

Conference on Disarmament

English

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

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President: Mr. Duong Chi Dung.....(Viet Nam)

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The President: I call to order the 1518th meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. Distinguished delegates, as announced yesterday, this plenary meeting is being held to continue the substantive discussion on agenda item 3, "Prevention of an arms race in outer space".

I would like to give the floor to the remaining speakers from the last plenary meeting on this topic, and then open the floor for the discussion of any other matters the delegations would like to raise. But first of all, I recall that yesterday, after making his statement, the representative of Brazil wished to ask some questions of the panellists. I give him the floor. Thank you.

Mr. Dalcero (Brazil): Thank you, Mr. President. Good morning. First of all, I would like to thank the panellists – the Ambassadors of Chile and Russia and Mr. Daniel Porras from the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research – for the presentations yesterday.

I have two questions for Mr. Porras. During his presentation, he mentioned the prohibition of anti-satellite tests. We know from the presentations that he has carried out some research on this possibility, and I would like to ask him to elaborate on this subject today. In his presentation he also mentioned advances in space situational awareness technology and the expansion of space situational awareness facilities around the world. My question is whether the development and expansion of these new technologies and facilities means that they are capable of verifying whether a hypothetical space-based missile is an interceptor intended to target another missile, such as an intercontinental ballistic missile, or is intended to strike targets on the ground. I hope my question is clear. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President: I thank the representative of Brazil. Now I give the floor to the Ambassador of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Mr. Valero (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, we thank you for organizing this thematic session on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. We would also like to thank Ambassador Gennady Gatilov of the Russian Federation, Ambassador Juan Eduardo Eguiguren of Chile and Mr. Daniel Porras of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research for their important contributions.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is of the view that outer space should be explored and used exclusively for peaceful purposes and for the benefit of all countries, regardless of their degree of economic or scientific development and without compromising the security of any State. We regret that the scientific and technological progress made in the exploration and use of outer space may be diverted for the unilateral deployment of missile defence systems or other military systems that could trigger an arms race, especially if we bear in mind that the current legal regime provides no adequate protection from the militarization of outer space and, consequently, needs to be strengthened. We stress the need for the Conference on Disarmament to pursue this issue more actively, fulfilling its responsibilities in accordance with its mandates in this area.

If we consider outer space the heritage of all humanity, countries with special and exceptional technological capacity should refrain from placing any defensive or offensive military systems in space and provide truthful information about their activities in this area. Transparency and confidence-building measures, which would make a significant contribution to strengthening international space law, are needed.

The adoption of such measures by States is an urgent step on the way to strengthening the existing legal regime in this area. It would help enhance the safety of outer space operations in the short term and facilitate the global drive towards the adoption of a binding international instrument. In no case, however, do such measures take the place of the early conclusion of a binding legal instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space that includes a prohibition on the placement of weapons in outer space and threats or the use of force against outer space objects. This must be the ultimate objective of our efforts.

We believe that the draft Treaty on the Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space prepared by the Russian Federation and China deserves due consideration by

the member States of the Conference on Disarmament. We wish to draw particular attention to the outcome document of the Ministerial Meeting of the Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement, held on 20 and 21 July 2019 in Caracas. The ministers said that they rejected the statement by the United States in 2018, according to which, “space is a war-fighting domain” or “the next battle zone”. Consequently, the ministers stressed the urgent need for the Conference to commence its substantive work, including on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, not least through the establishment, as early as possible, of an ad hoc committee to consider this item. The ministers also took note of the draft Treaty on the Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space, the Threat or Use of Force against Outer Space Objects, submitted jointly to the Conference by Russia and China on 12 February 2008 and updated in 2014.

We share the concerns expressed yesterday by Ambassador Gatilov of the Russian Federation with regard to the United States Government’s intention to place weapons of mass destruction in outer space, which, if followed through with, would undermine the peace and security of humanity. We also agree with the remarks of Ambassador Li Song, of China, who stated that the United States wants a monopoly on outer space and views it as its property to be used as a launch pad from which to compromise the outer space assets of other States.

Mr. President, in September 2015 my Government and the Government of the Russian Federation signed a joint statement in which they pledge not to be the first to deploy any type of weapons in outer space and to do their best to prevent the transformation of outer space into an arena of military confrontation and to provide security for space activities. Let me point out that, in addition, our country signed a cooperation agreement with the People’s Republic of China on the peaceful use of outer space, which aims at developing space technologies for the promotion and development of the Venezuelan Government’s social policies.

In October 2008, the satellite Simón Bolívar was placed in orbit under this agreement. Subsequently, in September 2012, remote observation satellite Miranda VRSS1, designed to take digital high-resolution pictures of Venezuelan territory to provide information for agricultural projects and natural disaster prevention, was launched from China. In July 2014, the Venezuela–China Mixed Commission adopted an agreement on the construction of a third remote sensing satellite – Antonio José de Sucre – to succeed Francisco de Miranda. It will inform work in strategic areas such as health, energy, food security, border surveillance, urban planning and agriculture.

Mr. President, my delegation wishes to acknowledge, once again, your excellent work as President of the Conference. The creative and innovative spirit of your presidency paved the way for the formulation of a draft decision that will surely serve as inspiration for future Presidents. We commend you, Mr. President, for the responsible, dedicated and transparent way in which you have conducted our business. Over the course of these four weeks of consultations, you have demonstrated your firm commitment to multilateral diplomacy. At the same time, we wish the Ambassador of Zimbabwe every success in the stewardship of our work in the coming weeks. Ambassador Mushayavanhu, please be assured of our delegation’s full support.

Thank you very much, Mr. President.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela for his statement. Now I give the floor to the representative of Cuba.

Mr. Delgado Sánchez (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you, Mr. President. Since this is the last time I will take the floor during your presidency, I would like to convey once again our gratitude for and confidence in your skilful guidance of our work. We are grateful for the efforts you, personally, and your team have made and for the convening of a discussion on this very important matter. We would also like to extend our appreciation to the panellists who are with us today for their commitment and insightful presentations.

As stated the day before yesterday, when we were considering the draft decision on a possible programme of work and the working paper prepared by the delegation of the Netherlands, Cuba supports the adoption of a programme of work that would enable us to

start work immediately in a comprehensive, balanced fashion. The prevention of an arms race in outer space is clearly one of the pillars required to strike this balance.

Cuba thanks Russia and China for their initiatives in this area. Please allow me to digress, Mr. President, to encourage some reflection or dialogue. Some countries argue that it may be more appropriate to develop a code of conduct on this issue, thus agreeing on the need to regulate certain types of conduct. Accordingly, they also agree that the militarization of space poses a threat to international peace and security. Other countries argue that the proposals on the table now are inadequate, thus agreeing on the need to develop relevant regulations and acknowledging, at the same time, that there is a threat to international peace and security. Thus, the only thing that remains to be done is to put forward concrete proposals and commence negotiations. Unless all these arguments and positions are mere excuses, there are synergies that provide a starting point for negotiations.

In other words, we all recognize the need to regulate a certain type of conduct, whatever the nature of the legal instrument we may create – be it a set of principles, a code of conduct or a treaty – and we all agree that there is a real or perceived risk to international security. I would therefore like to ask our panellists whether the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research has conducted any studies to identify synergies in the various positions with a view to ascertaining at least whether any negotiations can be begun, as our impression is that either those arguments are mere excuses or there is synergy that will allow us to start negotiations.

Mr. President, we are of the view that maintaining outer space as a peaceful environment free of weapons is of utmost importance. Therefore, while confidence-building and other voluntary measures are desirable, Cuba stands for new, legally binding instruments that regulate all relevant concerns. This is, in our view, the only real guarantee that any kind of weapons-related activity in outer space is at least illegal, irrespective of whether the hostility emanates from space, land or sea or whether dual military technology or civilian technology is used. Let us stop accusing each other and start developing regulations whereby the international community prohibits the militarization of and the placement of weapons and use of force in outer space. We have enough problems on Earth stemming from arrogant and unilateral policies; we do not need to pollute our skies as well. Let us be constructive: if a proposal seems inadequate and does not reflect our interests, we can put forward different proposals and make commitments, not excuses.

It is very easy to criticize and be destructive or hide behind excuses instead of addressing problems, including our own demons. There is no greatness or virtue in that.

Mr. President, there are international norms and principles on the peaceful use of celestial bodies and outer space. The treaties promulgated in the early days of the space race established, in the midst of the cold war, the sole system of absolute responsibility in international law. Under that system, all States are held responsible for any damage resulting from the launching of an object into space, whatever the motivation. It would thus appear that, under international law, all States are tasked with establishing clear, legally binding regulations to keep outer space outside the arms race and free of damage arising from military action.

Just as the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea established the peaceful use of the seas in no uncertain terms, striking a balance between the principles of the freedom of the seas and common interests of humanity, this Conference must adopt rules that strengthen the legal status of outer space and clearly prohibit space from being used for military purposes, the placement of weapons and shows of force.

Nothing justifies plans to dangle weapons over our heads like so many swords of Damocles or our alleged inability to enforce a prospective legal norm. The reasoning according to which not being able to control another party means we can do what we like is very dangerous. Please allow me to digress once more: if our countries considered all the potential future violations and associated impunity when they adopted domestic legislation such as criminal codes, there would not be any domestic legislation. While law enforcement and compliance monitoring need to be taken into account, they are not the province of lawmakers. We in the Conference on Disarmament are tasked with developing legal norms and, perhaps, oversight and verification mechanisms, not with ensuring that they are

enforced. That is the responsibility of the bodies we set up, not of the norms we have been charged with developing, a task on which we have failed to deliver for decades.

Mr. President, none of this prevents us from commencing negotiations during which all States have the opportunity to propose legal provisions and norms they consider in line with their legitimate defence interests or concerns. Hiding behind excuses and failing over and over again to adopt legislation on what we all consider a growing threat to space security is another matter.

Cuba believes that the Conference on Disarmament is well placed to simultaneously negotiate a treaty to eliminate and ban nuclear weapons, a treaty to prevent an arms race in outer space, a treaty establishing effective safeguards for non-nuclear-weapon States like Cuba and a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices that also addresses the issue of existing stockpiles. These are four legal instruments we could develop concurrently. Other bodies, such as the International Law Commission work, on 10 to 12 issues at a time. I believe there is room for us to be slightly less lethargic and work at least on four.

To conclude, Mr. President, to keep looking for the mote in the other's eye and not see the beam in our own is, to our mind, part of the idiocy of war politics. Thank you very much, Mr. President.

The President: I thank the representative of Cuba for his statement. I now give the floor to the representative of Japan.

Mr. Nakai (Japan): Thank you very much, Mr. President.

Mr. President, Japan joins the previous speaker in congratulating you on the successful conclusion of your presidency and it commends your significant effort to facilitate good discussions on the core issues of the Conference on Disarmament and the programme of work.

We would highly appreciate it if, once you are relieved of these important duties, you could continue to help us in holding these interactive discussions in this forum. Thank you very much.

Japan is also grateful to all three panellists who shared different but relevant views and information relating to the safety, security and sustainability of outer space activity.

As stressed by all panellists yesterday, an increasing number of countries are using outer space for a variety of purposes, with the result that it is already congested. We are also witnessing growing risks and threats against the sustainable and stable use of outer space, such as debris and satellite collisions. Japan is particularly concerned about debris caused by the anti-satellite tests and satellite collisions.

These developments further underline the importance of enhancing the rule of law in outer space. Japan believes that an arms race in outer space must be prevented. For that reason, we have positively contributed to the substantial discussions in the Conference, the Group of Governmental Experts on Further Practical Measures for the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space and other relevant forums.

We found the discussion in the Group of Governmental Experts to be practical and substantial, despite its being unable to adopt its final report. The process in general, and the discussions held in the Conference yesterday and today, clearly demonstrate that there is a wide variety of views on how to ensure the safety, security, and sustainability of outer space activities. Recalling there have been no new space conventions since the 1960s and 1970s, Japan is firmly of the view that, instead of immediately setting the challenge of adopting a legally binding instrument such as the draft Treaty on the Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space, the Threat or Use of Force against Outer Space Objects, it is more realistic and practical to outline areas of common interest and to work upon practical measures such as transparency and confidence-building measures.

From this point of view, Japan believes that the measures proposed in the joint statement by the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, France, Germany and New Zealand would be very useful in promoting transparency and confidence-building among us. We

welcome the initiative of the United Kingdom and stand ready to take part in future discussions to develop those ideas.

Finally, allow me to briefly explain our general stance on the space discussion. In addressing the prevention of an arms race in outer space, measures to be discussed have to be comprehensive, precise, universal, credible and verifiable. And the discussion should not hinder the civil and peaceful use of outer space.

With that in mind, Japan is willing to take part in the discussion to address the safety, security and sustainability of outer space activities. Thank you very much, Mr. President.

The President: I thank the representative of Japan for his statement. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of India. You have the floor.

Mr. Sharma (India): Mr. President, I thank you for organizing this thematic discussion on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, a core issue on the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament. I also thank our panellists, Ambassador Gennady Gatilov, Ambassador Juan Eduardo Eguiguren and Mr. Daniel Porras, and express our appreciation for their excellent presentations.

India is a major spacefaring nation and I would like to take this opportunity to put my Government's position on the prevention of an arms race in outer space on record. India remains opposed to the weaponization of outer space. India has not, and will not, resort to any 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 for the cooperative endeavours of all spacefaring nations.

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 the negotiation of a legally binding instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space to be negotiated in the Conference, where it has been on the agenda since 1982. India has been an active participant in the Group of Governmental Experts on Further Practical Measures for the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space, which concluded its session in March 2019. We also participated in deliberations on transparency and confidence-building measures, which were held in an informal meeting of the United Nations Disarmament Commission in April 2019. At the seventy-third session of the First Committee in 2018, India voted in favour of all resolutions submitted under the outer space cluster, including those on the 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, on no first placement of weapons in outer space and on transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities.

India remains committed to playing a leading and constructive role, together with 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.

In closing, I congratulate you on the successful conclusion of your presidency and express our sincere appreciation and gratitude for your active efforts, throughout your presidency, to advance our work. Let me also wish success to the distinguished Ambassador of Zimbabwe, as the incoming President of the Conference, and assure him of the full support and cooperation of India.

Mr. President, I was flattered yesterday by the comment of the Ambassador of China about Ambassador Patriota enjoying life in Mumbai, and I take this opportunity to invite you all to Mumbai. This invitation comes at an auspicious moment, because today is the independence day of India. So, I greet you all on our independence day.

Thank you, Mr. President.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of India for his statement and send him best wishes for his national day. Now I give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Azarsa (Islamic Republic of Iran): Thank you, Mr. President. Before making my statement, I wish to congratulate the Ambassador of India on the independence day of that great country.

Let me begin by thanking Ambassador Gatilov of the Russian Federation, Ambassador Eguiguren of Chile and Mr. Porras of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research for their informative and thought-provoking statements during the plenary meeting yesterday afternoon.

The indispensable and ever-increasing role of space technology and its various applications in our daily life is simply a proven fact in today's world. Outer space is a common heritage of mankind and must be used, explored and utilized for peaceful purposes, for the benefit and interests of all mankind. All States have the freedom of and equality to access outer space for peaceful purposes, according to international space law. This right entails certain obligations: the use of outer space by one State should not degrade the space environment for future users or undermine the commitment that the exploration and use of outer space shall be for the benefit of all countries, irrespective of their degree of economic or scientific development.

It is worrying that the militarization and weaponization of outer space might undermine these globally recognized rules and commitments. The ideal of a peaceful outer space environment can be maintained only if it is kept immune from weaponization and an arms race. Rapid advances in space science and technology, existing shortcomings in international space law and the irresponsible actions and policies of certain States have made the danger of weaponization of outer space more imminent than ever.

We are very concerned that irresponsible, unilateral space policies and plans are threatening the sustainability of the space environment and risk triggering a vicious arms race in outer space. Additional international legal provisions are needed to prohibit the weaponization of outer space in all these aspects, and to prevent deployment of weapons in space. Iran strongly supports efforts and proposals within the Conference on Disarmament for the prevention of the weaponization of outer space. We underline the right of all States to the peaceful application of space technologies which are indispensable for sustainable development. Iran rejects the manipulation and monopolization of space technology by a few countries and the imposition of any restriction on the transfer of space-related scientific know-how, technology and services to developing countries.

My delegation is fully prepared to work within the Conference on possible ways to secure the use of outer space solely for peaceful purposes. We support the start of negotiations on a legally binding instrument to prevent an arms race in outer space.

Mr. President, as today is the last plenary meeting under your presidency, I would like to add two points. Firstly, we studied and listened carefully to all initiatives proposed here in the Conference and we appreciate all creative efforts, such as the working paper presented by the Ambassador of the Netherlands, aimed at creating the momentum for moving the Conference forward with respect to its four core issues. Secondly, we express our appreciation of the hard work and the sincere efforts undertaken by you, Mr. Ambassador, and your team, during your presidency. I thank you very much, Mr. President.

The President: I thank the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran for his statement. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Gatilov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. President, as one of the panellists in this discussion, I would like to make a few additional observations and, perhaps, respond to some of the questions raised during the discussion.

Overall, I would like to say that, in my view, our discussions have had both a positive and a negative side. What is positive, above all, is that States are increasingly aware of the threat of an arms race and the placement of weapons in outer space. This is an important international security issue, particularly in the light of recent developments in the use of outer space.

Regrettably, there have also been negative aspects to our discussion. Our exchange of views has exposed a great chasm dividing the positions that States have taken in their

approaches to the prevention of an arms race in space and to the use and exploration of space more broadly. In conceptual terms, unfortunately, the views of Western countries seem to differ radically from those of the majority of the States Members of the United Nations.

At the outset, I would like to draw attention to the notion advanced here yesterday by Mr. Porras and the representative of France, albeit from somewhat different angles, that all space objects should and must be viewed as potential weapons. Consequently, in their view, all space objects pose a threat to the military security interests of individual countries and their allies. If we pursue this line of thought, we come to a conclusion with far-reaching consequences – namely, that decisive action is needed to neutralize this threat, including the preventive use of armed force. This is extremely alarming and dangerous. In fact, this notion is in direct conflict with the 1967 Outer Space Treaty and poses an even greater threat to international security than the satellites themselves. It provides a justification for placing weapons in outer space. Yesterday, incidentally, I quoted one of the provisions of the Treaty, article IV. Allow me today to refer to another of its provisions, article I, which states: “The exploration and use of outer space, including the moon and other celestial bodies, shall be carried out for the benefit and in the interests of all countries, irrespective of their degree of economic or scientific development, and shall be the province of all mankind.”

If it is assumed that any satellite can be used as a weapon, all parties to the Treaty will knowingly violate, or are already knowingly violating, this fundamental provision.

I must make another point, which concerns the extent to which outer space is contested. With the increase in the number of actors in outer space activities, outer space, it is often said, is becoming an aggressive, competitive environment in which there is an ever-increasing potential for conflict. First, the increase in the number of actors is the result of the involvement in outer space activities of non-governmental (primarily commercial) entities from Western countries. This is abundantly clear from the information put forward each year in the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space. Most countries simply do not have the capacity to carry out active outer space activities and rely on the services of other States. Thus, it would seem that it is Western countries that are helping to turn space into an aggressive environment characterized by unhealthy competition. And they are using this fact to justify their military space plans, including even the placement of weapons in outer space.

If Western countries wish to advance this notion, which is nothing if not controversial, they should state directly and clearly that they no longer intend to comply with the Outer Space Treaty. We remain committed to this international instrument and fully comply with our obligations thereunder.

I would like to thank Ambassador Liddle for his statement on the issues that fall within the purview of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and for the report submitted to the Conference on Disarmament on the recent meeting at Wilton Park. In general, we support the conclusions reached at this meeting.

However, the matter of the guidelines for the long-term sustainability of outer space activities requires further clarification. The Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom forgot to mention that Western countries blocked the adoption of 7 of the 26 principles under discussion. The remaining ones concerned important aspects of outer space activities.

Moreover, the situation is beginning to take a strange turn. For example, in the Group of Governmental Experts on the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space, the experts of France and Germany proposed that the recommendations on substantial elements of an international legally binding instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space should include several transparency and confidence-building measures, which were very similar in content to the seven principles that I mentioned earlier. But when the Russian expert pointed out this similarity – the similarity of the French and German experts’ proposal to the seven principles – and expressed full support for the proposal of France and Germany, the Franco-German duo thought better of it and withdrew the proposal at the very

next meeting. Why? Because there was a similarity between our approaches and their proposal? It is not clear.

Ambassador Liddle did not mention that it was thanks only to the perseverance of Russia and China, supported by the overwhelming majority of Member States, that it had been possible to continue work on the long-term sustainability of outer space activities in the Working Group established under the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space. To this end, we had to overcome stiff resistance from Western countries that did not want to continue working on the remaining seven principles or on new ones. This was a pity.

Allow me now to say a few words in response to the statement made by the Ambassador of the United States, Mr. Wood. In his statement, he expressed strong criticism of the new weapons that Russia is developing. He gave an assessment and an overview of these weapons, which, he claimed, have anti-satellite capabilities. Of course, all this is a matter for debate and discussion among military specialists and experts. All the same, I would like to make a number of points that strike me as important.

The first point is that, if the latest Russian weapons really do have such capabilities, this is nothing more than a response to the actions of the United States – although, regrettably, Ambassador Wood chose to distort the objective reality, turn it upside down and blame Russia for everything. It would seem that Western countries are themselves encouraging us, Russia, to see all their satellites as a real military threat – nothing more and nothing less. Incidentally, there will soon be 1,000 satellites in the satellite constellations of the United States. Russian satellite constellations, by comparison, have just over 150 satellites. So it is fair to ask: “Who is threatening whom?”

We now come to the intended purpose of the satellites. In this regard, I shall note that the United States, like Russia, has manoeuvrable vehicles in its space arsenal. Similar vehicles are being developed in other countries. Of particular interest in this context is the X-37B reusable spacecraft, the intended purpose of which has yet to be determined by military experts. I would like to stress that, unlike Russia, the United States registers all its satellites as either communications or meteorological satellites. The question therefore arises: “What is the purpose of doing this?”

If we go a little further back in history, it was the United States that began developing the first satellite inspector, as part of Project SAINT (SATellite INTerceptor). The aim of the Project was to create a spacecraft that could inspect foreign satellites and disable them, if necessary.

Later, the United States began developing ground-based anti-satellite systems and attached an anti-satellite system to a weapon in the early 1960s. I am referring to Programme 505. An interceptor based on the Nike Zeus DM-15S missile served as a means of destroying space objects. Beginning in December 1962, the anti-satellite system was tested against space targets eight times. In 1963, it was put into operation at Kwajalein, an atoll in the Marshall Islands, in the Pacific Ocean. Then came Programme 437 of the United States Air Force, a more effective system that was based on the Thor intermediate-range ballistic missile. The United States was thus the first country to put anti-satellite systems into use.

I would now like to say a few words about the realities of the present day. Independent military experts, including American ones, have pointed out the anti-satellite capabilities of the global missile defence system deployed by the United States. Their findings were confirmed by a test carried out by the United States in the Pacific Ocean on 21 February 2008. During this test, the United States Navy successfully struck a failed American satellite with a ground-to-air missile, Standard Missile 3, launched from a ship.

I shall also remind you of another American anti-satellite system, the Airborne Laser, which was being developed and tested in the mid- to late 1990s. I am sure that the technological breakthroughs made in the course of its implementation formed the basis for other military projects using laser systems. In this connection, it is worth noting that, in the Persian Gulf, the United States Navy has tested a powerful laser unit, which has the potential to be modernized in such a way as to give it anti-satellite capabilities.

The reason for setting out these examples in so much detail is to show that the anti-satellite capabilities of the United States, combined with space-based intercontinental ballistic missile interceptors and their warheads, pose a real threat both to the military security of individual countries and to international security as a whole. Mr. Wood should therefore not be surprised that, in these circumstances, Russia is trying and will continue to try to protect itself by all possible means.

By way of general corroboration, I can say that in the defence budget of the United States for fiscal year 2019, resources are set aside to develop space-based missile defence elements. This is also mentioned in the Missile Defence Review of the United States, in which it is noted that steps will be taken to place ballistic missile interceptors in outer space. What more is there to say? I think it is clear who started this arms race and who is refusing to negotiate the relevant international treaty. All I want to say is that, while there is still time, treaty discussions should immediately be launched in order to prevent an escalation of the arms race.

To conclude, as this is the last meeting, I would like to take the opportunity to thank Ambassador Duong Chi Dung of Viet Nam for his able leadership of the Conference and, in particular, for organizing this thematic discussion, and to wish the next President of the Conference, the Ambassador of Zimbabwe, success in his forthcoming work.

The President: I thank Ambassador Gatilov for his statement. I now give the floor to the representative of Mexico.

Mr. Martínez Ruiz (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you, Mr. President. Please let me start by extending our appreciation to the three panellists – Ambassador Gatilov of the Russian Federation, Ambassador Eguiguren of Chile and Daniel Porras of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research – who have provided context for the issue of prevention of an arms race in outer space and the importance of the Conference on Disarmament's immediate commencement of substantive negotiations on the peaceful use of outer space.

Mr. President, we are gravely concerned by the latest news about some States' openly stating their intention to build offensive capacities in outer space in the interest of national security. Even during the First Committee meetings last October and our discussions here, we hear about incidents and activities in orbit that suggest that the militarization of outer space may already be under way. All those developments only deepen our profound concern about the reluctance of some States to eliminate their mass destruction capacities and put an end to large increases in military spending. In this context, it is awful that outer space should once again be considered a viable and legitimate setting for the deployment of all types of weapons, provoking and justifying an ill-advised arms race. Aside from the potential to trigger such an arms race, it is unacceptable to jeopardize, intentionally or collaterally, telecommunications, navigation or meteorological and observation systems that are crucial to everyday activities the world over.

Mr. President, it is obvious that the international community has agreed to reserve outer space for peaceful purposes for the benefit of all humanity. The Outer Space Treaty remains fully in force and must be respected just like any other United Nations treaty related to outer space. We therefore call on all actors, whatever the circumstances, to refrain from placing weapons in outer space. In addition, we must sustain our efforts to consolidate a legal framework that is truly capable of preventing an arms race. In this context, Mexico is committed to negotiating a legally binding instrument on the issue, despite the 22-year deadlock that has kept the Conference on Disarmament from delivering on this mandate. We believe that the best way to meet this objective is to impose a total ban on the militarization of outer space and, successively, on all weapons of mass destruction, whatever their type or location. Mexico therefore supports the development of new international agreements, based on international law and cooperation, that build confidence and make the world, despite the ever-expanding catalogue of threats, a safer place.

At the same time, and prior to the conclusion of negotiations on legally binding instruments, we must work on risk reduction through transparency and verification, as well as on confidence-building measures such as codes of conduct and bilateral and multilateral

commitments. These confidence-building measures must be intermediate measures, not a substitute for legally binding prohibitions.

Mexico wishes to reiterate that declarations by a country to the effect that it will not be the first to deploy weapons in outer space should not be misconstrued as a tacit endorsement of any supposed right to deploy weapons in outer space or deliver them from Earth if another State has done so first or to do so in response to an attack. Such a situation may trigger an arms race and be used as an excuse to place weapons in outer space.

The delegation of Mexico supported the establishment of the Group of Governmental Experts on Further Practical Measures for the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space. We listened to the report by the Chair, Ambassador Guilherme de Aguiar Patriota, in this chamber and acknowledge the important substantive work undertaken by the Group. We regret, however, that the Group was unable to come up with consensus recommendations on substantive elements for a legally binding instrument on the prevention of an arms race and the placement of weapons in outer space and other related topics. We hope that its crucial input can feed into further and more comprehensive negotiations on the matter.

Mr. President, the joint use and deployment of space science and technology yields benefits for humanity in areas as diverse as health, education, telecommunications and broadband satellite services, the environment, agriculture and food security. It is time for the international community to make genuine commitments to prevent an arms race and eliminate the threat posed by the militarization of outer space, thus ensuring that all dimensions of space technology efforts are used exclusively for peaceful purposes.

Lastly, please allow me to reiterate the statement made by our Ambassador Raúl Heredia Acosta yesterday about the way in which you conducted your work as President and to reaffirm our support for the incoming presidency of Zimbabwe. Thank you.

The President: I thank the representative of Mexico for his statement. I now give the floor to the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Mr. Ju Yong-chol (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Thank you, Mr. President. My delegation would like to join other delegations in expressing its deep appreciation to the President for his excellent work to advance the Conference on Disarmament, and to congratulate him on the successful conclusion of his presidency.

My delegation would like also to thank the three panellists who made a valuable contribution to this thematic discussion with their profound professional insights based on in-depth research.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea has clearly stated its position on the prevention of an arms race in outer space on several occasions. In the absence of a legally binding instrument to address growing threats to space security and the potential weaponization of outer space, we believe that the draft treaty proposed jointly by the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China could serve as a good basis for consideration and substantive discussion in the Conference, with a view to finding effective measures to prevent an arms race in outer space. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President: I thank the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea for his statement. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of the United States of America. You have the floor.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): Thank you, Mr. President. As this is the last day of your presidency, I wish to congratulate you and your team on the efforts that you made to try to reach consensus in this body. I think all of us are greatly appreciative of your hard work and determination to bring our discussions over the four-week period to some kind of outcome.

Mr. President, I am taking the floor to respond to comments that were made yesterday and today. I would like to first turn to the comments made yesterday by the Ambassador of China. He had a series of questions for me personally, which as always I am happy to answer. But there were some inherent questions in my own statement yesterday that I think China does not seem willing to address. The first question that I have for the

Chinese Ambassador, who unfortunately is not here, is whether or not he was denying that China has developed ground-based anti-satellite weapons. The second question is whether China carried out the destruction of a weather satellite in 2007. It seemed to me that he rejected most of the points that I made on a variety of issues. But I do wonder if he was trying to say that this destruction of the weather satellite did not take place. I remind everyone that the act left more than 3,000 pieces of debris that we will all be struggling to deal with for decades. My third question is related to the second one. Was China saying that it has not moved forward with deployment of the missile system that was tested in 2007 against that weather satellite? It would be interesting to hear the answers to those questions. The Chinese Ambassador asked about the National Space Strategy of the United States, not understanding what that space strategy is. The American National Space Strategy is certainly on the Internet, so that anyone can access it. I would be interested to hear if the national space strategy of China is publicly available for countries to view. I look forward to those answers.

I now turn to the remarks of the Russian Ambassador, which were quite interesting, although the presentation made yesterday I found to be a very weak one. It did not really give any substantive support to the draft Treaty on the Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space, the Threat or Use of Force against Outer Space Objects. States heard yesterday from a number of countries in this room and from at least one of the panellists that the draft Treaty is not workable or verifiable and thus is not realistic. What was also interesting from the Russian Ambassador's comments was that he did not deny that Russia was developing terrestrial anti-satellite systems. The key point that I want to make, based on that non-denial, is that in essence he is saying that Russia is responding to what it perceives to be American efforts in this area. It is interesting that while doing so, Russia is simultaneously, along with China, proposing a draft treaty that is supposed to outlaw such activities. So there is some hypocrisy here that I think needs to be further addressed.

My last point, Mr. President, is in response to the statement by one representative here that the United States views space as a so-called battle zone. It is unfortunate that outer space is becoming a war-fighting domain. But I want to be very clear that this is not because the United States wants it that way. It is because the testing, development and deployment of terrestrial anti-satellite systems that have made it that way. So, while Russia will constantly accuse the United States of every ill in the world, I think it needs to seriously look again at its proposal and the hypocrisy within it, drop the draft Treaty on the Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space and help us look for realistic ways that we can all go forward to try to preserve space – as many have said in this room and I fully agree – as an integral part of our world heritage. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of the United States of America for his statement. Now I give the floor to the representative of Algeria.

Mr. Berkat (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): Thank you, Mr. President. Allow me once again to express the thanks of the Algerian delegation for your tireless efforts, which have led to a substantive, intense and fruitful debate, as well as to relevant initiatives and ideas that have captured our full attention. We welcome the working paper submitted by the delegation of the Netherlands and its commendable contribution to discussions on the ways and means of enabling the Conference on Disarmament to resume its substantive work, in accordance with its mandate. This initiative deserves to be considered with great interest and in depth. Lastly, I would like to assure the delegation of Zimbabwe, which will assume the next presidency of the Conference, of the full support of the Algerian delegation for its leadership of the Conference's work. Thank you.

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

Mr. Liddle (United Kingdom): Thank you, Mr. President. Once again, my thanks to you for organizing this debate yesterday afternoon and this morning. I think it has been an extremely useful one and a very stimulating exchange of views. Thanks also to the panellists for their invaluable input.

The Ambassador of the Russian Federation, Ambassador Gatilov, was kind enough to mention a few points from the joint statement that we delivered yesterday on behalf of the group of six countries and I was pleased to hear that he felt there were some interesting ideas in there. I look forward to taking that further. However, I was a little disappointed that he focused his remarks this morning on trying to draw dividing lines between different groups of countries. In particular, I do not think it is helpful to pick apart the proceedings of the Governmental Group of Experts on Further Practical Measures for the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space. My country and many others participated in that forum and worked very hard in it. It was a very in-depth, complicated discussion over many weeks and I do not think it is helpful, considering that these things are done as a package, to pick out individual issues. I want to reiterate that the main point of our statement was that we all need to work together to address security challenges in space. It is in all of our interests that space remains safe, open and accessible to all, because it is a domain that we all derive benefit from in our daily lives. The message of our statement was that we need to get away from dividing lines and groups and work together in an attempt to make progress.

Finally, Mr. President, on this your last meeting in the Chair, I would like to congratulate you on your conduct of the presidency over the past four weeks. You have moved us in a very good direction and I look forward to working with your successor to bring the year to a successful conclusion. My thanks to you and your team. Thank you.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of the United Kingdom for his statement and kind words addressed to the President. Now I give the floor to the representative of South Africa.

Mr. September (South Africa): Thank you, Mr. President, for giving me the opportunity to take the floor. We would like to thank you for organizing this debate and also the panellists for their presentations and contributions.

Mr. President, South Africa has expressed its concerns in various multilateral forums about developments that could prompt a new arms race on Earth and in outer space. We have also cautioned against any action that could lead to the weaponization of outer space.

Space is a driver for economic growth and innovations for the benefit of all mankind. Space activities and technologies contribute to tackling global challenges such as climate change, disaster management, food security and the protection of the environment. Space science and technology will also play an important role in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Given that the exploration of outer space for peaceful purposes plays an ever-increasing role in the development of humankind, the international community has a responsibility to prevent outer space from turning into a new area of weapon placement.

South Africa participated constructively in the Governmental Group of Experts on Further Practical Measures for the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space and regretted that a report could not be adopted.

Mr. President, South Africa believes the best way to promote order, safety, security and the sustainability of outer space activities, and to preserve outer space as a domain for peaceful activities, is through international cooperation and dialogue in which all interested parties can participate on an equal basis. A key component of our efforts to sustain outer space for exclusively peaceful purposes is the need to establish measures to ensure that space does not become the next arena for conflict and consequently that the arms race in outer space does not become a reality.

South Africa therefore remains a supporter of negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on a legally binding instrument that would effectively prevent an arms race in outer space. While recognizing the many contributions that have been made to the debate, we particularly appreciate the efforts of China and the Russian Federation, who submitted a concrete proposal for a draft Treaty on the Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space.

While South Africa welcomes the general pledge by States not to allow space to become the next theatre of war and conflict, we believe that a draft treaty on the prevention of an arms race in outer space would complement and reaffirm the importance of the 1967 Outer Space Treaty, which aims to preserve space for peaceful uses by prohibiting the use of space weapons and the development of space weapon technology.

Finally, Mr. President, let me thank you for your stewardship of the Conference. We would also like to wish Zimbabwe well on assuming the presidency of the Conference and to assure Zimbabwe of our continued support. I thank you.

The President: I thank the representative of South Africa for his statement. I now give the floor to the representative of China.

Mr. Ji Zhaoyu (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Thank you, Mr. President.

I, too, am honoured to continue taking part in the plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament today. Before today's meeting I was joking with some colleagues that today's meeting feels like a buy-one-get-one-free sale at a department store. I would like to respond below to some of the points raised by the Ambassador of the United States in his speech.

Regarding the national defence strategy of China, assuming the United States Ambassador's memory serves him right, he will recall that Ambassador Li Song presented the white paper entitled "China's National Defence in the New Era" just a few days ago. In this white paper, we provide a comprehensive description of our country's national defence policy and strategy, including our policy with regard to outer space. The English version of the white paper can be found on the web pages of both the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China and the Permanent Mission of China in Geneva, and I invite the Ambassador of the United States and any other interested colleagues to consult it there.

I myself am not an expert in military affairs, and therefore much of what the Ambassador of the Russian Federation has just said has left a deep impression on me. In his speech, he set out the experiments carried out and steps taken by the United States, along with its stated policy and its unstated aim of seeking dominance in outer space. I think that in the face of such actions by a major military Power, other States will be driven by the need to defend their own security and will inevitably become more vigilant and take corresponding measures in response.

I would like now to return to today's discussion, including of course the topic of the prevention of an arms race in outer space, that was the subject of our discussion yesterday. As the Ambassador of the Russian Federation said, the positive side of what we have seen in the discussion is that the majority of countries, or rather the overwhelming majority of countries, have recognized the real threat of the weaponization of outer space and an arms race in outer space. This threat is directed not just against China and the Russian Federation; it is a threat to all countries, to the international community and to the survival of our planet.

Of course, in previous talks, including a short while ago during the discussion by the Group of Governmental Experts that ended in March, the various parties held straightforward exchanges about such threats, whether they involved space-to-ground, ground-to-space or space-to-space capabilities.

If our colleagues give a careful reading to the 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, they will see that according to the logic behind the draft, such threats are addressed. We all held wide-ranging talks in the discussion of the Group of Governmental Experts that we recently concluded. I can responsibly state that if we are able to achieve a draft treaty through negotiation, all the contracting parties will of course assume the obligations incumbent upon them, with the exception, of course, of those States that do as they wish and find pretexts to withdraw from arms control treaties.

I would like to remind you that, according to the information presented by our former colleague, the Ambassador for disarmament of Brazil, who also served as Chair of the Group of Governmental Experts, in-depth discussions were held by the various parties during the Group's discussions, and they expressed a wide range of views. Kindly bear in

mind that the Group of Governmental Experts reflects the views of all the parties in a balanced manner. We may ask why, then, is it that everyone can have such frank exchanges and expressions of their concerns, and, at the end of the day, one country can claim that its own concerns have not been reflected? In the end, what kind of concerns does it have? What kinds of considerations were not reflected? Is it a question of its being inconvenient for them to be reflected, or perhaps of their not daring to have them reflected? I think it is worthwhile for all of us to think about that question.

Mr. President, in conclusion, I would like to reiterate what Ambassador Li Song has already said from this rostrum – namely, that all States have the right and duty to set out forthrightly their positions and proposals on the major issues, such as international peace and security, strategic balance and stability, arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation, that touch on the core interests of all countries. However, the aim should be to seek common ground while respecting differences, to enhance understanding and strengthen cooperation. It should not be for a State to create division and confrontation in the Conference or to seek to shirk its responsibilities for some ulterior political or military motives. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President: I thank the representative of China for his statement. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of the United States of America. Ambassador Wood, you have the floor.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): Thank you, Mr. President. I promise not to be too long-winded. I think we have heard some long-winded interventions today and yesterday.

First and foremost, I have read the defence strategy of China and frankly, the document does not address the country's national space strategy in very much detail. We know there is much more to the space strategy of China, and we recommend – and it is only a recommendation – that the Chinese authorities consider issuing their own space strategy paper. Considering that many details are not included at all in the overall defence strategy, I think that many countries represented in this room would welcome a more comprehensive explanation and understanding of the space policy of China.

With regard to why the United States has concerns about the draft Treaty on the Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space, our Chinese colleague has not been here very long and he might wish to talk to some of his colleagues who have listened to many representatives of the United States, including me, outline our major concerns with the draft Treaty. These concerns are well known and I stated yesterday that I was not going to waste time by repeating them; moreover, some of those positions were reflected in at least one of yesterday's panel presentations. I am not sure what China is trying to achieve by again focusing on the United States as the source of problems in outer space. As I outlined yesterday in very clear detail, what China and Russia are doing in the outer space realm is a threat to our common heritage. One example of a concern regarding the draft Treaty that I think is important to point out is that – as we have repeatedly said – it does not include any provisions on terrestrial anti-satellite weapons. It has a host of fundamental flaws, but that is a critical one. Therefore, I would again advise our Chinese and Russian colleagues to go back to the drawing board, because the draft Treaty is not practical, it is not realistic, it is not verifiable and, in short, any further discussion of this fundamentally flawed draft is a waste of the member States' time. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of the United States of America for his statement. If there is no other delegation requesting the floor on this topic, I would like now to give the floor to our panellists to give comments and answers to questions raised by the delegations. Ambassador Eguiguren, you have the floor.

Mr. Eguiguren (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you. I believe most of the questions were addressed to Mr. Porras, the expert who is with us from the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research. I just wanted to say that the importance of this issue highlights the need for negotiations to progress. The idea is to find common ground and, I will say again, it is important to find common ground and, at the same time, explore innovative options, including the use of existing instruments and the appropriate forums. Perhaps, Mr. President, a future presidency of the Conference on Disarmament can

entertain the idea of a new panel. I think our discussions yesterday and today have been stimulating enough to take things one step further. We learned about different positions, but what can we do? One possibility, perhaps, is a discussion that helps us find common ground and use existing instruments while exploring new initiatives, possibilities or options to facilitate this process and this discussion, which are so important. I will leave it at that.

That is all I wanted to say, Mr. President. I would like to thank you for the invitation to be part of this panel and congratulate you for the work you, as President of the Conference on Disarmament, and your team have done. Thank you very much.

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

Mr. Belousov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. President, regrettably, Ambassador Gatilov has had to leave our meeting, but I would like to make some brief remarks on behalf of the Russian Federation.

First of all, I would like to note that the position of the United States regarding the draft Treaty on the Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space proposed by Russia and China changes from meeting to meeting. Yesterday, Ambassador Robert Wood, referring to article II of the Treaty, said that the Treaty contains a provision that could somehow be viewed as regulating the issue of anti-satellite weapons. Today he is saying that the Treaty does not contain any provisions on anti-satellite weapons at all. I would like to reiterate that article II of the Treaty does partly address this problem and point out that neither the United States nor its allies, which continue to criticize the Treaty, have managed to raise even this minor point in response to concerns about anti-satellite weapons.

I would like to make one more point about the position of the United States of America. I have actually been participating in discussions on military space issues for nearly a decade and have been closely following the position of the United States on this matter. The main argument put forward by the United States against the draft Treaty is that it is not in the security interests of the United States. In other words, the United States refuses to assume any obligations regarding the military uses of outer space, including the obligation not to launch weapons into space. You can reach various conclusions if you follow this chain of logic, but I do not wish to take up your time with this subject now.

Another important idea has been put forward in this chamber, and here I would like to express my solidarity with the representative of Cuba, first and foremost, and with the other speakers who have expressed the same idea. Indeed, we must still be guided by our main aim, which is to make every effort to keep outer space free of weapons of all kinds and thus to preserve it for exploration and use for peaceful purposes. This is our main task, our main goal, and we, by which I mean the Russian Federation, are ready to work with all other States to develop the measures and means to ensure that it is achieved.

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

Mr. Wood (United States of America): Thank you, Mr. President. I apologize for taking the floor once again, but I need to respond to the comments made by our Russian colleague. He said that article II of the draft Treaty on the Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space partially addresses the issue; however, I would say that this is not the case, and I would refer everyone to the statement I made yesterday, in which I talked about this issue in some detail. As I said yesterday, the defenders of this draft Treaty would try to make us believe that article II prohibits these ground-based threats. In particular, they like to point to language that would oblige parties “not to resort to the threat or use of force against outer space objects of States parties to the Treaty”. But as I said, despite these claims, there is nothing in the draft Treaty, including in article II, that prohibits the development, testing, production, storage or deployment of these ground-based anti-satellite weapons. Over the years, Russia has invited us to draft language that addresses our concerns, but it has never been willing to address those concerns and it continually points to article II. As you heard, our Russian colleague used the word “partly”. Partly is not enough. I want to make that clear and to state once again that the draft Treaty is not effectively verifiable, it is not equitable and it is not in the security interests of the United States and its

allies. So, again, I would encourage Russia and China to go back to the drawing board. Let us address matters that we can work together on, rather than an unrealistic draft treaty that will never be adopted by this body. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of the United States of America for his statement. I would suggest that we are now in the part of the meeting in which the panellists answer questions and express their views. But before giving the floor to the representative of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, I recognize the representative of the Russian Federation. You have the floor.

Mr. Belousov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Just a brief comment, Mr. President. I apologize for taking the floor again. I must qualify my earlier remarks in order to be understood correctly. My reason for saying that article II of the draft Treaty partly addresses the issue of anti-satellite weapons is that this article also covers other issues and sets out other obligations. It is partial in that respect, not because it does or does not address the issue.

The President: I thank the representative of the Russian Federation. Now I give the floor to the representative of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, Mr. Porras.

Mr. Porras (United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research): Thank you. I would also like to thank my assistant, Ms. Yue Yuan, who has been an invaluable sounding board in developing some of the thoughts that I would like to share with you.

I note that we appear to be having separate conversations, as I think I have said in this room before. There is one group of States that are very concerned about threats to space systems; i.e., attacks on satellites and other types of space-based networks. Then there is a second group of States that are very concerned about threats from space systems; that is, threats from weapons that are deployed in space and can strike targets on the ground. Most of the suggestions that I have made in this room regarding space security concern threats to space systems. This includes prohibitions on the use of anti-satellite missiles and rules for the keeping of safe distances for co-orbital vehicles that could harm other satellite systems. However, we do not often talk about the possibility of weapons being deployed in space that can target things on the ground. During our discussions in the Governmental Group of Experts on Further Practical Measures for the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space, as well as in the subsidiary body and in the United Nations Disarmament Commission, a number of countries expressed concern that some countries would like to place certain types of missile defence in outer space that could then hold cities on the ground hostage. Now, I have invited experts here to give you presentations about issues such as space-based missile defence, and most of those experts will tell you that the possibility of any country deploying space-based missile defence is highly unlikely, for both financial and effectiveness reasons.

Dr. Laura Grego from the Union of Concerned Scientists has an excellent presentation on why it would be highly impractical to deploy space-based missile interceptors. However, when I talk to colleagues from countries that are concerned about the deployment of weapons in space, one thing becomes clear. That is that the United States is responsible for some truly remarkable achievements in space. The United States put a person on the moon in 1969, largely through sheer will. It cannot be denied that they have continued to do amazing things in space. Therefore, the concern of some countries that space-based missile defence could become a reality is not something that should necessarily be dismissed as unrealistic. This is something that I often have to share with my colleagues in Western countries. I try to explain there is a very real concern that in the relatively near future, there could be a constellation of satellites in low-Earth orbit that could deploy missiles that target things on the ground. From their perspective, they say it is not possible. But I think this could be one instance in which the draft Treaty on the Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space makes sense.

One of the problems that we are also encountering is that there are many different types of technology that put both space systems and targets on the ground at risk. It is very hard to address all of those threats in a single comprehensive instrument. My paper addressed the question of whether the draft Treaty on the Prevention of the Placement of

Weapons in Outer Space was verifiable. It did not say whether the draft Treaty was a good idea or a bad idea. What we can acknowledge, though, is that it sets an extremely high standard for verification and that despite all the advances that have been made in space situational awareness, this is still very hard to achieve. In this context, we think it might be more effective to look at individual threats that are creating problems for security both in space and on the ground. I think these two discussions – threats to space systems and threats from space systems – could be addressed separately. However, they will continue to impact each other, because the first step taken by any country that is genuinely concerned about the deployment of missiles in space will be to develop ground-based missiles that are able to target those satellites in space. This is not an attempt to qualify or quantify any particular threat, but to say that the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research takes the perception of these threats as being legitimate and honest. So, in this context, I think we can start taking the different pieces and rethinking how we address them. Thus, I propose that we take what I have described as the “ant” approach, which is that instead of trying to eat the whole carcass all at once, we take small bites and eventually achieve our ultimate goal.

Now, to Mr. Dalcero’s questions. With regard to whether a space situational awareness system can verify whether or not space-based missiles are missile interceptors or are targeting things on the ground, some of my colleagues have told me that yes, that would be possible. That you would be able to see a satellite in space that was carrying missiles and you would be able to determine by looking at them whether or not they were designed for targets in flight or targets on the ground. However, since we have not seen any realistic development of these concepts, we do not know whether that is necessarily true. Therefore, many questions remain as to whether or not the deployment in space of weapons – and specifically missiles – may be considered to be financially or economically viable.

Another, more focused effort that the Conference might decide to undertake, as I mentioned yesterday, is the prohibition of anti-satellite testing. This would not have to take the form of voluntary measures, but might be enshrined in a treaty. It would be verifiable. Under that approach, any breach of the prohibition would lead to a response so that the State responsible would not be able to reap a militarily meaningful benefit from the violation. An alternative would be the development of anti-satellite test guidelines, which I have advocated in the past. These would rely on three principles. Firstly, that of “no debris”: tests should not create debris. Secondly, “low debris”: any test that creates debris should be conducted at a sufficiently low altitude to avoid leaving debris for a long time. Thirdly, “notification”: relevant parties should be informed before tests are conducted so that they are not misinterpreted. Such guidelines could be adopted by consensus, regionally or even unilaterally by States that have absolutely no desire to have anti-satellite missiles or anti-satellite co-orbital vehicles. Such an approach would start a conversation and set the tone by drawing attention to norms which the international community considered worthwhile.

Another question related to whether synergies exist between rules of the road and space traffic management and security issues. I think they do. One issue that we discussed at the Space Security Conference this year was that so many different activities are happening today that it is difficult to know when a satellite or space object was acting abnormally. Therefore, the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research considers that setting a baseline of norms or behaviours would help create some kind of an order that would give contrast to objects and satellites that are acting strangely. That would make it possible to focus on the outliers that are not following the same rules as everyone else. I would note that today, of the 1,500 operational satellites that are in orbit, about 12 or 15 raise serious legitimate security concerns. From that perspective, a space traffic management system would help to flag those objects that should truly be considered as threats. It would also help maximize the use of orbits. We often hear people refer to space becoming “congested”. I do not like that term, partly because – as Peter Martinez from South Africa told me – when we talk about congestion, we might also be implying that we do not want any more actors in space. Are we saying that we should cut off access to space? Of course not. But by having an optimal space traffic management system, much as with aircraft, we can optimize orbits for safety and security, while allowing more actors to venture into space in an organized and predictable manner.

Finally, I would like to commend the United Kingdom for its proposal yesterday. The four focus areas considered at the Wilton Park conference are absolutely in line with some of the proposals advocated by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research. We hope to have more engagement in the future so that we can help in the development of some of those concepts. The Institute will participate in the First Committee this year and if any of you have any questions about our ideas, please feel free to approach me after this meeting.

Thank you very much.

The President: Thank you, Mr. Porras, for your remarks. Once again, I would like, on behalf of the Conference on Disarmament, to express my sincere thanks and gratitude to the panellists for their participation and their valuable contributions to our panel discussion today and yesterday. Would any other delegation like to take the floor on this topic or any other matters? That does not seem to be the case.

Distinguished delegates, this is the last plenary meeting under the presidency of Viet Nam. In the past few weeks, we have made tireless efforts to contribute significantly to the work of this Conference. We have seen constructive and enriching discussions on the possible elements for a programme of work and many other valuable ideas and proposals. I believe the discussions have provided food for thought and useful elements for future work. The dialogue was constructive and held in a cooperative atmosphere.

Now, in my capacity as President of the Conference, I would like to share my closing remarks and reflections on the work done during the presidency of Viet Nam and my views on the ideas and proposals of the member countries, as put forward during plenary meetings and in bilateral and multilateral consultations.

One observation I have made is that, in an era of increasing uncertainty and of complex challenges, members of the Conference continue to recognize the importance of disarmament for international peace and security and for creating favourable conditions for development. Members value the role of multilateralism in maintaining progress in this area and share the highest priority of building balanced and substantive work in this Conference.

The current presidency of the Conference came late in 2019, after many attempts by previous Presidents failed to achieve consensus on the programme of work. However, in the spirit of best serving the interests of the Conference and with the intention of making a positive contribution to its work, I put forward a draft decision on the programme of work that built upon the drafts presented by previous Presidents. This draft decision was simply worded and contained little technicality, merely containing the elements we believed should be discussed with regard to a programme of work. This process has been carried out in parallel with panel discussions on key thematic issues, with the participation of high-level panellists such as the Secretary-General of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations – for the first time – the Executive Secretary of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization, ambassadors, and experts from the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, the Geneva Centre for Security Policy and other organizations.

Many ideas and proposals have been put forward, while extensive and enriching bilateral and multilateral consultations have been held in order to reach common understanding on these elements of a programme of work, in the hope that these tireless efforts and the time invested might yield substantive results; namely, to break this 20-year stalemate and reach a consensus to move the Conference forwards. In this regard, it is time to recognize and thank member States for their efforts and goodwill. The Conference stands enriched by the contributions, ideas and proposals put forward by members. However, pending consensus on many key agenda items, there is a need for further discussion and clarification of positions among members. While the importance of moving forward is well acknowledged, considering the time constraints and the diversity of views expressed, the President's main observations are as follows:

(1) Positive momentum has been generated by the active and enriching discussions on the main agenda items. It is clear that the Conference as a whole is keen to return to substantive work and that the adoption of a programme of work each year, to guide the work of the Conference, is still a priority.

(2) Delegations noted the existence of convergent elements amongst the various proposals. The discussions on the working paper submitted by the Netherlands, which argued that the Conference should work according to its basic principles, and other ideas put forward by many member States, were fruitful in this sense.

(3) The principles and objectives of the Conference, as stated in the rules of procedure, should be stressed.

(4) The Conference should resume its substantive work, which could lead to negotiations for disarmament mechanisms.

(5) Despite concerns from some delegations, the proposal of continuity and better coordination between the presidents from one year to the next, remains the way forward.

Against this backdrop, and in order to improve the functioning of the Conference, I wish to present some suggestions on the possible elements for the future programme of work, as follows:

(1) A programme of work should be clear and simple, as a mere planning tool for each annual session, and should include a work programme and an approved plan and timetable for the equal treatment of all substantive agenda items. The rules of procedure say that the Conference shall establish its programme of work at the beginning of its annual session.

(2) Work must be carried out based on principles already agreed in the Final Document of the Tenth Special Session of the General Assembly, the first special session devoted to disarmament, and the rules of procedure.

(3) The establishment of subsidiary bodies, the nomination of coordinators and other issues should be addressed properly in due time and in accordance with the rules of procedure.

(4) Continuity is key to sustaining an effective discussion of substantive issues, without prejudice to the work of future Presidents.

Our presidency commenced with a commitment to work in a spirit of cooperation, constructiveness, transparency and balance, on all agenda items, to promote the work of the Conference and to comprehend the views and interests of member States. We very much appreciate the support, cooperation and trust which were manifested during our tenure. That tenure now ends with the reflection that it succeeded in initiating substantive and enriching discussions on key agenda issues, which could facilitate and contribute to the future work of the Conference.

We encourage the Presidents of 2020 to take into consideration these positive results in their endeavours, subject to the discretion vested in them as per the mandates and the rules of procedure of the Conference. On this occasion, I would like to thank the secretariat of the Conference for its continued assistance and support, which significantly contributed to the work of the Conference during my tenure. I thank you for your attention and kindly request the secretariat to circulate this statement as an official document of the Conference.

Distinguished delegates, the secretariat informs us that the next plenary meeting will take place on Tuesday, 20 August 2019, under the presidency of Zimbabwe. I see that Ambassador Mushayavanhu of Zimbabwe has requested the floor. You have the floor, Sir.

Mr. Mushayavanhu (Zimbabwe): Thank you, Mr. President. I will try to be short. I appreciate the opportunity to speak at the end of this plenary meeting, as Viet Nam concludes its presidency and prepares to hand over the baton to Zimbabwe. In this respect, I wish to thank you, Ambassador Duong Chi Dung for your dedication and that of your team, and in particular for your sterling efforts to find consensus on a programme of work. I will say more about this once I assume the presidency next week. Suffice to say, I have no doubt that the time and energy that you spent during your four-week tenure were not in vain, because your presidency served to remind us all of the *raison d'être* of the Conference on Disarmament and of our collective and primary responsibility to negotiate legally binding disarmament instruments.

Mr. President, I also want to acknowledge the interesting views that emerged from the thematic discussion on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. As the Ambassador of China observed on Tuesday, these opportunities to exchange views are critical as a way of preparing ourselves for future negotiations. I also wish to take this opportunity to express my deep appreciation to the Dutch delegation for its thought-provoking paper, entitled “Back to Basics”, an initiative which has attracted enormous interest in this chamber. Its publication could not have come at a more opportune moment, when consensus had been elusive in this chamber. We are grateful to you, Mr. President for granting us time to discuss this paper on Tuesday. Indeed, we believe that the Dutch paper deserves continued consideration, as we seek to address the mandate creep and institutional drift of this body.

Finally, Mr. President, regarding our programme for the coming week, we are planning to hold a meeting of the six Presidents of this session, followed by a meeting of the six Presidents plus regional coordinators, on Monday, 19 August 2019. As you have already said, we are also planning to hold the first plenary meeting of our presidency on Tuesday, 20 August. Of course, the usual detailed notifications will be circulated by the secretariat to that effect. Thereafter, in order to give the President time to carry out informal consultations on the form and content of the draft annual report of the Conference, guided by our rules of procedure, there will be no plenary meeting on Thursday, 22 August 2019. Further information and a more detailed schedule will be communicated next week. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Zimbabwe for the information provided and I wish him the best for his tenure and a successful presidency.

It seems that we have come to the end of our plenary meeting today. Before concluding, once again, I would like to express sincere thanks to all member States for the cooperation, support and expertise provided to the presidency and for all the encouraging words addressed to the President. I wish also to thank the secretariat of the Conference and all conference officers and interpreters for their support. I give the floor to the representative of Australia.

Ms. Wood (Australia): I speak as one of the Presidents for 2020. Thank you very much for your approach and that of your team to the presidency. You have given us the space to have a conversation that we needed to have. We have listened very carefully and we will take everything on board as we prepare for next year. I would like to propose a round of applause for your efforts.

The President: Thank you, Australia. I hope that I can continue to work and to contribute to the Conference. The meeting is adjourned.

The meeting rose at 12.20 p.m.