
Conference on Disarmament

English

Final record of the one thousand five hundred and twenty-third plenary meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 21 January 2020, at 10.20 a.m.

President: Mr. Rachid Belbaki (Algeria)



The President (*spoke in French*): I call to order the 1523rd meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, Director-General for Multilateral Relations at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Algeria, Mr. Soualem, and Ms. Kaspersen, I should like first of all to extend to you my best wishes for the new year. It is an honour for me to open the 2020 session of the Conference as the first President. Before we begin our work, I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to Mr. Dembri, the former Minister of Foreign Affairs of my country and Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Algeria in Geneva, who left us on 2 January 2020. Mr. Dembri's time in Geneva has had a profound impact on the Conference on Disarmament, particularly through his efforts as part of the 2003 five Ambassadors' initiative, which paved the way towards the adoption of the programme of work in 2009.

Before we proceed, I would also like to extend a warm welcome to our new colleagues who have assumed their roles as representatives of their respective Governments since the end of the 2019 session: Ms. Norton, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative of Canada to the United Nations Office; Mr. Tressler Zamorano, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative of Chile; Mr. Ogasawara, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative of Japan; Mr. Muhamad, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Malaysia; Mr. Sánchez de Lerín García-Ovies, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Spain; and Mr. Baumann, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Switzerland. On behalf of my Government and the Conference, I would like to take this opportunity to assure you all of our full cooperation and unwavering support in your assignments.

Distinguished colleagues, I would like to propose the following programme for our meeting this morning. First, the adoption of the draft agenda for the 2020 session of the Conference on Disarmament. Second, the consideration of requests from non-member States wishing to participate in the work of the Conference during the 2020 session. Third, my statement as President of the Conference, followed by the joint statement of the six Presidents of the 2020 session. This will be followed by a message from Mr. Boukadoum, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Algeria, which will be read out by Ambassador Soualem, Director-General for Multilateral Relations at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and statements from those delegations wishing to take the floor.

I now invite you to consider the draft agenda for the 2020 session of the Conference. This draft is contained in document CD/WP.624, which is before you. I propose, in line with the practice of previous years, combining the agenda with a presidential statement, which reads as follows: "In connection with the agenda, I, as the President of the Conference, should like to state that it is my understanding that if there is a consensus in the Conference to deal with any issues, they could be dealt with as part of this agenda. The Conference will also take into consideration rules 27 and 30 of its rules of procedure."

Would any delegation like to take the floor at this stage regarding the agenda before you? No one wishes to take the floor. May I take it that the Conference is ready to adopt the draft agenda as contained in document CD/WP.624 followed by the statement I have just read out?

It was so decided.

The agenda will be issued as an official document of the Conference by the secretariat.

I now turn to the list of States not members of this Conference who wish to participate in our work during the 2020 session. The requests received by the Conference secretariat as of Friday, 17 January 2020 at 3 p.m. are contained in document CD/WP.625, of which you will find a copy in front of you. Requests from non-member States received after that date will be submitted for consideration and decision at the next plenary meeting. I have received notification from a member State rejecting the candidacy of one of these non-member States. I therefore propose going one by one through the list of countries requesting to participate as observers.

I will now move to the first country on the list, which is Albania. May I take it that the Conference decides to grant this request to take part in our deliberations in accordance with our rules of procedure?

It was so decided.

We will now decide on the request from Angola. May I take it that the Conference decides to grant this request to take part in our Conference in accordance with our rules of procedure?

It was so decided.

We will now decide on the request from Azerbaijan. May I take it that the Conference decides to grant this request to take part in our deliberations in accordance with our rules of procedure?

It was so decided.

We will now decide on the request from Bosnia and Herzegovina. May I take it that the Conference decides to grant this request to take part in our deliberations in accordance with our rules of procedure?

It was so decided.

We now move on to the request from Cambodia to take part in our work. May I take it that the Conference decides to grant this request to take part in our deliberations in accordance with our rules of procedure?

It was so decided.

We will now decide on the request from Chad. May I take it that the Conference decides to grant this request to take part in our deliberations in accordance with our rules of procedure?

It was so decided.

We will now decide on the request from Côte d'Ivoire. May I take it that the Conference decides to grant this request to take part in our deliberations in accordance with our rules of procedure?

It was so decided.

We will now decide on the request from Croatia. May I take it that the Conference decides to grant this request to take part in our deliberations in accordance with our rules of procedure?

It was so decided.

We will now decide on the request from Cyprus. May I take it that the Conference decides to grant this request to take part in our deliberations in accordance with our rules of procedure? I give the floor to the representative of Turkey.

Mr. Ağacikoğlu (Turkey): Thank you, Mr. President. At the outset I would like to congratulate you on your assumption of the first presidency of the Conference on Disarmament in 2020. I assure you of Turkey's full support and cooperation in your efforts to advance the work of the Conference.

Mr. President, as it might be recalled, although Turkey has had concerns with this particular request, we have never objected to a blanket list or chosen to block a country on the list from participating as an observer of Conference activities. Instead, we have registered our position with a letter afterwards. This course of action was due to the utmost importance that Turkey has attached to not spoiling or politicizing the positive atmosphere of the Conference. Nevertheless, we all witnessed together last year that, in that respect, the Rubicon has already been crossed. Therefore, Turkey also decided to stop exercising restraint on this particular matter. Herewith, then, I would like to declare that Turkey will not support this particular request this year.

The President (*spoke in French*): In the light of the objection raised, we do not have a consensus to allow Cyprus to participate as an observer in the 2020 session of the Conference. The request is therefore rejected.

We will now decide on the request from Czechia. May I take it that the Conference decides to grant this request to take part in our deliberations in accordance with our rules of procedure?

It was so decided.

We will now decide on the request from the Dominican Republic. May I take it that the Conference decides to grant this request to take part in our deliberations in accordance with our rules of procedure?

It was so decided.

We will now decide on the request from Estonia. May I take it that the Conference decides to grant this request to take part in our deliberations in accordance with our rules of procedure?

It was so decided.

We will now decide on the request from Georgia. May I take it that the Conference decides to accept this request to take part in our deliberations in accordance with our rules of procedure?

It was so decided.

We will now decide on the request from Greece. May I take it that the Conference decides to accept this request to take part in our deliberations in accordance with our rules of procedure?

It was so decided.

We will now decide on the request from Guatemala. May I take it that the Conference decides to grant this request to take part in our deliberations in accordance with our rules of procedure?

It was so decided.

We will now decide on the request from the Holy See. May I take it that the Conference decides to grant this request to take part in our deliberations in accordance with our rules of procedure?

It was so decided.

We will now decide on the request from Honduras. May I take it that the Conference decides to accept this request to take part in our deliberations in accordance with our rules of procedure?

It was so decided.

We will now decide on the request from Jordan. May I take it that the Conference decides to grant this request to take part in our deliberations in accordance with our rules of procedure?

It was so decided.

We will now decide on the request from Kuwait. May I take it that the Conference decides to grant this request to take part in our deliberations in accordance with our rules of procedure?

It was so decided.

We will now decide on the request from Latvia. May I take it that the Conference decides to grant this request to take part in our deliberations in accordance with our rules of procedure?

It was so decided.

We will now decide on the request from Lebanon. May I take it that the Conference decides to agree to this request to take part in our deliberations in accordance with our rules of procedure?

It was so decided.

We will now decide on the request from Lithuania. May I take it that the Conference decides to grant this request to take part in our deliberations in accordance with our rules of procedure?

It was so decided.

We will now decide on the request from Luxembourg. May I take it that the Conference decides to grant this request to take part in our deliberations in accordance with our rules of procedure?

It was so decided.

We will now decide on the request from Malta. May I take it that the Conference decides to grant this request to take part in our deliberations in accordance with our rules of procedure?

It was so decided.

We will now decide on the request from Montenegro. May I take it that the Conference decides to accept this request to take part in our deliberations in accordance with our rules of procedure?

It was so decided.

We will now decide on the request from North Macedonia. May I take it that the Conference decides to grant this request to take part in our deliberations in accordance with our rules of procedure?

It was so decided.

We will now decide on the request from Panama. May I take it that the Conference decides to grant this request to take part in our deliberations in accordance with our rules of procedure?

It was so decided.

We will now decide on the request from the Philippines. May I take it that the Conference decides to grant this request to take part in our deliberations in accordance with our rules of procedure?

It was so decided.

We will now decide on the request from Portugal. May I take it that the Conference decides to grant this request to take part in our deliberations in accordance with our rules of procedure?

It was so decided.

We will now decide on the request from Qatar. May I take it that the Conference decides to grant this request to take part in our deliberations in accordance with our rules of procedure?

It was so decided.

We will now decide on the request from the Republic of Moldova. May I take it that the Conference decides to accept this request to take part in our deliberations in accordance with our rules of procedure?

It was so decided.

We will now decide on the request from Saudi Arabia. May I take it that the Conference decides to grant this request to take part in our deliberations in accordance with our rules of procedure?

It was so decided.

We will now decide on the request from Serbia. May I take it that the Conference decides to grant this request to take part in our deliberations in accordance with our rules of procedure?

It was so decided.

We will now decide on the request from Singapore. May I take it that the Conference decides to grant this request to take part in our deliberations in accordance with our rules of procedure?

It was so decided.

We will now decide on the request from Slovenia. May I take it that the Conference decides to grant this request to take part in our deliberations in accordance with our rules of procedure?

It was so decided.

We will now decide on the request from the Sudan. May I take it that the Conference decides to grant this request to take part in our deliberations in accordance with our rules of procedure?

It was so decided.

We will now decide on the request from Thailand. May I take it that the Conference decides to grant this request to take part in our deliberations in accordance with our rules of procedure?

It was so decided.

We will now decide on the request from Trinidad and Tobago. May I take it that the Conference decides to grant this request to take part in our deliberations in accordance with our rules of procedure?

It was so decided.

I give the floor to the Ambassador of the United States of America.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): Thank you, Mr. President. Let me first congratulate you on your assumption of the Conference on Disarmament presidency. I want to assure you of my delegation's support for your work as you carry out your duties.

Mr. President, let me just say that it is unfortunate that Turkey has decided to block Cyprus from participating in the work of the Conference. In previous years, there has been no objection to Cyprus participating in our work. My delegation calls on Turkey to reconsider its objection.

The President (*spoke in French*): Thank you. Excellencies, dear colleagues, allow me to suspend the meeting briefly so that the representatives of the observer States may take their seats in the Chamber.

The meeting was briefly suspended.

The President (*spoke in French*): The meeting is resumed. Distinguished colleagues, allow me to make a statement in my capacity as President of the Conference on Disarmament.

(spoke in Arabic)

Distinguished colleagues, I would like to start by extending my best wishes to all of you for the new year 2020. I hope that the current session of the Conference will lead to positive results.

As I assume the first presidency of the current session of the Conference, I look forward to working with you to create an atmosphere of calm, constructive and responsible cooperation and trust with a view to enabling member States to use the keys to success that are in their possession in order to restore the traditional role of the Conference as the only multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament, which is a pressing concern for the general public at the national and international levels. We must respond to that concern during this

critical juncture in order to meet the noble challenge of ridding all of humanity of the spectre of an insecure and uncertain future.

In assuming the presidency of the Conference again for the first time since 2009, when the last programme of work was adopted, Algeria will show the same determination and resolve, based on its steadfast position on disarmament issues. Algeria will join its efforts with those of the other States that will occupy the presidency of the Conference during this session. Together we will form a unified working group to work together with all stakeholders to lay foundations that will enable the Conference to bridge points of view and build on the existing consensus to produce tangible results with a view to restoring the effective role of the Conference, which has been pivotal in negotiating international treaties and agreements in the field of disarmament. This undoubtedly depends on our collective will and ability to reach a consensus on the best formula for doing so. In pursuing the determined efforts that have been made to adopt a programme of work that allows the Conference to play the role assigned to it, we will work together to redouble and pool efforts to change the status quo in order to preserve the credibility of this platform and enhance its ability to fulfil its responsibilities, prioritizing the common good while taking national interests into account.

In this context, the focus should be on adopting a common vision for achieving universal security and creating an atmosphere of trust and mutual understanding based on the required political will, using calm and balanced discourse and showing the flexibility necessary to revive the Conference's work, activate its role and break the current stalemate. This will, inevitably, have a positive and profound influence on the Conference's role and credibility and will help reconcile divergent views.

I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate my delegation's intention to harness all its efforts and work with the other presidents of the Conference during the current session, to whom I am thankful for accepting this collective approach with the aim of advancing the work of the Conference in a positive, transparent and open manner, with the involvement of all actors and based on dialogue, consultation and listening to different opinions. Our goal will be to submit a draft programme of work for the attention of member States as soon as possible. To ensure that the Conference has sufficient time to address substantive matters, our work should be based on the following principles:

- First, a collective approach, based on consultation and cooperation between the six presidents of the current session and all Member States
- Second, a tempered approach based on a distinction between developing the conceptual framework for the programme of work on the one hand, which involves only a general outline, and its implementation on the other, which involves all the necessary details
- Third, compliance with uniform, common criteria that allow us to lay the groundwork for a standardized and consensual presidency that takes into account, through the conceptual framework for the programme of work, the concerns presented each year to the Conference Presidents regarding what needs to be done during the session
- Fourth, remaining flexible in order to be able to update and adapt to the progress of work and new developments
- Fifth, taking advantage of the opportunities available under the Conference's rules of procedure and accepted working practices, as well as successful experiences related to decisions adopted by consensus, on the basis of various recent proposals and initiatives and with the aim of restoring the Conference's status as a negotiating forum

In the past few weeks, as part of the preparations for this session, I have held consultations with the previous President of the Conference, the Ambassador of Zimbabwe, Mr. Taonga Mushayavanhu, in line with the recommendations contained in the Conference's 2019 report. I also held close consultations, as former presidents of previous sessions have done, with approximately 40 representatives of member States and with representatives of regional groups, seeking their wise counsel on how to break the impasse

in the negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament. During these discussions, I sensed a common awareness of the imperative to emerge from the protracted stalemate and to take advantage of the beginning of the new cycle in order to give the necessary impetus and revive the work of our Conference.

I would like to take this opportunity to emphasize that broad and inclusive consultations will continue, and to confirm that the presidential office is open to every delegation that wishes to discuss any matters of interest to it.

In conclusion, I wish to express my appreciation and gratitude for the efforts made during the previous session of the Conference. I also thank the Secretary-General of the Conference, the Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, and all members of the Secretariat for their keen interest and great support during the preparation of the work of this Conference and their contribution to the efforts to achieve positive results.

Thank you for your kind attention.

(spoke in English)

Ladies and gentlemen, I now take the floor on behalf of the six Presidents of the Conference on Disarmament in 2020 – Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bangladesh and Belarus. As the Presidents of the 2020 session, we wish to reaffirm our steadfast support for the Conference and its important role in multilateral disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. Each of our countries has different positions and priorities. The strengths of our group lie in our diversity and complementarity. As the countries that will be responsible for guiding the Conference's work this year, and as we are at the end of a cycle that last saw the adoption of a programme of work in 2009, we want to start on a positive note.

Importantly, we are committed to engaging openly with all Conference members as we prepare for our presidencies this year. We welcome the interest of members in how we intend to lead the work of the Conference and cooperate across this year's presidencies. We want to make our contribution and support the work of the Conference and allow all members to do likewise in a positive atmosphere. We cannot promise that we will break the long-standing deadlock in the Conference, but with the support of the Conference members we can and do agree to work together during the year to try to make substantive progress in all areas of the institution's mandate. We are open and ready to consult member States of the Conference and invite all delegations to engage in substantive dialogue with a view to putting the Conference in a position to make an early decision on its programme of work in 2020, in accordance with the rules of procedure. As envisaged in the 2019 report, we undertake to keep the Conference informed, as appropriate, of our consultations.

The Conference belongs to all of us, and we all have a responsibility to use this valuable resource effectively. We look forward to your engagement, your ideas and your support as we serve you in 2020.

(spoke in French)

Distinguished colleagues, we will now listen to the statement of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Algeria, Mr. Sabri Boukadoum, to be delivered by the Director-General for Multilateral Relations at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Lazhar Soualem.

Mr. Soualem (Algeria): Thank you, Mr. President. Good morning and happy new year 2020 to everyone.

(spoke in Arabic)

Mr. President, I would like to begin by expressing my great happiness at seeing my country, Algeria, assume the first presidency of the 2020 session of the Conference, whose successes in negotiating and adopting international instruments have marked milestones in the efforts and progress made in the field of disarmament globally.

While Algeria has the honour to preside over the Conference, it is aware that with this honour comes a heavy responsibility. Each of us knows that our actions take place in

the context of an evolving reality and amid high expectations, and that a range of obstacles can sometimes hinder the emergence of a common vision in respect of certain issues.

For this reason, it is of fundamental importance that the Conference on Disarmament should respond to the many urgent calls it receives to address disarmament issues. It is also important for it to send the positive response that the international community, and more generally global public opinion, expects from it.

The sensitive and difficult context in which the Conference and the entire multilateral disarmament machinery are operating dictates that we all have to assume the responsibility that has been entrusted to us to enable the Conference to fulfil its mandate.

In this regard, it should be pointed out that we are not starting from scratch and do not have to devise new concepts. As members of the United Nations, we have committed ourselves through the Charter of the United Nations to save future generations from the scourge of war. It is our intention to practise tolerance and to join forces to maintain peace and international security, guided by a set of principles and objectives that include coexistence, respect for the sovereignty of States and refraining from the threat and use of force.

Mr. President, Algeria has always played a role in the pivotal moments of the history of disarmament, especially nuclear disarmament. In 1979, it was the first State to launch the deliberations of the Committee on Disarmament, which in 1984 became the Conference on Disarmament. It also chaired the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), at which the 13 practical steps for nuclear disarmament were agreed. In 2015, under the Algerian presidency of the First Committee, the foundations were laid for the 2017 United Nations conference at which the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons was adopted. Algeria also co-chaired the ninth Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty in 2015.

These contributions by my country stem from the firm conviction that nuclear disarmament remains a key priority for Algeria, as it does for the vast majority of the members of the Conference and the international community as a whole. This order of priorities puts nuclear disarmament at the heart of the concerns of the Conference on Disarmament. In this context, we hope that the 2020 NPT Review Conference, which is due to take place in a few months' time, will lead to concrete results that reflect the aspirations of the international community.

The conclusion of a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices is of particular significance if we are to adequately address the issue of fissile material stocks. Likewise, universal adherence to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is extremely important in order to accelerate its entry into force and thus strengthen the global architecture of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament.

My country believes that achieving tangible progress in terms of negative security assurances through the conclusion of a legally binding international instrument is imperative in order to protect non-nuclear-weapon States from the use or threat of use of such weapons against them.

As for outer space, which poses a special challenge to international security, it is in all of our interests to ensure the necessary conditions for the peaceful and safe use of outer space. Emphasizing the importance of the 1967 Outer Space Treaty, we believe it is important to set standards that prevent the placement of weapons in outer space.

Mr. President, the current session has begun with the determination of the six Presidents to work together to advance the work of the Conference. Such collective efforts send a strong positive message that the Conference can achieve concrete results that enhance international security. With this resolve, the differences between its members can be overcome and they can be encouraged to draw on the lessons learned from the Conference's successes as well as its failures.

With regard to these lessons, I would like to share some comments. In the past few years, the Presidents of the Conference have consistently submitted preliminary proposals concerning the programme of work. In view of the debate concerning a negotiating mandate versus a non-negotiating mandate, each of these proposals has been used as the basis for trying to give impetus to the Conference. It should be noted that these proposals, most of which were adopted, bore the personal touches of their authors in terms of their formulation and content and the way their adoption was negotiated. Would it not be a better use of the efforts of the Presidents and members, and of the time being spent on the preparation, discussion and adoption of such proposals, if we were instead to make progress on substantive issues and on gaining a broader understanding of what it is we need to achieve together, even if this were to mean prolonging our dialogue in the framework of a programme of work that would allow us to extend mandates by months or years?

With respect to the discussion regarding the negotiating mandate versus the non-negotiating mandate, it is interesting to note that the previous experiences of the Conference with regard to the subsidiary bodies that have been established show that some non-negotiating mandates have turned into successful full negotiating mandates, while some mandates that included negotiations from the outset have not produced any results.

In its annual report to the General Assembly, the Conference requests the first President and his or her predecessor in that role to conduct appropriate consultations and, if possible, to make recommendations that take into account all the proposals put forward, the views expressed and the discussions that took place during the session. For many years, the consultations, including those conducted by the presidents of the session with the delegations, have not resulted in a consensus on the programme of work. Every year concerns are expressed to the Presidents of the Conference regarding what should be done during the session. Would it not be better to reframe the question to ask not what should be done but how it should be done? I believe the practical framework proposed by the President of the Conference in his opening statement could contribute to answering these questions.

I wish you all every success in your work and assure you once again of the full readiness of Algeria to make every effort to ensure the success of the work of the Conference. Thank you for your kind attention.

The President (*spoke in French*): Thank you, Mr. Ambassador. At this point, I would like to turn to the list of speakers for today. Before I open the floor, I would like to mention that, in principle, today and for the duration of my presidency, I intend to take all rights of reply at the end of the plenary meetings and to allow the speaker to finish his or her statement before addressing any points of order, so as to allow a constructive, respectful and effective dialogue.

I now turn to the delegations who have requested the floor and I would like first of all to offer a warm welcome to the Ambassador of Cuba. I thank you, Excellency, for addressing the Conference on Disarmament.

Mr. Pedroso Cuesta (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Mr. President, and good morning. As the coordinators of the Group of 21, we would like to welcome you and the Presidents who will steer our work in 2020. The Group reaffirms the absolute validity of multilateral diplomacy in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation, and expresses its determination to promote multilateralism as the core principle of negotiations in these areas.

The Conference on Disarmament is the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum mandated by the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, and the Group of 21 wishes to emphasize the importance of preserving it by strengthening the nature, role and mandate of this body. We wish to underscore the need to redouble our efforts to reinforce and revitalize the Conference and to maintain its credibility by resuming its substantive work.

The Group reiterates the urgency for the Conference to execute its mandate as set out at the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament and also to adopt and implement a balanced and comprehensive programme of work on the basis of its

agenda, while taking into account the security interests of all States and dealing with, *inter alia*, the core issues, including nuclear disarmament, in accordance with the rules of procedure, including the rule of consensus. The Group urges you, Mr. President, to spare no effort to this end.

To conclude, we wish to reaffirm the engagement of the Group of 21 with the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and to wish you every success in your endeavours. Before I finish, I would like to welcome the Director-General for Multilateral Relations at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Algeria, Mr. Lazhar Soualem, and to commend the spirit of cooperation between the six Presidents of the 2020 session of the Conference on Disarmament. This may start a new positive cycle of work.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the Ambassador of Cuba for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the presidency and to my country. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Japan.

Mr. Ogasawara (Japan): Mr. President, I would first like to congratulate you on your assumption of the first presidency of this important body at this critical juncture. It is indeed appropriate to recall here that the last programme of work was adopted under the Algerian presidency in 2009. Japan will spare no effort so that the work of the Conference of Disarmament can unfold smoothly in order to achieve our common goals under your eminent leadership.

I am thankful for the heart-warming welcome that I received upon my arrival in Geneva. Throughout my diplomatic career, I have been repeatedly involved in disarmament and non-proliferation issues. Today I am delighted to meet my old friends again with whom I have developed very positive and sincere working relationships in the past.

At the very outset of the 2020 session, let me briefly explain the Japanese position on the work of the Conference on Disarmament.

First, we greatly appreciate the initiatives taken by different member countries which have contributed to deepening the substantial discussions on the issues pertaining to the Conference, such as the one undertaken by the Vietnamese presidency last year. In order to ensure continuity and consistency in the work of this body, it would be very helpful to draft a working paper which reflects our substantive discussions.

Second, we find it appropriate for the Conference to discuss new issues in addition to the traditional ones. In this regard, Japan would value discussions on nuclear deterrence as well as transparency. The discussions which took place under the United States presidency last year were useful. In the light of the recent evolutions in science and technology, the Conference should also examine the implications of these developments on the disarmament framework.

Third, it is crucial that we arrive at an agreement on a programme of work. We should be flexible with regard to the format and scope of this document, bearing in mind the Dutch proposal made last year. We are very much encouraged that close coordination among the six member States that will occupy the presidency this session has been continued since last year. We hope sincerely that such enhanced coordination and your inclusive approach, which you, Mr. President, have just presented to us, lead to a resumption of the dynamism of this Conference and to a new agreement on a programme of work.

Before concluding my remarks, let me reaffirm the importance of the Conference on Disarmament. The security environment has evolved in such a manner as to create a vacuum in terms of international rules and norms to regulate new security issues. On the other hand, this year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the entry into force of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). How we approach the NPT Review Conference this year will inevitably attract international attention to the role of the Conference on Disarmament as well. This year, we have to prove that multilateral diplomacy can move forward by producing tangible and relevant outcomes to meet the world's aspirations and preoccupations.

Finally, I am, personally and professionally, pleased to participate in this Conference and to share collective responsibility as a part of the “unified team”, as you described it, of this unique multilateral disarmament negotiation forum.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the Ambassador of Japan for his statement and for the kind words he addressed to my country. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Canada.

Ms. Norton (Canada) (*spoke in French*): I would like to commend you and your five successors on assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament in 2020. I assure you of my delegation’s full support for your endeavours. We welcome the initiative taken by the Presidents this year to work together on developing a common approach for the 2020 session. It is a seemingly simple measure, but it is an important step forward that should improve the chances of progress this year on the principal disarmament issues. Canada hopes that the Presidents of 2021, which includes us, will be able to draw on this positive precedent to improve the functioning of the Conference.

The 2019 session has shown that delegations continue to struggle with what it is possible to achieve in this forum. Proposals for a programme of work and even proposals to establish subsidiary bodies have failed to secure consensus. Of course, this deadlock is not unique to 2019, as the problem has persisted for more than 20 years. This is regrettable, since Canada still believes that negotiations in this Conference on a treaty banning the production of fissile material are an appropriate and well-developed measure that enjoys broad support from the members of the Conference and the world.

As it may once again be impossible to begin negotiations on any agenda item this year, Canada is in favour of having an organized discussion in the Conference regarding all the items on the agenda, which would start during the third week at the latest and last for most of the 2020 session. This organized discussion would leave time at the end of the session to decide whether certain items on the agenda would be worth considering in more detail in 2021. The Presidents for the 2021 session could then meet to propose ways of accomplishing this task.

To help delegations prepare for the discussions this year, we suggest adopting a schedule under your presidency indicating when the agenda items will be considered and the dates of each discussion. If there is a consensus for beginning negotiations on any agenda item, then naturally we will prioritize these negotiations over the general discussions. Presumably, we will find out over the coming weeks whether there is a consensus to begin negotiations.

(*spoke in English*)

Mr. President, between the end of last year’s session and today, Canada has reflected on the dilemma of the Conference’s inability to proceed to negotiations. To that end, and recognizing that other delegations have made similar proposals in the past, we wonder if Conference members could agree on expanding our shared concept of what might constitute “success in the Conference”. That is, while negotiation of legally binding mechanisms should remain our goal, we believe that the Conference could contribute to international peace and security by achieving consensus on other measures, such as norms or codes of conduct, related to specific agenda items.

Similarly, we note that Conference members have focused in the past on achieving comprehensive agreements, such as the Chemical Weapons Convention or the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Given the deadlock in the Conference, we wonder if we could all agree to take more modest but immediate steps on some of the agenda items, which could help to build the foundation for more comprehensive agreements down the road. For instance, we are currently at an impasse regarding a treaty preventing an arms race in outer space. However, we believe that there is scope for embarking on discussions on specific measures, such as negotiating a potential end to anti-satellite weapon tests causing space debris. While this would be a more limited achievement, such an agreement would nonetheless benefit all States and could, in the longer term, facilitate other advances related to the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

Mr. President, Canada puts forward these ideas as food for thought. We are happy to pursue them with other interested delegations, or to consider proposals from other delegations or this year's Presidents. We hope that we can come to consensus on measures which will give a renewed purpose and energy to the Conference.

Finally, Mr. President, Canada remains an advocate for greater diversity and inclusion in the field of disarmament. This includes more balanced participation of men and women in the Conference, including in the choice of speakers and panellists. In this vein, we were pleased to learn that the International Gender Champions Disarmament Impact Group had provided all six Presidents with an updated version of the gender and disarmament resource pack. It is important that all persons have a voice in the Conference, and we must use all the tools available to us in order to help move us forward to a more peaceful and secure world.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the Ambassador of Canada for her statement and for the kind words she addressed to the presidency. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Chile.

Mr. Tressler Zamorano (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, I would like to begin by congratulating you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and to wish you every success in the difficult task that has been entrusted to you. It is heartening that Algeria should assume the first presidency of this session, as it was the country that presided over the Conference the last time a programme of work was agreed upon in the now-distant year of 2009. As this is my first statement as Permanent Representative of Chile to the Conference, please allow me to share some thoughts regarding the tasks and challenges currently facing this body.

First of all, we recognize the mandate of the Conference on Disarmament as the foremost negotiating forum for agreements on multilateral disarmament and its historical importance as reflected in the principal outcomes of its work, including the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, also known by its abbreviation, NPT, and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. However, it is precisely because we recognize the importance of this body that we cannot hide our frustration over the ongoing deadlock in our work. In practice, this forum has become a talking shop and its main task, namely the negotiation of international legal instruments, has yet to be undertaken.

We cannot deny the facts: we are not carrying out our mandate. This is why we cannot fall into a conformist mindset. We must continue to support efforts to improve the effectiveness of our work and, above all, action to establish the long-awaited programme of work. To make this possible, all members need to demonstrate generosity. This means that everyone, without setting aside our national interests, must give ground; negotiations are about none other than finding common ground, where no one is completely satisfied or completely unsatisfied. It is of vital importance that we are able to do this to achieve a higher common purpose: the peace and security that we all need for the progress and well-being of our citizens. If we are unable to overcome our obstacles, we will be incapable of adequately addressing the pressing challenges that we have ahead of us.

We remain deeply concerned about the situation concerning the core agenda items. With regard to nuclear disarmament in particular, given the stalemate in this forum, we have had to take part in a special process outside of this body to negotiate a legally binding international instrument banning nuclear weapons. This reflects the belief held by the vast majority of States and citizens of the international community that there cannot be lasting and stable peace while some countries insist on entrusting their security to a system based on the threat of using the most dangerous weapons of mass destruction ever created.

Although we welcome proposals to combat the proliferation of nuclear weapons, it is our view that, in order for these initiatives to be successful, they should be accompanied by concrete steps towards the total elimination of such weapons. Chile shares the view of Pope Francis on this matter, and condemns not only the use but also the possession of nuclear weapons. Some months ago in Nagasaki, the Pope said, and I quote: "Convinced as I am that a world without nuclear weapons is possible and necessary, I ask political leaders not to forget that these weapons cannot protect us from current threats to national and international security. We need to ponder the catastrophic impact of their deployment,

especially from a humanitarian and environmental standpoint, and reject heightening a climate of fear, mistrust and hostility fomented by nuclear doctrines.” Chile shares this view because it is deeply concerned by the catastrophic humanitarian impact of any use of nuclear weapons, and because it believes that States that possess nuclear capacity must move away from their nuclear deterrent-based doctrines and towards other security strategies that are more sustainable and pose less of a risk to people and the environment.

This year we are faced with a special challenge: as we mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Review Conference presents an opportunity to reflect on and evaluate its achievements and its failures. Without a doubt, while we should recognize its importance as the essential backbone of the international legal system for nuclear non-proliferation and of the international security regime, we have not made sufficient progress in the implementation of article VI on disarmament.

Furthermore, other serious concerns remain, such as the reluctance of some States to adhere to the Treaty and the persistent challenges of regulating it. Another area of concern for us is the pressing need to reach an agreement to ensure that no nuclear-weapon States threaten to use their weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States. Chile considers that such negative security assurances are a fundamental step towards reducing the threat posed by nuclear weapons with a view to their total elimination.

We are also concerned that the major nuclear Powers have kept their operational systems on high alert, which considerably increases the risk that nuclear arms will be used and that an irreversible nuclear confrontation will take place with catastrophic consequences for humanity and our planet. For that reason, together with the delegations of other like-minded countries, we will continue to push for the downgrading of alert levels.

I would also like to take this opportunity to reiterate our concern regarding the risk of a possible arms race in outer space. That is why we have expressed our support for the negotiation of a treaty banning the placement of weapons in space. Despite the fact that the Group of Governmental Experts on the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space, in which Chile has also participated, was unable to reach a consensus, we will continue in our attempts to facilitate diplomatic discussions on a topic of central importance to the future of global security. As we have mentioned on other occasions, Chile is of the view that our efforts in this Conference should not take place in a vacuum, but should be understood within the context of an international diplomatic mission that favours multilateral processes and the strengthening of international legal frameworks as the best way to tackle international security challenges.

In that regard, we value and share the priorities identified by the Secretary-General in the Agenda for Disarmament in 2018. We share this comprehensive approach that considers security, disarmament and sustainable development together, by promoting concrete actions that are essential for the achievement of the commitments made under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. For Chile, this road map is more relevant than ever.

I would like to conclude by offering some words of what we might call cautious pragmatic optimism. In realistic terms, the disarmament machinery has faced formidable challenges in recent years that have led to the dismantling or stagnation of a large proportion of the web of international agreements and treaties on which it is based. It has been said, quite rightly, that this is merely a reflection of international insecurity. Nonetheless, the fact that we are meeting here today, starting a new session, is an indication that there is still a desire not to let the situation overcome us and that we still have faith in the effectiveness of international dialogue as a dispute settlement mechanism.

We know that the Presidents this year, mindful of the extent of the challenges, have worked together to build bridges between themselves, not only in chronological terms, but also between regional groups and shared objectives. We appreciate this special effort and we sincerely hope that it achieves the desired outcome. Accordingly, we call on all members of this central body of multilateral disarmament diplomacy and international security to demonstrate that we have the political will to forge ahead with our urgent, common disarmament work. We hope that under the balanced and dedicated leadership of Algeria and the presidencies to follow, we will be able to find our way forward once again.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the Ambassador of Chile for his statement and for the kind words he addressed to the presidency. I give the floor to the representative of Croatia.

Ms. Kemppainen (Croatia): Mr. President, I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The candidate countries the Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania align themselves with this statement.

We congratulate Algeria on assuming the first presidency of the 2020 session of the Conference on Disarmament and wish you and the five other countries that will occupy the presidency this session – Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bangladesh and Belarus – every success in your endeavours. You have set an example for the incoming presidencies on how to cooperate for the common good, and we very much hope that your early and well-coordinated preparations will bring more consistency, continuity and predictability to our work.

We also wish to thank the United Nations Secretary-General, the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs and the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament for their support for the work of the Conference.

Mr. President, the European Union has one central aim for this year's Conference session: to reinvigorate substantive work towards concrete negotiations, which have not been possible in this forum for much too long.

The Conference remains the world's single multilateral disarmament negotiating body, and its continued relevance is of utmost importance for the European Union. The Conference should fulfil its crucial function to negotiate multilateral disarmament treaties and it could also elaborate other instruments and norms, such as guidelines and codes of conduct. Strong political will, increased trust and flexibility are urgently required from all Conference members if we are to break the impasse and put the Conference back on track.

We appreciate that in recent months, many delegations have underlined their commitment to putting the Conference on Disarmament back on track. We count on delegations to turn their words into deeds and demonstrate flexibility as we all embark on a new year in the Conference.

We are confident that, despite the known challenges, we must advance technical, substantive work and broaden areas of agreement so that we are better prepared to start negotiations at an early date. As a first step, we should take a fresh look at the organization of our work with due respect for the rules of procedure. The concept of a balanced and comprehensive programme of work should not act as a barrier to beginning substantive work on core items on the Conference agenda. As highlighted by the Netherlands in its working paper during the 2019 session, we cannot afford to have protracted procedural debates on the organization of work at the beginning of each session, but should rather opt for a more pragmatic approach to scheduling our activities, similar to the more distant past.

While the European Union and its member States are ready to launch substantive work on all core items, we reiterate that our long-standing priority in the Conference is to immediately commence negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty and we support starting such negotiations on the basis of document CD/1299 and the mandate contained therein. We recall that, in respect of such a treaty, substantial progress has already been made on possible definitions, the scope, verification and legal and institutional arrangements, thanks to the efforts of the Group of Governmental Experts and the high-level fissile material cut-off treaty expert preparatory group. We encourage the six Presidents of this year's session and all Conference members to devote attention to these issues in 2020.

In the meantime, we call on all States possessing nuclear weapons that have not yet done so to declare and uphold an immediate moratorium on their production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. We welcome the action by the two European nuclear-weapon States, which have declared relevant moratoriums and dismantled or converted such facilities, and call on others to follow suit.

We also call on all States that have not yet done so, in particular the remaining annex 2 States, to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty without further delay. Pending the entry into force of the Treaty, the European Union calls on all States to uphold their moratorium on nuclear-weapon test explosions or any other nuclear explosions, and to refrain from any action that would defeat the object and purpose of the Treaty.

Mr. President, the European Union continues to actively support enlargement of the Conference on Disarmament, which currently has only 65 members. Since the last expansion in 2002, 27 countries, including 12 European Union member States, have been waiting to become Conference members, and the number of observer States is growing each year, reaching a new long-term high in 2019. The European Union deeply regrets and is very concerned that this morning consensus was prevented on the request for observer status made by Cyprus, a European Union State, contrary to the usual practice, and we strongly urge the Conference member concerned to reconsider its position in this regard. We would like to propose that a special coordinator be appointed to lead substantive consultations and lay out possible scenarios for the consideration of Conference members on the long overdue expansion of membership.

Promoting gender equality is an important horizontal priority for the European Union. We will therefore continue to pay attention to the active and equal participation of women and men in all decision-making and action, including in various disarmament forums. We should also engage youth and explore further opportunities to discuss with civil society, academia, industry and research institutions within the Conference on Disarmament.

Mr. President, promoting effective multilateralism and rules-based global governance is the cornerstone of the European Union's Common Foreign and Security Policy. The European Union will continue to do its utmost to protect the integrity of the rules-based international system, which is key to our collective security.

In 2020, the European Union will focus particularly on promoting a successful outcome of the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). On its fiftieth anniversary, we must celebrate and reinforce the Treaty as a key multilateral instrument for international peace, security and stability, promote its universalization and enhance its implementation. The European Union strongly supports all three pillars of the Treaty and will continue to promote comprehensive, balanced and full implementation of the 2010 NPT Review Conference action plan. We stress the need to implement all obligations and commitments under the Treaty, including the need for concrete progress towards the full implementation of article VI. We recall that all States parties have committed to pursuing policies that are fully compatible with the Treaty and the objective of achieving a world without nuclear weapons.

The European Union is contributing actively to the Treaty review process and provides support to the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs and the Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Review Conference for the organization of regional and thematic seminars, which should help to build common ground on the way to the Review Conference. A thematic seminar on nuclear disarmament funded by the European Union will take place in Geneva from 29 to 30 January 2020.

Bearing in mind the increasingly harsh and complex security environment, we stress the need to preserve and further advance general arms control and disarmament processes and call for further progress on all aspects of disarmament to enhance global security. We attach the highest importance to the New START and would welcome early and active dialogue on its future in the years after 2021 and on other arms control arrangements. We are deeply concerned over the continued international and regional tensions and the deterioration of the security environment, which could affect the international disarmament and non-proliferation architecture and spark a dangerous spiral into an arms race, conflict and violence. We welcome and encourage further initiatives and processes at the international and regional levels to restore dialogue and trust and promote transparency and confidence-building measures, such as risk reduction, including strategic risk-reduction measures.

The European Union remains deeply committed to verifiable treaty-based nuclear arms control and disarmament. We call on all parties to avoid steps that could erode the existing international instruments and to faithfully comply with their obligations.

The European Union is grateful to the United Nations Secretary-General and the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs for their continued engagement on disarmament and non-proliferation issues and their interest in the Conference on Disarmament. Ahead of this seventy-fifth anniversary year of the United Nations, Mr. President, the European Union has become the biggest supporter of the United Nations Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament, lending its support to a total of 10 actions. These actions are:

- Action 4: Bring the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty into force
- Action 7: Conclude a treaty banning fissile materials for nuclear weapons
- Action 8: Develop nuclear disarmament verification
- Action 9: Restore respect for the global norm against chemical weapons
- Action 10: Be ready to investigate alleged use of biological weapons
- Action 22: Secure excessive and poorly maintained stockpiles
- Action 34: Ensure the financial stability of treaty support mechanisms
- Action 35: Increase engagement with regional organizations
- Actions 36–37: Ensure full and equal participation of women in decision-making processes

Furthermore, the European Union continues to provide substantive funding to the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research on a process of confidence-building leading to the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems in the Middle East.

With regard to the situation in the Middle East, Mr. President, the European Union has called for urgent de-escalation and maximum restraint to maintain regional stability and global security. We stress our continued support for the preservation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, a key element of the global nuclear non-proliferation architecture, endorsed unanimously by the Security Council through resolution 2231 (2015). We regret the withdrawal of the United States from the Plan. And we are deeply concerned at Iran's latest announcements, in particular those of 5 January 2020, and Iran's previous steps in reduction of its nuclear commitments, which could have serious consequences, and we call on Iran to return to full compliance with the Plan without delay.

The European Union will continue to address all proliferation crises in a resolute way. The repeated ballistic missile launches by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, in violation of multiple Security Council resolutions, continue to undermine international work for building trust and establishing lasting peace and security on the Korean Peninsula, free of nuclear weapons. We call on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to return to meaningful negotiations and in the meantime stick to a moratorium on nuclear tests and ballistic missile launches, refrain from further provocations and take concrete and credible steps towards building trust and confidence and abandoning all its nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programmes in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner, as required by the Security Council. Until the Democratic People's Republic of Korea takes concrete actions, we will continue to strictly enforce existing sanctions. We urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty without delay and to return to compliance with its obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Croatia for her statement and for the kind words she addressed to the presidency. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of the Netherlands.

Mr. Gabriëlse (Netherlands): Mr. President, allow me to start by congratulating you on the assumption of the presidency and to assure you of the full support of my delegation.

My delegation is encouraged by your active engagement in the run-up to this year's session, as well as by the strong will among the six Presidents of the 2020 session to cooperate with each other and to ensure continuity throughout the year.

Let me also welcome the Director General of the Algerian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Conference on Disarmament and the address he delivered on behalf of the Minister for Foreign Affairs. Let me, too, use this opportunity to welcome and congratulate my new colleagues on the assumption of their role as Permanent Representatives to the Conference on Disarmament. The Netherlands delegation looks forward to working with all of you in this important forum.

In addition to the statement just delivered by Croatia on behalf of the European Union, I would like to deliver the following remarks in my national capacity.

Mr. President, this year's session takes place in an important year for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. The upcoming Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons is an important milestone, but for other disarmament topics – such as cluster munitions, cybersecurity and the completion of the Open-ended Working Group process – 2020 is also an important year.

At the same time, the world geopolitical situation remains tense, and effective multilateralism is under pressure. In the past few months, we have witnessed repeated missile tests by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which are in violation of Security Council resolutions and pose a serious threat to international security. The Netherlands is convinced that regional stability and lasting peace on the Korean Peninsula can only be reached through peaceful means.

In addition, increasing tensions and escalatory steps in the Middle East, in particular with regard to the nuclear deal with Iran, require action. The Netherlands supports France, Germany and the United Kingdom in triggering the dispute resolution mechanism of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action in order to resolve the impasse through constructive diplomatic dialogue. The Netherlands urges Iran to return to full compliance with the provisions of the nuclear agreement.

As noted by Netherlands Foreign Minister Stef Blok in Berlin last March, to ensure strategic stability in a multipolar world, we must ensure that existing instruments are retained, while we continue to work on new instruments in the field of arms control and disarmament. For the Netherlands, it is clear that the Conference on Disarmament can and must play its role by moving forward the development of new disarmament measures, in line with its mandate.

Such disarmament measures can take the form of norms, principles, guidelines, codes of conduct or legally binding instruments. For the Netherlands, the negotiation and conclusion of a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other explosive devices remains the key priority.

Disarmament, including the negotiation of new disarmament measures, is like running a marathon. Despite the headwinds we face, it is important for us to keep running, heading in the right direction and ensuring that no accidents happen along the way. This requires a pragmatic approach that focuses on the substance of our agenda. In 2018, this approach bore fruit. We had constructive substantive discussions in the subsidiary bodies, leading to the adoption of substantive consensus reports.

To continue heading in the right direction, we need to continue our work on the substance of our agenda. We are flexible on the format, but I will take this opportunity to share some thoughts on the programme of work.

Mr. President, the Netherlands continues to argue for a pragmatic approach to the programme of work in which the programme of work serves merely as a planning tool for the plenary meetings of the session ahead, thereby delinking it from the establishment of subsidiary bodies and their respective mandates, including negotiating mandates. The establishment of subsidiary bodies can be done through separate decisions once general agreement is reached on their respective mandates. As pointed out by our working paper

called “Back to basics – the programme of work” and contained in document CD/2165, this approach was successful in the first 15 years of this body and has a number of benefits.

First, the plenary meetings of the Conference will be focused on the substance of the agenda of the Conference, thereby contributing to reaching agreement on a way forward in the Conference for a number of agenda items, including through subsidiary bodies.

Second, by providing a clear timetable, the programme of work will give all delegations sufficient time for their preparations – including the submission of working papers or other proposals – and allow the participation of experts from capitals, thereby deepening the discussions. Third, by separating the programme of work from the establishment of subsidiary bodies and their mandates, discussions on the substance of the agenda can continue in the absence of consensus on those specific mandates.

I wish to underline here that this approach is fully in line with the existing rules of procedure and the past practice of the Conference. Taking this approach would enable us to return to substantive work in a pragmatic way with a view to ensuring that the Conference fulfils its mandate as the single multilateral negotiating forum for disarmament.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the Ambassador of the Netherlands for his statement and for his kind words about my country. Before giving the floor to the representative of Australia, I would like to express solidarity with Australia on behalf of the Algerian people and Government in the wake of the recent forest fires affecting the country. You have the floor.

Ms. Wood (Australia): Mr. President, colleagues, Australia is delighted to see Algeria assuming the first presidency of the Conference on Disarmament in 2020 – as part of a cohesive, collaborative presidential team across 2020.

But before I say a few words about this, I would like to thank colleagues for the heartfelt messages we have received over the holiday period and today about the bush fires in Australia. We are very grateful for the outpouring of support for Australia and the Australian people.

Mr. President, my delegation welcomes the statement you delivered on behalf of this year’s six Presidents. It sends a clear signal from across our team about our expectations as facilitators of the work of this important body. It is clear about how we intend to conduct our work – transparently, inclusively, respectfully.

We intend to do a lot of listening – and we want all Conference members to feel comfortable approaching us on any matter. We will try to understand all perspectives.

Mr. President, our priority is to agree a framework for our work as early as possible in the 2020 session. It is clear that there is an appetite for the Conference to do substantive work this year, and we will work creatively to facilitate this.

It will be enormously helpful to us if delegations come to the table with a spirit of possibility. And I was very encouraged to hear our new Chilean colleague talk about all members showing generosity. So, please have an open mind and look for what you can do, even if this is modest, and resist looking for reasons why not. Indeed, our new Japanese colleague referred to the notion of collective responsibility for the work of the Conference. Of course, we realize that there are serious security issues at play. The international security environment is no more favourable than it was in 2019.

But that is why it is all the more important that we use the multilateral tools we have effectively to build trust, to find areas of agreement, to examine critically how we work and to engage in dialogue on how we can improve the international security environment and use the Conference for its intended purpose of multilateral negotiations on disarmament and other relevant international security issues.

Mr. President, Australia welcomes the updated gender and disarmament resource pack distributed to us last week. In 2020, we mark 20 years since the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on the women and peace and security agenda. We can do more to integrate gender perspectives in the work of the Conference and to foster a more inclusive institutional culture. I encourage delegations to consider some of the ideas in part three of the resource pack. There is room to improve the evidence base about participation

in the Conference through the collection of data not only on the composition of delegations but also on who speaks in the Conference.

We can also do more to mentor young colleagues – of all genders – and provide speaking and negotiation opportunities. We will benefit from fresh perspectives about how we do our work, and our colleagues will be energized by the opportunity.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Australia for her statement and for the kind words she addressed to the presidency. I give the floor to the representative of Belarus.

Mr. Pytalev (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen, the delegation of Belarus is pleased to congratulate the distinguished Ambassador of Algeria on his election as President and assures him of its full support.

As one of the six countries concerned, we align ourselves with the statement made on behalf of all the presidencies in 2020. We share the approaches outlined in the joint statement. We intend to make every possible effort to create an atmosphere of constructive dialogue aimed at restoring the viability and revitalizing the work of the unique multilateral disarmament machinery that this Conference represents.

Distinguished colleagues, it is unfortunate to note that we are still witnessing the deterioration of the international security system and its key components. Belarus is concerned about the de facto dismantling of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF Treaty), which significantly increases the risks and threats associated with the re-emergence of an entire class of delivery systems previously prohibited by international law. It is also concerned about the negative signals surrounding the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty and the Treaty on Open Skies. There is also cause for concern over the outcome of the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. The involvement of States in the militarization of space is another dangerous trend. New weapons systems and delivery systems are being created, and the effect that scientific and technological progress is having on the future development of new types of weapons of mass destruction must be assessed.

All these trends highlight the need to begin comprehensive and inclusive negotiations to resolve disagreements over a broad range of international security issues.

Belarus has also been affected by the problem that we have raised before, namely the erosion of the system for prohibiting certain categories of weapons and delivery vehicles that undermine security in Europe and the world. In that connection, my delegation wishes to draw attention to the initiative to draft and adopt a declaration on the non-deployment of intermediate- and short-range missiles in Europe. Preparing such a document could help fill the legal vacuum left after the collapse of the INF Treaty, restore trust and enhance security in Europe and the world at large. Such endeavours could be one of the first steps towards a universal ban on these types of missiles. We are ready to present our initiative in more detail in the course of the session of the Conference and call on responsible members of the international community to support it.

The development of science and technology is having an increasing impact on the non-proliferation and arms control regime with each passing year. There is a growing risk that new weapons of mass destruction will be obtained. The resolutions sponsored by Belarus in the United Nations General Assembly on the prohibition of the development and production of new types of weapons of mass destruction and new systems of such weapons are thus as relevant as ever before. We intend to introduce the relevant draft resolution to the First Committee during the seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly, and we count on broad support for our draft.

We wish to inform the Conference that, in 2020, Belarus will be presiding over the Fourteenth Conference of the High Contracting Parties to Protocol V to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, on explosive weapons of war. One of the responsibilities of the President is the universalization of this international instrument. We take this opportunity to call on all Member States that are not parties to Protocol V to consider acceding to this important instrument, which ensures the protection of civilians, the security of future generations and sustainable development.

Efforts to resume the substantive work of the Conference are particularly important in the face of the international security crisis. The Conference has before it initiatives that can make an important contribution to reducing tensions, slowing the pace of the arms race and preventing the proliferation of sensitive materials and technology to non-State actors.

We regret that, last year, the Conference was unable to take a step forward. We were unable to adopt a programme of work and establish subsidiary bodies. However, the need to stop the Conference from deteriorating and to get back to substantive work is clear. For that reason, the delegation of Belarus would like to express the hope that Conference members will enter into constructive dialogue during the 2020 session.

We are also convinced that moving forward will be easier with a simple and functional procedural framework. A negotiating mandate does not come into being on its own. It is the result of painstaking work on the purpose, scope and other essential requirements of a future international legal system for regulation.

In this regard, we share the desire of many States to make the programme of work as technical as possible, which will allow it to be adopted at the very beginning of the regular session; this will also help members to draw more extensively on the experience with the organization of work of the Conference in the 1980s and 1990s.

Allow me in conclusion, Mr. President, to reassure you that the delegation of Belarus stands ready to engage constructively with both the Presidents and the members throughout the session to ensure that the work of the Conference in 2020 is substantive.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Belarus for his statement and for the kind words he addressed to the presidency. I give the floor to the Ambassador of Argentina.

Mr. Foradori (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Mr. President. Since this is the first time that my delegation has taken the floor, allow me to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency and on steering our work and initiating this new process in the Conference on Disarmament. We are convinced that your spirit of cooperation will make for an excellent presidency, which we hope will lay the foundations for restarting a substantive and continuous dialogue. You can count on the full support of my country to this end.

Before I continue, I, too, would like to extend my country's support and solidarity to the Government of Australia and to the victims of the forest fires and the devastation they have caused.

Mr. President, the last time we shared the presidency of this forum was in 2009, when the Conference on Disarmament was experiencing a long stalemate. Nonetheless, the coordinated efforts of that presidency and the constructive spirit of the members of the Conference on Disarmament allowed for the achievement of concrete objectives. A programme of work was adopted but, while this was a major step, we were unable to press ahead with its implementation.

More than a decade has passed since then and we seem to be back to square one. We are at an impasse. Despite this, we believe that the Conference on Disarmament can return to work. It is worth remembering that Viet Nam was the first country to hold the presidency of the 2009 session, when the Conference on Disarmament managed to take its first step towards the adoption of a programme of work after 10 years of paralysis. It was the presidency of Viet Nam last year that facilitated a debate on principles which, together with the document submitted by the Netherlands, enabled a highly enriching dialogue in the Conference on Disarmament.

We do not believe that the similarities between the situation now and in 2009 are the result of mere coincidence. Our view is that the similarity relates to the idea that, every so often (i.e. every 10 years), the Conference on Disarmament goes through a process of reflection and maturation. This could be interpreted as a need for revitalization through the adoption of a new approach that will allow us to improve. In short, we want this Conference on Disarmament to undergo a new process of political sterilization for the good of everyone.

The discussion started during the presidency of Viet Nam last year leads us to think that there would be a collective interest in taking a new direction and attempting to capitalize on the substantive and technical work done to date. We must maintain a spirit of cooperation to make this shared goal a reality. In this regard, we align ourselves with the statement of Australia. The six countries that will hold the presidency this year are taking a cooperative and collaborative approach to our endeavours. In doing so, we believe that we can take that first step once again and face up to the new challenge of building on the work of the Conference on Disarmament and creating favourable conditions for the future.

The Ambassador of Canada has raised the issue of gender. We strongly support her statement and we would like to leave you with this thought: until now, the vast majority of those who have built, deployed and launched nuclear weapons were men. It is now time to let women provide the much-needed dose of humanity that the world is calling for at this pivotal moment.

To conclude, without ingenuousness or naivety, but with realism and pragmatism; without vanity or arrogance, but with modesty and humility, we invite you all to shift the paradigm, to change the violent political lexicon of this Conference and to switch the stern and fearless masks for more human faces. We should bear in mind that these meetings cannot continue while we ignore the universal call to ensure peace in this small 700 m² room, which seems to be surrounded by realities.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the Ambassador of Argentina for his statement and for the kind words he addressed to the presidency. I give the floor to the Ambassador of Germany.

Mr. Beerwerth (Germany): Thank you, Mr. President. Let me, at the outset, congratulate you on the assumption of your duties as President and assure you of my delegation's full and constructive and wholehearted support for your difficult work. I would also like to welcome all new colleagues who have arrived in Geneva and taken up their duties in this venerable chamber since the end of the 2019 session.

Much has been said already by the European Union, to whose statement we fully subscribe. Let me reiterate a few of those points and add some short messages that are particularly important to us.

As in previous years, we enter this year's session of the Conference on Disarmament with mixed feelings. There is and must be hope that the Conference returns to its originally mandated task – which is to negotiate disarmament and arms control instruments – or at least that it returns to meaningful and focused deliberations. At the same time, we are painfully aware of the circumstances which have prevented the Conference from fulfilling these aspirations in the past.

But difficult circumstances cannot be an excuse for complacency. Much is at stake this year, not only in Geneva but also in other international forums, and we have to shoulder our responsibility in a diligent and forward-looking manner. We simply cannot afford to waste another year, as the world is expecting us to act decisively, as others have said before me. Therefore, we highly welcome the coordination and cooperation among the year's six Presidents and are optimistic that this cooperation will bear fruit.

The detailed and focused discussions of 2017–2018 have given some much-needed impetus to the core issues of the Conference. With a little bit of goodwill, the same outcome should be achievable in 2020 as well, if not more. We may want to depart from previous approaches which have deadlocked this body and structure our work in a manner that is consistent with the objectives of the Conference.

Germany stands ready to assist and facilitate all efforts to break the stalemate in this body and to bring it back to substantive work. All presidencies this year can count on our support.

By creating positive momentum in this body, we have the chance to also create momentum for effective multilateralism, which is so urgently needed elsewhere as well. I just want to refer to the landmark 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on

the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and a number of regional and other proliferation crises that require our collective engagement.

Germany remains engaged to make this planet a better and safer place and confront the challenges we face together. The Berlin conference series “Capturing technology – rethinking arms control”, our initiative to engage with the Security Council in support of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and our support for and engagement with the Stockholm Initiative on Nuclear Disarmament within the Treaty framework all aim at strengthening multilateralism and preserving and renewing the arms control fabric that has served our security well for decades.

In this context, I would also like to highlight two initiatives undertaken together with our French partners that underpin the need for both nuclear- and non-nuclear-weapon States to work jointly on our most pressing issues. In the area of nuclear disarmament verification, we jointly organized and carried out the “NuDiVe” nuclear disarmament verification exercise in September 2019. The dismantling of a nuclear warhead was successfully verified using a surrogate radioactive material source while taking into account the protection of proliferation-sensitive information and national security concerns. With regard to lethal autonomous weapons systems, we have worked jointly with our French colleagues to advance the work of the Group of Governmental Experts within the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons by tabling a number of concrete proposals for consideration, which have facilitated consensus-building around the 11 guiding principles adopted at the Meeting of High Contracting Parties to the Convention in November 2019. I would like to add that we are planning to present the results of the verification exercise here in Geneva in the coming months.

Progress, then, is possible, if the political will is there. Mr. President, in closing, let me say that mutual understanding and collective action should guide us this year. Time is precious. Let us get to work and be successful.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the Ambassador of Germany for his statement and for the kind words he addressed to the presidency. I give the floor to the Ambassador of India.

Mr. Sharma (India): Mr. President, let me begin by wishing a happy new year to all colleagues. My delegation would like to congratulate you on the assumption of the first presidency of the Conference on Disarmament for this year, especially as you are from a country with which India enjoys warm bilateral relations. My delegation assures you of its full cooperation and support in steering our deliberations to a successful outcome.

I would like to welcome our new colleagues to the Conference: Ambassador Norton of Canada, Ambassador Tressler Zamorano of Chile, Ambassador Ogasawara of Japan, Ambassador Muhamad of Malaysia, Ambassador Hashmi of Pakistan, Ambassador Sánchez de Lerín García-Ovies of Spain, Ambassador Baumann of Switzerland, as well as you, Mr. President.

India aligns itself with the statement delivered by the Group of 21. Even though the Conference could not conduct substantive work last year due to a number of factors, the fact that the annual report of the Conference was adopted by the General Assembly by consensus, gives us hope and optimism that when there is will, it is possible to overcome differences and divergences. At a time when the international security situation is going through a turbulent phase, it is all the more important for the Conference to uphold its vocation of negotiating legally binding instruments with a view to strengthening international peace and security and work strictly in accordance with the mandate recognized by the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament in 1978. Not doing so will only raise questions about the effectiveness and efficacy of this body.

It is incumbent upon the President to present a programme of work to the Conference for consideration and adoption, in accordance with the Conference’s rules of procedure. Such a programme of work should be established at the beginning of the annual session. In this context, we acknowledge and appreciate your efforts in consulting member States on a draft programme of work for the 2020 session. As you also noted, Mr. President,

the last time that the Conference on Disarmament adopted a programme of work by consensus was under the Algerian presidency in 2009 and, therefore, it is natural to have high expectations from you. We have been inspired by the remarks of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Algeria, as well as your statement and the declaration made on behalf of the six Presidents of this year's session, which reinforce our belief in your positive approach to achieving consensus on a programme of work. India stands ready to support your endeavour as well as those by the subsequent presidencies during the year.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the Ambassador of India for his statement and for the kind words he addressed to the presidency. I now give the floor to the representative of Zimbabwe.

Mr. Chishiri (Zimbabwe): Thank you, Mr. President. Dear colleagues, it is a singular honour for me to read the following statement on behalf of Ambassador Taonga Mushayavanhu, the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Zimbabwe, who cannot be here today because of official engagements outside Geneva.

Here follows the statement:

First, my delegation wishes to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament, and we are confident that your term as President of the Conference will be crowned with much success.

Mr. President, as the immediate past President of the Conference, I wish to say that it was a great honour for Zimbabwe to superintend the negotiations that led to the early agreement on the 2019 annual report, as well as to the subsequent consensual resolution at the seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly.

The early agreement on an annual report, and the consensual General Assembly resolution, were truly momentous achievements not because of any stroke of genius or wave of a magic wand by the President but because of the collective goodwill and effort from every member of this Conference. We could not have achieved much without the cooperative spirit that pervaded this chamber towards the end of the 2019 session. For that, we want to express our sincere appreciation for the support, cooperation and goodwill from all members, as we shouldered the important responsibilities of our presidency, and indeed delivered what was expected of us, given the challenging circumstances that we faced in the Conference.

I am also happy to report that, after our tenure in the presidency, we remained engaged with other members, in particular with you, Mr. President, during the intersessional period on how to advance the work of the Conference. In that regard, we are very delighted, and indeed expectant, about the good signs on the horizon, as we recall that it was under the presidency of Algeria in May 2009 that the last programme of work was agreed in the Conference on Disarmament.

Zimbabwe therefore has very high hopes that the return of Algeria, alongside the other five presidencies for the 2020 session, could be the harbinger of positive things to come. Not only does history repeat itself but we can also build on the positive spirit inherited from 2019 and resume substantive work.

Mr. President, I wish to conclude my remarks by observing that it is time to rise and respond positively to the expectations of humanity for a nuclear-weapon-free world, a world that is secure and free from weapons of mass destruction. We hope that the 2020 session will be remembered in history for the substantive contribution that this chamber will make to global security, non-proliferation and arms control.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Zimbabwe for his statement and for the kind words he addressed to the presidency. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Saudi Arabia.

Mr. Alwasil (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): Mr. President, at the outset, allow me to congratulate you on assuming the responsibility of presiding the Conference during this delicate phase of the new session. I would like to emphasize the continued support of my Government for the work of the Conference and its constructive efforts to adopt a comprehensive and balanced programme of work. I would also like to express my country's

appreciation for the efforts of Ms. Tatiana Valovaya, Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva and Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament.

We look forward to the success of the 2020 session in restoring the effectiveness of the Conference and the resumption of its role, which has long been pivotal in negotiating international treaties and agreements in the field of disarmament.

Mr. President, the stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament has lasted for more than two decades. We need to carefully review the causes of this deadlock, showing goodwill and avoiding unilateral positions that undermine the chances of achieving collective security. All States need to demonstrate the necessary flexibility and political will to revive the Conference and to remedy the situation and change the status quo so that it can fulfil its responsibilities in strengthening international security and restore its traditional role as the sole multilateral negotiating forum in the field of disarmament. Despite the determined efforts made, the Conference has been unable during this long period to adopt a programme of work that allows it to play the role assigned to it. This is a dangerous situation that threatens the internationally adopted multilateral working mechanisms in the field of disarmament.

Mr. President, Saudi Arabia affirms the importance of establishing and supporting all United Nations multilateral mechanisms, including the Conference on Disarmament, as an extension of the Government's consistent policy aimed at strengthening cooperation to ban all types of weapons of mass destruction and prevent their proliferation and its contribution to efforts to make the Middle East region free from all these weapons. Saudi Arabia hopes that the international community will support this objective as a legitimate right for the peoples of the region and a major pillar to enhance peace and security at the regional and international levels. In this regard, we stress the need for all States to uphold their obligations under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to ban all weapons of mass destruction. As the international community has observed in recent times, conflicts in the Middle East have taken a dangerous turn, significantly threatening international peace and security. It is imperative that the international community take the necessary measures to defuse existing tensions, as the weapons used and the damage they cause could lead to catastrophic human, environmental and economic damage on a regional and international scale.

Mr. President, in this context, the international community looked on in silence as terrorist drone attacks targeted Saudi Arabian oil installations in Abqaiq and Khurais last September; all signs clearly pointed to the involvement of Iran in these heinous terrorist operations. In this regard, my Government condemns in the strongest terms this cowardly attack and will take all necessary measures in accordance with relevant international laws and norms. Iran has consistently acted in a way that threatens the security of the region, particularly with regard to the delivery of ballistic missiles and technologies and drone technology to terrorist groups such as Hizbullah in Lebanon and the Houthi militia in Yemen. This attack also indicated the relinquishment by Iran of its obligations under the nuclear deal by declaring the resumption of uranium enrichment, the development of centrifuges and the production of heavy water in quantities exceeding those agreed upon. This represents a clear threat to stability and security in the region. Saudi Arabia had previously warned of this after the signing of the nuclear deal. My Government has warned that claims by the Iranian regime that it will give up its nuclear ambitions lack credibility.

Mr. President, Saudi Arabia has paid great attention to the issue of acceding to the conventions and treaties that seek to maintain international peace and security, and it is fully committed to implementing all Security Council resolutions related to disarmament issues. Saudi Arabia was one of the first countries to accede to international treaties related to banning weapons of mass destruction and preventing their proliferation, agreements on the storage and handling of hazardous substances and enhancing cooperation and coordination to protect civilians from their dangers. Saudi Arabia urges all peace-loving countries to take action, accede to agreements and engage the international community to be a society free from weapons of mass destruction.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank the Ambassador of Saudi Arabia for his statement and for the kind words addressed to my country.

(spoke in French)

I now give the floor to the Ambassador of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Lee Jang-keun (Republic of Korea): Thank you, Mr. President. I would like to begin by wishing everybody here a very happy, healthy and successful new year. Korea, like other Asian countries, celebrates the lunar new year, which starts this Saturday. As you may know, on the lunar calendar, 2020 is the year of the rat, which symbolizes a time of great opportunity and success. The year of the rat is also the first year of the 12-year cycle of the traditional Chinese or Asian zodiac. As this year the presidencies of the Conference on Disarmament start again with the letter A, beginning with Algeria, it seems that we are off to a fresh start. Having said that, let me join others in congratulating you, Ambassador Belbaki, on your assumption of the first presidency of the year. I assure you of my delegation's full support for and cooperation with you in your efforts to make progress in our work. I also extend my delegation's warm welcome to the Ambassadors and colleagues who have newly joined this body.

Mr. President, as we start another year with renewed hope of progress, my delegation believes it necessary to take a practical and fresh approach in conducting our work, based on the sober assessment of our failures to deliver on our expected mandate as the single multilateral disarmament negotiation forum for more than two decades. In this sense, my delegation welcomes the joint approach to be taken by the year's six Presidents, as clearly demonstrated in the joint statement of the six Presidents delivered by the Ambassador of Algeria, the year's first President.

As Algeria played a crucial role in breaking the deadlock in the Conference back in 2009 by successfully adopting the programme of work through a joint approach taken by that year's six Presidents, I sincerely hope that 2020 will be a repeat of such a history under the able leadership of the Algerian presidency. My delegation also believes that the evaluation of the Conference's success should be based on the year-round process rather than solely on the final outcome of the session. In this sense, well-planned thematic discussions on the Conference's core issues, in conjunction with the effort to adopt the programme of work, will surely contribute to enhancing mutual understanding among members and reviving the spirit of trust and cooperation.

My delegation will actively and constructively participate in the Conference discussions and contribute to the tangible outcomes informed by the joint initiative of the year's six presidencies. In doing so, we will remain flexible and cooperative not only in terms of substance but indeed with regard to procedural and administrative issues as well.

Mr. President, our journey towards peace on the Korean Peninsula has continued, backed by unwavering support from the international community. Though it is regrettable that no further progress was made in the past year, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's moratorium on nuclear and intercontinental ballistic missile tests continues to be observed. Furthermore, the cessation of hostile acts between the two Koreas has mostly held along the border area since the signing of the inter-Korean agreement on the implementation of the historic Panmunjom Declaration in the military domain in 2018.

In order to maintain and build upon the hard-won momentum for dialogue, substantial progress in denuclearization must be made. Therefore, early resumption of negotiations between the United States and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is critical.

My Government will do its utmost to promote talks between the United States and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We are determined to develop inter-Korean relations while respecting the international sanctions regime on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, in the hope of accelerating dialogue between the United States and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. My Government will seek realistic measures to boost inter-Korean cooperation, while maintaining close communication with the international community. In this regard, I ask for your continued support as we work together to achieve complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

Mr. President, as this year we celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which has been the cornerstone of the international nuclear

disarmament and non-proliferation regime, the success of the NPT Review Conference this coming April will indeed be vital in setting the tone for the international security environment for the coming decades. It is my delegation's heartfelt hope that we, as a group in this chamber, create a constructive and enabling atmosphere in this early session of the year, so that a positive spillover effect can be generated for the upcoming NPT Review Conference.

Lastly, let us remind ourselves of those historic moments in which a breakthrough towards a harmonious resolution took place at the very peak of crisis. Thus, in the midst of a worsening international security environment, I hope for promising and cooperative steps ahead for the Conference as we enter the new year.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the Ambassador of the Republic of Korea for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the presidency. I give the floor to the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Mr. Ju Yong-chol (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): I thank you, Mr. President. At the outset, I would like to extend on behalf of my delegation warm congratulations to you upon your assumption of the first presidency of the 2020 session of the Conference on Disarmament. I wish you every success during your presidency. My delegation assures you of its full support for and cooperation with you and your team in carrying out your duties.

Mr. President, in the light of the current complex global security environment, the Conference, as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, assumes an important responsibility to address the rising challenges to international peace and security. Several attempts were made last year to make a breakthrough in advancing the work of the Conference. However, to our regret, these efforts failed to produce any tangible outcome due to contradicting views among members and the lack of political will to move forward. It is the responsibility of all Conference members to revitalize the work of the Conference, and in this respect the urgent task before us is to agree on a comprehensive and balanced programme of work. My delegation welcomes any proposal in this regard and will actively participate in the deliberations over the possible adoption of any such proposal.

Mr. President, in the past two years the Democratic People's Republic of Korea took the initiative by taking crucial measures to halt nuclear test firing of intercontinental ballistic missiles and dismantle nuclear testing grounds in order to build confidence with the United States. However, far from responding with appropriate measures, the United States threatened the Democratic People's Republic of Korea militarily by conducting dozens of large- and small-scale joint military exercises which the United States President himself promised to discontinue and shipped the latest war weapons and equipment into South Korea, while imposing more than a dozen separate sanctions on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

At the talks between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States, the United States made demands contrary to the fundamental interests of our State and ignored the year-end deadline that we set for it to come up with a new method of calculation. The behaviour of the United States also threw a wet blanket over our efforts to promote global disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. Although the United States is talking about resumption of dialogue, from the beginning it had no intention to drop its hostility to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and resolve the issues through improved relations. The real intention of the United States is to pursue its own political and diplomatic ends, while wasting time under the signboard of dialogue and negotiations and at the same time maintaining sanctions so as to gradually exhaust our strength.

As it has become clear now that the United States still aims to block the development of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and stifle its political system, we found no reason to be unilaterally bound any longer by the commitment that the other party fails to honour. The United States has applied the most brutal and inhuman sanctions against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and posed a persistent nuclear threat for over seven decades by labelling it as the enemy, part of the "axis of evil" and a target of pre-emptive nuclear strikes. If the United States persists in such hostility, the

denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula will never take place. As Kim Jong-un, Chairman of the State Affairs Commission of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, explained in his historic report to the fifth plenary meeting of the seventh Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea last year, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will never exchange its security and dignity and the safety of its future for anything else. We have already warned that if the United States misjudges our patience, tries to enforce unilateral demands upon us and persists in imposing sanctions and pressure against the country, we may be compelled to seek a new path for defending our sovereignty and supreme national interests.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea will steadily develop strategic weapons, which are essential to its national security, until the United States abandons its hostile policy and a lasting and durable peace mechanism is in place on the Korean Peninsula. The scope and depth of the build-up of this deterrent will properly be coordinated depending on the future attitude of the United States towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Mr. President, I wish to conclude my statement by strongly rejecting the politically motivated remarks regarding the Democratic People's Republic of Korea by some previous speakers, including the European Union.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the presidency. I give the floor to the Ambassador of China.

Mr. Li Song (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Mr. President, on behalf of the Chinese delegation and on my own behalf, I would like to extend to you our warmest greetings as you take up your new post in Geneva and assume the first presidency of the Conference in 2020. I would also like to take this opportunity to warmly welcome the other newly arrived colleagues who have joined the Conference's big family. The numerous member States of the Conference are full of hope for the new year and for a new beginning. The Chinese delegation will spare no effort to support you in your work and will engage with everyone in the common endeavour to set the work of the Conference back on the right track.

The year 2020 marks the seventy-fifth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations and also the fiftieth anniversary of the entry into force of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), and in April the tenth NPT Review Conference is due to take place in New York. This year thus has special meaning for multilateralism and for the international arms control and non-proliferation processes. The international political and security situation has of late been subjected to profound and complex changes. Multilateralism has been seriously impacted by unilateralism, and the international arms control and non-proliferation regime has been wantonly undermined. People are worried that international arms control and non-proliferation have entered their darkest hour since the end of the cold war, nearly 30 years ago. Where is the non-proliferation regime headed? Where is multilateral disarmament headed? Where is the Conference headed? These are huge question marks hanging over the numerous Member States of the United Nations.

Last year, notwithstanding the fact that the work of multilateral mechanisms in the framework of the United Nations was seriously affected by these countervailing trends, and the Conference on Disarmament was unable to agree on a programme of work, the General Assembly and the Conference raised their voices and insistently supported multilateralism, upheld the system of international arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation and encouraged existing international mechanisms to show new vigour. That has been the resounding response of the international community to the current situation and to today's challenges.

China maintains that the more we face this kind of critical juncture, the more we must take a stand to defend multilateralism and safeguard and strengthen the authority and effectiveness of multilateral mechanisms. It is all the more necessary at times like this for every country to strengthen dialogue and cooperation on the basis of mutual respect, equality and mutual trust; at times like this, for every country to actively participate, with no one failing to be present. The major Powers, who bear a special responsibility for international peace and security, must not only be present, but all the more so must not break agreements and withdraw from the scene, nor must they destroy the stage.

Many people now say that international arms control has entered a new era. I too see this happening. Now that we have entered new times, the first thing to do is to completely take leave of the old era, and above all to abandon the cold war mentality and no longer insist on drawing ideological lines that would pull the world back to the time of the cold war, when two blocs faced off against one another. As the multilateral arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation process enters this new era, it requires the participation of all States, without exception. In particular, the major Powers, who bear a special and important responsibility for international peace and security, must not place their own interests first and exclude themselves from the international community.

Mr. President, if last year the Conference was unable to achieve a programme of work, it is not the fault of the Conference, it is not the fault of the rules of procedure and it is not the fault of the programme of work. The numerous members of the Conference all hope that this year the work of the Conference will no longer be disrupted by extraneous political interference, that they will get back to the original intent of this institution and place the Conference sustainably back on the correct track.

China is pleased to see the communication between this year's six rotating presidencies on advancing the Conference's work, and it welcomes the fact that the six Presidents have maintained a dialogue with the last President from last year and the Presidents for next year, in order to further strengthen the continuity of the Conference's work. We look forward to working with the Presidents and the coordinators of the regional groups in a positive and constructive manner as we take on the work of the Conference. We believe the work of the Conference this year can move ahead in two parallel tracks:

First of all, we should make full use of the plenary session to hold frank, objective, in-depth and pragmatic discussions on how to view the current international security situation, how to deal with the most prominent and urgent challenges in the field of international arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation and how to recognize the impact of high tech and new technologies on, for example, the revolution taking place in the military sphere and on the international arms control and non-proliferation agenda. By pooling our ideas, speaking freely and building consensus we can find the best way forward, on the basis of the Conference's traditional agenda, a way forward that is most adapted to our era and responds to the needs of our times, for this, the sole and most authoritative multilateral disarmament negotiating body.

Secondly, following the Conference's successful practice in 2018, subsidiary bodies should be set up on the key items on the agenda to carry out substantive work and make serious preparations for the commencement of the corresponding treaty negotiations. I would like to stress here that the "comprehensive and balanced" approach should remain the fundamental principle guiding us in achieving a programme of work. Fully respecting the legitimate security concerns and reasonable demands of the member States is the true essence of the value and role of the Conference. And last year, the Conference came very close to reaching such a programme of work. We have every reason to believe that this goal will be achieved at an early date this year.

Mr. President, 40 years ago, the Chinese delegation came here for the first time to formally participate in what was then called the Committee on Disarmament. In his first speech in the Council Chamber, the representative of China said that China had come with a sincere desire to safeguard world peace and hoped that the Committee on Disarmament would follow the flow of history, reflect the aspirations of the peoples of all countries and make progress toward world peace.

In the 40 years since then, China has staunchly supported the vast membership of the international community and has consistently supported, participated in and contributed to the international arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation process, acceding to over 20 major multilateral arms control instruments. We have actively supported and participated in the Conference's work and made important contributions to the conclusion of international arms control treaties such as the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. China is now engaged in procedures domestically with a view to joining the Arms Trade Treaty, and we expect to become a full member this year. China is actively committed to strengthening the cooperation mechanism

among the five nuclear-weapon States and to urging those five countries to establish a permanent mechanism for exchange and dialogue on global strategic stability, nuclear policies and doctrine. Our country has strictly complied with all the outcome documents of the NPT Review Conferences. It has never walked away from its obligations and responsibilities as a nuclear-weapon State under the Non-Proliferation Treaty and, together with the vast majority of member States, it is actively committed to consolidating and strengthening the mechanism and promoting the Treaty so that it can continue to play an irreplaceable and important role in international peace, security and development.

Mr. President, no matter how grim the situation, no matter how many challenges we face, China will remain optimistic and confident, with a responsible and constructive attitude that will instil positive energy in international forums, in the United Nations, in the Conference and in the multilateral platforms for the Non-Proliferation Treaty and for the five nuclear-weapon States. It will make fresh efforts to take practical steps to push forward the international arms control and non-proliferation process. My delegation and I stand ready to make the necessary contribution to the work of the Conference.

We wish the Conference all the best as it begins its work. We wish you all a happy Chinese New Year and good health for all your families.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the Ambassador of China for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the presidency. It is now 1 p.m. There are nine remaining delegations on my list that wish to take the floor. I will give them the opportunity to do so at the plenary meeting that will take place at 3 p.m. this afternoon in this same room. The meeting is adjourned.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.