

Conference on Disarmament

English

Final record of the one thousand five hundred and sixth plenary meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Thursday, 13 June 2019, at 10.10 a.m.

President: Mr. Jorge Valero (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela)

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The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I call to order the 1506th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. As announced yesterday, this morning we will have a thematic meeting on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. At this meeting, Mr. Andrey Belousov, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation, Mr. Guilherme de Aguiar Patriota, Ambassador and Chair of the Group of Governmental Experts on further effective measures for the prevention of an arms race in outer space, and Mr. Daniel Porras, of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), will address the plenary.

I suggest that, after the presentations have finished, the remainder of today's substantive discussion should take place in an informal setting. So, after our panellists have spoken, I intend to suspend the formal plenary and give them the floor for an informal discussion. After our discussion, I will adjourn the informal meeting and resume the formal plenary so that delegations who so request may take the floor.

Before we hear our panellists and begin our discussion of the subjects of our thematic meeting, I would like to give the floor to those delegations wishing to make statements or comments on matters other than the prevention of an arms race in outer space and the proposed programme of work. The first delegation on our list of speakers is the delegation of the Russian Federation. Excellency, you have the floor.

Mr. Gatilov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. President, colleagues, as you know, on 5 June, the President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, and the President of the People's Republic of China, Xi Jinping, met to mark the seventieth anniversary of the establishment of relations between the two countries. At the meeting, the two leaders signed a joint statement on strengthening contemporary global strategic stability. The statement focuses on international security, arms control and non-proliferation issues and is a response of the two peoples to the dramatic changes that have taken place in this area in recent years. It identifies the reasons for the current challenges to international security. The destructive steps taken by some States to dismantle the international arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation architecture are highlighted. These steps could, in the near future, lead to the definitive erosion of an already tenuous state of international peace and security. In this regard, the statement reaffirms the two countries' commitment to the treaties and conventions that are fundamental to international security.

The statement of 5 June reflects the consistent and unwavering nature of the two countries' positions on the most pressing issues on the international agenda. This continuity is reflected in the way in which the statement builds on similar statements on international security and global strategic stability previously made by the leaders of Russia and China. In addition, it clearly reflects the close ties between the two countries' approaches and the historic decisions taken at the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. These close ties can be seen in connection with such issues as strengthening the nuclear non-proliferation regime on the basis of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, preventing an arms race in outer space, countering attempts to undermine the authority of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons or engage in activities that raise questions under the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention and preventing the establishment of mechanisms that bypass the Security Council. The principles laid down in 1978 are still topical and relevant for arms control and non-proliferation purposes and thus for ensuring peace and security at both the regional and the global levels.

The statement emphasized the importance of ensuring equal and comprehensive security for all participants in the disarmament process and the regimes for the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and arms control. There is an urgent need to establish and maintain a sustained multilateral dialogue with a view to overcoming differences and finding consensual solutions to problems in this area. Emphasis was placed on the need, given the circumstances, for political and diplomatic measures to resolve contentious issues. The leaders of the two countries issued a call to address mutual concerns by holding consultations, building trust and avoiding misunderstandings and misguided strategic decisions and to support and promote multilateralism in arms control,

disarmament and non-proliferation efforts, with the United Nations and its disarmament machinery playing the central role.

The joint statement was another vivid example of the ability of States of different cultures and histories to reach an understanding on and take a shared view of the most sensitive issues on the international agenda. The main premise has been and continues to be the common objective of maintaining international peace, enhancing global security and strategic stability and expressing a genuine desire to reach this goal for the good of all humanity.

Mr. President, we ask the secretariat of the Conference on Disarmament to issue the statement as an official document of the Conference. Thank you for your attention.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Ambassador of the Russian Federation for his important statement. The next speaker on my list is the Ambassador of China. You have the floor, Sir.

Mr. Li Song (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Mr. President, the Chinese delegation fully endorses the statement just delivered by the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation, Ambassador Gatilov, concerning the joint statement by the Heads of State of China and the Russian Federation. I would like to take this opportunity to make some additional comments to allow for a better understanding of the joint statement.

On 5 June, the President of China, Xi Jinping, and the President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, together signed and issued the Joint Statement by the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation on Strengthening Contemporary Global Strategic Stability. For the second time since 2016, the Heads of State of China and the Russian Federation thus issued a joint statement on global strategic stability, which is of great practical significance and has profound strategic meaning.

The international situation today is marked by mounting uncertainties and instability. The unilateralism and bullying of a major power have produced a series of negative consequences. International strategic stability has been undermined, the multilateral system has been eroded, regional hotspots have become more dangerous and new security challenges are emerging without end. In the face of unprecedented challenges, the joint statement issued by the leaders of China and the Russian Federation points the way for their two countries to further strengthen strategic cooperation in a new historical era and helps to build confidence in a world full of uncertainty.

China and the Russian Federation have thus demonstrated in practice their sense of responsibility for upholding global security and stability. The bilateral nuclear disarmament treaty system formed over recent decades by the United States of America and the Russian Federation is an important part of the global security system. In the face of the new situation, China and the Russian Federation emphasize in their statement that the nuclear States must renounce cold war thinking and zero-sum games, stop the all-out development of global anti-ballistic missile systems and reduce the role of nuclear weapons in national security policies, effectively diminishing the threat of nuclear war. The two sides reaffirm the need to comply with international legal instruments and to maintain international consensus in the field of nuclear disarmament; they reiterate that the parties to the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty should make every effort to revive it and to extend the New START Treaty. The clear commitment of China and the Russian Federation to maintaining global strategic stability improves mutual trust among major countries on strategic matters and helps them to meet their international security obligations.

China and the Russian Federation have shown strong support for multilateralism. In an age of globalization, no one country can deal alone with every type of global challenge, and no country can achieve absolute security in a self-contained environment. China and the Russian Federation have demonstrated their support for multilateralism in practical actions. In the statement, the two countries express support for the central role played by the United Nations and the multilateral disarmament mechanism in the international arms control process, the upholding and strengthening of multilateral arms control treaties such as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the Biological Weapons Convention, and the consolidation of the

international arms control and non-proliferation system. In the current circumstances, the steadfast defence of multilateralism by China and the Russian Federation helps to contain the trend toward unilateralism, upholds the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and ensures the legitimate security interests of all countries through international cooperation.

At present, the situation in international and regional hotspots is worsening, affecting international and regional peace and security. China and the Russian Federation have always been important actors, demonstrating their firm determination to push forward political settlements in regional hotspots. In the statement, they reiterate their support for Security Council resolutions and the Charter of the United Nations and their opposition to the unilateral use of sanctions and long-arm jurisdiction, and they call on all parties to continue to fully implement the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on the Iranian nuclear issue and to resolve the chemical weapons controversy in the Syrian Arab Republic in an appropriate manner, in the framework of the Chemical Weapons Convention. China and the Russian Federation firmly support the settlement of problems in regional hotspots through political and diplomatic means, an approach conducive to international peace and justice; they advocate the replacement of confrontation with cooperation and of coercion with negotiation, upholding the authority of the United Nations and the Security Council and promoting international and regional peace and stability.

China and the Russian Federation have clearly stated their determination to meet security challenges of a new kind. With the changing times, scientific and technological innovation is moving forward in leaps and bounds, to the benefit of the economic and social development of all countries. However, scientific and technological development is a double-edged sword. The military applications of emerging technologies in outer space, cyberspace and artificial intelligence have a significant impact on international security and must be properly addressed. In their statement, China and the Russian Federation advocate strengthening preventive diplomacy, negotiating and concluding a legally binding international instrument to prevent weaponization and an arms race in outer space and using the United Nations as a platform to study the possible impact of scientific and technological developments on international security and to consider establishing legal norms for them, ensuring the equal participation of all parties. To meet the new kinds of security challenges, China and the Russian Federation advocate cooperation, which will foster the peaceful use of new technologies and the strengthening of international cooperation and governance in new security domains.

Mr. President, the international security situation and global strategic stability are at a critical juncture. In defending world peace and security and promoting shared development, China and the Russian Federation are playing the role of “anchors of stability”, not only in their own common interest, but also to meet the shared expectations of the international community. I would like to take this opportunity to emphasize that the joint statement by the leaders of China and the Russian Federation is not directed at any particular State, but rather at the cold war mentality, unilateralism and the mindset, policies and practices that disregard international justice, strategic stability and existing international mechanisms. China and the Russian Federation are committed to safeguarding not only their common interests, but, above all, global strategic stability, international peace and security and the common interests of the international community. In this regard, we consider all countries as equal partners. Needless to say, we should also be partners in a joint effort to defend multilateralism.

The Chinese delegation and the Russian delegation will work together with the delegations of the other member States of the Conference to promote the work of the Conference in a positive, constructive and responsible manner, to draw up a comprehensive and balanced programme of work as soon as possible and to make specific arrangements for substantive work on outstanding and urgent issues. I myself and my team are also willing to work with our colleagues from the Russian Federation, the United States, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and France and their teams to continue to actively strengthen the cooperation mechanism of the five nuclear weapons States and to work tirelessly to maintain global strategic stability and promote international peace and security. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you, Ambassador, for your important statement. I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Cameroon to make a statement on behalf of the Group of 21.

Mr. Awoumou (Cameroon): Mr. President, I have the honour to deliver the following statement, on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, on behalf of the Group of 21:

The Group of 21 believes that space technology has indeed become an indispensable and integral part of our daily lives. Never before have information, communications, banking, economic transactions, navigation and even political and strategic decision-making been so dependent on space-based technologies, which are themselves witnessing rapid growth.

The Group reiterates that outer space and other celestial bodies are the common heritage of humankind and must be used and explored for the benefit and interest of all humankind in a spirit of cooperation. The Group reaffirms that the exploration and use of outer space and other celestial bodies shall be for peaceful purposes only and shall be carried out for the benefit and in the interest of all countries, irrespective of their degree of economic or scientific development.

The Group stresses that the growing use of outer space requires all States to take action to ensure greater transparency, confidence-building measures and better information. The Group believes that all States with major space capabilities have a special responsibility to contribute actively to the objective of the peaceful use of outer space and of the prevention of an arms race in outer space. All States should refrain from actions contrary to that objective and to the relevant existing treaties in the interest of maintaining international peace and security and promoting international cooperation.

The Group recognizes that the prevention of an arms race in outer space would avert a grave danger for international peace and security. The Group emphasizes the necessity of undertaking further measures with appropriate and effective verification provisions to prevent an arms race in outer space in all its aspects.

The Group emphasizes the importance and urgency of preventing an arms race in outer space and the paramount importance of strict compliance with the existing legal regime concerning the use of outer space. In this regard, the Group is deeply concerned over the increasing threat of weaponization of outer space, including the negative implications of the development and deployment of anti-ballistic missile defence systems and the pursuit of advanced military technologies capable of being deployed in outer space, which have, *inter alia*, contributed to the further weakening of an international climate conducive to the promotion of disarmament and the strengthening of international security.

The Group stresses that all States bear a responsibility to refrain from activities that could jeopardize the collective goal of preserving outer space free from weapons of mass destruction and all other forms of weaponization so as to ensure that its benefits are available to all.

The Group considers that the multilateral disarmament agreements provide mechanisms for States parties to consult one another and cooperate in solving any problems which may arise in relation to the objective of, or in the application of, the provisions of the agreements and that such consultations and cooperation may also be undertaken through appropriate international procedures within the framework of the United Nations and in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

The prevention of an arms race in outer space has assumed greater urgency because of legitimate concerns that existing legal instruments are inadequate to deter further militarization of outer space or prevent its weaponization. The Group further reaffirms its recognition that the legal regime applicable to outer space does not in and of itself guarantee the prevention of an arms race in outer space. For that purpose, the Group stresses the need to consolidate and reinforce that regime and enhance its effectiveness.

In this regard, the Group reaffirms that the Conference on Disarmament is the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum of the international community and that it has

the primary role in conducting substantive negotiations on priority issues of disarmament. The Group therefore believes that the Conference on Disarmament should start negotiations on matters related to the prevention of an arms race in outer space without delay.

While welcoming the adoption by the General Assembly of resolution 73/30, entitled "Prevention of an arms race in outer space", the Group recalls that the resolution made the following observations with regard to the Conference on Disarmament:

Firstly, the Conference on Disarmament has the primary role in the negotiation of a multilateral agreement or agreements on the prevention of an arms race in outer space in all its aspects; and, secondly, the Conference on Disarmament should establish a working group under its agenda item entitled "Prevention of an arms race in outer space" as early as possible during its 2019 session.

The Group of 21 takes note of the completion of the work of the Group of Governmental Experts and the adoption of a study on outer space transparency and confidence-building measures, as requested by General Assembly resolution 65/68 on transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities, which was adopted by consensus at the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly. The Group, while stressing the priority of negotiating legally binding instruments for reinforcing the international legal regime on outer space, recognizes that global and inclusive transparency and confidence-building measures, reached through broad international consultations, could be important complementary measures. The Group recognizes the value of transparency and confidence-building measures, including a non-legally binding code of conduct in promoting trust among States. However, such voluntary measures cannot be a substitute for a legally binding treaty on prevention of an arms race in outer space.

The Group welcomes the updated text of the draft Treaty on the Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space and of the Threat or Use of Force against Outer Space Objects that was submitted jointly to the Conference on Disarmament in June 2014 by the Russian Federation and China. This initiative is a constructive contribution to the work of the Conference and a good basis for discussions toward adopting an international binding instrument.

The Group welcomes the 5 December 2018 adoption by the General Assembly of resolution 73/31, entitled "No first placement of weapons in outer space".

The Group also welcomes the adoption by the General Assembly, on 24 December 2017, of resolution 72/250, entitled "Further practical measures for the prevention of an arms race in outer space", which urged the Conference on Disarmament to immediately commence negotiations on an international legally binding instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, including, inter alia, on the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space. The Group appreciates the work carried out by the Group of Governmental Experts established pursuant to this resolution and regrets that the Group could not reach consensus on its final report.

The Group of 21 takes notes of the substantive and interactive informal discussions on prevention of an arms race in outer space held in the Conference on Disarmament from 11 to 13 June 2014 pursuant to the schedule of activities for the 2014 session (contained in document CD/1978); those held on 13 and 20 August 2015, pursuant to the schedule of activities for the 2015 session (contained in document CD/2021); those held on 14 to 16 June 2017 under the working group on the way ahead, established by the decision contained in document CD/2090; and those held in 2018 in subsidiary body 3, pursuant to the decisions contained in documents CD/2119 and CD/2126.

I thank you, Mr, President.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Is there any other delegation that wishes to take the floor? That does not appear to be the case. I therefore warmly welcome Ambassador Andrey Belousov, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva, and invite him to make his statement.

Mr. Belousov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Thank you, Mr. President. I would like to start with a small but important caveat. I am not an ambassador yet, but I suppose that everyone here is a potential future ambassador. And I hope that in that capacity, we will also be able to work together on the issues that we will be discussing, including those we are discussing today.

Before proceeding directly to my report on the topic of today's plenary meeting, I would like to bring up the statement made in a recent plenary meeting by my colleague from the delegation of Pakistan, Usman Jadoon. It concerned the joint statement of the Russian Federation and Pakistan, signed on 22 May on the margins of the ministerial meeting at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, on no first placement of weapons in outer space. The Russian Federation welcomes the decision by Pakistan to adhere fully to the initiative aimed at preserving outer space for peaceful purposes. This step taken by the leadership of Pakistan confirms its commitment to addressing the most difficult arms control and non-proliferation challenges and its determination to continue working with other States to strengthen international peace and security.

The initiative – or political commitment – in respect of not being the first to deploy weapons in outer space is the only practical, multilateral step being taken to prevent the deployment of weapons in outer space and thus to prevent an arms race in outer space. Twenty-one States have now pledged not to be the first to launch weapons into space and are ready to contribute to the globalization of this important initiative. In making such pledges, participating States are operating on an understanding of the potentially catastrophic consequences of the deployment and use of weapons in outer space and the need to take urgent practical, multilateral action to ensure that this negative scenario does not materialize. The Russian Federation once again calls on all States to join the initiative and continue to search jointly for ways to keep outer space free of weapons.

Mr. President, on behalf of the Russian Federation and Pakistan, I ask the secretariat of the Conference on Disarmament to publish the joint Russia-Pakistan statement on no first placement of weapons in outer spaces as an official document of the Conference. Thank you for your attention.

I would now like to turn directly to the topic of our plenary meeting today, but first to apologize in advance to the President, as I will probably need a little more time than is allocated to each speaker to make the points I have in my statement.

Mr. President, distinguished colleagues, at the outset I would like to express my gratitude to the Venezuelan presidency for organizing the plenary meeting on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, which we firmly believe the international community should continue to focus on closely. This is, firstly, because space is currently the only remaining environment for human activity that is not affected by the power struggles, political tension and military confrontation that are customary in international relations here on Earth and that contribute to the emergence of armed conflicts of varying degrees of intensity at the regional and global levels.

Secondly, this is dictated by the growing dependence of sustainable development and the well-being of every individual country and humanity as a whole on the use of space technologies and on the benefits of the increasing use of near-Earth space. The increase in the number of participants in space activities and the active involvement in such activities of non-State actors, including representatives of the business sector, make it especially important to preserve outer space as a conflict-free environment for multilateral cooperation and close interaction among space actors.

Thirdly, including outer space in military planning, regardless of the objectives of the latter, will certainly pave the way for a whole range of security threats both in outer space itself and here on Earth. A State's wish to gain special advantages in space and on Earth by launching weapons for deployment in low Earth orbit is fraught with the risk of retaliatory measures on the part of other States. Those measures could be symmetrical, assuming the retaliating State has developed space and military capabilities, or asymmetrical, enabling a country with modest space capabilities to respond, if necessary, to a space-based threat to its national security.

The Outer Space Treaty of 1967 was based on an understanding of the inadmissibility of turning space into an arena of armed confrontation and the need to prevent space from becoming a source of threats to international peace and security, which could bring humanity to the brink of global catastrophe. The Russian Federation is convinced that the norms and principles contained in this fundamental instrument of contemporary space law are still relevant and necessary.

We categorically disagree with the increasingly widespread view that, as it was drawn up in circumstances other than today's, the Treaty has become obsolete and hopelessly outdated. If we accepted such far-reaching and "innovative" considerations, it would mean that we, the parties to the Treaty, were abandoning our principled position that the exploration and use of outer space should be for peaceful purposes and that space activities themselves should be conducted to maintain international peace and security, promote international cooperation and broaden understanding among States. Furthermore, it would give States the right to disregard the need for their activities in outer space not to create obstacles or other difficulties for those of other States. It would mean turning our backs on the procedure provided by the Treaty for engaging in dialogue to address emerging issues and concerns.

If we give up all this, we can reasonably wonder what we will get in return. Part of the answer to this question can be found by analysing current patterns of thought in the field of security in space. I would like to draw attention to the concept, actively promoted in other relevant forums, of outer space as a contested environment. This concept is at odds with the understanding of outer space as the common heritage of humankind, the principle of equal and non-discriminatory access to outer space and the development of space for peaceful purposes. In our view, the logical development of this seemingly harmless concept is the new approach taken by individual States that sees outer space as a future theatre of war, an approach that has already led to the development of means of warfare in space. It could also involve reconsidering security practices in space, including the security of space assets and operations, and entail the use of force to respond to explicit and, most importantly, perceived threats. The possibility of using preventive measures and means, including of a military nature, is being discussed in all seriousness in that context. We could go on discussing the need for and timeliness of practical measures to prevent an arms race in outer space if the intellectual efforts mentioned above were still just examples of purely theoretical research. Currently, however, they are taking on a different meaning, as these efforts are already enshrined in doctrines and therefore provide guidance for practical steps, including the development of the necessary weapons and space capabilities.

Against this backdrop, the international community's efforts to prevent an arms race in outer space take on ever-greater importance. There is growing demand for preventive political, diplomatic and international legal measures to achieve this goal, as confirmed by the steady increase in the number of full-fledged participants in the multilateral initiative on no first placement of weapons in outer space and the broad support for that initiative among United Nations Member States.

It is troubling, however, that it is, to date, the only practical measure aimed at keeping space free of weapons. We call on the members of the Conference on Disarmament to take a creative approach and focus on additional steps that can be taken in this regard under item 3 of the Conference agenda. The time available for the international community to take preventive measures, it should be noted, is quickly running out. The year 2030, by which, according to United States military and space plans, the first combat components of a global missile defence system are set to appear in space, is coming inexorably closer.

Russia remains committed to the development in the Conference on Disarmament of a legally binding international instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space that would prevent the placement of weapons in outer space. We are persuaded that the only way to ensure that States' activities in space are peaceful is for States to make commitments to that effect under such an instrument. I would like to stress that this issue was given special attention in the 5 June 2019 joint statement by the Russian Federation and China.

Although there was no official outcome to the work of the Group of Governmental Experts on further effective measures for the prevention of an arms race in outer space, we take a positive view of the work done by the members of the Group. For what was perhaps the first time, experts from 25 countries, including those with opposing views on ensuring the security of space activities and keeping space free of weapons, made a genuine attempt to narrow their differences and find common ground on the most contentious issues. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the experts were able to reach consensus on the need for a legally binding instrument and the importance of establishing an unbreakable link between such an instrument and the Outer Space Treaty of 1967 and other sources of international space law. The experts also agreed on a shared vision of aspects of a possible instrument, such as its scope, the scope of the obligations it would create, the verification of compliance with obligations, the threats to which such an instrument should respond and the importance of including provisions on cooperation. In addition, members of the Group and invited experts alike made Herculean efforts to analyse such multifaceted phenomena as an arms race in space, possible ways of responding to the increasingly real prospect of weapons in space and the related political, military and legal implications. The results of these efforts are summarized in the Group's draft outcome document, which could well serve as a basis for negotiations here in the Conference on Disarmament.

Unfortunately, that document was blocked by the United States of America. That step only confirmed our conclusions and our fears that Washington's objections to the Russian-Chinese draft Treaty on the Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space and of the Threat or Use of Force against Outer Space Objects are but a smokescreen behind which the United States is hiding its real intentions: namely, to ensure that it continues to enjoy *carte blanche* and thus to take a dominant position in outer space.

However, the draft Treaty on the Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space, an updated version of which was submitted to the Conference on Disarmament five years ago, is still being considered by the States members of the Conference. We call on delegations not to put it off, but to begin negotiating on the basis of the draft, taking into account the discussions in the Group of Governmental Experts.

Thank you for your attention and your patience.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the distinguished representative of the Russian Federation, Mr. Belousov, for his important statements and explanations. I hope, Sir, that, as a great diplomat and, as you have demonstrated today, a great expert on disarmament issues, you will soon be appointed Ambassador by your Government.

I now give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador Guilherme de Aguiar Patriota, Chair of the Group of Governmental Experts on further effective measures to prevent an arms race in outer space. You have the floor, Ambassador.

Mr. De Aguiar Patriota (Brazil): Thank you very much, and in my capacity as Chair of the Group of Governmental Experts on further effective measures for the prevention of an arms race in outer space, established by resolution 72/250, I wish to thank the President of the Conference on Disarmament, Ambassador Jorge Valero of Venezuela, for the opportunity to address you in the session with some information and a summary of the work performed within the context of the Group of Governmental Experts. I did not bring a structured statement but am here for a dialogue on the issue on the basis of my experience as Chair of the latest edition of the Group.

I would also like to express thanks for the honour of being on this panel alongside the Deputy Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the Conference on Disarmament, Andrey Belousov, and Daniel Porras of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), who was also an incredibly important support element in the discussions on prevention of an arms race in outer space and is a recognized expert on the subject.

As you are all aware, resolution 72/250 requested the Secretary-General to establish a United Nations Group of Governmental Experts, with membership of 25 Member States, so Groups have been of the larger type as of late. The countries that took part in the Group are clearly indicated in all the reference documents on the website of the United Nations

Office for Disarmament Affairs. I think it is important to recall that, prior to the first formal session of the Group, we had a workshop in Beijing convened by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. This was in July 2018. It was an excellent initiative; it provided an opportunity for us – for the experts and me – to get to know each other before the first formal session, have an in-depth overview, an exchange of views, of the issues that we would be facing, set the stage and clarify how to structure discussions. And all that was done in Beijing, ahead of the first formal session, which was held from 6 to 17 August 2018 here in Geneva.

In this session, then, we had a structured dialogue with an agenda that was set along the lines of the mandate that we had to address. As you recall, the mandate clearly indicated that we should be in a position to provide substantial elements for a legally binding instrument on prevention of an arms race in outer space including, the existing draft Treaty on the Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space and of the Threat or Use of Force against Outer Space Objects as a basis for our consideration.

We considered the working arrangements for the Group, starting with the general aspects of a legally binding instrument, then moving to the substantial elements of such an instrument. There were discussions on elements for the preamble, for the basic obligations, definitions, verification, transparency and confidence-building, implementation and institutional arrangements, peaceful uses of outer space and international cooperation, final provisions and then conclusions and recommendations.

The Group was set up with two formal two-week sessions. The first was from 6 to 17 August 2018, the second from 18 to 29 March 2019. In between these two formal sessions, I, as Chair, was guided by the resolution to hold an informational meeting in New York, open to all United Nations Member States, on the last day of January and the first day of February 2019. This meeting was organized with assistance from the Office for Disarmament Affairs and UNIDIR, and at the meeting I read out a report by the Chair of the Group, which is dated 31 January 2019 and available on the Office's website. The Chair's summary, if you will, of the work performed during the first session has been made public and is available – it was actually annexed to the final procedure report of the Group of Governmental Experts for information purposes and provides an account of the spirit, nature and content of discussions in the Group's first session. In that first session, we went through all the different agenda items in great detail. I think there was a considerable degree of engagement and constructive participation by all experts. It was perhaps the first time in a couple of decades that the major interested parties in this discussions actually sat together and had a frank and open exchange, including not only their respective known positions but also explorations of the technical implications of these positions and even how or to what extent some sort of common ground could be found. The work was especially valuable, and the account by the Chair contained in the report of January 2019 is an important window on those discussions and a reminder for the participants of how far we have managed to go. The environment was extremely positive and constructive.

This happened, I must also indicate, on the heels of progress in other areas of equal importance related to prevention of an arms race in outer space. In 2018, we had subsidiary body 3, which I also had the honour to coordinate, and even though the sessions were not very long, there were seven of them for discussions on prevention of an arms race in outer space. These discussions had to include general debates, specific debates and the presentation and consideration of a draft report, so not all seven sessions were available for a real discussion – we had to segment the discussions into different approaches to the work, meaning that time was very tight for a substantial outcome. That notwithstanding, with the contributions, engagement and positive disposition of all Conference members, we managed to pull off a significant report on prevention of an arms race in outer space in 2018, and that report was actually adopted and annexed to the Conference's procedural report of 2018. It is a formal document to help us move forward on prevention of an arms race in outer space and build momentum with respect to this very important issue; it is contained in document CD/2140.

To continue following the logic of referring to the work of the Conference in 2018, I think the report is drafted to reflect different views, so it is not a report attempting consensual recommendations as such, but a negotiated reflection of what the different

views were. This negotiated reflection of different views was adopted by consensus, so I think there is relevance and there is value in this report. It has a final list of some issues for possible further consideration by the Conference. I must say that all these issues were in fact taken up by the Group of Governmental Experts at great length and in detail, so the Group did attempt to act in follow-up to the subsidiary body's report by addressing these elements.

I will not go into great detail, but a decision was taken by the United Nations Disarmament Commission to include discussions on enforcement or implementation of transparency and confidence-building measures in the area of prevention of an arms race in outer space for its triannual work programme, and that is ongoing. We also had developments of great relevance in the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space with respect to long-term sustainability guidelines for outer space. A set of such guidelines – 21, I think – was adopted. It remains to be adopted by the General Assembly. There are still guidelines to be considered by the Committee that have some relevance to discussions on prevention of an arms race in outer space. Some of those remaining guidelines that were not adopted have a security dimension to them and could fall in a grey area between discussions on peaceful uses of outer space and discussions on preventing an arms race in outer space. All this, in my view, means forward movement and progress.

To give you a flavour of the discussions of the Group of Governmental Experts, I will just run through some of the debates and the nature of those debates, without indicating sets of experts or groupings that defended one or the other view. I think it is important, however, to go into substance in this plenary meeting to inform all Conference members. Of course, there are differences in overall approaches to dealing with prevention of an arms race in outer space, and that came out very clearly in all discussions. There are some who really believe the time has come for an international legally binding instrument to be negotiated. There is a draft for such an instrument that was presented in 2008 to the Conference and an updated version that was presented in 2014, the draft Treaty on Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space known to all of you. There is thus a pre-existing draft, but the pre-existing draft does not necessarily exhaust discussions on what an international legally binding instrument on prevention of an arms race in outer space could actually look like. But many feel the time has come to start this discussion and these negotiations. There are those who believe that we should focus on transparency and confidence-building measures that could help shape what is referred to as responsible behaviour in space. This is a more progressive, more cautious approach to the issue, an approach dealing with certain norms or best practices that could be further elaborated to try to shape behaviour in space and thereby improve conditions for the peaceful use of space and prevention of an arms race.

There were some contributions that followed a logic of containing harmful acts in space. This is yet another concept that was explored by some experts. It would involve describing and dealing with acts that would be considered harmful to peaceful exploration of space and therefore subjecting these harmful acts to containment, restrictions or norms, perhaps in the form of a code of conduct, for example. There was yet another approach, which would actually go a bit beyond an international legally binding instrument like the draft Treaty we have seen: it would be a comprehensive convention on prevention of an arms race in outer space. This comprehensive convention would be all-inclusive – perhaps the idea of a comprehensive convention on nuclear disarmament can be thought of as an analogue – so it would include all sorts of things: obligations, restrictions, transparency and confidence-building measures, verification mechanisms and so on. That, then, was yet another approach.

Lengthy discussions were held on international law and international humanitarian law and how they would apply to space. On the latter, views were a bit less convergent; there were differences regarding how international humanitarian law might apply to space or how an international legally binding treaty would refer to the application of international humanitarian law to space in the context of prevention of an arms race in outer space. There are several different views on this. It is not a simple subject, of course; it is complex. For some, it would perhaps be best to avoid the issue altogether, while for others the issue could be addressed in one way or another. For others still, it is a simple fact that international

humanitarian law applies whatever the medium: on Earth, at sea, in the air, in space and so on. There should not be any doubt in that respect.

Some take issue with obligations specifically addressing the placement of weapons in outer space, and there is an argument that has been made in different venues to the effect that most outer space objects may be of a dual nature, civilian and military, offensive and non-offensive, and that it is very hard to tell what the real nature of space objects is, meaning that obligations in respect of the placement of weapons in outer space would be very hard to monitor, verify or enforce. That issue was discussed as well. Others believe that there can be cases where the nature of objects in space can be clearly verified or identified or classified. The nature of the objects would therefore not be an impediment.

There were also mixed responses to the issue of definitions – to what should and should not be defined. There were lengthy discussions and an attempt to list the expressions that might be needed in an instrument. These would be expressions that might need clear definitions if members are to pursue an instrument. One example is “weapons in space”. All these very nuanced things were discussed. Others use the expression “space weapons”, changing the order of the words. These are not simple things, of course. They depend on what a treaty would look like, what types of provision it would contain and negotiations on a treaty itself. Even the expression “prevention of an arms race in outer space” was discussed. What is an arms race in outer space? How can you define it or tell if it is happening? Are there any indicators that could provide us with references or benchmarks in that respect? That is also a complex subject.

We had technical contributions provided to us by a consultant from UNIDIR, Rajeswari Rajagopalan, and useful discussions on them. They were perhaps slightly distracting because we did not manage to make a lot of progress on the issue, and it may not be necessary to have an agreed view on what “prevention of an arms race in outer space” is, how you define it and whether or not it is happening to be concerned about it and do something about it.

Verification was a very important subject. For some, there is no value in an instrument if it cannot be verified. There is also the issue of whether or not things in space, obligations related to prevention of an arms race in outer space, can be verified, and if they can be, how they would be verified. Through an agreed multilateral verification arrangement? A protocol that is an integral part of the instrument? Would there be other means? Would transparency and confidence-building measures be helpful? And then there is the complementarity of national technical means of verifying obligations related to prevention of an arms race in outer space. All these aspects were discussed; views diverged, although not necessarily to the point of mutual exclusivity. There could be a multilateral verification mechanism complemented by national technical means and by transparency and confidence-building measures. Whether verification is the central element of a treaty was also given consideration. For all, I think, it is important and necessary but not necessarily the sole element of an instrument on prevention of an arms race in outer space. There are other elements of importance.

Discussions touched on the scope of restrictions. If there are prohibitions or restricting actions in such an instrument, how far should they extend? Should they cover the placement of weapons and anti-satellite weapons or attacks or should they extend towards research, development, testing, production, acquisition, transfer and stockpiling of any of the elements associated with prohibited or restricted activities under an instrument?

There was a discussion on intent, on whether or not it is possible to assess intent behind certain behaviours with respect to objects in space. By monitoring them alone, it seems that it would be difficult, so whether to address intent or simply bypass that difficult issue is complex. For some, I think, it is important to clarify how intent relates to the behaviour of objects and of countries that are controlling these objects and whether this behaviour is responsible. There was a discussion on whether the technology available today to monitor space situational awareness, as it is called, is sufficient to verify compliance with obligations in a treaty on prevention of an arms race in outer space and whether it could be used as a tool to address the intent behind the actions of objects in space. The discussion was not very conclusive. The technology is there, and I think there was

agreement that this is an area for increased cooperation among all nations. All nations can contribute to and benefit from enhanced cooperation with respect to space situational awareness, but possibly today the technology is not necessarily precise enough to provide us a foolproof tool with respect to behaviour in space and the intent behind certain movements of objects in space.

There was a discussion as to whether an instrument should refer to the Security Council as an instance of last resort for disputes that arise in respect of actions in space under an instrument on prevention of an arms race in outer space and that cannot be amicably resolved by mechanisms that are or are not provided for under the instrument. The discussion, in which diverging views were expressed, concerned whether the Security Council would be a relevant venue for resolving those disputes. For some, it would not be.

Then there was the issue of debris. Some issues here involve discussion with respect to long-term sustainability and the possibility of an arms race in space not being contained. If there is any offensive action in space, the outcome would most probably be additional long-term orbital space debris, and this would affect the long-term sustainability of space. It might actually make certain orbits unviable for use; it could affect the right of all countries to gain access to and explore space on equal terms. Discussions progressed, but there was no consensus that debris should necessarily be addressed in an instrument on prevention of an arms race in outer space. Some experts believe that debris should be discussed by the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and elsewhere because it is not directly a matter of concern to an arms race in outer space. But there was no clear outcome here.

There was also the issue of scope. It was interesting that a discussion was held regarding the nature of possible attacks that are relevant to this discussion, and an attempt was made to grade them by their impact, starting, for example, from jamming signals temporarily or permanently. You can also blind satellites temporarily or permanently, cause them reversible or irreversible harm, do it in a way that generates debris or in a way that will not. The impact, you see, increases. The concept is to try to map these possibilities on a scale from lesser to greater impact. Of course, at the top end of the scale, you would have bringing down a satellite with a missile or attacking it with something similar, such as a terrestrial-based laser weapon, or simply having one satellite attack another. The interesting aspect here is that, overall, experts considered that obligations should be proportional to the impact of attacks and the capacity of attacks for generating repercussions or responses, so the idea of proportionality emerged and seemed to be useful. The nature of attacks and their impact should be proportional to the obligations – lesser attacks of lesser importance would generate obligations that are lighter in terms of enforcement, and then the verification that would ensue would also be less burdensome. This is the idea of proportionality that was discussed and seemed to be an interesting one.

Other aspects were discussed in venues outside the Group of Governmental Experts, such as whether rendezvous and proximity operations would require regulations, what the keep-out zones and whether they should be established, what the distance that should be kept is, whether these things would be relevant in instrument on prevention of an arms race in outer space. Perhaps they should be discussed not in that context but elsewhere, because they might not be directly relevant to prevention of an arms race in outer space.

Of course, whether international law can deal with all concerns regarding prevention of an arms race in outer space was discussed. This is something that I know has been discussed here in the Conference itself, and those who believe that international law is sufficient will probably believe that an instrument is not necessary. The logical consequence of the belief that it is insufficient, on the other hand, is that an instrument is necessary. There are degrees between those two positions.

We discussed export controls and whether export controls should be an element of an instrument. Some experts think export controls might be useful; others believe they could hamper legitimate interests of countries regarding peaceful exploration of outer space. Access to technology and to related goods and services should be available to all, so there is a concern here that export controls should not become barriers to legitimate access to the elements that are needed for all countries to benefit from space exploration.

Discussions were held on Articles 51 and 2 (4) of the Charter of the United Nations. Article 51 concerns the individual and collective right to self-defence and Article 2 (4) the use of force. These two articles are generally discussed in this context, and there were lengthy discussions; in fact, some of the experts were specialized in international law and provided very useful input and comments, not necessarily conclusive. Here, there is a dilemma about whether recognizing the right of self-defence means accepting the idea of an attack in outer space and thus drifting away from the idea that space should be used exclusively for peaceful purposes. This dilemma is similar to the one that would apply to international humanitarian law. But I think the discussions, although not necessarily conclusive, were useful and clarified many things.

Some thought it important to capture the idea that space is becoming increasingly contested and congested. For some other experts, this idea was not necessarily a positive one, because the idea of congestion seems to indicate that for the new entrants to space exploration – those who are coming late – there is perhaps less opportunity for peaceful exploration of space than for those already there. The idea of congestion of space may thus have a bearing on the idea that all States have equal rights to the peaceful exploration of space.

There are clearly ideas on which there was convergence. One that is important is that whatever is done should be done with respect to the three possible scenarios for use of force: space to space, space to Earth and Earth to space. This, in my mind, was a clear agreement. Whatever the path that we choose in the future – whether to create more transparency and confidence-building measures, more best practices, more codes of conduct, instruments or a comprehensive treaty – these three scenarios should be covered when we discuss prevention of an arms race in outer space.

Another point of clear convergence is that the Conference should be the venue for further discussions and negotiations on an instrument or whatever follow-up to the Group that we may agree on. This, of course, strengthens the idea that we should hold more in-depth discussions on prevention of an arms race in outer space and that we should continue to strive to make progress on prevention of an arms race in outer space in the Conference. We have more elements now than we had before, even though the draft report with the Group's recommendations on prevention of an arms race in outer space was not adopted in the end. We adopted a procedural one, to which we attached the Chair's statement of 31 January 2019.

I cannot say that it was a waste of time. The Group was extremely useful and clarified many concerns and positions. During the four weeks of discussion, we managed to provide agreed language for almost all the issues, proving that it is possible, at least from a diplomatic drafting point of view, to bridge differences through wording. It is not impossible, because we managed to do that for all the issues, albeit with more convergence on some issues than on others. That experts were not in a position to take the final step of adopting that particular draft report does not lessen the value of what we achieved during the discussions and the debate. All the experts went back to their capitals with the draft report, and I think they know that that draft report has value, because it was put to the test of consensus-building and managed to clear many hurdles. So it is a useful basis.

Finally, I must mention that although I, as Chair of the Group, did not influence the course of events, in the United Nations Disarmament Commission, a group of countries presented a working paper that contains the draft that did not achieve consensus. That draft, then, has now been made public. It is annexed to a working paper presented by Nigeria on behalf of the African Group to the United Nations Disarmament Commission and issued under the symbol A/CN.10/2019/WP.1. There is nothing more transparent than that – with respect to how much we managed to achieve – but, of course, it is not an agreed outcome of the Group.

There are substantive elements available now, more than before, coming from the report of subsidiary body 3, from discussion by the Group, from the United Nations Disarmament Commission and from the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space. There is a body of additional and recent elements that would allow any State member of the Conference to make an attempt to improve on proposals for furthering our discussions on

prevention of an arms race in outer space, whether through a code of conduct, additional transparency and confidence-building measures, an international legally binding instrument or something else.

That is my view of the issue. I think the Conference comes out stronger as a venue for this, and there are all these additional elements that we all have at hand to work with. Thank you.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Ambassador De Aguiar Patriota for his informative presentation. I now give the floor to Mr. Daniel Porras, of UNIDIR. Mr. Porras, you have the floor.

Mr. Porras (United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR)) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Excellency. First of all I would like to thank you for having invited UNIDIR to participate today. As I usually work in English, with your permission I will give my statement in English.

(*spoke in English*)

I would like to say at the outset, that over the last year and half, I have been very pleased to see an increased participation by women in space security and other disarmament discussions, I hope that we continue to see the increased participation by women in all these panels that we hold.

It was my pleasure to make an intervention last year during the meeting of subsidiary body 3, but much has passed since then. Ambassador De Aguiar Patriota has discussed the Group of Governmental Experts, but I would like to touch upon the work taken up by the United Nations Disarmament Commission Working Group II, on transparency and confidence-building measures.

As some of you will recall, in 2013, the Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-building Measures in Outer Space Activities issued a report recommending a number of measures capable of strengthening security and stability in outer space. Unfortunately, little has been done at the national level to implement these recommendations. As a result, in 2017, United Nations Disarmament Commission members met informally and decided to take up the question of how United Nations Member States can effectively implement transparency and confidence-building measures during the Commission's triennial work programme (2018–2020). The idea is to make recommendations to the General Assembly, so that States can implement them in their national regulations.

The Commission met in 2018 but held few substantive discussions. To help spur these discussions, in 2019, UNIDIR was asked to produce a status report and a series of briefings for Commission members, providing food for thought for the New York disarmament community. This work was funded in part by the Government of Australia. UNIDIR produced its Disarmament Commission status report, which is available on the Institute's website, earlier this year and held briefings on 30 January and 10–12 April at United Nations Headquarters in New York. We invited a number of global experts to present at these briefings, and my statement today is informed by those presentations. They are also available on our website.

UNIDIR's briefs focused on "shared risks" – namely, certain security challenges that apply to all space actors, not only major military ones. These challenges can be summed up as follows:

- Space technology is dual-use and multi-use
- Some space technology is destructive
- There is little information about policies related to some space activities

All three of these challenges have the potential to destabilize the space security environment, and all space actors have a stake in how the challenges are met.

First, it is important to recall that most space technology is both dual-use and multi-use. This means that the same space object can be used for civilian and military purposes

and also for a variety of applications. The best example of this is the co-orbital vehicle. These are small, manoeuvrable spacecraft capable of complex on-orbit operations, particularly in close proximity to other satellites. These co-orbital vehicles can be used to repair, refuel and even remove defunct satellites from orbit. They can even be used to actively remove dangerous space debris from orbit, as was recently demonstrated by the University of Surrey with its “space harpoon”, called RemoveDEBRIS. This technology could be useful for both civilians and the military, and both classes of actor are actively engaged in developing the technology.

The challenge, however, is that the technology can be used by either military or civilian actors for hostile or aggressive purposes. If a private company from country x were to launch a co-orbital vehicle that carried a space harpoon, then x’s rivals might wonder if that vehicle is not intended to cause harm. Unfortunately, due to our limitations in tracking and monitoring space objects, it is hard to confirm the true nature of a space mission. As many of you will recall, last year, the United States accused Russia of developing hostile on-orbit vehicles within this room; Russia has refuted this claim. However, without additional information, it is impossible to tell whose story is more accurate. And with dual-use technology, they could both be right.

One option for dealing with this challenge could be, as was recommended by the Group of Governmental Experts in its 2013 report, that of notification for on-orbit manoeuvres. The owner of a co-orbital vehicle, for example, could notify other actors in the vicinity of its operations, even if they are not the subject of a rendezvous.

Moreover, the vehicle could be required to maintain a safe distance from other space objects unless it has explicit authorization to approach that object. By establishing these as baseline norms of behaviour, States might be better able to interpret the nature of close-proximity operations and not become unnecessarily alarmed about what could otherwise be peaceful activities.

The second challenge shared by all is related to the destructive nature of some counterspace capabilities. As we saw with the recent anti-satellite demonstration, the destruction of space objects will result in space debris. This space debris will continue to orbit and can have catastrophic consequences if it collides with other objects. Unfortunately, our current technology does not allow us to accurately predict which way debris will fly, so it is as yet impossible to conduct a test in a way that does not pose any risk to third parties. Even an object destroyed under 300 km in altitude can send up space debris beyond 1,000 km in altitude. In 2008, when the United States destroyed a satellite under 250 km in altitude, it still took 18 months for the last bits of trackable debris to leave orbit. And the debris from the 2007 Chinese anti-satellite demonstration, which was carried out at 900 km, will likely not de-orbit for decades or even hundreds of years.

India’s anti-satellite demonstration confirmed that States today consider counterspace capabilities, including destructive ones, as being a key part of a modern military. It is likely that other States will seek to develop these capabilities as well, which will require more testing and demonstrations. Widespread testing of destructive missiles, or even co-orbital vehicles that can destroy objects, could have a devastating impact on stability in space. This would affect all actors, not just military rivals. The reduced cost of access that we have enjoyed would rise yet again, as space actors would now also have to incur the cost of protecting their space objects from debris. This would set new space actors back considerably, especially those that are still developing nascent space capabilities.

One option for dealing with this issue quickly is to adopt guidelines for anti-satellite tests. This idea also stems from a recommendation made in the 2013 Group of Governmental Experts report on the intentional destruction of space objects.

This recommendation essentially contained three principles:

- No debris: tests should not create debris
- Low debris: if a test must create debris, it should be low enough that the debris is not long-lived
- Notification: States should warn others before conducting such tests

In a way, it can be argued that these principles are already implicitly accepted as an international standard. Compared to the Chinese demonstration, the debris from India's Mission Shakti will fall in a short amount of time. The relatively muted response from the international community (outside the disarmament and space communities) would indicate that destruction of an object below roughly 300 km is at the very least tolerable. If this is not acceptable, then the international community could take the extra step of giving an explicit limit to testing and demonstrations through guidelines for anti-satellite tests. While not a perfect solution, this approach could at least mitigate the possible adverse impacts of space debris on our low-orbit environment.

The last challenge I would like to address is that of the lack of policy information about space objects. Today, most countries do not have a space doctrine or policy. This means that many of their activities lack context, particularly for rivals. In this environment, where any object can be considered a "weapon", any activity can appear strange or even threatening, depending on one's perspective. As noted above, one State might see an object as a debris-removal vehicle, while another will see it as a weapon. Without further information, and in an environment devoid of much trust, any activity by any actor has the potential to raise tensions in space, even if its activities are peaceful.

To counter this, the 2013 report of the Group of Governmental Experts also contains recommendations about the development and sharing of space policies. A space policy can go a long way to providing context for others when they observe space activities. For example, if a State has a long-standing policy about debris removal and is open about the types of debris-removal technology that it is developing, then other States are less likely to see the development of a space harpoon as a threat. However, if there is little to no information about the object or its intended purposes, then the object might look suspicious to nearby actors when it engages in novel operations and manoeuvres. Without a policy, there is no reference for States to base their security assessments on. By enunciating and sharing their space policies, States can provide a cipher to help others understand otherwise threatening activities.

These recommendations are small, modest proposals that could be used to deal with some of the challenges that currently exist for space activities within the United Nations Disarmament Commission. However, they are by no means intended to solve all space security challenges in one go. As was noted in the recent UNIDIR Space Security Conference, there are challenges to space security, with a wide variety of technologies that are very distinct. Trying to cover them all in a single comprehensive instrument has proved unwieldy, with few results. However, by focusing on limited areas where there is some level of convergence among States, it may be possible to deal with specific threats and challenges, developing a body of rules and norms that strengthens the existing space governance framework a little bit at a time. The three suggestions I have noted here could be the low-hanging fruit that we need to make progress on space security. Thank you very much.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you, Mr. Porras, for your informative presentation. I will now suspend the meeting for a few minutes, for technical reasons.

The meeting was suspended at 11.50 a.m. and resumed at 1 p.m.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Many thanks to all this morning's panellists, Mr. Belousov of the Russian Federation, Ambassador De Aguiar Patriota and Mr. Daniel Porras, for their extremely interesting presentations, which have undoubtedly helped broaden our knowledge of the status of the discussion process on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. I am particularly grateful to Ambassador De Aguiar Patriota for the excellent work he is doing as Coordinator of the Working Group.

For the few minutes we have left I will move immediately to the formal session and I give the floor to the only delegation that will take the floor, namely that of India. We shall resume our formal deliberations at 3 p.m. Excellency, you have the floor.

Mr. Sharma (India): Thank you, Mr. President. Having worked for the United Nations for a long time, including the Secretariat, I am aware of the respect that we need to give to interpreters. I respect their time, so with their due indulgence, I would like to make a statement.

Mr. President, I would like to thank you for organizing today's thematic discussion on the important subject of prevention of an arms race in outer space, a core issue on the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament. I would also like to express our appreciation for the excellent presentations made by the distinguished panellists. I thank all of them. India aligns itself with the statement delivered by the Group of 21 on prevention of an arms race in outer space earlier today.

Since there was a reference made to India's recent anti-satellite test, I would like to take this opportunity to set the record straight. India's anti-satellite test of 27 March 2019 was a demonstration of India's technological capability to defend India's wide-ranging interests in outer space. The test was purely defensive in character and it was not targeted at any country. As a major spacefaring nation, India has made significant strides in developing a range of outer space technologies that also benefit other countries, especially fellow developing countries. India has sizeable space assets that provide the critical backbone for the country's economic and social development as well as security. It is important, therefore, for us to take measures to safeguard our assets.

India remains opposed to the weaponization of outer space. India has not resorted and will not resort to an arms race in outer space. India has been a consistent advocate of preserving outer space as a common heritage of humankind. We remain committed to maintaining outer space as an ever-expanding frontier of the cooperative endeavours of all spacefaring nations. As regards the concerns related to the space debris generated by this test, it may be noted that India, conscious of such concerns and the dangers posed by space debris, conducted the test in such a manner as to minimize the incidence and longevity of space debris. After having conducted extensive simulations, the test was intentionally conducted in low-orbit, at an altitude of 280 km, to ensure that there would be minimal space debris and that it would not pose any danger to objects in outer space. As for the simulation studies, whatever debris would have been generated was expected to have decayed and fallen back to Earth within weeks. In our assessment, most of the debris has decayed, and whatever pieces remain will be decaying in a short period of time.

Mr. President, India continues to support substantive consideration of the prevention of an arms race in outer space within the multilateral framework of the United Nations. We remain committed to negotiation of a legally binding instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space in the Conference on Disarmament, where it has been on the agenda since 1982. India has been an active participant in the Group of Governmental Experts on further effective measures for the prevention of an arms race in outer space, which concluded its session in March 2019 under the able leadership of Ambassador De Aguiar Patriota. We also participated in deliberations on transparency and confidence-building measures held recently in an informal meeting of the United Nations Disarmament Commission last month. At the seventy-third session of the First Committee last year, India voted in favour of all resolutions submitted under the outer space cluster, including on prevention of an arms race in outer space, which we also co-sponsored, on further practical measures for the prevention of an arms race in outer space and on no first placement of weapons in outer space, as well as on transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities.

India remains committed to playing a leading and constructive role, together with our partners, in deliberations and negotiations on prevention of an arms race in outer space, including legally binding measures, transparency and confidence-building measures and long-term sustainability guidelines.

Once again, Mr. President, I thank you and our interpreters.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Ambassador of India. We have run out of meeting time, and our consideration of the draft programme of work that was circulated yesterday is still pending. We therefore hope to hold a meeting this afternoon at 3 p.m. I would like to conclude by warmly congratulating our distinguished panellists and all delegations on their interventions. I believe that our debate today has been highly productive and beneficial to us all. I declare the meeting closed and invite you all to meet again at 3 p.m.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.