

# Conference on Disarmament

English

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

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 28 May 2019, at 10.05 a.m.

*President:* Mr. Jorge Valero .....Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

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**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): Distinguished diplomats representing your States in this forum, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is honoured to assume the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament for the period from 27 May to 23 June 2019. In this first plenary we would like to outline for you our vision and plans for our presidency. We have full confidence in this Conference, which is the only multilateral forum for the negotiation of disarmament agreements. We recognize the serious and responsible work done this year by the previous Presidents of the Conference, in particular the Ambassadors of Ukraine and the United Kingdom, who made strenuous, important and indeed very constructive efforts to reshape the work of the Conference on Disarmament.

Venezuela believes that this forum should live up to the expectations that the international community has had of it since its inception in 1979. The Conference on Disarmament is one of the foremost bodies for addressing the worrying nuclear scenario that may threaten the very life of the planet. Venezuela underscores the need to eliminate all weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear weapons. To that end, trust and respect among all States must be fostered.

World peace must prevail, the threats of war must disappear. The work of our Presidency will be conducted in strict adherence to the rules of procedure and the principle of transparency. Consensus is a cornerstone for decision-making. The Venezuelan presidency will therefore make every effort to ensure that a constructive and inclusive approach prevails in this forum. The impossibility of achieving an atmosphere of trust around the issues on the agenda has led to the lethargy that has prevailed in the Conference for almost 20 years.

The political will of peace-loving States can help us to achieve our goals. During our presidency, we will, I assure you, consult with the delegations of all member States in multilateral, bilateral, formal and informal settings in the quest for constructive and innovative proposals that can contribute to the mandate established for the Conference under the resolution of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD I), the rules of procedure and the Conference's agenda. We appreciate the efforts made by the chairs and coordinators of the subsidiary bodies in 2018, with whom we wish to hold bilateral consultations. Their work is one of the sources that will inspire our presidency.

As President, I will prioritize efforts to develop a balanced and inclusive programme of work. To that end, we will ensure at least one consultation per week in the framework of the plenary meetings scheduled on the calendar of the Conference on Disarmament. We will convene informal meetings so that delegations can comment freely on their positions. We will also hold an informal thematic meeting each week, in line with the agenda items.

Today, distinguished diplomats, we wish to hold a discussion on the programme of work. Before submitting a draft programme of work for consideration by the members of the Conference on Disarmament, I should like to hear your views on the minimum elements that should be included in the programme. We will listen very carefully to everyone's expectations, which will enable us to adjust the steps to be taken going forward. On 30 May, we will circulate a first draft programme of work, which will be discussed on Tuesday, 4 June 2019, in order to ensure that all delegations have time to receive instructions from their capitals.

We invite all member States to assist the presidency in fulfilling its mandate by taking an inclusive, respectful and positive approach. It goes without saying that interference in the internal affairs of States, which are not a subject for consideration by this forum, should be avoided.

I would like, distinguished friends, to begin with the list of speakers and to give the floor to those delegations that wish to comment on the matters that might be included in a first draft programme of work, which is the main focus of this meeting. But we have received some requests from delegations wishing to speak. The first delegation to make such a request was the delegation of the United States, and I respectfully give it the floor.

I note that the distinguished Ambassador of the United States is not present. I will therefore proceed to give the floor to the following speakers. The distinguished representative of Pakistan, Ambassador Tahir Hussain Andrabi, has the floor.

**Mr. Andrabi** (Pakistan): Thank you, Mr. President. I begin by congratulating you on assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. We are pleased to note that you have planned substantive discussions on the items on the Conference agenda during your presidency. We appreciate the informal consultations undertaken by you and your team. Pakistan remains committed to the smooth functioning of the Conference and always strives to contribute to its work in a constructive manner. We will continue to do so under your presidency. You can rest assured of my delegation's full support, cooperation and active participation.

We regret that some member States have chosen to absent themselves from the Chamber. Their decision is based on matters not relevant to the Conference. We believe that the Conference should operate in accordance with established rules and norms of accreditation and representation in multilateral bodies. The Conference should focus on addressing the real issues that are hindering progress towards the fulfilment of its mandate.

We hope that, during your presidency, the Conference will continue its routine functioning in a productive manner. The Conference should not become a victim of our posturing and politicking on issues that are not related to its substantive agenda items. Extraneous issues should neither divert the focus of the Conference from its core substantive items nor undermine the important role and responsibility entrusted to its President.

Mr. President, I would also like to take this opportunity to announce a recent development related to the prevention of an arms race in outer space. On 22 May 2019, in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, on the margins of the Council of Foreign Ministers Meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Pakistan and the Russian Federation signed a joint statement on not being the first to place weapons in outer space. The joint statement was signed by our Foreign Minister, Shah Mahmood Qureshi, and the Russian Foreign Minister, Mr. Sergey Lavrov.

In the joint statement, Pakistan and Russia have reiterated their commitment to refrain from the threat or use of force in outer space activities and have declared that they will not in any way be the first to place weapons of any kind in outer space and that they will make all possible efforts to prevent outer space from becoming an arena of military confrontation and to ensure security in outer space activities. This is a practical manifestation of Pakistan's commitment to this goal. We also encourage other responsible space-faring nations to follow this example.

Outer space is being used by an increasing number of States. Pakistan has been consistently highlighting the risk of its weaponization, which threatens the long-term sustainability of peaceful space activities. The use of force against space-based objects, as well as the development and deployment of anti-ballistic missile systems and their integration into space assets, has added worrying dimensions to this issue.

There is an urgent need to address gaps in the international legal regime governing the exploration and use of outer space with a view to ensuring that no one threatens peaceful activities and application of space technologies for socioeconomic development. The draft Treaty on the Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space, the Threat or Use of Force against Outer Space Objects, tabled jointly by China and Russia, provides a useful basis for the commencement of negotiations in the Conference, which we strongly support.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, distinguished representative of Pakistan, for your words, for your contributions. And now I would like to give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador of the Syrian Arab Republic, Ambassador Hussam Edin Aala.

**Mr. Aala** (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): Thank you, Mr. President. Let me begin by congratulating you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. We are confident that your experience and diplomatic skill will allow you to guide our work wisely and efficiently.

The Syrian Arab Republic welcomes the assumption of the presidency by the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and looks forward to the Conference returning its attention, during your presidency, to the agenda adopted at the beginning of this year.

In this context, we welcome the Venezuelan presidency's proposed action plan and its commitment to arriving at a comprehensive and balanced programme of work that reflects the concerns of member States and to organizing consultations to that end. As is well known, it is the responsibility of each president of the Conference to organize consultations with a view to agreeing a programme of work, but this did not happen when the United States assumed the rotating presidency of the Conference. From day one its actions raised questions about its compliance with the rules of procedure.

Diplomatic custom dictates that the congratulations offered to the new president be accompanied by praise for his or her predecessor, but we are not in a position to thank the former presidency, which chose to walk out of the Conference today, as it failed to hold consultations on the Conference's programme of work and used the presidency to promote its national agenda, unilaterally introducing items for discussion that fell outside the scope of the agenda and offered no prospect of advancing negotiations on the Conference's agenda and mandate.

This behaviour, which involved the renewed exploitation of the presidency and its machinery for political motives and the insistence on wasting time that should be spent discussing critical issues on the agenda, constitutes an unacceptable departure from the rules of procedure and established practice.

Those present in this chamber should not accept attempts to continue obstructing the work of the Conference. We all have a responsibility to ensure that the Conference is effective and fully operational in order to preserve its credibility and its pivotal role in multilateral disarmament negotiations. We look forward to this being the case during your presidency and future presidencies of the Conference.

Some States have held the Conference on Disarmament hostage to their political agendas and blocked the adoption of its annual report last year. During the presidency of the United States this year, work was not guided by the rules of procedure. We regret that from the outset the platform was used to make accusations against member States. We therefore stress, once again, the need for all members to fulfil their presidential responsibilities and to comply with their disarmament obligations.

Mr. President, the world is facing many challenges, with the rise of unilateralism in resorting to the threat or use of force in international relations, in violation of the rules of international law and the Charter of the United Nations, and the spread and use of terrorism as a way to undermine the stability of States, target their political systems and interfere in their internal affairs. The severity of these challenges is exacerbated by the decrease in compliance with commitments made within the framework of the multilateral disarmament agenda, notably obligations on nuclear disarmament and the increased risks of terrorist groups obtaining access to and using chemical weapons. With this in mind, the Syrian Arab Republic believes in the importance of the Conference on Disarmament and the need to revitalize its role as the only multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament.

Cognizant of the enormous complexity of the prevailing international security environment, we stress the importance of putting the issue of disarmament back at the centre of the collective security system, as set out in the Charter of the United Nations and in accordance with the priorities established by the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.

In this sense, Syria renews its call to preserve the nature and role of the Conference and to distance it from short-sighted calculations and avoid politicization. It also stresses that discussions should focus on the items on the agenda and that every effort should be made to reach a comprehensive and balanced programme of work that allows the Conference to resume its negotiating mandate and that reflects the concerns of member States. In this context, we reiterate our commitment to work with the Venezuelan presidency and with subsequent presidencies to achieve these goals.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the distinguished Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic for his important statement, and of course I also thank you for your kind words addressed to the President. I now give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador of Zimbabwe.

**Mr. Mushayavanhu** (Zimbabwe): Thank you, Mr. President. Firstly, my delegation wishes to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on

Disarmament. We are confident that your term, as President of the Conference, will be crowned with success. My delegation also wishes to recognize Ambassador Wood and the United States delegation for steering the work of the Conference at the end of the first part as well as at the beginning of the second part of the current session.

Mr. President, my delegation is concerned that no agreement on the programme of work has been reached for this session of the Conference. Although we have already lost a lot of time, we believe that the remaining three months of this session should be put to good use. By so doing, we would be laying a firm foundation and building much goodwill for better cooperation among members ahead of the 2020 session of the Conference.

Mr. President, my delegation was therefore pleased to hear from you this morning that you intend to continue building on the work of previous Presidents in search of consensus on the programme of work. We want to encourage you on this path. In this endeavour, you can count on the full cooperation and support of my delegation.

My delegation wishes to reiterate the call that we made earlier this year during the first part of this session of the Conference. At that time, we joined a group of like-minded delegations in recommitting ourselves to the Conference on Disarmament as the single multilateral negotiating forum for dealing with disarmament. In this context, we wish to reiterate our call on the entire membership of the Conference to respect the rules of procedure and the office of the President of the Conference.

At the moment, Mr. President, the Conference on Disarmament is clearly off course and drifting away from its core mandate. My delegation believes that we should now take decisive measures to address the institutional drift and mandate creep that are affecting the work of the Conference. We call on member States of the Conference on Disarmament to refrain from politicizing the Conference, because that has the effect of further undermining the credibility of this institution.

Finally, Mr. President, Zimbabwe invites all members of the Conference to recommit to the work of the Conference and to resume substantive work without further delay.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, distinguished Ambassador of Zimbabwe, for your words, for your constructive contributions and for your support for the presidency. I now give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

**Mr. Han** Tae-song (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Thank you, Mr. President. I am very pleased to see you, Ambassador of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, occupying the presidency. Since this is the first time I take the floor under your presidency, I would like to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and wish you every success during your tenure.

I am quite confident that under your professionalism and skilful guidance, the Conference will break out of its long-standing stalemate and resume substantive work. This year, there have been several attempts to agree on a programme of work proposed by your predecessors; however, due to the diverse and contrasting views among member States, they regrettably failed to reach consensus. Although it seems that we are pressed for time in this year's session, there is still room for us to engage in deliberating on what we can do and to establish a programme of work.

Mr. President, your redoubled efforts to this end would be highly appreciated. My delegation pledges its support to you as you carry out your duty. We are ready to work closely with you in order to make a constructive contribution to the Conference. In this regard, the plan of activities that you have just laid out could be a good starting point and a basis for consideration with a view to moving the Conference forward.

My delegation also calls on member States to engage in building mutual trust and confidence and respect the rules of procedure, so that our endeavours and flexibility will pave the way for the delivery of tangible results. Finally, my delegation reiterates its opposition to the politicization of the work of the Conference and the abuse of the rules of procedure.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, distinguished Permanent Representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, for your contributions this

morning and also, of course, for your willingness to work with the presidency to ensure that we carry out this responsibility with dignity. I now give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador of India.

**Mr. Sharma** (India): Mr. President, at the outset I would like to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and pledge my delegation's support to your efforts to steer our deliberations to a successful outcome.

In accordance with rule 29 of the Conference's rules of procedure, it is indeed the responsibility of the presidency of the Conference to draw up a programme of work. Therefore, we would like to endorse your approach to establishing a programme of work. In this context, we would like to thank the distinguished presidencies of Ukraine and the United Kingdom for drawing up a programme of work and their efforts in that direction. We had made considerable progress on various issues, including the possibility of establishing subsidiary bodies on the core agenda items pending an agreement on a programme of work. We believe that we could resume our discussions from that point and try to explore common ground for a consensus decision to establish a programme of work. We will share our detailed comments once you share your draft programme of work.

My delegation looks forward to engaging with you and fellow member States to achieve our collective goals, in accordance with the mandate of the Conference on Disarmament.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, distinguished Ambassador of India, for your positive and constructive comments and for your willingness to cooperate with this forum and, in particular, with the President. I shall now give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador of the Russian Federation.

**Mr. Belousov** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. President, first of all I would like to congratulate you on your assumption of this position and express the hope that, under your capable leadership and in light of your diplomatic experience, we will manage to achieve positive results in the work of the Conference on Disarmament.

Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen, the Russian delegation would once again like to remind our colleagues in the Conference that it is unacceptable to artificially politicize the work of our forum and turn it into a platform for settling scores between States, especially in matters unrelated to its mandate.

We are opposed to drawing the Conference participants into political games intended to justify interference in the domestic political processes of any country. The Conference has completely different objectives. They are based on a unifying foundation for seeking agreement between the parties on the universally significant issues of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. Any actions that bring political turbulence to the planned work of the Conference undermine that foundation and subvert the already slim possibility of achieving a compromise.

In this regard, the steps taken by the delegations of the United States of America and the Lima Group countries are deeply regrettable. In the immediate future, they risk deepening the divide between parties to the Conference for reasons unrelated to their national positions on the forum's agenda items. This could completely destabilize the work of the forum and lead to a collapse of the current session. This is happening at a time when the issues of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation are once again firmly lodged at the top of the list of problems facing the international community in terms of enhancing security and promoting global peace.

The Russian delegation, which remains a consistent supporter of preserving the Conference on Disarmament, overcoming the stagnation of its activities and accelerating the start of negotiation work in accordance with its mandate will categorically reject such actions, which can only result in further discrediting of the Conference.

That is why quite a considerable group of States participating in the Conference, including Russia, have associated themselves with the joint statement in support of it delivered by our Belarusian colleagues at the end of the first part of the session. Part of the statement stresses the following (I will quote it in English for the sake of accuracy):

(*spoke in English*)

“Member States of the Conference should make every effort to refrain from actions that could further exacerbate already existing tensions and further entrench the stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament. We urge all member States of the Conference to redouble their efforts to overcome its stagnation and to resume substantive work without further delay.”

*(spoke in Russian)*

A number of delegations have expressed the same views in their national capacities.

We are counting on the Venezuelan delegation, despite the political pressure placed on it, to focus during its presidency, in line with the Conference’s rules of procedure, on the main current task, which is drafting a programme of work for the forum. For our part, we are willing to cooperate fully with all delegations, including the presidency.

Finally, as regards the programme of work for the next four weeks put forward by the President, we fully support it and will be prepared to take part in both plenary meetings and group and bilateral consultations in order to produce a programme of work for our forum that is acceptable to the delegations.

**The President** *(spoke in Spanish)*: Many thanks to the distinguished diplomatic representative of the Russian Federation for his comments, his support for the President and his constructive spirit. I shall now give the floor to the distinguished delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

**Mr. Azarsa** (Islamic Republic of Iran): Thank you, Mr. President. I would like to begin by congratulating you on assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and assure you of my delegation’s full support in your efforts to fulfil your mandate. Allow me also to extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to the Conference secretariat as well as the Office for Disarmament Affairs for their support and hard work.

I would like to underscore the important role of the Conference on Disarmament as the only negotiating forum for disarmament and the role of the Conference President, as stipulated in the rules of procedure, in steering our collective work to inch towards negotiating legally binding instruments on four core issues. Therefore, it is necessary for us to overcome the past, look ahead with hope and make multiple efforts in order to reach a comprehensive and balanced programme of work.

My delegation firmly believes that inclusiveness and the collective work of the Conference are a matter of pride for the Conference. Those who are doing away with a reason to be proud by leaving the plenary meeting or not attending activities are taking a destructive approach to multilateralism. Although States have different views and visions on disarmament issues, it is high time to focus on finding commonalities and on what is feasible in the 2019 session. Mr. President, I wish you great success in your endeavours as President of the Conference.

**The President** *(spoke in Spanish)*: Thank you very much, distinguished diplomatic representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, for your constructive contributions and for your support for the presidency. I shall now give the floor to the distinguished delegation of South Africa.

**Mr. Mahomed** (South Africa): Thank you, Mr. President. My delegation would like to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and wishes to assure you of our full support and cooperation.

Mr. President, we regret that discussions on a programme of work held thus far during the 2019 session have not been successful. This continued impasse is not sustainable and will increasingly affect the relevance and stature of the Conference. My delegation has reiterated on a number of occasions that South Africa is committed to a functioning Conference on Disarmament. We welcome efforts aimed at resuming substantive work to break the impasse and restore confidence in this body.

In this regard, Mr. President, we appreciate your pronouncement that you will be holding consultations to discuss proposals to continue to contribute to fulfilment of the mandate of the Conference and that you will be presenting a programme of work. My delegation stands ready to contribute to exploring options to unlock the potential of this institution. We will remain actively and constructively engaged in the Conference and other

multilateral forums with a view to seeking solutions that, to strengthen the multilateral system, will inevitably require compromise. We will also remain engaged in efforts to work towards the achievement of a world without nuclear weapons.

Mr. President, South Africa is concerned about the actions that further diminish the credibility of the Conference, such as the lack of respect for the rules of procedure, the politicization of the Conference and the introduction of issues that fall outside the mandate of the Conference. The credibility of multilateral bodies and the sanctity of agreements and commitments from multilateral processes have to be respected and protected to preserve the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation architecture. South Africa remains firmly committed to multilateralism and will always do what is necessary to strengthen multilateralism, especially in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation.

I would like to conclude, Mr. President, by congratulating you once again on assuming the presidency and wishing you every success during your term.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): Many thanks to the distinguished diplomatic representative of South Africa, for your comments, your contributions and your support for the presidency. I now give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Algeria.

**Mr. Delmi** (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): Thank you, Mr. President, and at the outset I would like to congratulate you on assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and assure you of our full support as you carry out your duties. Your presidency will no doubt enable us to build upon the efforts of your predecessors, efforts aimed in particular at relaunching the substantive work of the Conference.

Mr. President, we have taken good note of your willingness to help us move towards a common and convergent understanding of the challenges, an understanding that, we hope, might bring us closer to the desired goal: the adoption of a consensus-based, comprehensive and balanced programme of work.

Mr. President, in order to succeed in renewing the substantive work of our Conference on the basis of a comprehensive and balanced programme of work, we must all focus on the areas of convergence that could help to relaunch negotiations on the issues on the Conference's agenda and, in that context, avoid allowing the debate to stray to matters outside the mandate of the Conference.

Respect for the rules of procedure and commitment to the mandate of the Conference are, as many of my colleagues have said this morning, objective factors that can prevent the work of our Conference from becoming politicized, which is in the best interests of preserving the credibility of this body and the validity of the objectives of the disarmament process.

On this basis, the Algerian delegation is prepared, with the support of the members of the Conference, to engage in any initiative which, as you yourself stressed this morning, will preserve the principles of inclusiveness and non-politicization in the context of our common objective of relaunching the work of the Conference.

Before concluding, let me say that we have taken careful note of your intention to present us with a programme of activities and that we will, at the appropriate time, certainly share with you our views and suggestions in order to help you in your efforts.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, distinguished Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Algeria, for your contributions, your comments and your support for the presidency. I now give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador and Permanent Representative of China.

**Mr. Li Song** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Thank you Mr. President. The Chinese delegation congratulates you on your assumption of the rotating presidency. As in the past, we will continue to support the work of the President. I would especially like to express appreciation of the fact that you have said you will continue to bring all parties together to discuss the programme of work, which is one of the main responsibilities of any person holding the rotating presidency. On this score, the constructive efforts made by the Ambassadors of Ukraine and the United Kingdom can serve as a basis for our work.



At the same time, my delegation is willing to play an active role in the relevant thematic discussions that you have organized, in accordance with the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament. The Chinese delegation is ready to work with other delegations to uphold the authority and professionalism of the Conference, eliminate politicization and push for the Conference to undertake substantive work as soon as possible.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, distinguished Ambassador and Permanent Representative of China, for your constructive comments, your contributions and also your expression of support for the presidency. The distinguished delegation of Mexico has the floor.

**Mr. Martínez Ruiz** (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you, Mr. President. As this is the first time that the delegation of Mexico is taking the floor under your presidency, allow me to express our appreciation to you for leading our work and to assure you that you have our support for the development of that work in accordance with the necessary institutional framework of this body. At the same time, I would also like to acknowledge the previous presidencies of Ukraine, the United Kingdom and the United States during the current session, recognizing those actions that have contributed to the advancement of the mandate of the Conference on Disarmament.

We appreciate the information you have given us today about the work you intend to accomplish in the coming weeks. There is no doubt that this is an ambitious proposal, but we also understand the urgent need to advance the cause of disarmament in the face of the complex situation of international security and stability, as well as the crisis in the disarmament architecture at the multilateral and bilateral levels. We have listened carefully to the description of your priorities for your presidency, a key element of which will be to strive for the adoption of a programme of work. As we await receipt of the first draft of this document, we acknowledge your efforts to guide the work towards a balanced and comprehensive document that will put the Conference on Disarmament on the path to substantive negotiations and thus the fulfilment of its mandate.

We also, of course, recognize the proposal submitted by Ukraine during the first part of this session, which had the advantage of including a mandate for each agenda item, focusing on the negotiation of instruments. We believe that it is a good basis for further progress towards the adoption of a programme of work. It also seems important to us that any discussion that may take place, whether formal or informal, should be focused on finding ways to end the paralysis of this Conference, and not on turning it into a mere deliberative forum, a function assigned to another body established under the final document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.

Lastly, the delegation of Mexico reiterates its previous statements on the importance of adhering strictly to the rules of procedure of this Conference and not politicizing the Conference on Disarmament by bringing up for discussion issues that fall outside the scope of the task entrusted to us and that do not contribute to the advancement of multilateralism.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): Many thanks to the distinguished delegation of Mexico for your constructive comments and for your support for the presidency. I now give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Viet Nam.

**Mr. Duong Chi Dung** (Viet Nam): Thank you, Mr. President. At the outset, I would like to join other colleagues in congratulating you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament this year. My delegation assures you of its full cooperation and support.

As an active member of the Conference and one of the Presidents in 2019, Viet Nam hopes that the Conference will have a chance to move forward and stands ready to give its full support and make contributions to its work. We are strongly committed to and strongly believe in upholding the mandate of the Conference as the single multilateral negotiation forum for disarmament issues.

We highly appreciate your determination, Mr. President, to find a way to come up with a programme of work for the Conference and think that coming up with such a programme could put the Conference back on track. Of course, we realize that it is not easy, but in this regard we also appreciate the tireless efforts of past Presidents, the Ambassadors of Ukraine and of the United Kingdom, to come up with a draft decision. We hope that we

will see substantive progress towards a balanced and comprehensive programme of work, as developing such a programme is the only way to overcome the current stalemate.

We look forward very much to hearing more from you on the substantive elements that you intend to include in the draft decision. We also look forward to receiving the draft, so that we can work intensively on matters of substance during your presidency, including in bilateral and multilateral consultations. Once again, then, we wish you success and look forward to working closely with you and other member States to come up with a balanced and comprehensive programme of work.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): Many thanks to the distinguished Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Viet Nam. We wish you every success in your presidency, which will be the next one. I thank you for your positive and constructive comments and for your support for the presidency. The distinguished delegation of Indonesia now has the floor.

**Mr. Bektikusuma** (Indonesia): Thank you, Mr. President. At the outset I would like to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. Be assured of the full support of my delegation. I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate your predecessor, Ambassador Robert Wood of the United States of America, for his work in steering the Conference.

Mr. President, my delegation is delighted that your presidency will try to establish a programme of work for the Conference on Disarmament. With the very limited time that we have, we believe that we need to focus on the substantive work that we need to carry out in this august body. We look forward to working with you, your team and other States members of the Conference on Disarmament in an attempt to conclude the programme of work.

With regard to the substance of the programme of work, Mr. President, we have seen a lot of draft programmes of work tabled in this august body, and with the very limited time that we have, my delegation believes that it is best for us not to reinvent the wheel but to draw on the draft programmes of work on which consensus has been reached in previous sessions, including elements from the draft decisions that were tabled by the Ambassador of the United Kingdom in the previous meetings and elements of the draft of programme of work produced by the presidency of Ukraine.

In this case, we can only focus on the things that still need to be addressed thoroughly or about which States members of the Conference on Disarmament have concerns. In the new draft programme of work, items on which consensus has been reached can be taken from the previous draft programmes of work.

Mr. President, my delegation would also like to join previous speakers who expressed concern about the politicization of the Conference. My delegation would like, once again, to call on all States member of the Conference to respect the rules of procedure and the office of the President.

Mr. President, it is our belief that, with your wisdom and able leadership, you can also lead us away from unnecessary exercises and provocations in this august body, so that we can all focus on the programme of work.

To conclude, Mr. President, I wish you every success in performing your duty. Once again, my delegation is ready to work with you, your team and all States members of the Conference.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): Many thanks to the distinguished delegate of Indonesia for your comments, your constructive words and for your support for the presidency. I now give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Netherlands.

**Mr. Gabriëlse** (Netherlands): Thank you, Mr. President, and thank you for sharing with us your intentions and schedule of activities and your plans for a programme of work. If you allow me, I have a few questions you may be able to elaborate on.

With respect to the programme of work, several colleagues mentioned your predecessors this year, the United Kingdom, Ukraine and the United States. Is it your

intention to develop a programme of work based on the work done by them, as was also mentioned by our colleagues from India, the United Kingdom and Indonesia?

With respect to your time schedule, I understand that you intend to circulate a first draft on 30 May, so I want to ask you about the timing of the consultations you have planned. That leaves little time for consultations to come up with a first draft based on the previous drafts we have already received. How, then, are you going to plan this?

The second question is that you said you intend to discuss the draft on 4 June. That could be problematic for my delegation, because if it becomes available at the end of this week and we have to consult the capital, 4 June might be very early. For us, Thursday is also a holiday. It is a Swiss holiday, and I understand for United Nations staff, it is a floating holiday that staff members may choose to take. Perhaps through you, Mr. President, I can ask you whether that date is also problematic for other countries and, if so, whether you could consider changing it.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): On the first question, distinguished Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Netherlands, I can assure you that I will take into account the contributions of the previous presidencies. Certainly, the idea is to give continuity to all positive and constructive aspects that may provide a basis for agreement in order to formulate a programme of work that is comprehensive and inclusive and, of course, that reflects the will of all.

With regard to your comments concerning dates, we will take your suggestions into consideration, and I will consult with the secretariat and my team in order to accommodate the requests you are making. I shall now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Myanmar.

**Mr. Tun** (Myanmar): Thank you, Mr. President. I would like to begin by congratulating you on assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. We welcome your intended approach to moving things forward, including the possible adoption of a programme of work for the Conference, which is the single multilateral negotiation forum for dealing with disarmament matters. We also would like to join others in calling for the non-politicization of the work of the Conference. We would like to assure you of our full support and cooperation in discharging your work, Mr. President. Finally, our delegation looks forward to working actively with you, your delegation and others at the Conference.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, distinguished representative of Myanmar, for your comments, contributions and support for the presidency. I now give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Germany.

**Mr. Beerwerth** (Germany): Thank you, Mr. President I would like to recognize that you have taken the Chair. With respect to the programme of work and other issues, I would like to echo what my colleague from the Netherlands has just said and underline that prior presidencies have attempted to make progress and we were almost there on agreeing on a programme of work. I would also like to echo what our Chinese and Indonesian colleagues have said – that we should build on the work undertaken in particular by Ukraine and the United Kingdom.

With regard to your planned consultations, I would also like to say that you indeed have a very ambitious plan if you want to undertake all these consultations with all members of the Conference. My understanding was that they were to be held prior to the circulation of the programme of work, so I would like to request a comment on how you are going to achieve that, in particular in the light of the fact that, as with the Netherlands, for us, this coming Thursday is a public holiday. This is why I also ask whether you could, as you say, consult the secretariat about the possibility of switching the date for that meeting, so that we are able to observe that holiday.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, distinguished Ambassador of Germany, for your contributions and for your concerns. I would like to reiterate that we will take into account the contributions of the previous presidents. Now with regard to the date, or the possibility of resetting the date, I would like to give the floor to the secretariat to inform us on the situation in that regard.

**Ms. Day** (Secretary of the Conference on Disarmament): Thank you, Ambassador. Without prejudice to the prerogative of the presidency, in consultation with delegations of the Conference on Disarmament, to alter the adjusted plan, while 30 May is a floating holiday for individual staff members of the United Nations Secretariat in Geneva, it is not an official holiday of the United Nations and the United Nations Secretariat will be open for business.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the secretariat for the clarification, and I now give the floor to the distinguished delegation of France.

**Ms. Delaroche** (France) (*spoke in French*): Thank you, Mr. President. France remains deeply committed to the Conference on Disarmament and has always supported efforts aimed at bringing it back to its original mandate, the negotiation of multilateral disarmament agreements, taking into account the progress and achievements made in recent years.

We have carefully studied the plan of activities put forward by the Venezuelan Presidency, which we saw for the first time yesterday, and have several remarks in respect of it.

First of all, we note with regret that the informal thematic meeting of the Conference on Disarmament scheduled for 30 May merges core items 1, 2 and 4 of the Conference's agenda. These points deserve the time that is needed for an in-depth dialogue. I am sure that you are aware of the importance my delegation sets on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for the manufacture of nuclear weapons. We have had the opportunity on several occasions to say that, of all the possible progress that might be made in the field of disarmament, this is undoubtedly the project that is most mature and whose negotiation is within reach, as demonstrated by the extensive work done in recent years.

We have also taken note of your wish to relaunch discussions on a programme of work. That is a laudable objective, but can be achieved only through a sincere search for consensus and the strictly neutral and impartial exercise of the function of the presidency. The objective that must be set is one of a balanced, inclusive and consensual programme of work; several delegations have reminded me of this.

Like others before me, I recommend that you draw inspiration from the work of the presidencies of Ukraine, the United Kingdom and the United States, particularly on the programme of work, in the interests of efficiency and continuity.

Finally, Mr. President, I echo the words of the Ambassadors of the Netherlands and Germany before me and support the request to postpone the meeting of the Conference scheduled for this Thursday. We were indeed informed only very late of your wish to convene the Conference on 30 May, which is a national holiday for us and for many of the member States represented here. I, of course, take note of the secretariat's response on that question.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, distinguished diplomatic representative of France. We are open to any opinion, any adjustment. We will discuss it with our team and with the secretariat. I now give the floor to the distinguished delegation of Egypt.

**Mr. Elsayed** (Egypt): Thank you, Mr. President. Allow me at the outset to congratulate you on assuming your role as the President of the Conference on Disarmament and assure you of my delegation's full cooperation. I am confident that your rich experience and wide knowledge will guide our work in a constructive manner.

Mr. President, in this august body, priority should always be given to the adoption by consensus of a balanced and comprehensive programme of work to start multilateral disarmament negotiations. I would like to seize this opportunity to recognize the work of the presidencies of Ukraine and the United Kingdom in this regard.

Mr. President, we listened carefully to your opening remarks and welcome your proposed workplan aiming at a balanced and comprehensive programme of work that would allow the Conference to break out of the impasse it is in and start substantive work on the core agenda items.

Mr. President, we wish you a successful presidency and would like to confirm our readiness to faithfully assist you in your efforts to enable the Conference to commence its substantive work.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the distinguished representative of Egypt for his comments, his positive contributions and his support for the presidency. I would like to ask whether any other delegation is interested in speaking. I note that the Cuban delegation has asked to speak. Sir, you have the floor.

**Mr. Delgado Sánchez** (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you, Mr. President. As this is the first time we have spoken under your presidency, we would like to congratulate you on your new responsibility. We are sure that you and your delegation will work to fulfil the mandate of the Conference on Disarmament and will always act in strict adherence to its rules of procedure and the most fundamental principles of multilateralism, diplomacy and civility, the latter of which have been in short supply in recent times.

All peace lovers who are committed to disarmament and to the mandate of this Conference have watched with concern how a group of States has tried to politicize and obstruct all the work of the Conference – all in order to impose spurious national political agendas that violate the most basic purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. The response to such unilateralism and arrogance can be found in a parable like the one describing the meeting between Alexander the Great and Diogenes. The latter merely told the most powerful man of antiquity that all he would ask of him was to stand aside so that he could see the light of the sun.

Mr. President, we are pleased to hear your proposal to resume work aimed at fulfilling the mandate of the Conference on Disarmament. You can count on the support of our delegation in that endeavour. It is professional, modest and wise of you to announce that you will continue the efforts of previous presidencies that have dealt with the issue of the programme of work. These recent proposals have come close to being agreed by consensus, and only the politicized action of some members has prevented more substantive progress from being made this year. Perhaps their childish absence from this forum will help us finally to adopt the programme of work, as we all wish to do in order to begin our substantive work.

We urge you to resume the practice of coordination with the other presidencies with a view to achieving a comprehensive and balanced programme of work and avoiding any diversion of our labours. The greatest contribution that your presidency can make to this Conference has already begun with your invitation to return to the path that concerns us, in accordance with the guiding documents of this Conference.

We hope that the rest of us will show our commitment to fulfilling that mandate. We look forward to your proposal and assure you of the full support of the Cuban delegation.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, distinguished delegate of Cuba, for your contributions, for your solidarity and for your support for the presidency. Does anyone else wish to take the floor? As that does not appear to be the case, I should like to give you some additional information concerning the road map that we intend to follow during our presidency.

I would like to inform you, first of all, that our intention was to hold the second plenary meeting next Thursday, 30 May 2019. The meeting is to be of an informal thematic nature and will be devoted to items 1, 2 and 4 of the Conference's agenda. However, we will undertake the necessary consultations to reschedule it. During this thematic meeting, the Counsellor of the Permanent Mission of Pakistan, Usman Iqbal Jadoon, and the Head of Programmes and Research Coordinator for the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), Mr. John Borrie, will participate as panellists. We will also, through the secretariat, distribute a zero draft of the programme of work.

The second consultation on the programme of work will be held on Tuesday, 4 June. On Thursday, 6 June, the delegations of China and Russia will be accompanied by Mr. Daniel Porras, a member of UNIDIR, who will speak on the prevention of an arms race in outer space as part of a panel discussion relating to agenda item 3. On Wednesday, 12 June, a panel will be held on agenda items 5, 6 and 7, consisting of the delegation of Belarus and Kerstin Vignard, Deputy Director of UNIDIR.

As I mentioned earlier, our presidency has been inspired by the work carried out by the subsidiary bodies established in 2018, in accordance with the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament, which includes negotiation on the programme of work, and I would like to reiterate that we will take into account the contributions made by the six Presidents. We will provide elements for substantive discussions aimed at strengthening the negotiation of the programme of work. We would have liked to have held a plenary meeting for each agenda item, with the participation of the coordinators of the subsidiary bodies. However, in order to manage our time more effectively, and without prejudice to the negotiation on the subsidiary bodies, we decided that it would be appropriate to group together items 2, 1 and 4, which relate to nuclear weapons; to keep item 3 as the subject of a single meeting; and to keep items 5, 6 and 7 grouped together. The distribution of these items during the plenary does not, of course, prejudge the content or form of the draft programme of work that we will be distributing in the coming days through the secretariat.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela will conduct its presidency of the Conference with dignity, utmost responsibility and transparency. We thank the majority of the delegations of the countries represented in the Conference on Disarmament who are present in this forum, and whose diplomatic representatives, as we have seen, have remained and continue to remain here in this room in a respectful manner, demonstrating their willingness to work constructively.

Finally, I would like to enquire, if there is any delegation that wishes to take the floor. I note that there are no requests for the floor. This meeting has been highly useful, constructive and productive. We look forward to working in concert with all of you and thank you for your support. The meeting is adjourned.

*The meeting rose at 11.25 a.m.*