

Conference on Disarmament

English

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

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Friday, 21 February 2020, at 3.15 p.m.

President: Mr. Carlos Mario Foradori (Argentina)

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The President: I call to order the 1531st plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. Ladies and gentlemen, before we proceed with our order of business for today, it is my pleasure to extend a warm welcome to Her Excellency Ms. Le Thi Tuyet Mai, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative of Viet Nam to the United Nations at Geneva.

Ms. Le Thi Tuyet Mai (Viet Nam): Thank you very much, Mr. President, and a very good afternoon to all of our colleagues here.

The President: On behalf of my own Government and on behalf of the Conference on Disarmament, I would like to take this opportunity to assure you of our full cooperation and support in your new assignment.

I now give the floor to the representative of the United Kingdom for an announcement.

Mr. Liddle (United Kingdom): Thank you very much, Mr. President, and before I go any further, let me congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency and assure you of my delegation's full support as you carry out your duties over the next four weeks. Let me also take this opportunity to welcome our colleague, the Ambassador of Viet Nam, to the Conference on Disarmament.

Mr. President, I have asked for the floor in the United Kingdom's capacity as coordinator of the process led by the five nuclear-weapon States designated as such under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (P5 States) to give a report of the conference of P5 States that took place last week.

The five nuclear-weapon States met in London on 12 and 13 February 2020 for the ninth P5 Conference to discuss the preparations for the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty. They welcomed the confirmation of Gustavo Zlauvinen of Argentina as President-designate of the Review Conference and had a fruitful exchange of views with him and the other members of the bureau, Ambassador Syed Hasrin of Malaysia, Ambassador Adam Bugajski of Poland and Ambassador Marjolijn van Deelen of the Netherlands. They also had a valuable dialogue with representatives of civil society from the P5 countries and across the wider Treaty membership, in partnership with King's College London and the European Leadership Network.

During the course of the Conference, each of the P5 States reaffirmed its commitment to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in all its aspects 50 years since its entry into force and 25 years since its indefinite extension. They reiterated that the Treaty provides the essential foundation for preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons, thereby limiting the risk of nuclear confrontation, for the promotion and sharing of the peaceful uses of nuclear technology, to the benefit of humanity, and for nuclear disarmament, by helping to ease international tensions and create conditions of stability, security and trust among nations. They reiterated their commitment to continue their individual and collective efforts to uphold their obligations and to advance the goals and objectives of the Treaty in all its aspects.

In a wide-ranging discussion, the P5 States exchanged views on the current situation in the international security environment and other issues relevant to the Review Conference, including proliferation challenges in Iran and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the Middle East zone free of nuclear and all other weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems, nuclear disarmament verification and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. They also pledged their full and continued support to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and its new Director General, Rafael Mariano Grossi. They acknowledged that IAEA plays a critical role in Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty implementation, both to promote the fullest possible cooperation on the peaceful uses of nuclear technology and to apply safeguards and verify that nuclear programs are entirely peaceful.

Specifically, they reviewed progress on the five areas of work agreed at the Beijing P5 Conference in January 2019.

First, they welcomed the continued exchange of views on their respective nuclear doctrines and policies and confirmed their intention to hold a side event presenting them at the Review Conference. They agreed to continue these expert-level meetings beyond the Review Conference. They also underlined the importance of reducing nuclear risk and promoting stability and agreed that experts should continue and deepen their dialogue on strategic risk reduction up to and beyond the Review Conference.

Second, they endorsed the progress made on the second phase of the Working Group on the Glossary of Key Nuclear Terms, which is conducive to strengthening the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and enhancing mutual trust. They agreed to publish the results of the Working Group's deliberations ahead of the Review Conference.

Third, they reaffirmed their commitment to the aims and objectives of the Treaty on the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone (Bangkok Treaty) and welcomed ongoing discussions between the P5 States and the States members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations on the Protocol to the Bangkok Treaty.

Fourth, they reiterated their readiness to negotiate a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable treaty – a fissile material cut-off treaty – on the basis of consensus and with the participation of all relevant countries. In this context, they welcomed the ongoing expert-level discussions held by the P5 States on issues related to such a treaty.

Fifth, they reiterated their commitment to share with the international community the many benefits of nuclear technology and its applications for peaceful purposes and to continue their contributions to IAEA or bilateral development projects. They also announced their intention to host a joint side event focusing on peaceful uses at the Review Conference.

Finally, the P5 States reaffirmed their commitment to present their respective national implementation reports to the Review Conference based on the common reporting framework agreed in 2013.

The P5 States looked forward to continuing their dialogue and their work on these and other relevant issues up to the Review Conference and beyond and welcomed France's generous offer to host the next conference of P5 States in 2021.

The President: Thank you. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Viet Nam.

Ms. Le Thi Tuyet Mai (Viet Nam): Thank you very much, Mr. President, for giving me the floor. Mr. President, distinguished colleagues, it is my great pleasure to take the floor here for the very first time at the Conference on Disarmament.

First, I wish to congratulate you, Mr. Carlos Mario Foradori, Ambassador of Argentina, on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament in 2020. My delegation assures you of its full cooperation and support.

I also would like to take this opportunity to thank Mr. Rachid Belbaki, Ambassador of Algeria – and his excellent team – for his efforts in his capacity as the first President of the Conference in its 2020 session. Though we have not reached consensus on the proposed package, the tireless efforts of the Algerian President, as well as those of the five others who will preside over the Conference this session, the last President of the 2019 session and the first President of the 2021 session, have laid a very positive foundation for the Conference.

We are encouraged to see that since the very first days, the Presidents of 2020, in the same positive spirit of support and cooperation that they extended to Viet Nam during its presidency of the Conference on Disarmament in 2019, have been jointly promoting the work of the Conference and seeking solutions which can lead the Conference to a positive conclusion. It is our great hope that the Conference will move forward in achieving a balanced and comprehensive programme of work, which is the only way to break its current deadlock.

Mr. President, for the past 75 years, multilateralism, with the United Nations at its heart, has become indispensable. Multilateralism has provided the forums for States to

deliberate and establish common policies in all aspects of global governance, especially peace and security. This year, with the celebration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the establishment of the United Nations and the fiftieth anniversary of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, heading to the upcoming Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty, which will be held in New York, it is worth looking back in order to move forward. Since its first day, the Conference on Disarmament has played an exemplary role in bringing to life the fundamental framework of today's global disarmament regime.

The Conference has demonstrated vividly how multilateralism could allow nations to bridge differences and find practical and substantive solutions to global challenges. It has developed into the single multilateral disarmament forum dealing with all multilateral arms control and disarmament issues. Therefore, and for the sake of international peace and security, we really look forward to seeing the work of this forum preserved. With the momentum we achieved in recent years, I sincerely hope that the Conference may be able to achieve a tangible result in 2020.

Mr. President, multilateral cooperation has always had a special place in Viet Nam's foreign policy. Now, with Viet Nam's assumption as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council for 2020 and 2021 and with its chairmanship of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) for 2020, we are committed to do our utmost to work with the States Members of the United Nations and United Nations forums towards the ultimate goals of sustainable peace and development. In our capacity as the Chair of ASEAN in 2020, we also stand ready to promote cooperation between ASEAN and United Nations forums, including cooperation with the Conference on Disarmament.

In conclusion, let me reaffirm Viet Nam's full support for your presidency and your efforts to find consensus on a programme of work.

The President: Thank you, Ambassador, and welcome to the Conference on Disarmament. You can be sure that we will do our best to lead this Conference to the common objective.

Ladies and gentlemen, Argentina is pleased to take over the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and pledges to do its best to follow the path blazed by my colleague and friend, Ambassador Rachid Belbaki of Algeria, the first of the year's six Presidents, whom I warmly thank for all his efforts. I intend to continue his work, together with my colleagues from the group of this session's six Presidents, to ensure the resumption of substantive work in this forum. I want to thank you very much, Ambassador, for all your efforts.

Due to what happened in our last plenary meeting, the six Presidents of the 2020 session considered that we needed more time to exchange views and explore possible ways forward on the package. For that reason, I have conducted a number of consultations to see whether there is common ground for its adoption. In that sense, I convened informal meetings in different formats: groups of countries of different regions, some countries from the same regional groups, drafting meetings in large and small groups. I wish to thank all of you for your efforts and flexibility that you have shown throughout the process. At this stage, the six Presidents believe that we are pretty close to presenting a revised version which contains language acceptable to all.

During my intensive consultations, I realized with profound admiration that many of my colleagues in the Conference had doctorates. This situation would seem to be a wonderful accomplishment; however, this way of reasoning frenetically leads us to the most obscure cryptology, which, taking advantage of the lack of understanding or the maturity of the members, including mine, makes decisions impossible.

The Conference lacks a radical element, an ingredient that is essential, a vital component to enable this old and rusty machine to work again. It urgently needs high doses of common sense. We and our predecessors have wasted about 1,600 hours in the past 22 years in trying to agree on something that, as everybody knows, could be very simple: a programme of work. Are we all prepared to give a certificate of perpetuity to this situation?

"Elaborate", "identify", "recommend", "analyse" and many other words, or even a comma, could provoke the vital collapse of the whole world.

Dear colleagues, we are not negotiating anything here. The greatest aspiration we have is to agree on a document that indicates how we are going to work. We must, once and for all, break this powerful attraction of the force of gravity that causes us to fall and fail over and over again. Obviously I am not naive, and I know that behind a word an entire universe can experience tremendous stress. But if the purpose of all of these countless exercises is doing nothing, we should be brave enough, honest enough and determined enough to explain here, in this beautiful room, that we should not function any more and that – and this is obviously a decision that we have to take by consensus – the bank of the Conference on Disarmament is bankrupt.

That could save our respective taxpayers millions of dollars, which they can use to heal the pain of the victims of war. But I still have hope. I still have hope that eventually that ingredient, at least in minimal doses, can be spread in this room. And I have hope that common sense will eventually emerge, and that is why on Monday, once again, we will circulate a revised version for you to analyse and decipher with a view to tabling it on Tuesday afternoon.

Now I open the floor to all members wishing to offer comments, suggestions or ideas. I have on my list the Ambassador of Algeria. The floor is yours.

Mr. Belbaki (Algeria) (*spoke in Arabic*): Mr. President, I would like to take this opportunity to extend my sincere congratulations to you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and to assure you of the willingness and full determination of my delegation to work together with you and with the other presidents of the current session to advance the work of the Conference. I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome the ambassador of the friendly country of Viet Nam and to thank her for the kind words she addressed to my country and to the presidency of Algeria.

I also appreciate, Mr. President, your untiring efforts to continue on the path of consultation and dialogue in order to find consensual solutions that will allow us to progress in our work. Once again, I wish to express my appreciation for the valuable contributions and positive spirit shown by the members of the Conference since the beginning of the current session, which motivated my delegation, during the Algerian presidency of the Conference, to strive relentlessly to bring about a convergence of views and to create an atmosphere conducive to reaching consensus on a programme of work that would enable the Conference to restore its role as the sole forum for negotiations in the field of disarmament. Through this endeavour, we recognized the importance and effectiveness of dialogue, consultation and listening as the only way to mobilize efforts and achieve the necessary harmony to realize our common goal of restoring the traditional role of the Conference and preserving its effectiveness.

With that in mind, my delegation remains ready to contribute further to pursuing these efforts, which have already borne fruit and provided us with an important opportunity to achieve consensus. We hope that the trust and positive and constructive atmosphere that we have achieved through the collective, participatory and objective approach, based on intensifying and broadening consultations as far as possible, will be maintained. We also hope to see a sense of responsibility and constructive participation to ensure that our collective work culminates in positive results that preserve collective and national interests, serve our Conference and preserve its credibility and effectiveness.

The President: Thank you, Mr. Ambassador. I give the floor to the representative of Australia.

Ms. Wood (Australia): Thank you, Mr. President, and a very warm welcome to Ambassador Le Thi Tuyet Mai.

First of all, thank you to the United Kingdom for the readout on the recent meeting of the nuclear-weapon States designated as such under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in London. We really appreciate the efforts ahead of the NPT Review Conference and the transparency shown by these briefings. I recall that China did a similar briefing after the Beijing meeting last year. This is good practice which we encourage you to continue.

Mr. President, your statement is probably one of the most sensible things I have heard in the Conference on Disarmament since arriving three years ago. Strong coordination among the session's six Presidents, plus the last President of the 2019 session and the first of the 2021 session, continues under your leadership. We welcomed your statement last Friday that consultations would continue on the package presented under Algeria's exemplary presidency, because this is a group effort.

This level of continuity is new for the Conference and a welcome development in the way we work. We appreciate and support the extensive consultations you are undertaking this week to reach consensus on the package. We applaud the sense of responsibility with which you approached the Conference's duty to establish its programme of work at the beginning of its annual session, in accordance with rule 28 of the rules of procedure.

This is the Conference's responsibility, and we call on all Conference members to play a positive role in getting the Conference back to work, starting with the adoption of a programme of work. There are consequences for the Conference and for the credibility of multilateral arms control if we do not seize the opportunity presented by the hard work you and the other members of the team of Presidents have done.

I recall your comment that the Conference urgently needs a dose of common sense. This is really a wake-up call that we do ourselves and this institution a disservice if we do not act.

The President: I thank the representative of Australia for her words for the presidency and give the floor to the Ambassador of Peru.

Ms. Alfaro Espinosa (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Mr. President. As this is the first time that my delegation has taken the floor, I would like to warmly congratulate you on assuming the presidency. You recently said that you consider yourself fortunate to have been granted the presidency as the representative of Argentina. I believe that we are all fortunate to have you as President at this time. As a Peruvian and a representative of Latin America, I feel particularly fortunate to see you in this role.

I warmly welcome our colleague from Viet Nam and I thank the Ambassador of the United Kingdom for his report. This meeting is particularly important for Latin America because we, and we Peruvians in particular, are deeply committed to the principle of nuclear-weapon-free zones.

My delegation has followed with great interest and concern the process of producing the documents that form part of the package put forward by Ambassador Belbaki of Algeria under his presidency. We are deeply grateful for his efforts. We knew that we had to support this package as it provided balance and the opportunity to achieve the goal that has eluded us for years, namely, the adoption of a programme of work. Although this proved not to be possible last week, we have listened carefully this afternoon to the account of the steps that he and his team have taken to achieve this goal in close coordination with the other five presidencies of the Conference on Disarmament.

We trust that we will soon receive a revised version of the programme of work and the accompanying documents. We expect the representatives of the member States gathered here to show flexibility and political will when they assess this package. We strongly believe that the adoption of a programme of work would send a positive message to the international community. It would represent a step towards the goal of resuming multilateral negotiations on disarmament, in line with the mandate of the Conference established at the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament in 1978. We all have a great responsibility as representatives of our States in this prestigious multilateral forum. The task entrusted to us is to achieve security for the world and humankind and to protect the sovereignty of our States.

We often forget that the focus of our work is to prevent human suffering. A couple of years ago, Secretary-General António Guterres gave a presentation on the agenda for disarmament in which he told us that efforts in the field of disarmament are aimed at saving humanity and ensuring a common future for us, our families and the millions of our fellow

citizens whom we represent every time that we take the floor in this chamber, as the President has just reminded us.

In the current fragile international context, my delegation will always welcome circumstances and opportunities that allow us to reaffirm the political commitment of Peru to the Conference's efforts to maintain international peace and security. In this regard, Peru supports the work that Argentina has been carrying out. Once again, I wish you every success in your work for this Conference and assure you of my delegation's full support in achieving the objectives.

The President: I would like to thank the distinguished Ambassador of Peru for her kind words addressed to the presidency. I give the floor to the representative of Austria.

Mr. Müller (Austria): Thank you, Mr. President. I congratulate you on taking the Chair and thank you for your very wise and very frank words concerning the state of affairs of the Conference on Disarmament. In particular, I fully share your appeal for common sense. I think that is what we really need now.

We support your analysis and your approach as to how to proceed. According to rule 28 of the rules of procedure, the Conference shall, at the beginning of its annual session, establish its programme of work. We – Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bangladesh and Belarus – are trying to achieve this objective collectively and in close collaboration. As one of the six member States that will occupy the presidency this session, we have supported this goal which was set under the Algerian President and towards which we continue to work under the Argentine presidency.

The spirit of cooperation among the six Presidents has been outstanding. It has been an outstanding experience, and, like many others in the room, we see this joint, broad and cross-regional effort as a vivid and very positive contribution to the Conference. It is a kind of desperately needed wave of fresh air in a smoke-filled room.

Last Friday, we came very close to agreeing on a package that was the result of broad consultations and many hours of listening. I would like to salute the Herculean efforts of the Algerian presidency in this context.

Mr. President, you gave everyone extra time and continued extensive consultations this week. The vast majority of delegations in the room have already shown a lot of constructiveness and flexibility in order to allow for a common endeavour. Eventually, we will have to propose a package and put it on the table, as you indicated, and it is up to Conference members to make the ultimate judgment. Can they allow the Conference to take decisions and to structure its work for 2020 and to at least send a small positive signal that they see merit in the Conference as a multilateral disarmament forum or do they want to stand up and block even any efforts to that end?

I would like to appeal to those delegations that have not yet shown the required flexibility and constructiveness to do justice to this important organ, to show flexibility and to support the very valuable efforts of the President. We have to maintain or, rather, to re-establish the credibility of the Conference, as you mentioned.

Last but not least, I would like to welcome the Ambassador of Viet Nam and wish her very well and thank the representative of the United Kingdom for the very valuable information provided on the recent conference of the five nuclear-weapon States designated as such under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

The President: Thank you, Sir, and thank you for the kind words addressed to the presidency. Now I give the floor to the representative of Belarus.

Mr. Pytalev (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. President, as one of the six Presidents of this session, Belarus assures you of its full support. We believe that the joint work of the six Presidents this year is proving to be effective. I agree with the ideas put forward today by my fellow Presidents.

The first weeks of the Conference on Disarmament have shown, in our view, that progress is possible and that we all feel the need to resume substantive work. Well then? In order to work, we need a programme of work. We need to make additional efforts which,

with an appropriately constructive attitude and with the emphasis on common sense that you so aptly remarked on, Mr. President, could be successful. You can count on us to provide those efforts.

The President: I thank the representative of Belarus, including for his kind words addressed to the presidency, and give the floor to the representative of Colombia.

Ms. Castillo Castro (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you, Mr. President. My delegation would like to thank you and the other Presidents of this session for all the efforts that you have made thus far to promote the adoption of a package that will allow substantive issues to be discussed during this meeting.

My delegation is aware of the difficulties involved in this process and would like to express its support for your efforts, which we hope will soon enable us to establish an agreement that will lead us towards the fulfilment of our mandate.

The President: Thank you very much. I give the floor to the representative of France.

Mr. Hwang (France) (*spoke in French*): Thank you, Mr. President. First of all, I would like to say that my delegation is very pleased to see you in this role. I wish you every success in your mission and assure you of my delegation's full support as you endeavour to carry it out. I would also like to welcome the new Ambassador of Viet Nam.

I do not intend to address the issue of the programme of work because I believe that I spoke about the position of France on that important subject last Friday. The set of documents proposed by the six Presidents is an excellent basis on which to work and I would like to commend the efforts of our Algerian colleague once again. Last Friday, we were ready to join the consensus on this proposal, on condition that its basic structure was maintained, particularly with regard to the mandates of the subsidiary bodies contained in the timetable. We would be more than willing to consider a revised version of this set of documents, which we hope will make it possible to reach an agreement.

In fact, I have asked for the floor to say a few words about the speech on defence and deterrence strategy that was delivered by the President of France on 7 February in his capacity as head of the armed forces. This speech is being circulated in two languages. President Macron presented an analysis of the international security situation and expressed his thoughts on the key aspects of the defence and deterrence strategy of France. In this regard, he followed in a tradition that French heads of State have upheld since 1958. During each of their terms of office, the Presidents of France have delivered at least one major public speech on French deterrence strategy.

This speech, however, expressed something new. It focused more broadly on a defence strategy that sets the apparatus of French defence, including deterrence, within the context of a world undergoing a profound upheaval in which political, strategic and economic equilibria are being undermined, certain powers are once again acting without restraint and the international architecture of security and multilateralism is being progressively dismantled. President Macron's ambitions for Europe were expressed in his call for the continent not to be a mere observer of this new strategic environment but to regain control of its destiny. He called for a Europe that generates new ideas for establishing peace and rebuilding the world order by investing again in its defence and making its voice heard on arms control.

Concerned to fulfil the duty of transparency that France has as a nuclear-weapon State within the meaning of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, President Macron spoke of the country's deterrence strategy. This strategy is framed by a doctrine that is clear, predictable and strictly defensive. The role of deterrence is limited to extreme circumstances in which self-defence may legitimately be exercised. Nuclear weapons must not be conceived as tools of intimidation, coercion or destabilization. They must remain instruments of deterrence whose purpose is to prevent war.

The President also spoke about the priorities that France upholds in the area of disarmament. His road map for disarmament includes several aspects that are particularly relevant to the Conference on Disarmament: compliance with the Nuclear Non-

Proliferation Treaty and the maintenance of its key role, the commencement of negotiations, within the Conference, on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons, the preservation and universalization of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the continuation of efforts to verify nuclear disarmament, which France is carrying out with Germany, and, lastly, the commencement of focused work on strategic risk reduction. In view of the erosion of the major arms control instruments, the President expressed his concern about the dismantling of the security architecture in Europe and the risk that, and I quote, there will be another conventional or even nuclear arms race on European soil. He therefore reiterated his wish for Europeans to come together to propose an international arms control programme and to strive once again to understand the dynamics of escalation and to prevent it from occurring by establishing clear and verifiable standards.

Following the collapse of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, in particular, President Macron expressed his desire to see wide-ranging discussions in which Europe makes its voice heard and ensures that its interests are properly taken into account in negotiations on a new instrument capable of guaranteeing strategic stability on the European continent. He also reiterated that France would like the New START Treaty to be extended beyond 2021. Lastly, he proposed an ethical approach to French nuclear deterrence. A democracy such as France cannot avoid considering this issue, on which there has been a long-standing legal and strategic debate. But this discussion cannot take place without a lucid analysis of the strategic environment or it might lead to choices that undermine the international security architecture.

As the President said, and I quote, disarmament cannot be an objective in itself; it must first improve international security conditions. France therefore rejects unilateral disarmament, which would expose it and its partners to violence and blackmail. Unilateral disarmament would also have no knock-on impact on the other nuclear powers. The priority must be to establish a transparent and responsible nuclear doctrine that restricts the role of nuclear weapons to the prevention of war.

President Macron therefore reaffirmed the importance of the dialogue taking place among the five permanent members of the Security Council on confidence-building and transparency in relation to each member's nuclear arsenals and strategies. In conclusion, I would add that the President's speech, by a coincidence of the calendar, successfully brought to a close the series of transparency actions organized by France, in which some of you participated, consisting of a seminar to present our national report on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and a visit to the decommissioned Pierrelatte and Marcoule facilities. The speech therefore strongly reaffirmed all our commitments under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and the transparency exercise that we have undertaken in connection with our nuclear doctrine and posture.

I am sure that the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Jean-Yves Le Drian, will have more to say about this important speech when he addresses this chamber at 10.45 a.m. next Monday.

The President: Thank you. 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. Since my delegation is taking the floor for the first time under your presidency, my delegation would like to extend its congratulations to you on your assumption of the presidency and for all the efforts you have made so far to take the Conference on Disarmament forward.

Mr. President, it was not my intention in any manner to divert our discussion on the work of the Conference, but the statement read out by the United Kingdom's representative compelled me to take the floor. My delegation does not accept the argument made in his statement, which singled out the Democratic People's Republic of Korea for what were called its proliferation activities. This only shows a lack of knowledge of the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula and ignorance of the legitimate right to self-defence of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. It can be interpreted only as an attempt to put

pressure on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which will never work and which will prove futile.

Since my delegation made clear its position on the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula at the beginning of this session, I would like to refrain, for the sake of our discussion on the work of the Conference, from repeating the position that we have already stated. However, my delegation wishes to underscore our strong rejection of and disagreement with the charges made in the statement.

I would like to conclude my statement by expressing my delegation's full readiness to work with your presidency with regard to early adoption of a programme of work.

The President: Thank you, Sir, and thank you for your kind words addressed to the presidency. I give the floor to the Ambassador of Chile.

Mr. Tressler Zamorano (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Mr. President. Since this is the first time that we have taken the floor, I would like to welcome you as you take on this enormous challenge and assure you that the Chilean delegation fully supports your quest for what you have called a minimum of common sense.

We fully concur with what you have said and agree that we need to set aside our more extreme positions in favour of a middle ground where each of us is required to gain or lose something. A successful negotiation is one in which we all give up something for the sake of a greater good, which is universal peace and security. In this regard, we must remember that peace and security are a common good that belongs to each and every one of us. We are of the opinion that an agreement is close and that we therefore must not extend or increase the window of time in which the necessary consensus might elude us.

In that regard, we are grateful for the work of your predecessor, Ambassador Belbaki of Algeria, whose efforts have undoubtedly brought us much closer to a possible consensus. We would also like to welcome the new Ambassador of Viet Nam and thank the Ambassador of the United Kingdom for his report.

Mr. President, for 20 years now, we have been trying to agree on something as basic as a programme of work. In principle, this should not be a very complex negotiation. As the President mentioned, the real work with which our taxpayers have entrusted us is that which we will undertake after we have agreed on the programme of work, and the rule of consensus will always be applied that, to ensure that the interests of each of us are upheld. As has been made clear to us, if we do not, at the very least, establish a programme of work, we should have the courage to assess the situation of the Conference on Disarmament and, as you pointed out, save our taxpayers' and citizens' resources in order to put them to better use, perhaps by funding humanitarian programmes.

I wish to conclude by reiterating our support for your efforts and echoing the optimistic sentiments that you have expressed. We believe that we are close but, to succeed, we each need to adopt a spirit of generosity.

As we have already indicated, the Chilean delegation supports the package that you will be presenting to us and assures you again of its support and solidarity.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the distinguished Ambassador of Chile for his kind words addressed to the presidency. I now give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador of Spain.

Mr. Sánchez de Lerín García-Ovies (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Mr. President. Let me first congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency. I wish you every success and assure you of my delegation's full support in all your work. I must say that I am very impressed, not only by the degree of coordination between the six presidencies but also because they appear to be working as a real team. I extend my most sincere congratulations to them.

I am also very grateful for the huge efforts that they are making to accommodate the sensitivities of all the delegations in the proposal. I acknowledge your efforts and thank you for them. I also appreciate the flexibility we are showing in order to reach a consensus. As we all know, our ambitions do not stop here. We will each be concerned with one aspect or

another. But we also all know that this is the only possible way to preserve the nature of the Conference and establish the harmonious relations, atmosphere and trust required to resume negotiations as soon as possible.

If we restrict ourselves to discussing schedules in order to pass the time, we may make our meetings more predictable and structured but we will simply be going around in circles, repeating the same national positions over and over again. As you have said yourself, we have debated for 1,600 hours over the course of 22 years without getting anywhere.

If we want to make progress, the package that we approve must include a programme of work that has the imperfections and sense of equilibrium required to establish a consensus. In other words, it must be a programme that breaks the deadlock.

We do not expect miracles but we do need to send a positive message to the international community, end the stalemate and take steps to re-establish the negotiating mandate of the Conference.

The President: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of Spain for his kind words addressed to the presidency. I now give the floor to the representative of the United States of America.

Ms. Plath (United States of America): Mr. President, we have a saying in English, “you are a man after my own heart”, and I could not have spoken your words better myself.

It is indeed in our interest, at a time when all our Governments are faced with so many competing demands at all different levels across the world, to make the best use of taxpayer dollars. This is a common refrain that, as anyone who has ever spoken to me knows, I often repeat, and I have to tell you I have never done the math before, so when you throw out a number like 1,600 hours to discuss a programme of work, which has never actually been accomplished in 20 years, that is horrifying. As a taxpayer myself, I am pretty sure I put someone through college last year with my taxes, and to know that part of that was for 1,600 hours of deliberation in this body is just horrifying. I can’t even begin to tell you as a taxpayer myself.

However, my delegation firmly believes that we do need a dose of common sense in here – an injection, if you will – as you noted, Sir, and that the version that has been so thoughtfully and collaboratively put together and already presented to us is indeed the best compromise we are going to achieve. And, frankly, in the three years, two years, that I have been here, I also believe it is the best compromise that we can seek to achieve: at the minimum, the aspiration of having some substantive, formalized and structured discussion here at the Conference on Disarmament.

We look forward to seeing your draft on Monday. You of course have our full support. We would love to see that draft along the lines of where we already are. And I can only say, Mr. President, fundamentally, it is time to get on board and get to work or go home.

The President: Thank you so much for your support and thank you for your kind words addressed to the presidency. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Lee Jang-keun (Republic of Korea): Thank you, Mr. President. First of all, I would like to congratulate you on your assumption of this year’s second presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and assure you of my delegation’s full support and cooperation. I would also like to join the previous speakers in welcoming the new Ambassador of Viet Nam to our group and wishing her great success during her mandate in Geneva. In addition, I would like to express my appreciation for the presentation and briefing made by Ambassador Aidan Liddle of the United Kingdom about the results of the process engaged in by the five nuclear-weapon States designated as such under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) last week in London. It was very helpful in our preparation for the upcoming NPT Review Conference. The Algerian presidency – in particular Ambassador Belbaki’s tireless efforts to iron out differences on the proposed package for a programme of work in close collaboration with the other five

member States that will occupy the presidency this session – also deserves appreciation. However, it is regrettable that we could not agree on the package during his presidency in spite of the pervasive spirit of flexibility and active cooperation shown on the floor by the majority of member States.

My delegation would like to urge everyone to exercise maximum flexibility and make collective efforts to enable this long-stalled body to move forward and show the world that we are doing our job and not wasting time and taxpayers' money. In this context, my delegation strongly supports the approach that you, Mr. President, are taking together with the five other Presidents of this year's session. We look forward to seeing the revised draft package and hope that there will not be significant changes to the documents that were circulated last week.

As my delegation emphasized in its previous statement, we believe, for various reasons, that the adoption of an appropriate programme of work for this year is of the utmost importance. We should not disappoint the international community again this year as we celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Treaty and, in April, hold the Review Conference.

Obviously, my delegation is not fully content with the proposed programme of work and the package for various reasons on which I will not elaborate now, but for us a more important and urgent thing is to take this body forward by taking the first step towards fulfilling the mandate that has been entrusted to us, especially now that most of the members of this body are showing the greatest possible flexibility and cooperativeness, as we have all heard this afternoon.

As the saying goes, "a journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step", but if we cannot take the first step, all the good discussions we are having will have been in vain. For too long, we have been unable to take even this first step. Moreover, this year is a very important year, as I said. It is important not only for the success but also maybe even for the very survival of the international disarmament and non-proliferation community itself.

My delegation nonetheless hopes that we can agree on the proposed programme of work and the package as soon as possible, hopefully by Tuesday of next week. I thank you, Mr. President.

The President: Thank you, Mr. Ambassador, and thank you for your kind words addressed to the presidency. Now I give the floor to the representative of Brazil.

Mr. Dalcero (Brazil) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Mr. President. As you are aware, Ambassador de Barros Carvalho e Mello Mourão, the special representative of Brazil to the Conference on Disarmament, is attending the seminar on lethal autonomous weapons in Rio de Janeiro. For that reason, he cannot be here today for the first session of the Conference under your presidency.

However, we would like to congratulate Ambassador Foradori of Argentina at this first formal meeting under his presidency and assure him that he has the full support of Brazil in his efforts to adopt a programme of work. We are confident that his diplomatic skills, negotiating ability and inclusive spirit will enable progress to be made on the remaining tasks so that we may start the substantive work of the Conference this year. We also wish to pay tribute to the distinguished permanent representative of Algeria, Ambassador Belbaki, and his team for the efforts made during his presidency. We would also like to thank the Ambassador of the United Kingdom for his presentation on the meeting of the five nuclear-weapon States. We believe that this is a positive exercise in transparency and that it should be continued.

Lastly, I would like to welcome the distinguished Ambassador of Viet Nam and assure her of our cooperation.

The President: I thank the distinguished representative of Brazil and I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Dehghani (Islamic Republic of Iran): Thank you, Mr. President. We congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament

and thank you for all your efforts in consulting all delegations this week. We also welcome the Vietnamese Ambassador and wish her all the best in her new position.

Mr. President, Iran's support for the effective functioning of the Conference has been steadfast, unique and strategic. We regard the Conference as the unique negotiating forum for nuclear disarmament. We need to make every effort to preserve the Conference as such and avoid any distraction which may undermine its core mandates, which are critical to maintenance of international peace and security.

The world, with its increasingly sophisticated nuclear weapons, is not a safe place. And we need to work together to craft a programme of work to advance the cause of nuclear disarmament.

The Conference managed to make very important progress during the exemplary presidency of Algeria, and we encourage the Presidents to continue on that same path in order to bring all member States to consensus. The Algerian package was the outcome of many weeks of hard work done with professional dedication and skilful transparency, as well as an unbiased attitude. That should be continued.

Mr. President, my delegation will continue its constructive engagement with you and with other delegations as we have already done in bilateral and informal consultations this week. We believe that each and every member of the Conference has a key role to play, but of course those States that have nuclear weapons bear the lion's share of responsibility in helping the Conference discharge its mandates.

Last but not least, with regard to the report on the conference of the five nuclear-weapon States designated as such under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, my delegation would like to strongly advise our British colleagues that it would have been absolutely appropriate if they had put the issue of the United States and Security Council resolution 2231 (2015) and their own non-compliance with it on the agenda of the London conference. Those who have violated Security Council resolutions either directly, by withdrawing from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or indirectly, by succumbing to illegal pressure and impulsive unilateralism, have no moral or legal high ground from which to lecture Iran about its commitments. Iran's nuclear programme has been and continues to be purely peaceful, and portraying it as a proliferation concern is far from honest.

The President: Thank you, Sir, for the kind words addressed to the presidency. I give the floor to the representative of Bulgaria.

Mr. Tomov (Bulgaria): Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, our delegation wholeheartedly congratulates you on your assumption of your new function and wishes you every success. We are ready to support your efforts to ensure the adoption of the proposed package. At the same time, we welcome your transparent and proactive approach and your efforts to follow the impeccable example set by the Algerian presidency of the Conference on Disarmament.

We also welcome the newly arrived Ambassador of Viet Nam and wish her every success in her position. And we also highly value the briefing provided by our United Kingdom colleague on behalf of the five nuclear-weapon States designated as such under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

Dear colleagues, according to the document and the statements we have been hearing and reading this week and last, we were – and still are – close to reaching a consensus on a common approach but have not reached it yet. It looks as if we want to hold ourselves back from the decisive step ahead that would bring us back to practical work. It looks like as if we were afraid of changing the situation, even if it meant only transferring our discussions to subsidiary bodies. We think that it is worth taking this last step. It would mean that we value the new approach – open and transparent – of the six Presidents of this year's session and the first and last of 2021 and 2019, respectively. It would also mean we know what our goal is. Otherwise, it would be a confession that we do not know what we are aiming for or what we want to achieve. It would also mean that, collectively, we do not want to advance.

For our delegation, neither of those options is acceptable. We think that doing the utmost, going beyond our red lines, would prove that we are aware of the responsibility that this body is bearing. Sitting here just to reiterate political messages would mean that we are incapable of providing for the change we all preach or unwilling to make it. We believe that this is also not acceptable to anyone. Working together this year – no matter how hard it is and no matter how much the international security environment deteriorates – would mean we can provide for conditions for more trust and confidence, which are crucial to every common effort to achieve a shared goal and are desperately needed in our working environment in the Conference. Let us rise to the responsibilities we bear and take this last step.

The President: Thank you, Sir, for your kind words addressed to the presidency. I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Mexico.

Mr. Martínez Ruiz (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you, Mr. President. Since this is the first time that my delegation has taken the floor during your presidency, I would first like to congratulate you on assuming this important task and assure you of the cooperation of Mexico in making your presidency successful and helping to resume the work of the Conference on the basis of its negotiating mandate. We wish to acknowledge the ongoing close cooperation between the six presidencies of this session because, as has been said previously, it is a good practice that gives continuity to the Conference's work and we hope that it will be repeated in subsequent years.

My delegation would also like to welcome the Ambassador of Viet Nam to this forum. We fully agree that multilateralism is essential to addressing issues of peace and security, including nuclear disarmament. We are grateful to the delegation of the United Kingdom for its report on the work of the five permanent members of the Security Council and to the delegation of France for its report on the speech made by President Macron. We note these reports and affirm that it is a good exercise in transparency to present them in this forum. We will certainly analyse the information presented in the hope that it is an indication of the open-mindedness of these countries and their commitment to achieving a successful 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

Lastly, we would like to acknowledge the message that you have conveyed in your presentation today. We are pleased to see that we are following up on the excellent work carried out by Ambassador Belbaki of Algeria during his presidency and we note the bilateral consultations that have been held and those that are scheduled to take place. We certainly share the view that common sense should be a central and guiding aspect of our work in this Conference, always within the framework of respect for the mandate given to us as a negotiating body. Common sense should not lead us to duplicate other bodies' mandates or engage in sterile and repetitive discussions that lead to simulations of substantive work.

We fully agree with you that, if the Conference's bank does prove to be bankrupt, we must take this situation on board and save the significant sum that taxpayers contribute. We will also have to rethink the architecture at a new special session of the General Assembly.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the distinguished representative of Mexico. I have no other speakers on my list.

(*spoke in English*)

I would like to tell you two things. First, that we are going to keep on with our consultations and that I am completely open to any suggestion, any comment or whatever you may need. For that purpose, my colleagues have my telephone number, my WhatsApp contact information – you can call me at any time. I can meet with any one of you at any time as well, including over the weekend. The other thing is that I know that everybody knows that next week is the high-level segment, and many Ministers or high officials of many of the Governments of the member countries that are represented here are coming, so I want to be at your entire disposal for whatever you may need, because I know that this

sometimes causes logistical problems and a lot of stress. I would like you to count on me to solve any problem that you may have.

I see the representative of Canada asking for the floor. You have the floor.

Mr. Davison (Canada): I am very sorry to interrupt, Ambassador, and again, congratulations on taking on the responsibility of presiding over the Conference on Disarmament for the next four weeks. We have complete faith in your abilities and your good-faith efforts to try to get this place working again.

I am sorry to interrupt, but I have no clue as to what the schedule is next week. I have not been able to find anything online, and I am a bit startled that just before the start of three or four or however many days we are going to have high-level speakers for, nothing has appeared for public consumption. And, so, could I just ask that in some way this information be communicated to delegations? I also noticed that there are now, it seems, two Conference websites online, and I do not know why that is. At some point, it would have perhaps been appropriate for the secretariat to explain why there are now two Conference websites. Thank you, and sorry to interrupt.

The President: Thank you, Sir. The secretariat has the floor.

Ms. Mercogliano (Acting Secretary of the Conference on Disarmament): Thank you, Mr. President. The list of the entire high-level segment from Monday to Wednesday was posted online this morning, but the website is changing, and I will get to that in a second. So, instead of having it as soon as you open the link that the old website provides, you have to go to the banner on the left and click on "high-level segment". I myself was there for a few seconds before I realized where to click.

Now, the issue of the website is something that the secretariat was indeed planning to bring to your attention, and we apologize for not doing so earlier. Basically, the entire website of the Geneva branch of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs will be transferred to a new site, and this will take place in bits and pieces for obvious reasons. We are not able to do this from one day to the next, so, for the moment, as a temporary measure, you will start seeing these links to other pages, which will be the new pages for this year's meetings. In the medium term, we will be able to move the entire contents of the current website, the old website, to the new website. But because we are changing the tools that we are using, some of which are still being built in New York, we are obliged, for the moment, to keep the old information on the old website and develop new pages for the new information as it comes in. At some point, everything will be merged.

The high-level segment will start on Monday at 10 a.m.

The President: I am glad that we have had a chance to clarify the circumstances. Dear colleagues, I thank you once more for your contributions and discussions today and for the kind words for the presidency. I would also like to thank the secretariat and the interpreters for their work.

The next plenary meeting will take place on Monday, 24 February 2020, which will be the first day of the high-level segment. And as the secretariat has just said, the list of the high-level speakers was posted online this morning by the secretariat.

This is a critical moment, with many high-level officials coming. I am at your disposal, including this weekend, to resolve any issue that may arise. And I hope nothing arises. Thank you very much.

The meeting rose at 4.30 p.m.