

Conference on Disarmament

English

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

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President: Mr. Germán Edmundo Proffen..... (Argentina)

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The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Good morning. I call to order the 1538th meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. Distinguished colleagues, we begin this morning's meeting with the continuation of the high-level segment of the Conference. Please allow me now to suspend the meeting to welcome our distinguished guest, His Excellency Mr. Pham Quang Hieu, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Viet Nam. The meeting is suspended.

The meeting was briefly suspended.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The meeting is resumed. Distinguished colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to extend a warm welcome to our distinguished guest, His Excellency Mr. Pham Quang Hieu, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Viet Nam. Thank you, Your Excellency, for coming to address the Conference on Disarmament. You have the floor, Sir.

Mr. Pham Quang Hieu (Viet Nam): Thank you, Mr. President, for giving me the floor. It is my pleasure to take the floor for the first time in the Conference on Disarmament: one of the most important forums in the global disarmament machinery.

As the world enters the second decade of the twenty-first century, we in the international community are witnessing rapid and complex changes in the global security context. Disarmament and non-proliferation continue to be among the most daunting challenges that the world faces today. We are deeply concerned about recent departures from global disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control mechanisms, and the current status of adherence to those mechanisms, which may further deteriorate as a result of new developments in the global security landscape.

At this difficult time, the Conference continues to be the sole negotiating forum on disarmament with the participation of both nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon States. During its existence, the Conference has succeeded in developing the current disarmament regime, thus demonstrating the role of multilateralism in bridging differences and finding substantive solutions to global security challenges. It is unfortunate that this important body has suffered an impasse for more than two decades and it is urgent that the member States reach consensus on the programme of work and begin discussions on substantive issues. For that reason, we welcome the proposal by the Presidents of the Conference of a revised package based on the Conference's previous work. We are ready to engage actively and meaningfully with the President and the member States to reach consensus on the programme of work in order to move the discussions forward.

The consistent policy of Viet Nam is to support all efforts towards general and complete disarmament and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear weapons. We are a party to all major multilateral agreements on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, including the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and, most recently, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

Viet Nam became a member State of the Conference in 1995 and has actively contributed to its work since then. We have assumed the presidency of the Conference on three occasions, most recently in June 2019. During this recent presidency, Viet Nam invited the Secretary-General of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations to address the Conference for the first time, outlining regional nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation efforts – such as the conclusion of the Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone – and highlighting how regional organizations might play a larger role in the international peace and security landscape. We also took the initiative to hold panel discussions on each of the four core items of the Conference's agenda. We believe that such discussions are important to stay abreast of emerging challenges and processes in these areas.

It is of the utmost importance that the Conference agrees to give new impetus to the global disarmament and non-proliferation mechanisms. The upcoming 2020 NPT Review Conference affords an ideal opportunity to do so. This April marks the fiftieth anniversary of the NPT, which has become the cornerstone of global disarmament. The Treaty has safeguarded progress in allowing the peaceful advancement of nuclear technology for global development, while at the same time reducing the risk of nuclear proliferation to the

detriment of human life. The upcoming Review Conference is an important reminder of the Treaty's historical importance and of the need to foster consensus to achieve further progress in the full and balanced implementation of all pillars of the Treaty.

In this vein, I would like to stress our unwavering support for the NPT and the importance of the full and balanced implementation of the Treaty's three pillars, including ensuring the right of States to use nuclear technology for peaceful purposes. We emphasize the need for greater determination to assure security for non-nuclear-weapon States, in particular through agreements on nuclear-weapon-free zones. In this regard, we attach great importance to the accession of the five nuclear-weapon States to the Protocol to the Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone with a view to the effective implementation of this treaty. We support the role of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in strengthening the global disarmament framework and are ready to contribute actively and positively to the success of the 2020 NPT Review Conference in April.

As the Chair of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in 2020 and as a non-permanent member of the Security Council for the term 2020–2021, Viet Nam has made disarmament and non-proliferation one of its priorities in working towards regional and international peace and security. We are ready to work with the member States of the Conference and other partners to contribute to a sustainable peace and a sustainable future for all nations. Thank you very much.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank you for your statement, Sir. Allow me now briefly to suspend the meeting so that I can accompany the Minister from the Chamber.

The meeting was briefly suspended.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The meeting is resumed. I have a couple of things to say regarding how we are going to proceed. First, I would like to say a few words on the topic of the fiftieth anniversary of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. I will then give the floor to the Ambassadors of Germany and France for a presentation on the nuclear disarmament verification initiative, after which a few delegations have asked for the floor, including Morocco and Austria. If any other delegation would like to take the floor, I will of course give them the opportunity to do so.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, today we celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the entry into force of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. This is a special opportunity for us all to renew our commitment to the full implementation and strengthening of the Treaty. We are aware that the next review conference comes at a time of growing concern. National and regional expectations are being raised. The international challenges we face cannot be ignored. At the same time, it is vital that the Conference find solid ground on which to make progress on all issues covered by the Treaty. To that end, Argentina, as represented by the President of the Review Conference, Ambassador Zlauvinen, will encourage all parties to participate in the Review Conference with the ambition and determination to achieve progress wherever possible.

The fiftieth anniversary of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty is an opportunity not only to review its implementation but also to renew our commitment to its objectives by working towards peace, security and development in all our countries. A comprehensive review of the Treaty's implementation is necessary and indispensable for international cooperation as a whole and for the progress of our countries towards peaceful uses of nuclear science and technology. Argentina will strive to provide the necessary leadership and collaboration so as to ensure a successful outcome to talks between the parties.

I now give the floor to the Ambassadors of Germany and France.

Mr. Beerwerth (Germany): Thank you, Mr. President. Indeed, on the strength of what you have just said, I think it is timely that my distinguished colleague from France and I make this presentation today. Our presentation will include a video on a verification exercise that took place last year in the western German city of Jülich.

Mr. President, colleagues, one of the few commonalities observed during last week's high-level segment of the Conference on Disarmament was the assessment that the

international arms control and disarmament architecture is under severe strain. There was also an expectation that in the current context, pragmatic, practical and realistic steps are needed to rebuild trust and create positive momentum in international political processes, including in the Conference. For the moment, our focus is on facilitating a productive and positive outcome to the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). We believe that effective verification of nuclear disarmament could be a crucial element for building confidence and trust among and between nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapons States and would thus facilitate future treaty implementation.

For many years, Germany has seen itself as a bridge-builder between nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States. This role pertains not only to nuclear disarmament verification, but also includes participation in initiatives such as the Stockholm Initiative on Nuclear Disarmament and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative and the Deep Cuts project. We believe that our close collaboration with our French partners and friends could be an example of the kind of pragmatism, constructive thinking and goodwill that is needed to improve the current international security, arms control and disarmament context.

We hope that the input we can provide through the positive experiences and lessons learned from the joint Franco-German nuclear disarmament verification (NuDiVe) exercise – organized in the framework of the well-established International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification – will enable more constructive dialogue in the NPT community and future nuclear disarmament processes in this Conference. We consider this exercise to be an important part of our efforts to technically facilitate and improve nuclear disarmament verification as a practical and tangible contribution to nuclear disarmament efforts.

The exercise we are going to present today brought together experts and Government representatives from 13 countries. It showed that both nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States can contribute to nuclear disarmament verification and thus increase the legitimacy and reliability of verification activities. Through the creation of a highly realistic scenario, inspection procedures and modalities, including the use of surrogate radioactive material, we hope to convince sceptics that nuclear verification, through this transparent science-based approach, is feasible.

So far, existing nuclear arms control or disarmament regimes have focused on the carrier systems of nuclear weapons (missiles, aircrafts or submarines). They neither regulate nor verify the dismantlement of nuclear warheads. The NuDiVe approach focused for the first time on nuclear warhead dismantlement as the crucial phase in any disarmament process. This is the moment when non-proliferation and national security concerns have to be brought into a sensitive balance. The exercise showed that this is possible.

The fundamental question we asked was: how can non-nuclear-weapon States participate in the verification of nuclear disarmament without gaining sensitive knowledge of nuclear weapons? We all know that there are two critical parts of nuclear warhead dismantlement: disabling the warhead mechanism and removing the fissile material. The NuDiVe exercise did not simulate the actual dismantling of a nuclear warhead, but rather the inspection procedures needed to ensure the non-diversion of fissile material during dismantlement. The exercise focused on furthering our knowledge of the specific aspects that need to be considered to verify dismantlement, while respecting non-proliferation, safety and security obligations and additional national security constraints.

For the sake of transparency, detailed reports from the inspection team, the host team and the evaluation team were published. The experts involved in the exercise will present these reports in detail here in Geneva in mid-March. We hope that the lessons learned in the NuDiVe exercise will further advance our collective understanding in building effective verification measures.

Before we watch the video, I would like to briefly outline the scenario that was devised. As I have said, the objective was to verify non-diversion. The scenario assumed the existence of a multilateral treaty signed by all NPT nuclear-weapon States and a

significant number of non-nuclear-weapon States with the ultimate goal of reducing nuclear arsenals to 50 weapons. This treaty had a verification protocol providing for three types of inspections: baseline inspections, inventory inspections and dismantlement inspections. In this exercise, we conducted a dismantlement inspection. The location of the inspection was the fictitious country of Urania. This country, in accordance with its obligations under the treaty, allows all types of inspections. This particular dismantlement inspection was to be carried out in a military complex used for multiple activities related to the monitoring of the nuclear arsenal of Urania.

The exercise was carried out over the course of a whole week. The procedure began with the inspection team inspecting the dismantlement room to ensure that any diversion of fissile material was impossible. A nuclear warhead was then transported into the room and measurements were taken to confirm the existence of fissile material. Warhead dismantlement took place without the physical presence of inspectors and the fissile material was placed in a separate box. Finally, the materials and components that had been taken into the room, including the fissile material, were removed. Measurements were taken again in order to prove that what went in, also came out. With that, I invite you to watch the video.

A video was shown.

Mr. Hwang (France) (*spoke in French*): Thank you, Mr. President. I would like to thank Peter for his presentation on the nuclear disarmament verification (NuDiVe) exercise and to extend my warmest thanks to Germany for having agreed to host this important exercise in Jülich. I hope that the video will have given you all a more concrete idea of what the exercise entailed. Now, let me say a few words about the main lessons to be learned from NuDiVe. As you will know, the objective was to test the conclusions of the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification, in other words to assess the procedures and technologies needed to ensure the non-diversion of nuclear material during the dismantlement of a nuclear warhead. We believe that this objective was clearly achieved. According to the conclusions of the evaluation team, the exercise confirmed the hypotheses of the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification. The inspection procedures were found to be sufficiently complete, robust and satisfactory to detect the diversion of fissile material during dismantlement. The evaluation also identified possible areas for improvement in the inspection procedure and its objectives, as well as in the way the exercise was conducted, all of which will prove useful for the conduct of future exercises.

More generally, the exercise demonstrated the value of practical exercises in developing knowledge about nuclear disarmament verification. NuDiVe was also very rewarding from a national perspective. I would like to stress three points. First, the main challenge was to determine how non-nuclear-weapon States can participate in nuclear disarmament verification without the risk of proliferation. Any initiative in the area of nuclear disarmament verification must take into account the safety and security obligations of the host nuclear-weapon State. It must be fully consistent with the non-proliferation obligations arising out of articles I and II of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Secondly, disarmament verification regimes cannot be established *in abstracto* but must relate to a specific disarmament treaty and be tailored to the particular situation of each State. Thirdly, the NuDiVe exercise has shown that it is possible to work on nuclear disarmament verification while respecting non-proliferation obligations and national security interests. As parties to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, we share the ultimate goal of nuclear disarmament under strict and effective international control, within the meaning of article VI of the Treaty. In this context, effective nuclear disarmament verification is crucial to achieving general and complete disarmament. The NuDiVe exercise also provided an opportunity for dialogue with non-nuclear-weapon States. From this point of view, nuclear disarmament verification makes it possible to build trust between nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States, and this is a genuine factor of strategic stability.

Mr. President, dear colleagues, my country hopes that this tangible work on nuclear disarmament verification will make a positive and real contribution to the next Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference. The progress that my country, France, has

made on this subject is interesting and could, I hope, be an inspiration to other States, whether or not they have nuclear weapons. In conclusion, I would like to invite you all to attend a more detailed presentation on the exercise on 18 March as part of the outreach event organized by the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification, which is open to all States. I should add that there will be a Franco-German side event on NuDiVe at the Review Conference in New York in May. Thank you for your attention. I thank you, Mr. President.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you, Ambassador Beerwerth and Ambassador Hwang, for that very interesting presentation on the nuclear disarmament verification initiative. I will now give the floor to the delegations of Morocco and Austria.

Mr. Zniber (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): Thank you, Mr. President. First, I would like to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of our Conference and on your commendable efforts to move our work forward. The intensity of the discussions that are being held is very encouraging and demonstrates that, despite the differences of opinion, there is a strong desire to overcome the deadlock that characterizes this body and, above all, that there is a clear understanding of the issues at stake for all of us.

Mr. President, rather than touching upon several major challenges in my statement, I would like to focus on addressing a topic of special relevance this year, at a time when, as you have pointed out, we are celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. I will address the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference to be held later this year and present our vision for the adoption of a programme of work, which remains central to our discussions, given the circumstances.

Mr. President, beyond the periodic aspect of the Review Conference, we are convinced that the 2020 session comes at a pivotal time. Uncertainty and the climate of mistrust and fear in the multilateral arena run counter to our common interests, and we should therefore strive to move beyond fruitless confrontations. The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, despite its imperfections, is a most satisfactory binding legal instrument; its universality, comprehensiveness and uniqueness make it the only guarantee that the world will one day be rid of the threat of nuclear weapons and of those weapons themselves.

Despite its strength, however, the Treaty has not prevented the proliferation of nuclear weapons and their intensive – I could say absurd – accumulation. This should not discourage us – far from it – from enforcing the provisions of the Treaty, from seeking by all possible means to include States that are not yet parties to it, or from implementing article VI on nuclear disarmament in an orderly manner within a clear time frame. My delegation is of the view that, outside the Review Conference, our Conference here in Geneva can play a role in the full and comprehensive implementation of the objectives set out in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

In that regard, I would like to point out that the Kingdom of Morocco has endeavoured to do substantive work this year in preparing its national report to the Review Conference, through the mobilization of our delegation here in Geneva and of our other relevant missions, in particular those in New York and Vienna, naturally under the supervision of our central authorities. In parallel, Morocco is working on all aspects of the nuclear threat, including nuclear terrorism, through its co-presidencies, first with the Netherlands then with Canada, of the Global Counterterrorism Forum for a third consecutive term, and through the organization, in partnership with the United States Department of State within the framework of the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism, of an international workshop entitled “Nuclear detection at land and maritime borders”, which was held from 3 to 5 December 2019 in the city of Tangier in northern Morocco.

As we have often said, the five nuclear powers have a special responsibility, not only with respect to non-proliferation but also with respect to dismantling their arsenals. It goes without saying that we are watching their initiatives and discussions with interest. In that regard, I welcome the conclusions of the meeting of these five States in London last month, under the auspices of the United Kingdom, which stressed the need for regular exchanges regarding national doctrines. We also welcome the planned side event on the

peaceful use of nuclear energy to be held on the margins of the next Review Conference. The presentation delivered this morning by the representatives of France and Germany confirmed not only that the imperative of nuclear disarmament at all levels can be achieved but also that it is more than necessary in the face of the risks to non-proliferation. We call for a general broadening of the scope of this coordination, which will undoubtedly allow us to preserve the gains made and to move forward with regard to the strategic aims of the nuclear States, while taking into account the legitimate demands of non-nuclear-weapon States, particularly in the intermediate phase before nuclear disarmament, with regard to negative security assurances, which my delegation, as well as many others here, have been insisting on for several decades, and rightly so.

Mr. President, allow me now to make a few observations on the efforts to adopt a programme of work, which are widely shared by the member States of this Conference. First, we note your decision to withdraw the package of documents. I would like to add that, in our humble opinion, the draft, in this format, cannot be called a “programme of work”, since it comprises, both in substance and in form, the constituent elements of a decision. Secondly, the strengthening of this Conference is inextricably linked to its capacity to negotiate multilateral treaties. We should therefore work to ensure that the text includes a reference to this ambition, which is the principal element of a programme of work, from our point of view. Thirdly, building consensus at this session of the Conference is our main objective, and, while we give it its due importance, after more than 20 years of stalemate, what counts is no longer time but the ability to agree on a consensual, comprehensive and inclusive programme of work. If, to this end, we were to engage in a little more constructive reflection and exchange, we would definitely derive the greatest benefit and make greater progress.

In this regard, I would like to emphasize strongly that future consultations on the programme of work should be comprehensive and free from subjective considerations relating to national priorities or time constraints, which are contrary to the principle of consensus. Before concluding, Mr. President, allow me once again to express before this Conference our fear, which is shared by several delegations, that the Conference will become a yearly debating forum, although this is not the worst possible scenario, since debate remains a source of hope and has the merit of facilitating regular and open exchange on issues that are of interest to us all. Lastly, despite all the pessimism, I would like to reaffirm that my delegation is fully committed to crowning this session with a long-awaited success by adopting the programme of work and effectively implementing it. I remain confident in our ability to achieve this shared ambition. I thank you, Mr. President.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of Morocco for his statement and his kind words addressed to the presidency. I now give the floor to the delegation of Austria.

Mr. Müller (Austria): Thank you, Mr. President. First of all, I would like to thank the Ambassadors of France and Germany for their presentation on their valuable joint initiative.

I am taking the floor today to pay tribute to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) on the occasion of its fiftieth anniversary. The NPT was born, at a time of heightened tensions, from the conviction that cooperation ultimately serves security interests better than national, unilateral actions – that amassing ever larger arsenals and developing ever more lethal weapons does not increase security, but worsens it for everyone. Since 5 March 1970, the NPT has contributed substantively to global security through the promise of the total elimination of nuclear weapons, rather than uncontrolled proliferation.

Yet today, despite the Treaty’s ambition of a world free of nuclear weapons and the legal obligation contained in article VI, full implementation of the NPT remains to be accomplished. Austria is firmly convinced that progress in implementing the mutually reinforcing pillars not only strengthens the treaty, but ultimately is also vital for its credibility. Conceptualizing hierarchies between the three pillars of the Treaty, with a view to justifying its unbalanced implementation, endangers the consensus within the treaty and could create a precedent with potentially serious consequences. The disarmament pillar of

the NPT has been implemented and strengthened through the successive adoption of various multilateral agreements, such as the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, as well as bilateral treaties such as the New START. Several other multilateral arrangements, such as The Hague Code of Conduct, and relevant export control regimes further contribute to the current framework.

It is with grave concern that we see that the NPT has come under strain, as several speakers outlined during the high-level segment. Over the decades, the NPT community has developed a joint acquis. The outcome documents of 1995, 2000 and 2010 are the latest consensual agreements between NPT States parties that set out the route for the future implementation of the Treaty. Respecting and fulfilling these commitments will be essential in the coming decades. As a State party that actively supports the Treaty, we see this anniversary as a moment to reaffirm our joint commitment. Today's developments corroborate the need for this: they are a call to action. The time has come to stand together in support of the NPT.

Mr. President, my Government believes it is critical to reverse the current trend of increased investment in and modernization of nuclear arsenals, as well as the ensuing trend towards an arms race. For the sake of our global, regional, national and indeed individual security, the achievements of previous years must not be dismissed or reversed. Rather, the obligation to finally fully implement article VI of the Treaty needs to be pursued seriously. As States parties have jointly committed to seek a safer world for all through the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, we need to do more to address the fact that some still consider nuclear weapons essential for their national security. How are we going to continue to contain global nuclear proliferation, against that premise? How can we as States parties to the NPT ensure that President Kennedy's bleak warning of potentially 30 nuclear-weapon States does not become a reality in the years to come?

Recent developments must be a wake-up call. The termination of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty and the potential non-extension of the New START are or would be serious reversals of the implementation of article VI obligations. We therefore call upon the States parties to New START to extend that Treaty and to negotiate a successor instrument with further reductions, and to refrain from stationing intermediate-range nuclear missiles in Europe and beyond. The end of such essential agreements has momentous consequences for regional and international security and imperils our populations. Too much is at risk to accept such backtracking. It is our shared responsibility to protect humanity. Nuclear detonations, whether occurring by accident, miscalculation or intention, remain a serious global threat to international security and cooperation.

Mr. President, the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of the use of nuclear weapons are the fact which underpins and drives our efforts on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. We thank the International Committee of the Red Cross for hosting an important conference on this subject earlier this week in Geneva. Refocusing on the origins of the NPT, namely – as the preamble states – “the devastation that would be visited upon all mankind by a nuclear war and the consequent need to make every effort to avert the danger of such a war and to take measures to safeguard the security of peoples”, seems critical at a time when risks are increasing. As we look to the future of the treaty, universalization will become even more important than it is today. Austria therefore calls upon the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to implement all relevant Security Council resolutions, to denuclearize and to return to the NPT.

As we celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Treaty, we must all take responsibility and resist the temptation to undermine the Treaty by walking back on the commitments agreed over the past 50 years. The ambition to fully implement the NPT should guide our work. Previous commitments, such as the 13 steps agreed in 2000 and the action plan agreed at the 2010 Review Conference, provide us with practical avenues to implement and strengthen the Treaty. The measure of success should be the extent to which States parties implement the Treaty by fulfilling commitments undertaken during the review process. The 2020 Review Conference should be an opportunity to reaffirm and add to previously agreed commitments. Austria continues to hope that the fiftieth anniversary of the Treaty can inspire true commitment and ambition. We are ready to steadfastly support all serious efforts on the road towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

Mr. President, nuclear disarmament is rightly the Conference's top priority. Austria hopes that the Conference will soon be able once again to fulfil its important role of negotiating disarmament instruments. The successes of the past, in particular the conclusion of the NPT and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, should guide our ambition. Thank you for your attention.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the delegate of Austria for his eloquent statement and I now give the floor to the delegate of the Netherlands.

Ms. Claringbould (Netherlands): Thank you, Mr. President. Firstly, I would like to thank Argentina and the other presidencies of this session for their work on the package that includes the programme of work. The Netherlands is disappointed that it could not be adopted but we know that the six Presidents of 2020 and the current Argentine presidency have done everything they could in undertaking this important work. We hope that the Conference on Disarmament can now move towards substantive work under the leadership of the six Presidents. We are keen to hear about the schedule in advance, since we are looking forward to forthcoming sessions and wish to prepare for them as best possible.

In respect of substantive discussions, we appreciate today's briefing by Germany and France on the NuDiVe initiative. As we know, work on verification is crucial to achieving a world free of nuclear weapons and we would like to congratulate the two countries on their useful initiative and to thank them for sharing it with the Conference, as it is relevant for our work here.

Mr. President, I am mainly taking the floor today on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the entry into force of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which was negotiated here in Geneva by one of the Conference's predecessors, the Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarmament. Over the past 50 years, the Treaty and the broader non-proliferation and disarmament regime that it underpins have been at the heart of global security and, accordingly, human security. While today's anniversary provides a good opportunity to look back on the successes of the past 50 years, the goal of the upcoming 2020 Review Conference must be to plan ahead for the success of the next 50 years. Achieving a successful and forward-looking outcome at the Review Conference will require ambition and realism from all delegations.

For such progress to be possible, all countries, especially nuclear-weapon States, need to take responsibility. Non-nuclear-weapon States like my own must also play their part and take responsibility. As the Chair of Main Committee III and a member of the Chairs' bureau, the Netherlands will do its utmost to help make the Review Conference a success. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the delegate of the Netherlands for her statement. Would any other delegation like to take the floor? The Democratic People's Republic of Korea, you have the floor.

Mr. Han Tae-song (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Thank you, Mr. President, for giving me the floor. The delegation of Austria mentioned my country's return to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. In the past we have clearly stated our position as to why we withdrew from the Treaty. We have also asked the question: if the Treaty did not exist, what would the Conference on Disarmament discuss at its meetings? I do not need to comment on what the Austrian delegate said. Delegations that do not know why the nuclear issue arose on the Korean Peninsula should refrain from making remarks about my country. Thank you.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you, Sir. I now give the floor to the delegation of Australia.

Ms. Mansfield (Australia): Thank you, Mr. President. I wanted to say some words about the last couple of weeks and to look ahead to the presidency of Australia. Firstly, I would like to pass on our sincere thanks to your Ambassador, your team and the other Presidents of 2020 plus the last President of 2019 and the first President of 2021. Beginning with the Vietnamese presidency last year, together they have done an extraordinary amount of work and built up a great deal of goodwill and momentum.

Having had the Vietnamese deputy minister here today, I would also like to thank the delegation of Viet Nam for inviting the Secretary-General of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations to address this forum. I recall that he provided the Conference on Disarmament with a useful perspective. We have heard plenty about the anniversary of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), so I will not say more about that now, except to state that we will certainly work hard with States parties to find practical ways to strengthen this extremely important Treaty. We, too, are keen to look forward, as well as to mark important achievements to date.

Our colleague from the Netherlands mentioned the utility of trying to bring substantive work to the Conference, irrespective of whether the programme of work was formalized. From an Australian perspective, that is something that we intend to do. We were hopeful and optimistic that consensus would be reached on a programme of work and, although in the end that was not possible, it was not for want of trying. In the next few days, the six Presidents of this session will discuss our proposals and next week we hope to be in a position to outline what the Australian presidency would like to contribute to this body.

We are conscious of the approach of the 2020 NPT Review Conference and so our proposals will bear in mind workloads and the fact that the Review Conference takes place in the middle of our presidency. I would like to remind all delegations that this Sunday, 8 March, is International Women's Day. Australia recognizes the importance of mainstreaming gender in all the work it undertakes in Geneva, considering that while there is much to celebrate, much remains to be done. It also recognizes the need for an approach that takes account of a diversity of voices, so that the whole planet is represented in the way that issues are addressed. We will reflect on that in the course of our presidency.

I would like again to express my sincere personal thanks for the efforts undertaken by your Ambassador and the sincere thanks too of my whole delegation for the efforts of Argentina.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you, Ambassador, for your statement and for the kind words addressed to the presidency, in particular your recognition of the work carried out by Ambassador Foradori. I see the delegation of Brazil; Ambassador, you have the floor.

Mr. De Barros Carvalho e Mello Mourão (Brazil): Thank you very much, Mr. President. I would like to thank Ambassadors Hwang and Beerwerth for their presentations and to congratulate France and Germany on their initiative. It is an important step, considering that such exercises will be very necessary once we really decide to embark on the path of disarmament. The exercise was broad and transparent, and we commend you for that. You and I, Mr. President, come from countries that long ago established agencies for the control and verification of nuclear activities. This was an important brick in the building of the extraordinary and unprecedented nuclear-weapon-free zone in Latin America and the Caribbean, which unfortunately is not a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Americas.

Anyway, I would like to say that we sincerely hope that this important and interesting exercise of France and Germany should be a first step towards something that would be very important for the world, namely a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Europe. Thank you very much.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of Brazil for his statement. Let me see if any other delegation would like to take the floor. The representative of Cuba has the floor.

Mr. Delgado Sánchez (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you, Mr. President. We too would like to make some brief remarks regarding the importance of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons on the occasion of its fiftieth anniversary. I did not want to miss my opportunity to congratulate you personally for demonstrating the leadership of Argentina in this Conference. I would also like to thank the Ambassadors of France and Germany for their presentation.

With regard to the comments made by our next President, the Ambassador of Australia, I would like to say a few words, since, as she rightly indicated, she will have to assess, together with the six Presidents of the Conference, a whole range of issues in order

to determine how we can begin work on substantive issues. In the view of the Cuban delegation, it is imperative that the six Presidents reiterate their commitment, which we have commended time and again, not to renounce their obligation under the rules of procedure of the Conference to work towards achieving a programme of work, in whatever format is ultimately decided upon. We believe that this is an obligation that is incumbent on all Presidents of the Conference. You, the current group of six Presidents, have fulfilled this obligation excellently, and we would therefore like to see this remain a priority for the future groups of six. With regard to potential substantive items, they should be consonant with the agenda adopted in the Conference. It would be a very positive step if the coherence and unity that the current group of six Presidents has shown could continue in such a way that, under each presidency in the group of six, it is clear which issues we will be addressing, so that we can prepare ourselves properly, as some colleagues in the Chamber have mentioned, but also so that we can maintain a proper balance between all items on the agenda, rather than prioritizing certain national agendas.

We are convinced that we are in good hands, and we would therefore once again like to praise the current group of six Presidents for their excellent coordination work and their coherence. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the delegate of Cuba for his statement and for the kind words addressed to this presidency and to the six Presidents of the Conference. I now give the floor to the delegation of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Belousov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Good morning, distinguished colleagues. I would also like to make a few comments and, first of all, to express my regret that we did not manage to reach a consensus on the package initially submitted for our consideration by Ambassador Belbaki and on which work continued during the Argentinian presidency.

I would like to note a few important points. Firstly, we have acquired a wealth of experience in cooperation in several formats at the same time: both cooperation within the group of six Presidents and cooperation between the six Presidents and the individual delegations and groups of States. This experience is very important – the work done by the Algerian and Argentinian presidencies deserves high praise and we should bear it in mind for the future.

Specifically as regards the programme of work and its adoption, the latest decision of the six Presidents in no way draws a line under the work begun by the Algerian presidency but rather leaves it open. Indeed, as has been correctly pointed out here, in accordance with the rules of procedure of the Conference on Disarmament, all subsequent Presidents must make active efforts to adopt a programme of work and must therefore continue active consultations with the delegations in this matter.

I would also like to thank the distinguished Ambassadors of Germany and France for a very interesting presentation. Certainly, any new approach to the issue of nuclear disarmament verification would be useful and we look forward to the more detailed presentation on 18 March, which will give us more substantial food for thought concerning the approach you used to improve on the verification methods already applied under the bilateral agreements between the Soviet Union and the United States of America and between the Russian Federation and the United States of America.

Finally, today we are indeed marking the fiftieth anniversary of the entry into force of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. It is an important date, especially as it takes place in the lead-up to the Review Conference, and the Russian Federation fully shares the opinions expressed today about the Treaty and the Review Conference. The Treaty could indeed be called the international community's first significant contribution to strengthening international security and is currently the main cornerstone of that security. It was gratifying and reassuring to hear that all the States who have spoken about this so far have shown a commitment to a successful and productive outcome for the Review Conference and to strengthening the Treaty. I fully agree with my Austrian colleague that we must reaffirm our commitments under the Treaty and under the instruments adopted during previous review cycles and which for us are in many ways a road map for our joint work to strengthen the Treaty.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of the Russian Federation for his statement and for his recognition of the work of the six Presidents of the Conference. I do not see any other delegation that wishes to take the floor, so that concludes our business for today. The next plenary meeting will take place on Tuesday, 10 March, at 10 a.m. You will be informed of the agenda for the meeting in due course.

The meeting rose at 11.30 a.m.