

Conference on Disarmament

English

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President: Mr. Carlos Mario Foradori (Argentina)

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The President: I call to order the 1533rd plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. Ladies and gentlemen, this afternoon we shall continue the high-level segment of the Conference on Disarmament. Allow me at this stage to welcome our first guest, His Excellency Mr. Pekka Haavisto, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland. Minister, the floor is yours.

Mr. Haavisto (Finland): Thank you. Mr. President, distinguished delegates, disarmament and arms control are accorded a high priority in the government programme of Finland. Strengthening the international rules-based order and its institutions are cornerstones of our foreign policy.

Therefore, I am very pleased to address the Conference on Disarmament. The Conference has a unique role as the single multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament matters. Your work is as important as it is demanding. Agreeing on disarmament that increases safety and security for all is an immense task. National security interests are too often seen as competing, and lack of genuine dialogue has led to increasing polarization.

The global security environment is becoming increasingly challenging. This heightens the need for international rules-based cooperation. We need a strong focus on common interests in pursuit of disarmament and arms control. The Conference on Disarmament is a key forum, and you are key players in this effort.

Mr. President, in a few days, we will celebrate 50 years since the entry into force of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). The Treaty is a remarkable success story. It has effectively curbed the proliferation of nuclear weapons. It provides an internationally recognized basis for peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Not least, the Treaty contains a legally binding commitment to pursue nuclear disarmament in good faith.

Some countries deem it necessary to develop and retain nuclear weapons for their security. At the same time, the very same weapons pose an existential threat to every nation and every human being on our planet. This is a paradox we must overcome.

Our ultimate goal is a world free of nuclear weapons. This can only be achieved through a process that provides increased security for all. This requires a good-faith effort to build trust through dialogue, while exercising restraint in rhetoric and postures. In particular, there is an urgent need for enhanced dialogue on strategic stability among the nuclear-weapon States.

The Russian Federation and the United States, possessing by far the largest arsenals of nuclear weapons, must take the lead in reviving the much-needed dialogue. While we applaud the Russian and American efforts so far, it is indispensable that they continue spearheading nuclear arms control and disarmament. The extension of the New START would be a concrete demonstration of this much-needed leadership.

We recognize the need to involve all nuclear-weapon possessors in nuclear arms control. Non-strategic nuclear weapons need to be urgently included in discussions, too. The sooner the New START is extended, the faster the discussion on new and additional arms control measures can begin. Such an extension would also provide a strong impetus to the NPT process.

We know from history that in a tense security climate, escalation can happen very fast. Tools to increase transparency and trust and to manage crises are vital to reducing the risk of nuclear-weapon use.

Finland has been active in searching for practical means to reduce nuclear risks. We are committed to facilitating concrete efforts at risk reduction also in the future.

Mr. President, the NPT Review Conference will commence in two months. The most important message coming from the Review Conference must be to confirm the common determination of all nations that nuclear weapons must never be used again. Past NPT commitments remain valid and form the basis for making further progress in accomplishing the aims of the Treaty.

For the future, we need a forward-looking outcome covering all three pillars of the Treaty. This should include:

(a) Deepening discussion on nuclear doctrines and declaratory policies with the aim of limiting the role of nuclear weapons in security policies. This is key to increasing trust and confidence in order to advance nuclear disarmament;

(b) Engaging in structured dialogue to assess, minimize and address nuclear risks. This includes measures aimed at preventing crises or extending decision times in crisis, and measures to minimize potential vulnerabilities emerging from disruptive technologies and cyberthreats;

(c) Addressing the challenges posed by the entanglement of conventional and nuclear weapon systems and taking measures to reverse this development. Addressing the most destabilizing weapon systems and arrangements is a priority;

(d) Strengthening negative security assurances. This would alleviate concerns and increase the security of non-nuclear-weapon States without weakening deterrence;

(e) Supporting ongoing efforts to develop multilateral nuclear disarmament verification capabilities. Multilateral participation in verification is important for confidence in nuclear disarmament measures and their irreversibility.

Mr. President, it has always been difficult to agree on an outcome in NPT Review Conferences. The upcoming Review Conference will be no exception. However, the real test of the value and success of the Treaty is the real-life implementation of the norms it establishes. The Treaty and the States parties to it have been successful so far, but we can, and we must, do better still.

We can – and we shall – have a successful review conference with a forward-looking outcome. It takes hard work and a strong will to compromise to overcome differences. It takes your diplomatic skills, Ambassadors. You will be key players in New York in May. It is a great challenge. It is a great opportunity. Let us all shoulder our responsibility and make the NPT Review Conference a success. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President: I thank His Excellency Mr. Haavisto for his statement. Allow me now to suspend this meeting for a short moment in order to escort Mr. Haavisto from the Chamber and to welcome our next guest, His Excellency Mr. Ehab Fawzy, Assistant Minister for Multilateral and International Security Affairs of the Arab Republic of Egypt.

The meeting was briefly suspended.

The President: Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to extend a warm welcome to our guest, His Excellency Mr. Ehab Fawzy, Assistant Minister for Multilateral and International Security Affairs of the Arab Republic of Egypt. Thank you, Excellency, for addressing the Conference on Disarmament. You have the floor.

Mr. Fawzy (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): Thank you, Mr. President. I would like to begin by congratulating you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference, in which role I wish you every success. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Permanent Representative of Algeria for all his efforts and the outstanding way in which he administered the work of the Conference. I wish to reaffirm the ongoing support of Egypt for the presidency in its constructive efforts towards the adoption of a comprehensive and balanced programme of work for the Conference on Disarmament. My country hopes that the 2020 session will successfully enable the Conference to resume its effective role, which has been so fundamental in negotiating international treaties and instruments in the field of disarmament.

Mr. President, the Conference on Disarmament is locked in a stalemate that has lasted for more than two decades. During that long period of time, and despite the efforts expended, the Conference has been unable to adopt a programme of work that would enable it to fulfil the role for which it was mandated. This extremely frustrating and unacceptable situation should encourage us all to review the reasons that have led to such an outcome and to redouble our efforts to rectify and alter the current state of affairs in order to preserve the credibility of the Conference, maintain its capacity to assume its responsibility to promote international security and help it to resume its traditional role as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum.

In that context, Egypt fully supports the convening, at the earliest possible opportunity, of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. The session would serve to undertake a comprehensive review of the structure of the multilateral disarmament system and to examine how to find rapid solutions to revitalize that system, taking account of the efforts made by the international community in that connection.

Mr. President, Egypt and other members of the international community have – over long decades, on many occasions and in different settings – been calling for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, in compliance with one of the pillars of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Nonetheless, the concept of nuclear deterrence remains prevalent in the doctrines of certain military alliances, and nuclear weapons continue to be a fundamental pillar of such doctrines for many States, some of which persist in opposing all international efforts to ban nuclear weapons. Moreover, those same States spearhead calls for the nuclear non-proliferation regime to be applied against parties that they feel pose a threat to their strategic interests while overlooking other parties as they act to undermine the universal application of the Treaty. At the same time, 50 years after the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty was signed, the legal obligation enshrined in its article VI is being completely ignored, and this too compromises global peace and security and adds to sources of tension and instability across the world.

Certain nuclear States have put forward the notion that the international political and security environment is not conducive to complete nuclear disarmament. In the view of Egypt, this is a twisted logic. Proceeding towards nuclear disarmament would, of itself, be a major element in a less dangerous security environment and a more stable international situation. Moreover, nuclear disarmament is a legal obligation that must not depend upon political calculations.

For that reason, the issue of nuclear disarmament remains a top priority for the Conference on Disarmament, which needs to work to achieve that goal in a verifiable and non-discriminatory manner. In this context, I would like to draw attention to the international community's growing understanding of the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons and to the undisputed facts in that regard, which have been highlighted by international conferences. There can be no doubt that this growing understanding helped lead the international community to adopt, following negotiations in New York, a non-discriminatory legal instrument: the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Although it is regrettable that this achievement was not made within the framework of the Conference on Disarmament, the Conference must pursue efforts to achieve that same goal by negotiating its own comprehensive treaty on the elimination of nuclear weapons, one that sets out both the time frames to be met and the irrevocable and internationally verifiable progress that must be made.

Egypt believes that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only guarantee against their use or the threat of their use. For as long as the complete elimination of nuclear weapons remains pending, there is an urgent need for a binding, universal, unconditional and irreversible legal instrument that provides effective safeguards in all circumstances to non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or the threat of use of nuclear weapons.

In that context, Egypt also confirms its support for efforts aimed at launching negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material. As the instrument in question must achieve the objectives of both nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation, it must include stockpiles of fissile materials within its scope. An instrument that seeks solely to ban future production is not seen as a priority for Egypt. Such an instrument cannot make a genuine contribution to nuclear disarmament and would merely be a new non-proliferation mechanism aimed at maintaining an unequal status quo.

Egypt attaches particular importance to the development and consolidation of a legal system for the promotion and maintenance of outer space for peaceful activities and its preservation as a common heritage of humankind. The necessary measures must be taken to prevent it becoming a new arena for conflict or an arms race. For many years, Egypt and Sri Lanka have been submitting draft resolutions to the United Nations General Assembly on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. Egypt believes that negotiations on a binding legal instrument to prevent an arms race in outer space are of the utmost importance, particularly given the rise in alarming trends that are paving the way for the weaponization of space.

Mr. President, in recent years, the Middle East has witnessed serious and rapid developments in the spheres of security and politics. All the countries of the region and of the world must act decisively to address those developments and the concomitant threats to regional and global security. Therefore, the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction remains at the top of the list of steps that need to be taken to preserve the security of the region and the well-being of its people. Egypt stands at the forefront of countries calling for this objective to be realized, on the basis of its profound conviction that the way to achieve peace and security in the Middle East is to focus on the concept of collective rather than selective security in order to guarantee the reciprocal interests of all the countries in the region.

The Middle East is a hotbed of regional and international instability, a situation aggravated by the presence there of a State that is not a party to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. We would like to draw attention to the NPT Review Conferences of 1995, 2000 and 2010, which called upon Israel, the only Middle Eastern State that is not yet a party to the Treaty, to accede without delay and to place all its nuclear facilities under comprehensive International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards, in order to guarantee peace, stability and security for all the peoples of the region. Regrettably, the attempt at the 1995 NPT Review Conference to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone failed as did the attempt to implement the decision of the 2010 Review Conference to convene a conference on the Middle East in 2012.

Believing that persistent postponement in the implementation of that decision would only further complicate the NPT review mechanism, and in an attempt to avoid such complications, the Arab Group, with great seriousness and sincerity, presented a draft resolution to the United Nations General Assembly authorizing the Secretary-General to convene, in 2019, a conference on establishing a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East with a view to adopting a legally binding treaty in that regard.

The adoption of that resolution by the international community sent a message regarding its stance on the matter. It was a step upon which Egypt hopes to build by calling on all States to contribute constructively to the sincere and comprehensive process set in motion by the conference. This will serve to strengthen international peace and security, particularly given the clear provisions included in the resolution regarding the principle of consensus and the opportunity for dialogue between all States in the region. All outcomes will be subject to the political will of the States involved and will be consistent with the principle of sovereignty.

In that context, I would like to express my country's appreciation to all those who contributed to the success of the first session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction which, despite all the challenges, was held in November 2019. I would also like to draw attention to the many positive outcomes that emerged from that first session. The most significant of these, from a procedural standpoint, was the presence of all the countries that had been invited, both Middle Eastern States and permanent members of the Security Council, with the exception of just two States whose places remained symbolically empty although the invitation to them still holds good. The States that did participate in the Conference took certain steps to ensure its sustainability. At a substantive level, the participating States underscored their own serious and sincere commitment to work towards achieving the goal of the Conference and establishing a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. The Conference was not used as a platform for launching accusations and criticisms. Quite the contrary, the substantive discussions revealed a sincere feeling on the part of States of ownership of the process, as reflected in the constructive positions they adopted during the meeting. The participating States adopted a political declaration reaffirming their support for the process.

However, it is important to stress that the path before the Conference is not an easy one, given the multiple procedural and substantive challenges it is facing. The most significant of these is how to ensure the participation of all invited States and, having done so, how to ensure that they continue to participate. Another issue revolves around how to address a number of substantive technical issues, particularly as the treaty the process aims

to produce would be the first of its kind in banning weapons of mass destruction of all categories. This requires the international community to stand shoulder to shoulder in its support for the Conference until it has achieved its goal, something which will certainly contribute to security and stability in all the countries of the Middle East and across the world.

Mr. President. Egypt wishes to emphasize its constructive and active engagement in the Conference on Disarmament and looks forward to making further contributions over the course of the various meetings envisaged in this year's agenda. In that regard, Egypt would like to draw particular attention to the 2020 NPT Review Conference, which is due to be held in New York this April or May, and to the second session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, scheduled for November 2020. Thank you Mr. President.

The President: I thank His Excellency Mr. Fawzy for his statement. And allow me to suspend the meeting for a short moment in order to escort Mr. Fawzy from the Chamber and to welcome our next guest, His Excellency Mr. Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba.

The meeting was briefly suspended.

The President: Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to extend my warm welcome to our guest His Excellency Mr. Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba.

(spoke in Spanish)

Thank you very much for addressing the Conference on Disarmament. You have the floor.

Mr. Rodríguez Parrilla (Cuba) *(spoke in Spanish)*: Mr. President, preserving multilateralism and respect for the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law, in an increasingly dangerous and complex international scenario in which our nations face unprecedented challenges to their security and well-being, is essential. We see the spread of plundering wars and the arms race, the intensification of unconventional warfare, acts of aggression, unilateral sanctions, the manipulation and politicization of human rights and disrespect for the right of peoples to self-determination.

The development of new nuclear weapons systems and the modernization of existing forces and stockpiles; strengthening of the role of these weapons in the military defence and security doctrines of the United States, possessor of the largest nuclear stockpiles; the increase in that country's military spending; threats of military intervention; and disregard for international disarmament and arms control commitments are undermining international peace and security and eroding the United Nations disarmament machinery.

In 2018, global military spending amounted to \$1.8 trillion. In 2018, United States military spending grew for the first time since 2010, by 4.6 per cent, to reach \$649 billion. It is alarming that, every year, exorbitant sums are invested in the industry of war, instead of those resources being used to promote peace, combat hunger and poverty and implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In this context, the conduct of the current Government of the United States and its strategy of military domination, whereby it maintains more than 800 military bases and institutions throughout the world, advances plans for the militarization of outer space and cyberspace and makes covert and illegal use of information and communications technology to attack other States, are generating deep concern.

We reject the decision of the Government of the United States to withdraw from the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces Treaty, signed with the Soviet Union in 1987, and from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action – the nuclear deal with the Islamic Republic of Iran. The international community cannot remain passive or silent in the face of the threat represented by the United States Nuclear Posture Review, which lowers the threshold for consideration of the use of nuclear weapons to include response to so-called non-nuclear strategic threats. We urge the Government of the United States to renew the Treaty on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (START) with Russia.

To meet the challenges facing humanity, we stress the importance of preserving disarmament and arms control agreements that are the result of international cooperation and multilateral negotiations, which should have been taken up again in the Conference on Disarmament. This forum is ready to negotiate simultaneously a treaty prohibiting an arms race in outer space and a treaty providing effective security assurances for States that, like Cuba, do not possess nuclear weapons.

Mr. President, Cuba reiterates that the Proclamation of Latin America and the Caribbean as a Zone of Peace, adopted at the Second Summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States in Havana in 2014, remains fully in force at a time of unilateral and interfering policies that seek to destabilize our region and a United States foreign policy that is inspired by the Monroe Doctrine.

We denounce the campaigns against left-wing political forces and leaders and progressive Governments in Latin America and the Caribbean. We reject the unconventional warfare that the United States is waging in an attempt to overthrow the legitimately constituted Government of President Nicolás Maduro Moros in our sister republic, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. The administration of President Donald Trump persists in its attempt to destroy the Cuban Revolution through the economic suffocation of our people.

Today, more than ever, it is essential for States to heed our call to refrain from exerting pressure on or coercing others, including by applying or promoting unilateral measures of a coercive nature, contrary to international law.

Mr. President, we reaffirm the irrevocable commitment of Cuba to multilateralism and to efforts to advance towards a democratic, fair and equitable international order that responds to the demand of all peoples for peace and sustainable development. That world will be possible only if we struggle together to achieve it.

I conclude by recalling Fidel Castro Ruz, Commander-in-Chief of the Cuban Revolution and a tireless fighter for peace and disarmament, who in April 2016 stated that “The greatest danger hanging over the Earth today derives from the destructive power of modern weaponry, which could undermine the peace of the planet and make human life impossible on the Earth’s surface”.

Let us work tirelessly for general and complete disarmament, especially nuclear disarmament, let us save succeeding generations from the scourge of war and let us achieve a lasting and sustainable peace for all. Thank you very much.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you, Mr. Rodríguez Parrilla, for your statement.

(*spoke in English*)

Allow me now to suspend this meeting for a brief moment in order to escort His Excellency Mr. Rodríguez Parrilla from the Chamber. Our next guest, His Excellency Mr. Fabio Marzano, Ambassador and Vice-Minister for Sovereignty and Citizenship of Brazil, will address the Conference on Disarmament at 4.30 p.m. The meeting is suspended until then.

The meeting was suspended at 3.45 p.m. and resumed at 4.30 p.m.

The President: Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to extend a warm welcome to our guest, His Excellency Mr. Fabio Marzano, Ambassador and Vice-Minister for Sovereignty and Citizenship of Brazil. Thank you, Excellency, for addressing the Conference on Disarmament. You have the floor.

Mr. Marzano (Brazil): Thank you, Mr. President. Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. I am very happy to be here again, after a year. Allow me first to congratulate you, Ambassador Foradori, on your role in the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. We are confident that you will successfully carry out the work of the Conference and of this high-level segment in view of your well-known diplomatic skills as Permanent Representative of Argentina. Through you, I would also like to congratulate the members of the group of the year’s six Presidents for the coordinated and exemplary action which they have been carrying out this year.

Mr. President, when Brazil acceded to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), we took into account its potential to achieve the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons after the end of the cold war era. The Treaty's legislative approval in Brazil took place bearing in mind that the nuclear arms race was terminating and that the world was finally moving towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons. How naive we were! Unfortunately, those expectations have still not been fulfilled.

In this sense, we emphasize that the indefinite extension of the Treaty in 1995 cannot be understood as a licence for the perennial possession of nuclear weapons. The NPT Review Conferences of 2000 and 2010 succeeded in achieving positive outcomes and in offering some hope that real progress was under way. The bleak scenario that ensued in the last five years should not prevent us from adopting a bold view while approaching the upcoming conference, in less than three months. The 2020 Review Conference should be an opportunity for reaffirming and moving beyond previous commitments. And that should be our gauge of progress and of success.

The implementation of article VI by nuclear-weapon States is a condition *sine qua non* for the future of the Treaty. Brazil views two other legally binding instruments as important means on the road map towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons. Firstly, we call upon annex 2 countries to ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, as a treaty with more than a quarter of a century of existence cannot remain in legal limbo. The high costs of maintaining the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization weigh on developing countries and may become to be seen as meaningless, apart from the fact that the Treaty is essentially an incomplete non-proliferation treaty, as it does not ban subcritical testing.

Brazil believes that halting the enrichment of fissile material for nuclear weapons and explosive devices may achieve only feeble progress, or no progress at all, in the pursuit of the goal of nuclear disarmament if we do not address the issue of existing stockpiles. Yet, as I stated in this very body last year, we are ready to shift gears on a fissile material treaty. In order to bridge positions, we reaffirm our 2010 proposal to this committee on a framework agreement approach to fissile materials, underpinned by two protocols dealing with existing and future stocks, respectively.

Brazil actively supported the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which is an unambiguous statement of the intolerable humanitarian consequences of any use or detonation of nuclear weapons. The Treaty complements and is consistent with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and is the ultimate expression of all commitments in the architecture of nuclear disarmament. The entry into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons will soon constitute the new gold standard for nuclear disarmament.

Furthermore, the proponents of the Treaty already abide by obligations equivalent in scope as non-nuclear-weapon States under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and within the umbrella of the nuclear-weapon-free zone agreements to which they are parties. We are waiting for nuclear-weapon States and nuclear-possessor States to provide in exchange corresponding full negative security assurances without conditions or interpretative clauses to the effect that we will not be threatened or attacked with nuclear weapons.

Implementing nuclear agreements presents the practical challenges of verification, as we all know. The Brazilian experts of the Group of Governmental Experts to consider the role of verification in advancing nuclear disarmament submitted a working paper on the establishment of a group of scientific and technical experts on nuclear disarmament verification. The new edition of the Group of Governmental Experts will also consider the issue of a group of scientific and technical experts. The proposal draws inspiration from the Group of Scientific Experts under the Conference on Disarmament between 1976 and 1996 to technically prepare for negotiations on the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

It is important to recall that the Group of Scientific Experts was active at a time when there was no hope of a breakthrough agreement on banning nuclear tests. But its work was fundamental in establishing the foundations for the successful negotiation of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Brazil views the group of scientific and technical experts on nuclear disarmament verification as feasible, proliferation-resistant and instrumental in providing a valuable contribution to the overall goal of nuclear disarmament.

Mr. President, under your presidency, the Argentine presidency of the Conference on Disarmament, I have the honour to bring to the fore the Argentine-Brazilian Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials. The Treaty creating the Agency in 1991 predated our countries' accession to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and laid the ground for close cooperation between our two countries. To extraregional observers, the partnership that we have today may be seen as smooth and even obvious. But observers holding that view are unaware of the transparency that was necessary to overcome past mistrust and occasional tensions over most of the twentieth century. Therefore, we have every reason to be proud of our Agency, as well to believe that our institutional experience could inspire, *mutatis mutandis*, other regions in easing regional tensions involving nuclear components.

Brazil would like to reiterate its support for the United Nations Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament as a notable initiative to recognize, assess and respond to what we can all agree is a deteriorating international security environment. It is a contribution which brings needed encouragement and guidance to the work of the Conference on Disarmament. We must reactivate the core mandate of the Conference – namely, negotiating legally binding instruments that can prevent the world from slipping into a scenario of high-risk, high-stakes strategic confrontation. The flawed idea of permanent and unaccountable military build-ups led by the modernization of nuclear arsenals and their means of delivery cannot achieve strategic stability.

Science and technology are breaking new ground in terms of what is militarily possible. It challenges our post-World War notions of compliance with an ethical and moral bottom line built under the aegis of the United Nations to protect humanity from self-destruction, as reflected in the common acquis of international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

Last week in Brazil, we organized the Rio Seminar on Autonomous Weapons Systems, where we had the pleasure of receiving participants representing Governments, civil society organizations, academia and the private sector to openly discuss the most ethically challenging disarmament issues derived from the weaponization of emerging technologies. We are confident that this first seminar that we organized in Rio, as well as other similar events that may take place this year, will have a positive impact on the discussions in the Group of Governmental Experts related to emerging technologies in the area of lethal autonomous weapons systems. The discussions on those systems have achieved a considerable level of maturity. In the coming months, we should labour in the Group of Governmental Experts with a view to launching negotiations of a legally binding instrument in the form of an additional protocol at the Review Conference of the High Contracting Parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons in 2021.

Brazil believes in preventing the weaponization of outer space and that space should remain solely a territory of peaceful and scientific exploration for the common good of mankind. Outer space is fragile, and the realization of anti-satellite tests can threaten its sustainability. Brazil took note with appreciation of an opening statement in the initial session of the Conference on Disarmament referring to the idea of negotiating a legally binding instrument prohibiting the carrying out of anti-satellite weapons testing. We are open to discussing further features of that idea.

The digitalization of all aspects of modern life places cybersecurity issues at the heart of contemporary security challenges. A Brazilian diplomat is chairing the Group of Governmental Experts on Advancing Responsible State Behaviour in Cyberspace, the second session of which is taking place this very week here in Geneva. We are also actively participating in the Open-ended Working Group on developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security. We are deeply engaged in these initiatives and expect that both of them will have successful outcomes.

The potential weaponization of life science looms as a hazard that would violate one of the greatest taboos in warfare – namely, the use of disease as a weapon. Since the Ebola outbreak in 2014, the international community has been acutely aware of the nefarious humanitarian consequences of a hypothetical bioweapon. The Biological Weapons Convention is an almost universal treaty. It prohibits biological weapons, and no State party to the Convention is currently developing, we believe, a bioweapons programme.

Nevertheless, the ongoing scientific and technological revolution in the life sciences requires a comprehensive strengthening and modernization of the Convention through additional legally binding instruments.

Mr. President, the disarmament machinery as it stands now has allowed for some progress, if far slower than we deem necessary. It seems incapable of keeping up with the challenges of a world order in very fast transformation. With regard to the Conference on Disarmament, we firmly believe that we should improve its functioning so that the Conference can fulfil its core mandate – negotiating legally binding instruments.

Finally, let me commend the tireless efforts of the Algerian presidency and say that we are fully supportive of your endeavours, Mr. President, in moving the Conference towards a negotiation mode. The range of topics to be negotiated is well known and has been long established. It includes the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, a treaty on fissile material for nuclear weapons, the review of nuclear military doctrines, particularly with regard to negative security assurances, progress on other fronts, such as transparency, confidence-building and verification and, ultimately, a comprehensive legal framework to eliminate nuclear weapons. These initiatives have been on the Conference agenda for years and are awaiting an opportunity to be effectively considered. It is our collective responsibility to pursue them with the utmost resolve. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President: I thank His Excellency Mr. Marzano for his statement. Allow me now to suspend this meeting for a moment in order to escort Mr. Marzano from the Chamber and to welcome our next guest, His Excellency Mr. Simon Coveney, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of Ireland.

The meeting was briefly suspended.

The President: Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to extend a warm welcome to our guest, His Excellency Mr. Simon Coveney, Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of Ireland. Thank you, Excellency, for addressing the Conference on Disarmament. You have the floor.

Mr. Coveney (Ireland): First of all, thank you for the opportunity to be here again this year. I can remember last year's session very well. It is an honour to be in Geneva to address the Conference on Disarmament. I was speaking in the Human Rights Council this morning, and I introduced myself by saying it is always a pleasure to be here in Vienna – I was just making sure everybody was listening. But I am delighted to be here, so thank you for the opportunity.

Allow me to begin by congratulating you, Ambassador, on Argentina's assumption of the presidency at this crucial time. I assure you of Ireland's full cooperation and support in undertaking this important role. I would also like to express our gratitude to the Secretary-General of the Conference and to her team for their invaluable support to the work of the Conference.

Mr. President, disarmament is a key driver of peace and security. We have a responsibility to our people, but also to our planet, to make progress on the real challenges that are facing us in this area.

This is the essence also of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. While far from perfect, multilateralism still offers the only real hope for cooperative, constructive engagement and for maintaining peace and security. We know that a focus only on narrow self-interest is not a sustainable approach. It takes courage and leadership to look beyond our national short-term interest. Effective cooperation and engagement on disarmament issues are particularly important in an environment of tension and distrust. We remain firmly convinced that multilateral dialogue and negotiation contributes vitally to our overall goal of peace and security worldwide. That is particularly the case for small countries like mine.

It is therefore deeply regrettable that the Conference on Disarmament has been unable to adopt a programme of work or reach agreement on new membership applications in over twenty years. There is a growing frustration, which I expressed in this chamber last year, that the Conference has been unable to perform its role as the single multilateral disarmament

negotiating body. In the face of significant challenges, the international community must urgently rebuild a common vision for international security and disarmament, and this should involve a reinvigorated and effective Conference on Disarmament.

I commend the six Presidents of the Conference for 2020 for working together to develop a package that will, I hope, result in the Conference's returning to substantive work very soon. Your cooperative approach is a novel one and a necessary one. Let me assure you that Ireland is willing and ready to work with all members to rebuild consensus and fulfil the mandate of this important Conference. I hope that others will play their role, too, and that we can move beyond the difficulties of the last years and take advantage of the real potential that this body has, if people choose to work together.

We should not forget that, over several decades, this Conference has played a central role in promoting the rule of law in disarmament. Among its notable achievements are the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. These achievements have made significant contributions to international disarmament and non-proliferation and to international security and peace. They demonstrate what the Conference is capable of achieving when there is a collective will among its members to work together for the common good.

Mr. President, Ireland is deeply concerned that recent years have seen repeated incidents of chemical weapons use. We have witnessed increasing humanitarian harm as a result of the use of explosive weapons in populated areas – in fact, we are seeing it today – and the mounting threat posed by nuclear weapons, of course.

This situation, coupled with the increasing polarization and politicization of multilateral forums and the failure to implement commitments previously undertaken, should give urgency to our work across all disarmament fields. We must not use heightened tensions in the international environment as an excuse for inaction. Rather, the current situation places a greater moral responsibility on us to reengage with multilateral methods, imperfect as they may be, and frustrating as they may be.

With this in mind, 2020 will be an important year. The Review Conference of Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) takes place in April and May in New York. Ireland is proud of its association with the Treaty, which is one of the major success stories of multilateral diplomacy. The 2020 Review Conference, coming as we mark 50 years of the Treaty, presents an opportunity to celebrate and recommit ourselves to the Treaty and its acquis.

As we celebrate this anniversary, we should remind ourselves that the Treaty came into being at the height of the cold war. This achievement clearly demonstrates that times of heightened tension do not preclude us from making progress or, indeed, reaching consensus. Quite the contrary, in fact: increased security concerns remind us of the urgency of our work to preserve global peace and security; they can and should provide the impetus to reach consensus on our disarmament and non-proliferation goals. We do not accept the notion that progress on disarmament can only be made when the necessary security conditions exist. If we wait for that, it will never happen in reality.

Ireland believes that to ensure a successful outcome in 2020, all States must, as a starting point, reaffirm their commitment to all the consensus-based outcomes we have collectively reached throughout the past five decades. This includes the unequivocal undertaking by the nuclear-weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals.

Ireland will engage actively and constructively at the Review Conference in its national capacity, as well as with the European Union, the New Agenda Coalition, the Vienna Group of 10 and other partners, like-minded or not, to ensure as successful an outcome as possible.

Ireland is proud to have played its part in negotiating the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. The Treaty is fully complementary to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and, for Ireland, gives effect to the disarmament obligations set out in article VI. Ireland completed its domestic legislative process to give effect to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Irish law at the end of last year. We will complete

ratification of the Treaty at the earliest opportunity. I am pleased to note that the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons has to date received 81 signatures and 35 ratifications.

For Ireland, the recognition in the Treaty of the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons is of paramount importance. The Treaty also recognizes the disproportionate impact of ionizing radiation from nuclear weapons on the health of women and girls and the disproportionate impact of nuclear-weapon activities on indigenous peoples.

Ireland firmly believes that the only true guarantee against the horrors of nuclear war is the total elimination of nuclear weapons. And while we recognize that realizing this aim will certainly take time, the prize is certainly worth striving for.

Before concluding, I would like to emphasize the value Ireland attaches to the diversity of voices in disarmament forums. This includes the full and equal participation of women and men in disarmament and security decision-making, and the involvement of youth. I would also emphasize the critical importance of the varied voices of civil society, academia and other stakeholders.

For Ireland, the integration of gender perspectives and issues across all spheres of disarmament is a significant priority. In its role as co-Chair of the International Gender Champions Disarmament Impact Group, Ireland, along with Canada, Namibia, the Philippines and the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research continues to promote efforts to strengthen the application of gender perspectives in multilateral disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control forums.

The Impact Group recently revised and reissued its gender and disarmament resource pack to all Conference presidencies to encourage the application of a gender lens to their work. We were pleased to see that in 2019, a number of States noted the resource pack in their national statements, and we hope that many more will incorporate these important perspectives in their work for the future.

Mr. President, distinguished delegates, the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists' Doomsday Clock is now at 100 seconds to midnight, signifying that the global risk of nuclear war is closer than ever. As the President and Chief Executive Officer of the Bulletin, Rachel Brosnan, has noted, "there is no margin for error or further delay". The time has long since passed for the stagnation of this Conference to end.

There is a clear obligation on all of us to leave behind our differences of opinion and to work together to make progress once more in the interests of all of our peoples and indeed our planet as a whole. Our task has never been more urgent. Thank you for listening.

The President: I thank His Excellency Mr. Coveney for his statement. Allow me now to suspend this meeting for a short moment in order to escort His Excellency from the Chamber and welcome our next guest, Her Excellency Lolwah Rashid Al-Khater, Assistant Foreign Minister and spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the State of Qatar.

The meeting was briefly suspended.

The President: Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to extend a warm welcome to our guest, Her Excellency Ms. Lolwah Rashid Al-Khater, Assistant Foreign Minister and spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the State of Qatar. Thank you, Excellency, for addressing the Conference on Disarmament. You have the floor.

Ms. Al-Khater (Qatar): (*spoke in Arabic*): Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen, I am pleased to be able to address you today on the part of my country's delegation. Please allow me to begin by congratulating the Permanent Representative of Argentina on his assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and by commending Ms. Tatiana Valovaya, Secretary-General of the Conference, for all the efforts she has made. We also welcome the initiative of the six Presidents, which represents a constructive starting point from which to move towards a comprehensive balanced and programme of work, one that will serve to advance the goals for which the Conference on Disarmament was created, first among them that of creating a world free of nuclear weapons.

Mr. President, Qatar is pursuing a firm and unambiguous national policy on disarmament that takes concrete form in its support for peace and its belief in the need to

back all initiatives aimed at global disarmament. This would strengthen international peace and security and liberate a large amount of resources, which are urgently required to promote sustainable development, preserve the environment, prevent nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction from falling into the hands of extremist terrorist groups and eradicate the fear that stains the purity of human existence.

Mr. President, Qatar has acceded to a number of the principal international disarmament treaties and has enacted the domestic legislation necessary to ensure their full implementation. Since it was created in 2004, the National Arms Prohibition Committee has been fulfilling its role by advising government departments on matters related to disarmament and the prohibition of arms, working to achieve the objectives of the relevant international treaties to which Qatar has acceded, and drafting and implementing awareness-raising and educational programmes on various aspects of disarmament.

In addition, the National Arms Prohibition Committee has been working professionally, credibly and transparently to consolidate its ties with other organizations and agencies that work for disarmament, and it has hosted a number of conferences and seminars on the subject of disarmament in coordination with the Doha Regional Centre for Training on the Conventions on Weapons of Mass Destruction, which opened its doors in December 2012 and is the first body of its kind in the Middle East and Asia.

Mr. President, in the light of the paralysis that has been affecting the Conference on Disarmament for more than two decades we, like many other member and non-member States of the Conference, believe that it is time to review the possibility of expanding the membership in order to make it more effective, more representative and more in keeping with the Conference's own rules of procedure.

On the subject of examining the membership at regular intervals, we urge all member States to overcome their political differences and to appoint a special rapporteur for the expansion of the membership of the Conference. In that connection, Qatar reaffirms its own desire to become a member State of the Conference on Disarmament and notes that it sent a request to that effect to the Conference secretariat in June 2012. Indeed, Qatar believes in the important role the Conference can play in the future by building on the treaties and other past successes it has achieved in the field of disarmament.

Mr. President, the 2020 Review Conference the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons will be an opportunity for States parties unambiguously to reaffirm their commitment to that historic Treaty by promoting its goals and pursuing nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. It will also be a chance to continue efforts to establish a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, in line with the obligations and responsibilities of the international community, particularly the States that sponsored the 1995 resolution, which have an obligation to implement the resolutions of the 2010 Review Conference and other relevant resolutions.

Qatar believes that the international community today, in the light of existing regional and international tensions, has serious need for this resolution to be implemented as a necessary step towards making the comprehensive safeguards system universal. In addition, the creation of such a zone would be a way to address the problem of nuclear proliferation comprehensively at a regional level. In fact, the practice of dealing with each country individually has been shown to be selective and discriminatory and a cause of regional power imbalances. The failure of efforts to rid the Middle East of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, in accordance with the 1995 resolution, has an underlying link to the indefinite extension of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and will have an impact on the credibility of the Treaty, on the review process and on the entire non-proliferation regime. It would also call into doubt the intention of nuclear States to create a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, and thereby increase tension and instability and hinder the Middle East region from achieving peace and pursuing sustainable development. For that reason, I wish to underscore the relevance of the conference held under the presidency of Jordan in November 2019, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 73/546, and to express our hope that efforts to achieve the desired goal will continue, thereby contributing to the consolidation of international peace and security.

Mr. President, Qatar stresses the legitimate right of all States, particularly developing States, to make peaceful use of nuclear energy. The development of peaceful nuclear energy programmes, must follow the standards and procedures laid down by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and take place under the Agency's supervision, just as it must adhere to the comprehensive safeguards system, which is the principal legal instrument with which to verify the peaceful nature of nuclear activities and to guarantee the highest standards of safety.

Lastly, Qatar wishes to reaffirm its ongoing commitment and support for disarmament and international security and its intention to fulfil all its obligations in that regard in order to further peace and security at both the regional and the international level.

The President: I thank Her Excellency Ms. Al-Khater for her statement. Allow me now to suspend this meeting for a short moment in order to escort Her Excellency from the Chamber.

The meeting was briefly suspended.

The President: Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to invite His Excellency Mr. Pankaj Sharma, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of India to the Conference on Disarmament, to address the Conference.

Mr. Sharma (India): India congratulates you, Mr. President, on chairing this high-level segment, which falls during your presidency of the Conference on Disarmament, and assures you of the full support and cooperation of its delegation. India and Argentina enjoy close bilateral relations. It is therefore an added pleasure to see you in the Chair. We have been privileged to listen to a number of high dignitaries today.

The Conference on Disarmament has so far not been able to adopt a programme of work, in spite of the extensive joint efforts undertaken by the six Presidents of the 2020 session, the last President of the 2019 session and the first President of the 2021 session. We hope that with your able leadership and guidance, the Conference will soon be able to adopt a decision to advance its substantive work.

Mr. President, Dr. S. Jaishankar, External Affairs Minister of India, in his remarks at the Munich Security Conference earlier this month, emphasized that multilateralism can be strengthened by creative diplomacy and plurilateral understanding and that multilateralism should be recognized, preserved and protected. India's approach to the Conference on Disarmament is predicated precisely on this vision.

The Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament noted that "the attainment of the objective of security, which is an inseparable element of peace, has always been one of the most profound aspirations of humanity". In this context, it emphasized that disarmament had become an imperative and the most urgent task facing the international community. This aspiration and the urgency of disarmament are as relevant today as they were more than four decades ago at the time of the founding of the disarmament triad in the form of the Conference on Disarmament, the Disarmament Commission and the First Committee. We hope that the Disarmament Commission will be able to resume its formal session this year and fulfil its mandate.

India attaches high importance to the Conference on Disarmament as the world's single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, as mandated by the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament and reaffirmed most recently in General Assembly resolution 74/74.

Annually, since the time of the "decadologue", the Conference has adopted an important agenda that deals with some of the most critical disarmament and international security challenges facing the international community. In this framework, India has been advocating a comprehensive and balanced programme of work to enable the Conference to commence negotiations on all the core issues on the agenda.

For its part, India remains steadfastly committed to the goal of universal, non-discriminatory and verifiable nuclear disarmament and has called for complete elimination of nuclear weapons through a step-by-step process, as also outlined in its working paper on nuclear disarmament, submitted to the Conference in 2007 (document CD/1816). India would

like to reiterate its call to undertake the steps outlined in the working paper, including negotiation in the Conference of a comprehensive nuclear weapons convention, as also called for by the Group of 21. India has also been tabling an annual resolution in the General Assembly on a convention on the prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons since 1982, which enjoys wide support of the membership. Similarly, conscious of the grave dangers posed by unintentional or accidental use of nuclear weapons, India has consistently drawn the attention of the world for over two decades through its annual General Assembly resolution on reducing nuclear danger and the need to take steps to address it.

As a responsible nuclear-weapon State, India is committed, per its nuclear doctrine, to maintaining credible minimum deterrence with the posture of no first use and non-use against non-nuclear-weapon States. We are prepared to convert these undertakings into multilateral legal arrangements to be further negotiated in the Conference.

Without diminishing the priority it attaches to disarmament, India has supported the immediate commencement of negotiations in the Conference of a fissile material cut-off treaty on the basis of document CD/1299 and the mandate contained therein, which remains the most suitable basis for the commencement of negotiations, as also endorsed by the Group of Governmental Experts on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices and the high-level fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT) expert preparatory group.

Commensurate with the importance that it attaches to nuclear disarmament verification, India participated in the Group of Governmental Experts to consider the role of verification in advancing nuclear disarmament and has also supported further consideration of the issue through the establishment of another group of governmental experts.

The prevention of an arms race in outer space is another issue of critical importance. India maintains that the work of the Group of Governmental Experts on further effective measures for the prevention of an arms race in outer space, concluded in March 2019, can serve as a useful basis for future discussions for negotiation of legally binding instruments as well as transparency and confidence-building measures. We hope that substantive work on these issues will begin soon, so as to enable the Conference on Disarmament to commence negotiation of a legally binding instrument on this issue.

Mr. President, one of the gravest threats to international peace and security, as also highlighted by several member States and the United Nations Secretary-General, is posed by illicit transfers of conventional weapons, including small arms and light weapons, in particular to terrorists and non-State actors. The United Nations Register of Conventional Arms serves as an important tool in this context, and we are pleased to note the successful outcome of the Group of Governmental Experts on the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms in 2019. We look forward to participating in the Seventh Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects later this year. India will also participate constructively in the discussions by the Group of Governmental Experts on lethal autonomous weapons systems to explore and agree on possible recommendations based on the 11 guiding principles which have been supported by consensus in the Group.

India shares the recognition by the international community of the implications of the scientific and technological developments for international security and disarmament. To advance shared understanding on the issue, India has been tabling a resolution to this effect, which has been adopted without a vote, in the First Committee. In this context, India, along with Germany, Qatar and Switzerland, supported the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research in organizing a one-day focused seminar on this subject in August last year here in Geneva.

Having faced the scourge of terrorism for several decades, India is deeply aware of the perilous consequences of the transfer of weapons of mass destruction to non-State actors and terrorists. India continues to highlight the need for measures to prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction through its consensus resolution annually tabled at the General Assembly since 2002.

Mr. President, India firmly believes in the crucial and positive contribution that the younger generation can make to international peace and security. Cognizant of the need for disarmament and non-proliferation education, India hosted, in January 2020, young disarmament diplomats from across the world for the second edition of the annual Disarmament and International Security Affairs Fellowship Programme.

Mr. President, India believes that the only way to prevent and effectively resolve the conflicts that we face today is through dialogue based on mutual trust and understanding. We need to work together to find common ground to enable this Conference to negotiate legally binding instruments, a role entrusted to it by its founders. India stands ready to work with fellow member States in this collective endeavour. I thank you, Mr. President.

The President: I thank His Excellency Mr. Sharma for his statement. Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to invite His Excellency Mr. Yury Ambrazevich, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Belarus to the United Nations and Other International Organizations in Geneva, to address the Conference on Disarmament. Thank you, Excellency, for addressing the Conference. The floor is yours.

Mr. Ambrazevich (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen, the Belarusian delegation is delighted to congratulate the distinguished Ambassador of Argentina on his assumption of the presidency and assure him of our full support. We would also like to express our gratitude to the distinguished Ambassador of Algeria for his efforts in preparing and promoting the package of documents aimed at unblocking the work of the Conference on Disarmament.

As a member of the group of Presidents of this session, Belarus supports the approach taken this year of joint work by the Presidents, which we believe has already demonstrated its effectiveness in the first weeks of the Conference. We intend to continue making every effort to create an atmosphere of fruitful dialogue, in order to restore the viability and revitalize the work of this sole multilateral disarmament mechanism that is the Conference.

We regret the fact that, until now, despite all the efforts made, the Conference has still not been able to adopt a programme of work. This has meant that efforts to unblock our forum and move to substantive work remain unsuccessful. Meanwhile, the need for such a move has become decidedly urgent.

We are unfortunately forced to remark that we continue to see a steady deterioration in the international security system and its key components. Belarus is concerned by the effective dismantling of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, which has resulted in a significant increase in the risks and threats posed by the reappearance in Europe of an entire class of delivery systems that was previously prohibited by international law.

Equally concerning are the negative signals we are receiving concerning the extension of the Russian-American Treaty on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms and the prospects for the Treaty on Open Skies. There are justified concerns about the outcomes of the 2020 Review Conference.

A worrying tendency has emerged for States to be drawn into an arms race in outer space. With new weapons and delivery systems being produced, it is necessary to assess the influence of technological progress on the likelihood that new types of weapons of mass destruction or new types of weapons of comparable power will be invented.

All these trends confirm the need for an immediate start to comprehensive and holistic negotiations to resolve the whole range of disagreements in the field of international security. In our view, the Conference with its unique mandate must be the forum that addresses this task.

I would like to reiterate the point that, to achieve an updated and balanced agenda, the time has come for the Conference to end its practice of dividing its activities into core issues and other items. The new challenges and threats considered under agenda items 5, 6 and 7 should be considered on an equal footing with nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation, negative security assurances and the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

In current conditions, it is impossible to ignore the growing threat that malicious use will be made by State and non-State actors of new developments in science and technology,

including in the fields of synthetic biology, cyberthreats, autonomous weapons systems and artificial intelligence. In this respect, the proposals we made last year on possible action for the Conference along these lines remain relevant.

It would therefore be appropriate for the Conference to request that the Secretary-General of the United Nations prepare a comprehensive report on the risks and challenges that new technologies pose to international security and non-proliferation.

We believe that practical benefits can be drawn from studying and systematizing national best practices from various States regarding the potential consideration of risks and challenges to international security and non-proliferation posed by new technologies, with a view to formulating rules or principles of conduct to prevent the malicious use of new developments in science and technology. We consider it equally important to study and systematize national measures taken to counter the attempts of non-State actors to obtain weapons of mass destruction in order to develop harmonized principles.

Belarus is making proactive efforts to develop this subject. An international high-level conference on counter-terrorism and the use of new and emerging technologies was held in Minsk in September 2019. The conference was organized jointly by Belarus and the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism. During the conference, three plenary sessions were held on preventing the misuse of new technologies and artificial intelligence by terrorists, innovative use of new technologies to strengthen detection capacity and development of national, regional and international approaches to address the misuse of new technologies and artificial intelligence by terrorists.

The initiative of Belarus concerning the adoption by the General Assembly of a resolution on prohibition of the development and manufacture of new types of weapons of mass destruction and new systems of such weapons also remains timely. We intend to submit a draft resolution on this subject for consideration by the First Committee at the seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly. We call on you to support our draft resolution in New York.

We emphasize that Belarus does not shy away from the problem we mentioned earlier of the erosion of the regime that prohibits certain categories of weapons and delivery systems, which has dealt a serious blow to security in Europe and the world as a whole. In this regard, our delegation would like to draw your attention to an initiative to draft and adopt a declaration on the non-deployment of intermediate-range missiles in Europe. The development of such an instrument could help fill the legal vacuum left by the collapse of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, restore trust and strengthen security on the European continent and throughout the world. These measures could be a first step towards a universal ban on this type of missile.

In 2020, Belarus will preside over the Fourteenth Conference of the High Contracting Parties to Protocol V to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects. One of the duties of the President is to promote universalization of this international instrument. I would like to take this opportunity to call on all States members of the Conference on Disarmament who are not parties to Protocol V to look favourably on acceding to this important instrument, which ensures protection for civilians, the security of future generations and sustainable development.

The need to put an end to the degradation of our Conference and return it to substantive work is obvious. To achieve this, we must first of all adopt a programme of work. The past weeks have shown that this goal is absolutely achievable. I am therefore once again calling on the delegations to demonstrate a constructive approach and a desire to move forward in our joint work.

The President: Thank you, Ambassador, for your statement. I now give the floor to Ambassador Han Tae-song of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, who wishes to exercise his right of reply.

Mr. Han Tae-song (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) Thank you, Mr. President, for giving me the floor. First of all, I would congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. You can be assured of our full support and cooperation. I know you are the holder of a third-degree black belt in

taekwondo. With the spirit of the sportsman, you are working very hard to reach an agreement on a programme of work for the Conference. I appreciate that.

Mr. President, this is my right of reply to the remarks by some delegates, including from South Korea, to my country. I can understand their concern, but it is quite regrettable and deplorable that they think they must mention the Korean issue as if they were addicted to it, although they do not know the reality of the Korean issue.

As is well known, after the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and United States summit in Singapore in June 2018, the international community had great expectations for the implementation of the agreement, which could lead to peace and security on the Korean Peninsula as well as in the region and the world. With the attention of the international community, there were two more rounds of summit meetings and several rounds of working-level negotiations between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States. As agreed and promised at the summit meeting, my country declared a moratorium on testing nuclear deterrents and on launches of intercontinental ballistic missiles. No tests were carried out, and the nuclear testing site was even dismantled. And we also returned the remains of American soldiers who died in the Korean War.

However, the United States responded by not implementing the agreement and continuing joint military exercises on our doorstep. It has been bringing modern and sophisticated military equipment into South Korea and talking about maximum pressure through strengthening and increasing the inhuman sanctions against my country. My country was cheated and betrayed by the United States, which had never abandoned its hostility to my country and never had any true intention to help ensure peace and security on the Korean Peninsula.

This is the reality. No progress was made. If the United States does not abandon its hostile policy against my country, it cannot expect anything. If you are cheated and betrayed by your counterpart in a negotiation or dialogue, there is no need to ask yourself what to do. Therefore, I would like to advise that the countries in this chamber, if we are really concerned about peace and security on the Korean Peninsula, first try to understand the reality and the main root cause of the issue. And instead of saying anything, you should ask or at least advise the United States to abandon its long-standing and unchanging hostility to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Maybe some more delegates will mention the issue again tomorrow or thereafter, but they have to know that doing so simply reveals their political ignorance of the Korean issue.

As for the remarks by South Korea on the so-called peace initiative on the Korean Peninsula – which, far from reality, is a useless attempt to show it can do something – the world knows that South Korea cannot do anything without United States approval of issues related to inter-Korean relations, as has been shown on many occasions. If South Korea really wants peace and security on the Korean Peninsula, it has to first stop blindly following the hostile policy of the United States against the North instead of advertising the so-called inter-Korean peace initiative, which is so unrealistic, and begging for diplomatic support from other countries, as the South Korean Foreign Minister did during the Munich Security Conference held over ten days ago.

The President: Thank you for your statement, Ambassador. I now give the floor to the representative of Turkey.

Mr. Güneş (Turkey): Thank you very much indeed, Mr. President. Since this is the first time that my delegation has taken the floor under your presidency, we would like to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. You can count on our support. Taking this opportunity, we would also like to thank you for the revised draft texts. We are considering them positively.

Mr. President, I briefly took the floor to inform the Conference that we will utilize our right of reply at the end of the high-level segment. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President: Thank you, Sir. I now give the floor to the representative of the Republic of Korea.

Ms. Choi Soonhee (Republic of Korea): I thank you, Mr. President. I am taking the floor to respond, very briefly, to the statement made by the Ambassador of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, our northern brother.

Bearing in mind the goal of the complete denuclearization and the establishment of lasting peace on the Korean Peninsula, agreed by the leaders of the two Koreas and the United States, my Government will continue to exert diplomatic efforts to foster early resumption of negotiations between the United States and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and achieve substantial progress on denuclearization. Furthermore, we will further enhance inter-Korean cooperation as we continue to work towards successful negotiations between the United States and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, as my Minister stated in this morning's session, and implement thoroughly the military confidence-building measures as agreed between the two Koreas.

The President: Thank you for your statement, Madam. I give the floor to Ambassador Han Tae-song of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Mr. Han Tae-song (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Thank you. Sorry for taking the floor again, but, as for the remarks by the South Korean delegate, I have to say something. As I said already, the South Koreans cannot do anything without American approval. We already have expressed our position about a dialogue and negotiations with America. If there is no change of position, or if the Americans do not abandon their hostile policy against my country, we are cheated and betrayed by our American counterparts in dialogue. We are cheated and betrayed. How can we trust them? What can we expect from them? If negotiations continue, then that means continuation of the betrayal and the cheating. That is what we expect. I do not know how South Korea, as a third party, can help, how it can solve such problems. The South Koreans should know what position they are now in.

The President: Thank you, Ambassador. I give the floor to the representative of the United States of America.

Ms. Plath (United States of America): Thank you, Mr. President. I am so sorry I have to wade into this unfortunate argument so late in the afternoon, but I have never heard someone complain that they have been cheated and betrayed so many times in one intervention.

Frankly, the only people who have been "cheated and betrayed" are the people of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the people of the Republic of Korea and the people of the entire region, who have been misled and indeed lied to by the Administration of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which has failed to live up to any of its commitments. As always, the United States remains committed to the process that it started in 2018, when the President of the United States last met with North Korea in Singapore, and we remain hopeful that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will abandon its reckless policies of nuclear commitment.

The President: Thank you, Madam. I give the floor to Ambassador Han Tae-song of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Mr. Han Tae-song (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Sorry for taking the floor again. As for the remarks by the representative of the United States, I think they are an attempt to cheat all the people in this chamber. As I said already, we declared a moratorium on testing of nuclear deterrents and launches of intercontinental ballistic missiles. We also dismantled the nuclear site. And then we returned the remains of the American soldiers who died in the Korean War. That was agreed at the Singapore summit meeting.

We showed our sincerity. We really want the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. But what did they do? They did nothing. Worse than nothing, they responded with the continuation of the joint military exercises, bringing modern, sophisticated military equipment into South Korea and strengthening sanctions. They are talking about maximum pressure. It is quite clear who did not live up to its commitments. I do not know how they can say they are living up to their commitments and we are not. It is so surprising! If they really want peace and security on the Korean Peninsula, they have to abandon their hostile policy against my country; otherwise, as I said already, we cannot do anything.

The President: Thank you. I now give the floor to the representative of the United States of America.

Ms. Plath (United States of America): Thank you for giving me the floor one last time. I would appreciate it if the delegate of North Korea could please clarify for me what exactly he is referring to when he refers to the “hostile policy” of the United States that he would like us to abandon, because I have actually been hearing this term now, since we started the session this year; the “hostile policy” of the United States is new terminology that my delegation or my Government had not previously heard or had a fulsome explanation of.

The President: Thank you, Madam. I now give the floor to Ambassador Han Tae-song of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea.

Mr. Han Tae-song (Democratic People’s Republic of Korea): I think I can clarify in many ways about the hostile policy by the United States. The continuation of the joint military exercises on the doorstep of my country, threatening my country – that is one of the hostile policies. The second one: maximum pressure. They are talking about maximum pressure through increasing and strengthening sanctions. When high-level delegations of America visit other countries, they say openly, “You have to reduce the level of diplomacy with the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea”, and then we have to lower the diplomatic level and then also you reduce the number of diplomats in those countries. That is hostile policy. That is not a friendly policy.

The President: Thank you, Ambassador. Would any other delegation like to take the floor at this moment? It seems not. This concludes our business for today. The next meeting of the Conference on Disarmament will take place tomorrow, Tuesday, 25 February, at 10.15 a.m.

On the request of a number of countries that needed some other consultations about the proposal that we are submitting, and after a meeting of the six Presidents of the 2020 session, we decided to table this document on Thursday morning. And tomorrow we will have distinguished guests from Croatia, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, Greece, Japan, Romania, Estonia and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

This meeting is adjourned.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.