as well as the principles of multilateralism that are cherished by all of us. In this context, we would also like to recall the statement made by a group of member States to this effect earlier this year.

It is our sincere hope that the Conference will be able to advance its substantive work in order to deliver on its core mandate through early commencement of negotiations. One of the core issues that is most mature, as also underscored by several delegations, is the negotiation of a fissile material cut-off treaty, which has also suffered from extraneous considerations not related to the core issue. India fully supports the negotiation of such a treaty in the Conference on the basis of document CD/1299 and the mandate contained therein and reiterates its call for an early commencement of such negotiations.

My delegation reiterates its support for your efforts to lead the work of the Conference to a successful outcome, Madam President.

**The President:** Thank you, Sir. I now give the floor to the representative of South Africa.

**Mr. September** (South Africa): Thank you, Madam President. We align ourselves with the statement that was made earlier by the representative of Kazakhstan. We want to emphasize that being an integral part of the United Nations disarmament machinery, the Conference on Disarmament has, in the past, made a significant practical contribution to the maintenance of international peace and security and is still an important venue for an exchange of views on a broad range of issues of arms control and disarmament. We call on member States to respect the mandate and presidency of the Conference. Any attempts to politicize the institution of the Conference presidency are unacceptable and should be resisted.

Conference members should therefore make every effort to refrain from actions that could further exacerbate existing tensions and further entrench the stalemate in the Conference. A founding principle of South Africa's constitutional democracy that we hold very dear is respect for the rule of law. We therefore are deeply concerned by what is a clear attempt in Venezuela to circumvent the country's constitutional legal mechanism that governs its elections. We believe that any grievance or dispute should be resolved in a peaceful manner through proper mechanisms and processes provided for in the Constitution of Venezuela and its electoral laws, without external influence. This is standard and indeed best practice in all democracies that subscribe to the rule of law.

I wish to stress that South Africa is firmly against any attempts at undue or unconstitutional change of government in Venezuela. We believe that the Security Council should provide avenues that create environments conducive to dialogue and cooperation that would ease the challenges and hardship faced by the people of Venezuela.

**The President:** Thank you for your statement. I now give the floor to the representative of Viet Nam.

**Mr. Duong Chi Dung** (Viet Nam): Thank you very much. I would like first of all to thank our previous colleagues and associate ourselves with the views they have just expressed. We support what the representative of Kazakhstan has called for. It is important for us in the Conference on Disarmament to focus on our work, have discussions and, as mandated, develop a programme of work, a very important matter.

Viet Nam has also undertaken to work under the mandate of the Conference and would like to join other efforts in this sense. We are disappointed that, once again, politicized issues were brought up in the Conference, causing the atmosphere of cooperation to deteriorate.

My delegation would like to call on member States to refrain from unhealthy practices that could threaten the Conference's legitimacy. It believes that raising issues not relevant to the Conference agenda will hinder the work of the Conference. It does not welcome inappropriate actions that could spoil the Conference and plunge it into turmoil. We strongly urge member States to uphold fundamental principles of international law and those inscribed in the Charter of the United Nations on national sovereignty and non-interference, while maintaining the principle of consensus and the fundamental principles to which the Conference owes the legitimacy and success it has enjoyed over the past decades.

**The President:** Thank you, Sir, for your statement. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Nicaragua.

**Mr. Morales Dávila** (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you, Mr. President. My delegation is committed to the objectives of the Conference. In that regard, we support the forthcoming presidency of Venezuela. We regret the attempt to politicize this body, which is so important in the field of international disarmament for peace, and in this respect we reiterate our constructive support for Venezuela under its presidency, in accordance with international law.

**The President:** Thank you for your statement, Sir. I now give the floor to the representative of Cameroon.

**Mr. Awoumou** (Cameroon) (*spoke in French*): Thank you, Madam President. In a global context marked by a rise in multifaceted tensions, which makes it necessary and urgent for the Conference to be revitalized, Cameroon does not believe it is necessary to hear any further views on this matter from the Conference. Cameroon remains very committed to the principles and rules of international law, the Charter of the United Nations and, above all, the Conference's rules of procedure. In its capacity as the future coordinator of the Group of 21, Cameroon therefore pledges to cooperate fully with the future President of the Conference.

**The President:** I thank you for your statement. It seems we have no more speakers on the list and that we have come to the end of our plenary meeting today.

Let me add in my national capacity, given the strong statements here at the end that my delegation strongly and fundamentally believes that all diplomatic discussions – and I have said this before – in any multilateral forums are in fact political discussions by their very nature and that we will continue to use these opportunities to press for issues that are of collective interest to us all. Unfortunately, it is not the politicization of the Conference on Disarmament that endangers its credibility but the will and the stance of member States that participate in this forum on a daily basis.

In that regard, let me also say that the United States aligns itself with the statement of the Lima Group. We do not recognize the former Maduro regime members here today but look forward to collaborating in the future with a delegation that represents the legitimately elected Government of Venezuela.

Before concluding, I would like to thank all States members for their support for our presidency and for the substantive and frank exchanges on the various topics discussed, particularly here today on transparency. I also wish to thank the conference officers and interpreters for their support and, of course, the United States would like to express its appreciation for all that the Conference on Disarmament secretariat does to support this organization. Its dedication and professionalism are to be commended – we thank you for all of your support. This meeting is adjourned.

*The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.*