

Conference on Disarmament

English

Final record of the one thousand five hundred and forty-second plenary meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Thursday, 13 August 2020, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Shameem Ahsan.....(Bangladesh)

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The President: I call to order the 1542nd plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

Director-General Tatiana Valovaya, ladies and gentlemen, it is an honour for Bangladesh to take over the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. I would like to express my sincerest thanks and appreciation to Ambassador Robert Müller of Austria for his steadfast and successful efforts to resume the important work of the Conference in the midst of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) crisis. I would also like to thank the group of the six Presidents of the 2020 session for their ongoing collaborative spirit and the invaluable guidance and support provided to the Bangladeshi presidency.

Before we proceed with our order of business for the day, I would like you to join me in observing a minute of silence in tribute to the innocent lives lost and impacted by the tragic explosion that occurred in Lebanon last week, as well as for the loss of hundreds of thousands of lives to COVID-19. Please rise.

The President: Thank you very much. I would like to propose the following order of business for our meeting this morning:

First, I will give my statement as President of the Conference on Disarmament in my national capacity. We will then listen to Ms. Tatiana Valovaya, the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and Personal Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General to the Conference. That will be followed by statements by delegations that wish to take the floor. Allow me now to deliver a statement in my national capacity as the President of the Conference.

Ladies and gentlemen, Bangladesh is honoured to have the privilege of presiding over this august body, the Conference on Disarmament. The presidency offers a unique opportunity to reiterate our commitment to the principle of general and complete disarmament. Despite some uncertainty and limitations, we took this responsibility very seriously and tried our best to move forward in a constructive manner. In this respect, I am thankful to you, member States, for showing understanding and flexibility and for extending valuable support.

In my effort to chalk out a plan of work for the Conference, as well as to ensure transparency, I held extensive informal bilateral consultations with many member States last month. You may be aware that I briefly explained the background as well as the outcome of the consultations in my letter of 30 July 2020.

In addition, I would like to highlight a few other points that emanated from the consultations, hoping that this would give you an overview of member States' thoughts on the Conference's activities in the current year.

An overwhelming majority of the delegations highly appreciated the endeavours undertaken by the group of six Presidents in the beginning of the year to finalize a programme of work. One or two delegations recommended making further efforts on a programme of work under the presidency of Bangladesh. On the other hand, there were others that thought it was not feasible to organize discussions on substantive issues, including the programme of work, in view of the current challenging coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic situation and the so-called resource constraints of the secretariat. A few member States desired that as many thematic plenary meetings as possible be convened to discuss substantive issues on the agenda and thus to cover at least two to three agenda items. Some of them preferred one item to others. On the contrary, other delegations suggested that no particular agenda item or core issue should be given priority over the rest. Rather, topics for substantive discussion should be selected in a balanced way with assurance of equal treatment for all issues.

Some delegations were of the view that developments in the field of security and disarmament globally over the last few months merited discussion at the Conference. Otherwise, the Conference would come under criticism for not fulfilling its role. A few delegations opined that instead of focusing on the current year's activities, the Conference could discuss its future work, particularly how the Conference might begin its work next year. Some delegations recommended advancing the Australian proposal, which is still available as a non-paper, on a technical amendment to the rules of procedure to introduce

gender-neutral language. Nevertheless, one or two delegations cautioned against opening discussion on any kind of amendment to the rules of procedure. In view of the multiple challenges, a considerable number of delegations suggested going through the motions by organizing an open-ended plenary meeting.

In general, I came away with the impression that a broad majority of the member States were not happy, as the Conference has been unable to deliver or witness any substantial progress for almost two decades. We, too, share those concerns: the long-standing stalemate in the Conference does frustrate member States' legitimate desire for substantial discussion and negotiation on core issues in pursuit of disarmament goals.

Obviously, there are divergent views on the ways, means and the pace of work. Yet we have considerable convergence on the point that international peace and security can only be ensured by achieving common objectives. We need to draw upon our collective wisdom and put our heads together to reach a broad consensus in that respect.

I would also like to take this opportunity to state that this year marks the seventy-fifth anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. We pay our deepest tribute to the victims of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings. Those bombings remind us of the real and harrowing consequences of war and the growing urgency to free the world of nuclear weapons. They also underscore the vital importance of the work of the Conference and the need to uphold and strengthen the disarmament architecture. Let us seize the moment to renew our commitment to complete disarmament.

While COVID-19 continues to rattle the global economy, particularly of developing countries, we do not yet see any indication, from a number of countries, of moves to cut military expenditures. The pandemic has also exposed the planet's vulnerability and our unpreparedness to face such a sudden and colossal crisis. Perhaps this provides the context in which disarmament discourse deserves more attention in order to chart a way forward to explore a global solution to and ways of addressing emergencies like COVID-19.

As a nation in development transition, Bangladesh always advocates for channelling the massive resources deployed for arms build-up up to deserving imperatives of economic development. If history is any guide, then now is the time to turn away from ambitious defence budgets and focus on enhanced spending on health care, education and overall economic resilience-building. With these remarks, let me stop here and invite Ms. Tatiana Valovaya, Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and Personal Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General to the Conference, to take the floor.

Ms. Valovaya (Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament): Thank you. Mr. President – Ambassador Ahsan – distinguished delegates, 2020 is a year of important anniversaries in the field of disarmament. We celebrate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations – the symbol of multilateralism and cooperation that emerged from the ashes of the Second World War.

A few days ago, we marked the seventy-fifth anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which brought sorrow and devastation to hundreds of thousands of people for generations. As the United Nations Secretary-General said at the Nagasaki Peace Memorial, "the international community must return to the understanding that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought. There is an urgent need to stop the erosion of the nuclear order. All countries possessing nuclear weapons have an obligation to lead."

This year, we also celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the entry into force of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). To date, it is the only binding commitment to the goal of disarmament by the nuclear-weapon States in the framework of a multilateral treaty.

As we look forward to the NPT Review Conference, as we mark the events in Nagasaki and Hiroshima and as we commemorate the United Nations, we must do so with a view to overcoming the current global situation of insecurity or the lack of trust and cooperation among States and the diminished faith in and support for the very multilateral institution that was designed to maintain global peace and security. Remembering these landmark moments from our common history is not an end in itself. Rather, it should provide the impetus to address important questions on the way forward in disarmament.

It should generate momentum to do more to counter the erosion of the disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation regime. It should encourage constructive work to negotiate new global legal instruments, including here in the Conference on Disarmament. We ought to jointly reflect on these issues and what they mean for this Conference, which remains an extraordinary platform for dialogue and confidence-building. I am therefore encouraged by your determination to resume meetings of the Conference and stand ready, with the secretariat, to support your work.

In my capacity as Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva, allow me also to say a few words on the status of meetings support at the Office. As you know, we have installed equipment in several rooms allowing for remote and hybrid meetings when delegates cannot be in Geneva. However, the associated costs are significant. At the same time, the United Nations Secretariat is facing a severe liquidity crisis. While we are sparing no effort to identify ways to reprioritize and make bridge funding available, the United Nations Office at Geneva has not received sufficient funding for normal operations through to the end of the year, while also facing unforeseen expenses related to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. We will be briefing Member States in Geneva on the situation, measures and outlook going forward in 2020 very soon. We will provide you all the detailed information.

Meanwhile, I wish to assure you that all possible measures have been taken to make these conference rooms a safe place to be – from assigning large conference rooms to enable social distancing to a request to wear masks, to ensuring constant supplies of fresh air. In this light, and given that our ability to support hybrid meetings for intergovernmental bodies remains limited, I would encourage you to consider resuming physical meetings soon, allowing you to continue your important work to the fullest extent.

In my capacities both as Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva and as Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, my respective teams and I are prepared to extend the maximum support possible to the intergovernmental process in this vitally important area of peace and security that is the multilateral disarmament efforts made by you – the member States.

Thank you very much.

The President: I thank you, Ms. Valovaya, for your statement. Now we would like to open the floor to delegations that wish to speak. As I informed you earlier, today's plenary meeting will be an open-ended meeting for general debate without any particular agenda. I believe that would offer you the scope to state your national positions and address recent developments in the field of disarmament should you so wish.

I would also like to welcome you to share your assessments on the progress made so far in the work of the Conference on Disarmament in the current year and on how the Conference may begin its work next year.

According to the list of speakers in front of me, I would now like to invite Ambassador Korcho of Ethiopia, who will deliver a statement on behalf of the Group of 21, to take the floor.

Mr. Korcho (Ethiopia): Thank you, Mr. President. Colleagues, Madam Director-General, I am now going to read a general statement on behalf of the Group of 21:

The Group of 21 would like to stress once again that the Conference on Disarmament is the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum mandated by the first special session of the United Nations General Assembly devoted to disarmament and to emphasize importance of preserving it by strengthening the nature, role and mandate of this body.

We must underscore the need to redouble our efforts in order to reinforce and revitalize the Conference and preserve its credibility through the resumption of substantive work, including negotiations on nuclear disarmament. The Group of 21 reaffirms its working paper on nuclear disarmament contained in document CD/2168 and all the other working papers submitted to the Conference in 2018.

Nuclear disarmament continues to be the highest priority of the international community. The Group of 21 reiterates its deep concern at the danger posed to the survival

of humankind by the continued existence of nuclear weapons and of their possible use or threat of use.

The Group, stressing its strong commitment to nuclear disarmament, underscores the urgent need to commence negotiations on this issue in the Conference without further delay. As the highest priority, the Conference should start negotiations on, first, a programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, including a nuclear weapons convention prohibiting the possession, development, production, stockpiling, transfer and use of nuclear weapons, leading to the global, non-discriminatory and verifiable elimination of nuclear weapons with a specific framework of time. In this context, the Group recalls its working paper contained in document CD/2168, which calls for the urgent commencement of negotiations on nuclear disarmament in the Conference on Disarmament, in particular on a comprehensive convention on nuclear weapons to prohibit their possession, development, production, acquisition, testing, stockpiling, transfer, use or threat of use and to provide for their destruction.

The Group welcomes the formal proclamation, for the first time in history, of Latin America and the Caribbean as a zone of peace on the occasion of the second summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States held in Havana, Cuba, on 28 and 29 January 2014. That proclamation includes a commitment on the part of all States of that region to further nuclear disarmament as a priority goal and to contribute to general and complete disarmament. We hope that this proclamation will be followed by other political proclamations as zones of peace in other regions of the world.

The Group welcomes the political declaration of Quito, adopted at the fourth summit of the Community, held in Quito, Ecuador, on 27 January 2016, which reaffirms, *inter alia*, the commitment of the Community to the preservation of peace and international security, political independence and nuclear disarmament conducive to general, total and verifiable disarmament.

The Group also welcomes the political declaration of Punta Cana, adopted at the Community's fifth summit, held in Punta Cana in the Dominican Republic on 25 January 2017. The declaration reaffirms, *inter alia*, the Community's commitment to achieving the total prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons. The Community reaffirms its commitment to the consolidation of Latin and the Caribbean as zone of peace and highlights its character as the first-ever zone free of nuclear weapons, as established by the Treaty of Tlatelolco.

The Group welcomes the celebration of the fifteenth anniversary of the Treaty of Tlatelolco on 14 February 2017 in Mexico in the framework of the twenty-fifth session of the General Conference of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean. The Group also welcomes the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty, known as the Treaty of Pelindaba, signed in Cairo, Egypt, in 1996. The Treaty, which came into effect on 15 July 2009, seeks to prevent the stationing of nuclear explosive devices, prohibit the testing of nuclear weapons and the dumping of radioactive wastes on the continent. For the purpose of ensuring compliance with the obligations under the Treaty, the African Commission on Nuclear Energy was established.

The Group reaffirms the absolute validity of multilateral diplomacy in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation and express its determination to promote multilateralism at the core principle of negotiations in these areas.

The Group welcomes the convening of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on nuclear disarmament on 26 September 2013 and reaffirms the related follow-up resolution (A/RES/72/251).

As the former Secretary-General of the United Nations rightly mentioned in the Conference on Disarmament in 2015, "the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on Nuclear Disarmament demonstrated that this issue remains a major international priority and deserves attention at the highest levels".

In this vein, the Group fully supports the goals of this resolution, in particular, its call for an urgent decision by the Conference on Disarmament to commence negotiation on nuclear disarmament, particularly a comprehensive convention on nuclear weapons to prohibit their possession, development, production, acquisition, testing, stockpiling, transfer, use or threat of use and to provide for their destruction.

The Group welcomes the decision to convene in New York, on a date to be decided, a United Nations high-level international conference on nuclear disarmament to review the progress made in this regard.

The Group welcomes the establishment of 26 September as the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons and the high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly organized every year to commemorate and promote this international day, thereby highlighting the events around the world in commemoration of this day. The Group calls on Governments, parliaments and civil society to take further action annually to commemorate the day.

The Group reaffirms the importance of the multilateral disarmament machinery. It notes the report of the Open-ended Working Group mandated by the United Nations General Assembly to develop proposals to take forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations for the achievement and maintenance of a world without nuclear weapons and hopes that it will contribute to negotiations on nuclear disarmament in the Conference, particularly on a comprehensive convention on nuclear weapons to prohibit their possession, development, production, acquisition, testing, stockpiling, transfer, use or threat of use and to provide for their destruction.

The Group takes note of the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons on 7 July 2017 at the United Nations conference to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 71/258, held in New York from 27 to 31 March and 15 June to 7 July 2017.

The Group reaffirms that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. Pending the achievement of the complete elimination of such weapons, the Group reaffirms the urgent need for the conclusion of a universal, unconditional and legally binding instrument to effectively assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.

The Group is concerned that, despite the commitment of nuclear-weapon States to provide such assurances and long-standing requests by non-nuclear-weapon States to receive them, no tangible progress has been achieved in this regard. It is a matter of more concern that non-nuclear-weapon States, implicitly or explicitly, have been subject to nuclear threats by some nuclear-weapon States in disregard of their obligations under the Charter of the United Nations.

The Group also calls for the commencement of negotiations in order to reach agreement on an international convention prohibiting the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons under any circumstances, in accordance with General Assembly resolution A/RES/74/68.

The Group expresses its deepest concern over the immediate, indiscriminate and massive death and destruction caused by any nuclear-weapon detonation and its long-term catastrophic consequences on human health, the environment and other vital economic resources, thus endangering the life of present and future generations. The Group believes that a full realization of the catastrophic consequences of nuclear weapons must underpin all approaches, efforts and international commitments directed towards nuclear disarmament on the basis of an inclusive process involving all States.

In this context, the Group concurs with the statement delivered on 23 May 2015 by the former United Nations Secretary-General that there is a growing understanding of the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons and, in this regard, welcomes the conferences on this subject convened in Oslo on 4 and 5 March 2013, in Mexico on 13 and 14 February 2014 and in Vienna on 8 and 9 December 2014. The States of the Group of 21 that are parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons welcome the spirit of the findings of the conferences on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons. We call on all nuclear-weapon States parties to the Treaty to implement their unequivocal undertaking to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals, leading to nuclear disarmament, to which all States parties are committed under article VI.

Given the catastrophic humanitarian consequences and unacceptable risks and threats associated with the detonation of a nuclear weapon, we will endeavour to cooperate with all relevant stakeholders in efforts to prohibit and eliminate nuclear weapons. In this regard, we note the relevant resolutions adopted at the seventy-third session of the General Assembly.

The Group of 21 expresses its disappointment that the Conference on Disarmament has not been able to undertake substantive work on its agenda. The Group takes note of various efforts to reach consensus on the Conference's programme of work and all subsequent decisions, efforts and proposals towards this end.

The Group reiterates the urgency for the Conference to execute its mandate as set out by the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament and to adopt and implement a balanced and comprehensive programme of work on the basis of its agenda, while taking into account the security interests of all States and dealing with, *inter alia*, the core issues, including nuclear disarmament, in accordance with the rules of procedure, not least the rule of consensus. The Group encourages you, Mr. President, to spare no efforts and to continue wide consultations with all delegations to the Conference to achieve this goal.

The Group furthermore believes that promoting the work of the United Nations disarmament machinery hinges on the need to exercise political will, taking into account the collective security interests of all States.

While expressing its deep concern over the persistent lack of consensus on the implementation of the multilateral disarmament agenda in the United Nations disarmament machinery, particularly in fulfilling the commitments on nuclear disarmament as the highest priority, the Group reaffirms its support for an early convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament and expresses its deep concern over the fact that the fourth special session is yet to be convened.

The Group welcomes the successful outcome of the Open-ended Working Group, convened by General Assembly resolution 65/66 and its decision 70/551, which held its substantive sessions in 2016 and 2017 under the able chairmanship of Ecuador, adopting, by consensus, recommendations for the objectives and agenda for the fourth special session, and reaffirming the importance of the existing United Nations disarmament machinery, while considering ways to strengthen it and improve its effectiveness. The Group welcomes the endorsement by the General Assembly of the report of the Open-ended Working Group and the substantive recommendations contained therein.

The Group of 21 reiterates the importance of the establishment in the Middle East of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction and acknowledges the decision contained in General Assembly resolution 73/546 that entrusts the Secretary-General to convene a conference to elaborate a treaty on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction. The Group calls upon all States to actively support this conference and to contribute to its success.

The States parties of the Group of 21 to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty express their disappointment and deep concern that three States parties, including two States that bear special responsibility as Treaty depositary States and co-sponsors of the 1995 Review and Extension Conference resolution on the Middle East, blocked consensus on the draft outcome document of the ninth Review Conference, including the process to establish a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction, as contained in the 1995 resolution on the Middle East. This could undermine efforts towards strengthening the Treaty regime as a whole. The States parties of the Group of 21 to the Treaty reaffirm that the 1995 resolution on the Middle East continues to constitute the basis for the establishment of such a zone and that the 1995 resolution remains valid until fully implemented.

The States of the Group of 21 that are parties to the Treaty also express their serious concern over the lack of implementation of the 1995 resolution and, in accordance with paragraph 6 of the resolution, call upon all States parties to the Treaty, in particular the nuclear-weapon States, to extend their cooperation and to exert their utmost efforts with a view to ensuring the early establishment by regional parties of a Middle East zone free of

nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction and reaffirm that the co-sponsors of the resolution must take all the necessary measures to fully implement it without further delay.

The States of the Group of 21 that are parties to the Treaty express their utmost concern that the persistent lack of implementation of the 1995 resolution, contrary to the decision made at the relevant Review Conference, erodes the credibility of the Treaty and upsets the delicate balance among its three pillars, taking into account that the indefinite extension of the Treaty is inextricably linked to the implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East. In this context, the States parties to the Treaty that are members of the Group of 21 reaffirm the urgency of Israel's accession to the Treaty without further delay and the placement of all its nuclear facilities under comprehensive International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards.

While the lack of agreement on the outcome document could undermine the Treaty regime, the States parties to the Treaty that are members of the Group of 21 emphasize the continued validity of the commitments made in 1995, 2000 and 2010, particularly the unequivocal undertaking towards the nuclear disarmament, and call for their full implementation without further delay.

The Group recognizes the importance of continuing consultations on questions of the possibility of expansion of the membership of the Conference on Disarmament.

The Group emphasizes the urgent need to address the prevalent dichotomy between the lack of progress in disarmament and increasing emphasis and efforts on non-proliferation. The Group calls upon all member States to manifest their support for and investment in disarmament and non-proliferation education in a balanced and comprehensive manner through training and fellowships provided by the United Nations as a priority. In this context, the Group appreciates the annual fellowship programme on disarmament and international security instituted by India in 2019.

The Group also recognizes the importance of enhancing engagement between civil society and the Conference on Disarmament, in accordance with decisions taken by the Conference, and continues to support the strengthening of the Conference's interaction with civil society. In this regard, the Group welcomes the convening of the Conference on Disarmament/civil society forum on 19 March 2015 and the second informal civil society forum on 22 June 2016, as well as the Conference on Disarmament/civil society dialogue held on 17 August 2018.

I thank you for your attention.

The President: Thank you, Ambassador Korcho, for your statement and for your kind words. I now give the floor to Ambassador Ogasawara of Japan.

Mr. Ogasawara (Japan): Thank you. I would like to begin by congratulating you, Mr. President, on your assumption of this important responsibility at this challenging time. Please be assured of our full support.

I wholeheartedly support your decision to hold today's meeting in a hybrid format for the sake of inclusiveness and given the current exceptional health conditions. I would also like to thank the secretariat for the extensive support it has provided to us throughout this challenging period.

While fully appreciating the precious endeavours undertaken by the group of the six Presidents of the 2020 session, together with the last President of the 2019 session and the first of the 2021 session, to advance the work of the Conference on Disarmament, we regret that no consensus was reached on the proposed package for a programme of work that would have enabled us to launch substantive discussions in a structured manner and paved the way for the start of negotiations on new disarmament instruments. We, the States members of the Conference, need to show to the world that the Conference is relevant in tackling the problems posed by the current severe international security environment. To this end, the Conference should conduct substantial discussions to lay the groundwork for the future commencement of disarmament negotiations, the core mandate of this body, irrespective of the adoption of the programme of work. Japan therefore welcomes any practical approaches to enabling substantive discussions of the items on the Conference agenda – for example, discussions based on an adopted schedule of activities.

The cooperation among the aforementioned group of Presidents, as well as the enhanced leadership derived from it, was a significant positive development this year. In particular, I found the group's efforts to lay out all the activities for this year helpful. I sincerely hope that next year's presidencies will continue this good practice.

Mr. President, as you have pointed out, it has been seventy-five years since the atomic bombings in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This year, at the Peace Memorial Ceremony in Hiroshima on 6 August and in Nagasaki on 9 August, Japanese Prime Minister Abe delivered his speech. He took note in his speech of the current harsh security environment as well as of the difference in positions among States on the matter of nuclear disarmament. Prime Minister Abe called for further efforts to reduce mistrust through mutual engagement and dialogue in order to build common ground. In his speech, Prime Minister Abe reiterated his commitment to lead international efforts towards the realization of a world free of nuclear weapons by working tenaciously to build bridges between the States with different views and to prompt actions by and dialogue between the States.

On a similar note, I would like to emphasize the importance for the upcoming Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons to produce a meaningful outcome, especially because this year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the entry into force of the Treaty. In our view, a concrete outcome in the field of nuclear disarmament is of crucial importance for the success of the Review Conference. Japan, for its part, is determined to continue and even redouble its efforts to achieve common ground through its national and collective efforts.

Now let me touch briefly upon certain specific issues to which Japan attaches particular importance as far as the activities of the Conference on Disarmament are concerned – namely, a fissile material cut-off treaty and outer space.

A fissile material cut-off treaty is an important building block for a world without nuclear weapons. We must exert our political will to build on the discussions on such a treaty that have been held thus far and to commence negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament as soon as possible. The Conference has discussed this matter for many years. The issues concerning the components of the treaty have been amply addressed. I would like to recall that, since 2014, both 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 expert preparatory group produced their consensus final documents, which provided recommendations and indicated potential elements for a treaty. We have to make best use of these valuable documents in our further efforts on this subject.

The second issue is outer space. As countries increase their reliance on space systems for their security and economic development, it has become increasingly urgent to deal with risks that may prevent us from maintaining outer space as a peaceful, safe, stable and sustainable environment open and accessible to all. We emphasize the need for transparency and confidence-building measures, as well as enhanced communication among space actors, in order to reduce the risks of misunderstanding and miscalculations with regard to outer space activities. We request all relevant countries to remain committed to their responsibilities and obligations under international law and to behave as responsible actors in outer space. For its part, Japan is ready to play an active role in promoting this issue, including by discussing it at the Conference on Disarmament.

Let me add, finally, that we support discussions on the effective functioning of the Conference on Disarmament, which could revitalize our work in this forum. Equally, we fully support the proposal by the former Australian presidency to make the rules of procedure gender-neutral.

In the remaining meetings, it will be important to quickly compile and agree on the annual report. Based on the review of our activities this year, the Conference would benefit from a discussion of plans for next year's activities, while exploring points of convergence and divergence on various topics, including the ones I mentioned today.

In this regard, I look forward to further clarification from our colleagues from the Office for Disarmament Affairs and the United Nations Office at Geneva on the budgetary situation surrounding the Conference. A briefing session by the United Nations Secretariat to the member States of this body would be very welcome. With the current financial

constraints due to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, we are grateful again for the leadership of the group of Presidents, which, in close cooperation with the secretariat, has guided us through our work and will enable us to fulfil our mandate, especially the adoption of the annual report for this year.

Due to technical problems, some of my statement was left out. I would therefore like to submit it in its original format to the secretariat. Thank you.

The President: You are most welcome to do so, Ambassador. Thank you very much for your statement and your words for the President. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Kenya.

Mr. Mailu (Kenya): Thank you, Mr. President. Ladies and gentlemen, let me begin by affirming that Kenya aligns itself with the statement delivered by Ethiopia on behalf of the Group of 21.

First of all, my delegation extends its sincere congratulations to you, Mr. President, on assuming your role as President of the Conference on Disarmament. I assure you of Kenya's full support and cooperation during your presidency in this third and final part of the Conference on Disarmament's 2020 session. The Kenyan delegation commends the President's efforts in convening this open-ended plenary meeting, despite the challenging times that we find ourselves in.

The Conference on Disarmament, the single multilateral negotiating forum for disarmament, with its unique mandate, as recognized by the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, in 1978, remains an important and indispensable bastion for the maintenance of international peace and security. Allow me, Mr. President, to take us back to the Final Document of that special session, which, in paragraph 4, states that "the arms race is not diminishing but increasing" and that "effective measures relating to the cessation of nuclear disarmament continue to elude man's grasp". Additionally, it is recognized in the Final Document that military budgets are constantly growing and that the increase in nuclear weapons, the vast stockpiles and tremendous build-up of arms and the competition for qualitative refinement of weapons of all kinds pose incalculable threats to international peace and security.

That was over forty years ago. Kenya believes the situation is still very much the same, if not worse. It is a fact that all nuclear-weapon-possessing States continue to modernize their nuclear arsenals. The continued rise in military spending and the heightened uncertainty of the international arms control regime add to this precarious global context. This stark reality, as well as the principal goals of disarmament that seek to ensure the survival of mankind, coupled with the new threats of pandemics and other challenges facing humanity, must be the wake-up call for intensified progress within the Conference on Disarmament, once and for all. The impetus to take the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament forward is, therefore, ever more crucial.

It would be highly ambitious, albeit unrealistic, to convince ourselves that we can achieve much in the time left for this year's session of the Conference on Disarmament. Nevertheless, we must redouble our efforts to achieve consensus in taking the important work of this body forward. While we may not be able to achieve this now, the efforts made during the Australian presidency in proposing technical updates on the gender dimensions of the rules of procedure are worth considering in a positive light. As we stated during the plenary meeting of 30 June 2020, we are convinced that these efforts should be carried forward. While this may not be the focus of the Conference on Disarmament, Kenya is convinced that it could be an issue around which we can build consensus.

It is a fact that global geopolitics underpinned by national interests of member States influences our deliberations within this august assembly. Kenya has taken note of and is encouraged by the progress in deliberations taking place between the two largest nuclear-weapon-possessing States. The negotiations which took place in Austria in June, as well as the subsequent talks in July, are welcome. We look forward to continued progress in this regard, given the special responsibility that nuclear-weapon States are tasked with in nuclear disarmament. We hope that the coming together of minds will herald the beginning of better days for the arms control architecture. We remain cautiously optimistic but are well aware that doublespeak and counter-accusations will do more harm than good to the already fragile arms control regime. Kenya can only hope that the spirit of cooperation and

willingness to engage demonstrated in efforts aimed at preserving important arms control agreements, be emulated in this very multilateral setting.

Seventy-five years after the founding of the United Nations, multilateralism, the collective will of Member States to resolve global challenges together, through a rule-based system, is under severe strain. The continued impasse in the Conference on Disarmament and our inability to achieve, through consensus, our programme of work are indeed quite disturbing. Despite the commendable efforts of past presidencies, the Conference is still unable to overcome the deadlock that has plagued it for over twenty years. What legacy do we want to leave to future generations? Is it one of a future that guarantees, to a certain extent, the elimination of the possibility of a nuclear war? Or is it one that is so bleak and grim with no hope of an agreement's ever emanating from the Conference on Disarmament?

I am convinced that the buck stops with us. We must consider ourselves very privileged to have the opportunity to make the difference that, to some extent, guarantees a safer world for the 9 billion people on planet Earth. We must use this opportunity wisely. Let us not squander it. I urge all member States of the Conference on Disarmament to redouble our efforts and demonstrate flexibility and a willingness to compromise, so that in the near future we can begin what we should have begun years ago – negotiate disarmament treaties. Additionally, with the requisite political will, this important body can rise above its challenges and make its crucial contribution to international peace and security, as it did in the past.

Mr. President, 2020 has been an unprecedented year for humanity. There has never been a greater imperative for the Conference on Disarmament to deliver on its mandate than now, when new invisible threats to the stability of mankind have the potential to wipe away the progress that has taken humanity decades to achieve. This, together with a turbulent international security landscape, requires this important body to rise up and do much more, so that it may achieve its mandate for the sake of posterity.

I thank you, Mr. President.

The President: Thank you, Ambassador, for your statement and for the kind words addressed to the President. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Saudi Arabia.

Mr. Alwasil (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): Mr. President, allow me at the outset to congratulate you on assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament during this delicate stage of the final part of the session. I would also like to express my country's appreciation for the efforts of Ms. Tatiana Valovaya, Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva and Secretary of the Conference on Disarmament. I also wish to thank the Austrian Ambassador, Mr. Robert Müller, for the efforts he made during his presidency of the second part of the session. In this regard, I would like to reaffirm the continued support of my country's Government for the work of the Conference and its constructive efforts to adopt a comprehensive and balanced programme of work. We hope that, during the 2020 session, the Conference will once again become effective and will reassume its pivotal role in negotiating international disarmament treaties and agreements and all matters related to international peace and security.

Mr. President, I regret to say that the Middle East region is currently at a delicate and critical juncture, marked by widespread danger. The region continues to witness an unprecedented level of smuggling of various types of weapons to terrorist and fundamentalist groups, whose aim is to undermine the region's security and gain control of its countries by using the weapons and missiles to target civilians and infrastructure. They also aim to harm the global economy by threatening waterways and targeting oil installations in the region, which represent the backbone of the global economy. I would like to refer to what took place during the last session of the Conference on Disarmament and the outcome of the Security Council session of 30 June at which the United Nations Secretary-General presented his report. The evidence contained in the Secretary-General's report clearly confirms the direct involvement and responsibility of the Iranian regime for the attacks against the oil installations in Abqaiq and Khurais, in eastern Saudi Arabia, as well as the targeting of Abha International Airport, in the south of the country, with cruise missiles and drones. The report leaves no room for doubt about the hostile intentions of Iran towards Saudi Arabia in particular and the Arab region and the world in general, and reveals this regime's continued aggressive and subversive approach aimed at destabilizing the security of the region and Iranian logistical, military and financial support for armed

terrorist militias in Yemen, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and elsewhere, without regard for international covenants and treaties or the principles of good-neighbourliness.

Mr. President, the Kingdom's invitation to international and United Nations experts to participate in the investigation of these events reflects the high level of transparency the country provides the international community and its commitment to international law and the Charter of the United Nations. It also highlights its desire to stabilize the region and not to be drawn into attempts by Iran to ignite conflict and chaos. Saudi Arabia has been subjected to approximately 1,660 attacks targeting civilians in the country. Civilians in Yemen and other countries in which the Iranian regime supports militias are subjected to various forms of torture and oppression as a result of the bombing of civilians and destruction of infrastructure using Iranian weapons smuggled to these militias.

Mr. President, the Kingdom is capable, by the grace of God Almighty, of protecting itself and its people. However, we confirm in this forum that lifting the international embargo on Iran with regard to all types of weapons, whether conventional or non-conventional, will only lead to more destruction and devastation and will further fuel the scale of the conflicts in the region, which has suffered greatly from Iranian subversive actions.

In the coming hours, the international community will arrive at a decisive and important moment that will determine a new future for the peoples of the region. There are two paths: either maintaining and protecting international peace and security or giving the Iranian regime an opportunity to commit further crimes and violations against the peoples of the region.

Accordingly, the Kingdom calls on all concerned States and the international community to extend the provisions of the annex to Security Council resolution 2231 on restricting the transfer of conventional weapons to and from Iran, which will end on 18 October this year. The Kingdom supports all international measures that contribute to impeding Iranian destruction in the region until the Iranian regime adopts – in deeds, not in words – a peaceful approach acceptable to the international community and abandons the treacherous, aggressive behaviour that has caused destruction and devastation to the peoples of the region.

Thank you, Mr. President.

The President: Thank you, Ambassador, for your kind words and for the statement that you have just made. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of the Netherlands.

Mr. Gabriëlse (Netherlands): Thank you, Mr. President, for giving me the floor. Allow me at the outset to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency. You can count on the full support of my delegation.

The Netherlands is keen for the work of the Conference on Disarmament to continue, including during these challenging times, and welcomes our meeting today. In my intervention, I will focus on two points. First, I would like to take this opportunity to briefly reflect on the past sessions and provide some thoughts on how the Conference may begin its work next year. Second, my delegation would like to address the financial situation of the Conference.

Mr. President, 2020 is unmistakably a memorable year for all of us. But apart from the ongoing coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, which will influence our work, there are a number of developments in the Conference that we should reflect upon and learn from with a view to moving forward in 2021.

The Netherlands warmly welcomes the close cooperation between the members of the group of the six Presidents of the 2020 session, together with the last President of the 2019 session and the first of the 2021 session, which has provided the Conference with much-needed continuity and consistency. This close cooperation and coordination among the Presidents should continue in 2021. Therefore, we note with appreciation that there has already been a first meeting of the 2021 Presidents.

Regarding the organization of our work this year, the Netherlands deeply regrets that it was not possible to agree on a framework for the planning of our substantive work. Disagreements on one part of the proposed package prevented us from making any progress on substance during this session. This is particularly regrettable, as many delegations

expressed their willingness from the outset of the session to start substantive work as soon as possible.

Reflecting on why we could not agree on the organization of our work, we believe that there are a number of issues from this session that we can learn from. In this context, we would like to recall our “Back to basics” working paper contained in document CD/2165, which continues to be of relevance. Many of the key problems identified in our working paper, unfortunately, reoccurred during our session this year.

Once again, disagreement on the establishment of subsidiary bodies and their respective mandates prevented substantive work on any of the agenda items, as no framework for the organization of work was agreed, due to the linkage made between the programme of work and the establishment of subsidiary bodies. Moreover, the first eight weeks of our session were spent on procedural debates rather than on the substance of the Conference on Disarmament’s agenda, preventing us from doing substantive work and making much-needed progress.

In our working paper, we provide a number of suggestions for dealing with these problems. For example, we have argued that the organization of work can be rationalized by separating the programme of work from the establishment of subsidiary bodies. In line with the existing rules of procedure, the programme of work should merely include a schedule of activities based on the agenda that was agreed at the start of the session. By taking this approach, the focus of the plenary meetings will again be on the substance of the Conference’s agenda.

Once sufficient progress is made on an agenda item or a specific topic covered by it, the Conference could establish a subsidiary body on that agenda item or topic through a stand-alone decision in which the mandate of the subsidiary body is agreed. Substantive work on the other agenda items will continue under the programme of work, as agreed earlier. This will allow the Conference to make headway where possible, at a pace that is commensurate with the maturity of the topic at hand. This is how the Conference successfully organized its work in the 1980s and 1990s.

Hence, after a stalemate of more than two decades resulting from an “all or nothing” approach, it is time to go “back to basics” and to shift gears in 2021.

Mr. President, secondly, I wish to touch upon the financial situation of the Conference. We take note of the information paper of 23 July, about which my delegation has a number of questions. The Netherlands is particularly concerned with the lack of transparency surrounding the costs and the allocation of funds for Conference plenary meetings. We understand from the letter that the limits put on the number of meetings we can have in the Conference this year, despite the cancellation of many meetings due to the unforeseen COVID-19 pandemic, are due to a scarcity of resources at the overall level of the budget of the United Nations. Also, extra costs accrued by having to use Interprefy to allow remote participation due to the COVID-19 pandemic have put pressure on the total budget available.

However, we would appreciate more detail from the United Nations Secretariat on how much was spent on Interprefy for the Conference and how priorities are set with regard to the allocation of the conference management budget by the United Nations Office at Geneva vis-à-vis the different bodies it services. We also wonder why member States have been informed so late in the year about the scarcity of resources, when no mitigation can be attempted or choices can be made or internal discussions can be held with our Fifth Committee colleagues. It looks as if we have been presented with a fait accompli, and we would like to stress that it is the member States that decide how often we conduct our meetings. In case of financial limitations, we have to be informed in time and then decide on the emerging situation. Lastly, we would like to underline that there can be no hierarchy with respect to different forums in Geneva. We hope that the United Nations Secretariat will be in a position to provide further clarification with a view to avoiding this situation in 2021.

I thank you, Mr. President.

The President: Thank you, Ambassador, for your statement and your kind words. Now we have Ambassador Robert Wood of the United States of America, who will connect remotely.

Mr. Wood (United States of America) (*spoke via video link*): Thank you, Mr. President. On behalf of the United States, may I extend our congratulations to you on your assumption of the Conference on Disarmament presidency. In these unprecedented times, we rely more than ever on good leadership to guide us through our important tasks ahead. We recognize this places a fair amount of pressure on you and the Belarusian Mission, which holds the final Conference presidency of the 2020 session, but we are certain we are in good hands. Please know that you have our support.

As we look forward through mid-September, this body has two responsibilities: to finalize the 2020 report and to prepare a First Committee draft resolution conveying the Conference's annual report to the seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly. These two tasks must be completed in a limited number of hybrid meetings as the world continues to grapple with a global pandemic that has to date caused over 700,000 deaths and over 20 million infections.

For health and safety reasons, as we continue to face the global coronavirus disease (COVID-19) threat, my delegation urges that we convene as few in-person meetings as possible. To limit our in-person meetings yet accomplish our two tasks will require compromises, concessions, and flexibility. We need to be realistic and practical if we are to be successful under these unprecedented circumstances. As such, my delegation strongly recommends that we pursue a technical report and a Conference resolution that are as minimalist as possible, avoiding any undue controversial entanglements and that we adopt them via silence procedure.

Now is simply not the time to tackle entrenched or intractable substantive issues. In 2021, with the ambition of a vaccine, improved therapies and successful containment of the virus, we hope to continue where we left off in March 2020. Let us not forget: the Conference came very close to adopting a programme of work this year, and my delegation looks forward to reinvigorating that momentum when the time is right.

Until then, Mr. President, my delegation agrees with your 30 July statement that while the Conference may essentially be on hiatus due to the pandemic, the disarmament discourse has not lost its relevance. In fact, United States–Russia discussions in this area are ongoing. Special Presidential Envoy for Arms Control Ambassador Marshall Billingslea and Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov had productive discussions in June on the future of arms control, followed by working group meetings in July on mutually agreed upon topics related to the future of arms control. Concurrently, a space security exchange was organized on 27 July, where senior United States civilian and military experts with space policy and operational experience engaged with Russian counterparts in the first bilateral space dialogue in seven years. The two sides exchanged views on current and future space threats, policies, strategies and doctrine and discussed the forward-looking agenda to promote safe, professional and sustainable activities in space. Of equal importance, the meeting included more than two full days of detailed discussions to identify options for future trilateral arms control.

In addition, the United States has been working virtually with other members of the Creating an Environment for Nuclear Disarmament working group to advance an informal, frank dialogue on improving the security environment to facilitate progress towards nuclear disarmament. The working group has produced programmes of work for its three subgroups and plans to begin substantive discussions next month.

Next week, Ambassador Billingslea will once again lead a United States delegation to meet with our Russian counterparts to advance the progress already made in our expert working group discussions. We hope to achieve greater understanding between our two sides on a number of issues. Of course, to realize a truly comprehensive agreement on the future of nuclear arms control, the People's Republic of China needs to show transparency and a willingness to reduce the risk of a destabilizing nuclear arms race by bringing its military and diplomatic officials to the table for meaningful talks. At this point, Beijing has refused for decades to share any significant information about its plans, its capabilities or its intentions regarding its move to a triad of delivery vehicles, a "launch on warning" posture and exploration of low-yield nuclear weapons. China has an obligation under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to nuclear disarmament.

The United States has extended an open invitation to the People's Republic of China to join in trilateral arms control and risk reduction discussions and has made clear the need for all three countries to pursue arms control negotiations in good faith. To date, China has flatly rejected any invitation from the United States to provide more clarity and transparency into its nuclear doctrine and related nuclear activities. In fact, China continues to pursue an expansion of its nuclear arsenal, which will heighten nuclear tensions rather than diminish them and threatens to stimulate a new, unnecessary and destabilizing arms race among the three largest nuclear Powers on earth. And the other nuclear-armed States, like India and Pakistan, are also unlikely to stand still in the face of a completely unconstrained Chinese nuclear build-up. As President Trump said recently, "China is surging" in its nuclear weapons build-up. China will at least double the size of its nuclear stockpile by the end of the decade. This is the most rapid expansion and diversification of China's nuclear arsenal in its history, which is all the more alarming when viewed in the context of China's other actions. In a recent speech delivered by United States Secretary of State Pompeo in California, he addressed the Chinese Communist Party's designs for hegemony – from its unlawful claims to offshore resources across most of the South China Sea and its campaign of bullying to control them to a Chinese military that grows stronger and more menacing as it remains unchecked.

The United States recognizes that all parties to future arms control agreements will bring different perspectives and objectives to the negotiating table and will surely have disagreements, but we are confident these can be resolved in good-faith negotiations. It is time for dialogue and diplomacy between the three biggest nuclear weapons Powers on how to prevent a new arms race. As a party to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, each State is obligated to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to nuclear disarmament.

If China wants to claim to be a responsible Power, it needs to act like one. As part of those responsibilities, China must engage meaningfully in nuclear arms control. Every State member of the Conference on Disarmament – indeed, Mr. President, every nation on Earth – should insist, as a matter of international peace and security, that China engage on nuclear arms control, transparency and confidence-building with the United States and the Russian Federation without further delay.

When discussing ongoing security issues that have not diminished during the COVID-19 crisis, I would be remiss not to raise Iran's ongoing destabilizing behaviour. Iran's nuclear, ballistic missile and military programmes continue to pose a grave threat to international peace and security. For months, Iran has denied access to International Atomic Energy Agency inspectors and refused to answer the Agency's questions about possible undeclared nuclear material and activities. In June, the Agency's Board of Governors adopted a resolution calling on Iran to cooperate with the Agency without further delay. In doing so, the international community made clear that full and transparent cooperation with the Agency is the only path forward for Iran. Iran's safeguards agreements require it to declare nuclear material and nuclear-related activities to the Agency and provide its inspectors with access for verification. Iran's intentional failure to declare such nuclear material or provide access when required would be a clear violation of its safeguards agreement required by the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Further delay, denial or deception by Iran regarding the Agency's essential nuclear verification work is a cause for grave concern and will further isolate the Iranian regime. The United States remains committed to denying Iran any pathway to a nuclear weapon. In the light of Iran's past nuclear weapons programme, it is imperative that Iran verifiably demonstrate that it has permanently abandoned all such work. The international community must speak clearly and with one voice: full and transparent cooperation with the Agency and compliance with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty are the only path forward for Iran.

Mr. President, it is clear the world continues to face significant challenges. Threats to global peace and security have not diminished under the spectre of this debilitating COVID-19 pandemic. The Conference has a role to play, and my delegation looks forward to resuming its efforts here in Geneva when the time is right.

In the meantime, we are committed to completing our tasks at hand and urge you to consider the adoption of a minimalist technical report and resolution, adopted by silence procedure. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President: Thank you, Ambassador Wood, for your statement and your kind words. I now give the floor to the representative of Germany, Mr. Pilz.

Mr. Pilz (Germany): Thank you, Mr. President. Let me at the outset congratulate you on assuming your duties, given the circumstances. Our delegation fully supports your approach, sketched out in your letter of 30 July.

The year 2020 has been an exceptional year in the history of the Conference on Disarmament not only due to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic but also due to the inability of the Conference to agree on a meaningful road map for the year. We thus need to avoid setting another negative precedent for the future, as we need to make sure that this august body gets back to work, as many of the previous speakers have already stressed. We need to do this by at least finishing this session smoothly through the adoption of an annual report – and we, too, support the adoption of a technical report that focuses on the issues that are necessary to get us back to work next year. To do that, however, we need to make sure that the Conference gets the time and the right framework to meet and to hold discussions without undue limitations. I thank the Secretary-General of the Conference for her remarks in this context and would like to emphasize the need for full and continued transparency in this regard. We very much look forward to the announced meeting on financial issues, which will hopefully provide further clarity. I thank you, Mr. President.

The President: Thank you very much, Mr. Pilz. I now give the floor to Ambassador Sally Mansfield of Australia.

Ms. Mansfield (Australia): Thank you very much, Mr. President. And we thank the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, Ms. Valovaya, for her attendance and support as well. Ambassador Ahsan, may I congratulate you, too, on assuming the Conference presidency and reiterate Australia's support for you and for your team.

Holding any kind of meeting during these coronavirus disease (COVID-19) times is indeed challenging, so I would like to thank the team from Bangladesh and the Conference secretariat for the work that has gone into allowing us to meet after the summer recess, along with the work by the United Nations Office at Geneva, so that we can ensure the health and safety of all.

Australia has been proud to be part of the group of the six Presidents of the 2020 session, together with the last President of the 2019 session and the first of the 2021 session, and we are delighted to see this cooperation continuing under your presidency. Strengthening coordination among that group of Presidents has been one of the positive features of the Conference this year, so we are pleased that this continuity and transparency seem set to continue with the six Presidents of the 2021 session.

But looking back on this year, it will of course go down as a year very much affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Before the lockdown, however, I would like to recall the really positive efforts by Algeria and Argentina to land a programme of work.

Consultation and solidarity among the year's six Presidents were critical to the comprehensive proposals aimed at advancing the work of this body, and we wish next year's six Presidents all the very best in their efforts to agree on a programme of work and have substantive discussions.

The civil society meeting held under the Austrian presidency was another highlight. And as I mentioned in my statement when we last met in June, during the Australian presidency, we invited Conference delegates to share their views about the priorities and role of the Conference, ways to break the deadlock and how we can become effective. Many of you commented that the views and priorities expressed during our presidency would be a good basis for work going forward. We very much welcome this positive assessment of our consultations and have turned the statement into a working paper that we would be pleased to see annexed to this year's Conference report.

We will also submit a paper on our proposal to make the Conference's rules of procedure gender-neutral and request that this, too, be annexed to this year's report. I also thank those delegations that have expressed their support for that proposal. Doing so is an expression of value of diversity and equality in the Conference. And we stand ready to assist next year's six Presidents make this simple fix a reality.

Turning to 2021, we see merit in continuing the conversation on how to get the most out of this body. Some of the areas where we would like to see progress include nuclear risk reduction, in particular given the uncertainty about the delayed Review Conference. We think the time is more than ripe for the Conference on Disarmament to get serious about contributing to the development of a set of practical nuclear risk reduction measures. The United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research's work in this area is an excellent point of reference.

The other area worth looking at, in our view, is softer instruments like codes of conduct or other confidence-building measures on verification or outer space. Transparency regarding military activities in outer space merits this attention – as an increasing number of countries become engaged in the space domain, it needs to be a near-term priority.

The final point I will make is to underline that it is up to all of us to decide whether to move forward and how best to do that – the challenging international security climate demands that the Conference regain its relevance.

Australia looks forward to working with each and every one of you to respond to this demand. And I thank you again, Mr. President.

The President: Thank you very much, Ambassador, for your statement and your kind words for the President. We now have the Russian Federation. I give the floor to Mr. Andrey Belousov.

Mr. Belousov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Thank you, Mr. President. I would like to congratulate you on assuming the presidency and thank you and the secretariat for all the effort that has made it possible for us to meet in this chamber today.

Our delegation welcomes the opportunity to come together again at a plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. For a number of reasons, encompassing both the financial restrictions and the new *modus operandi* in the context of the ongoing coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, we are forced to meet in a hybrid format, which unfortunately does not allow us to enjoy fully all the advantages of diplomatic work, such as friendly conversations in the corridors or over a cup of coffee. Of course, we would like our Conference to fully resume its work and for “traditional” meetings to be held involving discussions – or, preferably, negotiations – on the Conference agenda items.

At our last meeting, on 30 June, our delegation proposed that we think about the ideas on which our approaches to ensuring international security and strategic stability are based or, rather, should be based. I will not repeat myself. I will simply stress that, in our view, the current situation in respect of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation leaves much to be desired. The framework of international law established with such difficulty over the course of decades, which has formed the basis for the efforts of the international community to resolve issues in this area, is facing unprecedented challenges. The destructive tendency to throw about unfounded claims about the supposed non-compliance by States with their treaty obligations is only worsening the state of crisis in arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation.

In this respect, I would like to say that Russia has fulfilled its obligations under the agreements to which it is a party and will continue to do so in future. Unfortunately, the number of these agreements keeps on shrinking. And this is not the fault of Russia. The unshakeable tenet of *pacta sunt servanda* has always been the underlying principle behind Russian foreign policy. Those interested in our assessment of compliance with agreements on arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation are recommended to read the comments of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the subject, which are available in English on the website of the Permanent Mission.

We not only support the preservation and strengthening of the existing international legal foundation of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation, but are also prepared to participate in multilateral work to improve it, including by drafting new agreements. We would also stress that the effectiveness and sustainability of such agreements will only be guaranteed if they reflect the security interests of all participating States without exception and are the outcome of a genuine desire to come to acceptable arrangements. We will keep on repeating that consensus is the most important factor in ensuring the functional durability of treaties and agreements, especially in such a sensitive area as arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation.

Of course, there is no quick and easy route to resolving the entire range of issues that have accumulated in the area of international security. Long-term results can only be achieved through painstaking and rigorous work aimed at a better understanding of each other's positions and the gradual building of trust. Constructive ideas that unite rather than divide the international community can play a major role in this.

The emergence of such ideas is possible only where there is a true dialogue of equals among all interested States. One of the leading forums meeting these criteria remains the Conference, with its special mandate which allows new ideas not only to be generated but to be realized in the form of actual, legally binding, agreements.

We sincerely believe, and the overwhelming majority of delegations will agree with me, that the States Members of the United Nations have at their disposal all the tools they need to examine and resolve issues related to arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation and to maintain international security. I mean first and foremost the relevant forums in the United Nations disarmament mechanism. They form a whole in terms of fulfilling the goals enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and confirmed by the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. They smoothly complement each other, fulfilling their designated functions, both deliberative (as in the case of the First Committee and the United Nations Disarmament Commission) and negotiating (as is intended for the Conference).

The potential of these forums in the context of the mandates they have been given is far from being exhausted; the main thing is to make full use of it. That, indeed, is the essence of the obligation incumbent on all of us.

Yes, there are certain subjective and objective difficulties which prevent the mechanism from working as effectively as it should. But this does not mean that we need to reject it and introduce new formats, which would at first seem designed to supplement it while actually being intended to replace it completely. The creation of interest groups involving one's "own" like-minded partners might seem the simplest, most obvious and therefore highly attractive solution to difficult issues. However, in the long term, such an approach will have very little impact because it is not inclusive and seems very likely to lead to greater divisions among States on vital global security matters, such as the prevention of nuclear war and the avoidance of an arms race in outer space. Such initiatives only divide the attention of the international community among numerous matters, sometimes of secondary importance, instead of focusing it on the most important issues.

We believe that the Conference agenda, approved several decades ago, is as relevant as ever. Carrying it out will require the resumption of full-fledged work for our forum, which should be based on a comprehensive and balanced programme of work. The programme of work must provide for the start of negotiations on specific agenda items or at least the organization of preparatory work to lay the path for such negotiations. I am talking about intense and substantive pre-negotiation work. That is the point of a programme of work. The connection between this document and the existing agenda can be expressed as follows: the agenda is a list of the tasks before the Conference, while the programme of work is a plan of our actions, containing answers to the questions of when and how we will complete these tasks. We are prepared to consider any options for streamlining our work, for example the re-establishment of subsidiary bodies. However, ideas on this subject must be accorded the appropriate status and procedural form. Most importantly, they must help the Conference exercise its negotiating mandate.

We call upon all States parties to the Conference to show maximum flexibility and readiness to compromise with the aim of agreeing on an acceptable programme of work, so that we can finally begin considering specific proposals, including those already on the table at the Conference.

In this regard, I would like to express a measure of optimism following the meeting in Vienna between the Governments of the Russian Federation and the United States of America. These meetings give reason to expect the continuation of substantive bilateral dialogue on an ambitious list of issues, some of which concern the competences of the Conference.

In conclusion, I would like to underscore our readiness for full and productive engagement with all States parties to the Conference in order to find a way out of the

current state of affairs and begin substantive work on addressing the international security issues of today. The longer we put off this work, the more effort, means and resources we will be obliged to spend on it in future. Thank you for your attention.

The President: Thank you, Mr. Belousov, for your statement and for your kind words for the President. Now we have Ambassador Alfaro of Peru, who will connect remotely.

Ms. Alfaro Espinosa (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to begin by congratulating Ambassador Shameem Ahsan of Bangladesh on assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. Mr. President, you may count on my delegation's full support in helping to make your work a success. I would like to thank you for the bilateral consultations that your delegation has held in recent weeks, the outcomes of which were explained in the communication that was circulated some days ago. Peru endorses the statement made by Ethiopia on behalf of the Group of 21.

Mr. President, last week saw the commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the first nuclear attack in history. At a time when the risk that nuclear weapons might be used again is rising, it is worth remembering the tragic events of August 1945. The atomic bombs that were dropped on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki ended the lives of thousands of people, changed the lives of thousands more who were seriously injured, and inflicted suffering on many families, suffering that lasts even to this day, as a result of radiation.

Last year, the International Committee of the Red Cross released an enlightening video, entitled "What if We Nuke a City?" It is chilling to realize how much energy can be released in a nuclear explosion, causing the deaths of innocent people, the destruction of infrastructure and damage to the environment. To give you an idea, it is estimated that the unfortunate and shocking accident that occurred a few days ago in Lebanon caused a blast equivalent to between 1,000 and 1,500 tons of TNT – slightly less than a tenth of the magnitude of the Hiroshima bomb. We can already imagine the devastating scale of a new nuclear explosion.

The humanitarian consequences of a nuclear explosion would be severe, regardless of whether it was detonated intentionally or accidentally by a State, or by a non-State actor. Nuclear weapons simply must not exist. It is worrying that despite their catastrophic potential, there are still tens of thousands of nuclear weapons around the world and that currently no progress is being made in dismantling them. On the contrary, we are witnessing an upsurge in political and military tensions and, as a result, the revival of programmes for the modernization of nuclear arsenals, while the doctrine of nuclear deterrence prevails in security policies.

My delegation wishes to reiterate its deep concern about the threat posed to humanity by the existence of nuclear weapons. We consider that their use or the threat of their use constitutes a crime against humanity and a violation of international law, including international humanitarian law. We are proud to be part of the first densely populated nuclear-weapon-free zone under the Treaty of Tlatelolco. We are also encouraged by the growing number of ratifications and accessions to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. We see such instruments as the product of efforts by the international community – including States, international agencies and civil society – to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons, and as the only effective safeguard for their total prohibition and elimination in a transparent, verifiable and irreversible manner.

Mr. President, I have brought up the events that occurred in Hiroshima and Nagasaki 75 years ago, and which have already been mentioned in this chamber, because such tragic events, much like the global health crisis that we are currently experiencing, make us reflect upon the human condition and its vulnerability. We reaffirm the strong and immeasurable commitment of Peru to disarmament and we renew our willingness to promote and support initiatives aimed at strengthening the Conference's position as the sole multilateral negotiating forum on this subject.

Before concluding, I would like to mention that, faced with the challenges posed by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the bodies of the disarmament and arms control machinery, and the United Nations system as a whole, have had to decide upon the best way to restart their activities. In this regard, while Peru recognizes the value of face-to-

face exchange, we also acknowledge that virtual tools have proved useful in these exceptional times. We therefore believe that, as States parties, we must ensure that the secretariats of international instruments have the necessary budgetary provisions to make virtual services available to the membership. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President: Thank you, Ambassador, for your statement and for your kind words for the President. We now have Ambassador Valero of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, who will be connect remotely.

Mr. Valero (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela congratulates you on your efforts in preparing this meeting. We are pleased that a member of the Group of 21 is taking the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. We take this opportunity to salute the peoples of the world who, in concert with their Governments, are making the necessary efforts to reduce the harm caused by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. Concrete and holistic measures are needed to save the lives of millions of people.

We respectfully joined in the minute's silence that was observed in tribute to the victims of the explosions in Beirut. This event caused great sorrow among the Venezuelan people, which includes a large community of Lebanese origin. We endorse the statement made by the Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Ethiopia on behalf of the Group of 21.

Venezuela celebrates the proclamation of Latin America and the Caribbean as a zone of peace, endorsed at the Second Summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States in Havana in 2014. At that Summit, all States of the region committed to working towards further nuclear disarmament as a priority goal and contributing to general and complete disarmament. The proclamation is an important contribution to the international community's repeated efforts to move towards complete disarmament. Venezuela is proud to be part of these efforts and to contribute to strengthening the international and regional disarmament regime.

In the Conference on Disarmament, substantive negotiations have been paralysed for more than 20 years, and that situation is now accompanied by the collapse of major international security, disarmament and arms control agreements, including the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, the Treaty on Open Skies and the New START. They have all been abandoned by the Government of the United States.

Mr. President, in view of the fragile security situation, aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic, our delegation has reflected on the Conference's future. We support the call that was made by the Russian Federation during the plenary meeting of 30 June 2020, and agree with its diagnosis of the current unfortunate situation. For its part, my delegation would like to make the following comments.

This month marks 75 years since the United States used nuclear bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The harmful and catastrophic effects of the radiation generated then are still being felt today. There is no human way of measuring the pain caused by the use of these bombs. Yet the possibility of new, modern nuclear tests and attacks remains. Despite these risks, the Conference has been unable to take its mandate forward. More seriously, according to the timely and detailed report presented on 30 June 2020 by the Australian Ambassador, one of the Presidents of the 2020 session, some States believe that the Conference could engage in work on codes of conduct, action plans and other documents of a voluntary nature. It is my delegation's view that these proposals mainly favour the decision by the United States Government to abandon the current arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation regime.

Mr. President, one might ask what is the Conference's role in a context where the world's leading nuclear Power systematically rejects or imposes conditions on any form of regulation in the sphere of disarmament? What does the United States Government hope to achieve by rejecting the most basic international obligations in the area of disarmament? Clearly, a foreign policy under which a country refuses to accept new regulations on disarmament will have a direct impact on a negotiating body such as this Conference, which operates by consensus.

In the coming weeks, the member States of the Conference will begin negotiations on its report to the General Assembly. The report will state that, despite all the efforts undertaken by the Presidents and the new coordination mechanisms, it has not been possible for the Conference to adopt a programme of work. What country in the world, whose foreign policy rejects multilateralism and aims to diminish the international disarmament regime, stands to benefit from this situation?

As for the questions raised by the Russian Federation during our previous plenary meeting, we wish to assert that it will neither be possible to create favourable conditions for disarmament nor to build a new era of arms control on the wreckage of the current disarmament and arms control system, which the United States Government wishes to eradicate.

The pressure on the current disarmament regime casts new doubt on the trust that the international community has placed in the United Nations that it will maintain international security and prevent war. Many experts, non-governmental organizations, diplomats and academics hold the view – which my country shares – that the breakdown of the disarmament regime will only strengthen doctrines of deterrence, based on a renewed arms race. In this scenario, developing countries that do not have nuclear weapons are prey to terror and susceptible to political manipulation, while the zone of peace in Latin America and the Caribbean faces imminent danger. Unilateralism is so dangerous that it is rejected even by the countries that possess nuclear weapons. This is a sensible criticism of nuclear deterrence mechanisms based on supremacy and on military competition.

Venezuela shares a multilateralist vision of international security. It believes that peace can be achieved by strengthening the international security, disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation regime. Constructive dialogue and the political will of the member States of the Conference are crucial for repairing the damage that has been done to the international disarmament regime. Against this background, the Conference will have to devote enormous efforts in 2021 to breaking its historical stalemate, which has been aggravated by the uncertainty caused by COVID-19.

We call upon member States that are prepared to make progress on the basis of meaningful binding agreements which address the latent problems of international security, including nuclear disarmament, the prevention of an arms race, negative security assurances and the prevention of an arms race in outer space, not to give in to doctrines that encourage war. The Conference remains the only forum with a universal mandate to negotiate legally binding instruments on disarmament. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President: Thank you, Ambassador, for your statement and your kind words. Ladies and gentlemen, for whatever it is worth, let me tell you that we have nine speakers to go on my list and we might just be able to finish the plenary meeting before lunch if we stick to a time schedule which is more or less manageable and concise. I now give the floor to Ambassador Khalil Hashmi of Pakistan.

Mr. Hashmi (Pakistan): Mr. President, thank you for convening this plenary meeting. On behalf of my delegation, I congratulate you on assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. We welcome your outreach and consultations prior to this meeting. We also appreciate the efforts that the secretariat has made to organize this plenary meeting.

In line with the framework that you have outlined for today's meeting, I wish to briefly share our perspective on recent developments in the field of disarmament, the Conference's work and options for future work. At the last plenary meeting, in June, I shared our detailed appraisal of the contemporary global order, especially with reference to the international security environment. I drew the attention of this body to the causes and consequences of the negative developments and disturbing trends in the arms control and disarmament landscape, as well as its architecture. My delegation also proposed a road map to manage and perhaps begin to halt and reverse the damage done to the global order, as well to the arms control agenda. As we meet, the diagnosis and prognosis hold true.

Mr. President, let me briefly share our assessment of recent global developments in and around the field of disarmament. It is clear that the international order, multilateralism and long-standing norms and rules continue to be undermined. Unilateralism has emerged as a defining feature of our times. There are valid and growing perceptions about the lack of

international accountability of the big and the powerful, who defy and violate international law, often with impunity.

Despite avowed commitments to the rule of law, strategic, political and commercial interests continue to trump universal values and norms. Power asymmetries are rising as powerful States seek absolute security and domination through weaponization, integration and operationalization of space and cybertechnologies. Instead of working on controlling and reducing arms, many States are pursuing efforts to expand their arsenals and make them more sophisticated. Nuclear dangers are increasing, as thresholds for nuclear testing and use are lowered by some States. These developments entail enhanced risks of miscalculation and tensions, escalating the potential for crises, confrontation and new armed conflicts, especially in regions marked by power asymmetries. The multilateral machinery designed to deliberate and negotiate arms-related constraints is therefore directly affected by these developments at the global, regional and subregional levels.

Let me briefly share how these global developments impact South Asia and vice versa. Most of the varying elements of the global picture are evident in our region, where the largest State remains embarked on a policy course to deliberately violate international law and norms. This premeditated defiance of international rule of law is accompanied by an unbridled policy of hegemony and offensive doctrines. Rather than holding this State accountable for such recklessness, it is being shielded politically and aided with generous conventional and non-conventional supplies from outside the region. Jammu and Kashmir, under the illegal occupation and alien domination of India, represents both a cause and manifestation of these policies.

Every tenet of international human rights and humanitarian law has been trampled upon in the illegally occupied territory. Just last week, the world marked the completion of one year of India's unilateral actions in occupied Jammu and Kashmir that contravene the Charter of the United Nations and several Security Council resolutions.

On a positive note, the Security Council has held three discussions on the illegal Indian occupation of Jammu and Kashmir, including one last week. Pakistan welcomes these discussions, which underscore the importance the Council attaches to this international dispute and the risks to peace and security that may arise out of unlawful actions.

The fountainhead of Indian policy of defiance of international law and norms lies in the country's Hindutva ideology, which seeks the establishment, by all means, including through policies of hegemony and repression, of a Hindu *rashtra*, a State. I have previously drawn attention to the belligerent statements by Indian leaders and the country's pursuit of offensive doctrines on subjects that fall within the purview of this Conference. It would be naive to dismiss such statements and doctrines as mere bluster and bravado. They indeed represent the increasingly militarized mindset that defines Indian polity today. India has a track record of deflecting international attention from its illegal actions and State-led repression in occupied Jammu and Kashmir. The possibility of India's resorting to a false-flag operation or another military adventure against Pakistan cannot be ruled out. There are continuing signals of such aggressive Indian designs, as evidenced by the growing frequency of its cease-fire violations and attacks against the civilians across the Line of Control.

As I said at the last meeting, Pakistan seeks neither war nor conflict with India. However, as we demonstrated last year, if attacked, Pakistan has the will and capability to defend itself and will respond resolutely to any act of aggression. The international community, especially international bodies mandated to maintain international peace and security and to control arms, have a duty to take cognizance and press India to halt its grave violations of international law and refrain from stoking regional tensions.

Mr. President, as regards the work of the Conference and future options, it is clear that the Conference has not been able to commence negotiations on its core agenda items for several decades. In fact, negotiations on some of its oldest agenda items, which have far-reaching significance for international security, have continued to be blocked. The root causes of this long-standing deadlock do not lie in the Conference's rules of procedure or methods of work. After all, this Conference has successfully negotiated several important treaties with the same rules and methods. The impasse in the Conference is a consequence of the larger political developments, policies and postures that I have outlined before. The

Conference is therefore affected by these developments and is obliged to operate in such an environment.

Overcoming the deadlock and exploring options for the future would necessarily entail demonstrable adherence to the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations. It also requires reaffirmation that these principles are universal and that faithful compliance by all States, big or small, is essential to maintaining the integrity of the rule-based international order. It must also include full and effective implementation of international treaties and Security Council resolutions by all States. Within this framework, the revival of a global consensus on arms control and disarmament on the basis of equity, balance, restraint and cooperation among States is both urgent and essential. Even as consensus-building will be a complex task, there are no viable alternatives to addressing a myriad of international security challenges. I have spelled out in my last statement elements of reviving such a consensus and will not repeat them again.

In the specific context of the Conference on Disarmament, only a realistic approach that draws on what has worked and what has not will work. Subjective notions of ripeness have not gained traction in the past and will not do so in the future, either. The Conference should be able to resume substantive work on all its agenda items. Should there be consensus, we are open to substantive work on other contemporary issues, such as chemical and biological terrorism, the weaponization of cyberspace and lethal autonomous weapons systems.

The global build-up of advanced weapons platforms and means of delivery, together with rising tensions, heightens nuclear risks and dangers. This makes work on the prevention of nuclear war a high area of priority for this Conference.

Finally, Mr. President, on our part we will continue to engage with other members and Presidents of the Conference to enable it to resume substantive discussions on all agenda items and, where possible, on new and emerging issues.

The President: Thank you, Ambassador, for your statement and for your kind words for the presidency. I now give the floor to the representative of Indonesia, Mr. Indra Rosandry.

Mr. Rosandry (Indonesia): Thank you, Mr. President. On behalf of the Indonesian delegation, let me begin by congratulating you on assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. You can be assured of Indonesia's continuous support for the work of the presidency and this esteemed Conference. Indonesia appreciates the efforts made by the President and the secretariat to organize this meeting amid the ongoing coronavirus disease (COVID-19) challenge faced by the Conference.

Indonesia associates itself with the statement by Ethiopia on behalf of the Group of 21 and wishes to convey the following remarks in its national capacity.

Mr. President, it is no secret that for nearly three decades, the Conference has been in gridlock. We also understand that member States' positions in the Conference remain unchanged. This situation has raised questions about the relevance and contributions of the Conference.

However, I think you are all in agreement that the Conference should move forward in order to fulfil its mandate effectively and to retain its relevance. In that sense, we need to identify the low-hanging fruit: that is, the issue that the Conference is in a position to consider.

In Indonesia's view, negative security assurances are an important issue in the multilateral process of reducing nuclear weapons towards "global zero". I do not recall that there is any State officially opposed to the idea of an agreement on effective international arrangements for negative security assurances. In principle, we all agree on the urgent need to reach agreement on such arrangements.

An appeal for legally binding negative security assurances is very reasonable, especially considering the understanding that, in exchange for the commitment never to develop or receive nuclear weapons, the non-nuclear-weapon States will have the legitimate right not to be attacked with nuclear weapons or threatened with the use of nuclear weapons.

It was part of our grand bargain back when we agreed on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty fifty years ago. It stands to reason, therefore, that we have been urging an early agreement on effective, universal, unconditional, non-discriminatory and irrevocable legally binding security assurances, including since the creation of the Conference.

Mr. President, I recognize that we still have divergent views on this issue – for example on the scope, nature, form of these future arrangements. However, we note that various efforts have been undertaken in order to address the issue of negative security assurances, including the following:

- Convening of relevant ad hoc groups, meetings and thematic debates within the Conference framework
- Submission of various draft conventions and working papers, reflecting in-depth discussion and substantive negotiations
- Adoption of relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions
- Consultations on security assurances among the nuclear-weapon States
- Establishment of the six zones free of nuclear weapons (those established under the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Bangkok, Pelindaba and Semipalatinsk, in addition to Mongolia)

In this regard, we would like to underline that negative security assurances are a mature issue.

Taking into consideration the divergent views on how to establish the Conference's programme of work, I would like to encourage the Conference to consider a new approach to the four core issues. The Conference could consider an arrangement that enables negotiations on negative security assurances and, simultaneously, a discussion mandate on the three other core issues.

I thank you, Mr. President.

The President: Thank you very much for the kind words addressed to the President and for the statement you made. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of France.

Mr. Hwang (France) (*spoke in French*): Thank you, Mr. President. Allow me to congratulate you on assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and commend your efforts, which have led to today's meeting.

Certainly, this session is not meeting the expectations of many member States. For our part, we would have preferred to dedicate this meeting to in-depth thematic discussions related to the Conference agenda.

In an ideal world, we would have preferred to carry out the programme of work approved at the start of the year. However, it must be said that the Conference is the one disarmament forum that is meeting during this drastic slow-down in the multilateral disarmament calendar, and that is good news in itself.

In this regard, we have taken note of the recent information sent out to member States by the Conference secretariat regarding the state of the Conference's finances. We are surprised, to put it diplomatically, by the announcement that the remaining budget for 2020 is apparently only sufficient to pay for four 2-hour hybrid meetings at most.

These statements are not backed up by any tangible or costed explanation. We would therefore request the presidency to ask the Conference secretariat, in conjunction with the United Nations Office at Geneva and the five other Presidents for the session, to prepare a specific report on the Conference's financial situation, including detailed information about the Conference's overall budget, moneys paid out, savings made and forecasts for 2020.

We all have the right to demand increased transparency on the Conference's accounts and, in line with what my colleague from the Netherlands said, a fait accompli is unacceptable to my delegation.

As the third part of this year's session comes to an end, I will now take a step back and share a few observations about the prospects for the Conference in 2021. The year 2021

will begin with a highly awaited key event, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference, which we hope will be able to take place in the best possible conditions, given the public health context. The Treaty, which is a pillar of the non-proliferation system, serves our collective security and the central goal will be to reaffirm its authority and primacy.

On the fiftieth anniversary of its entry into force, we must acknowledge that the Treaty is an undeniable success. The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty is the most universal instrument in the world. It is the only treaty that prevents nuclear war while allowing everyone to enjoy the peaceful use of nuclear power.

While the threat posed by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their vectors has increased since the last NPT Review Conference, it is important to work towards the protection and reinforcement of the non-proliferation regime and the preservation of its cornerstone, the Treaty. France will do this using the following road map, in accordance with article VI of the Treaty.

Firstly, by defending the rationale of disarmament that serves global security and stability. In this respect, my country has a unique record that is in line with both its responsibilities and its interests, as it has irreversibly dismantled its land-based nuclear system, its nuclear test sites and its facilities for producing fissile material for arms manufacturing, in addition to reducing the size of its arsenal, which now constitutes fewer than 300 nuclear weapons. All these decisions are consistent with our rejection of any arms race and the preservation of our nuclear deterrent at its current level of strict sufficiency. This record is exemplary. It gives my country legitimacy to demand concrete steps towards global, progressive, credible and verifiable disarmament.

Secondly, France continues to argue for the immediate start at the Conference of negotiations for a fissile material cut-off treaty, based on document CD/1299 and the mandate it contains and for the preservation and universalization of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

Thirdly, we will continue work on nuclear disarmament verification in the relevant forums and will continue cooperation, for example with Germany, with which we have carried out an unprecedented practical exercise.

Furthermore, we will seek to engage in practical work towards strategic risk reduction, a subject that has been mentioned several times already today. Like the other delegations before me, we believe that the uncontrolled escalation of a local conflict into a major war is one of the most worrying scenarios today, which a series of simple common-sense measures could effectively prevent.

At the same time, France will continue its efforts aimed at an international arms control programme in which Europeans must make their voices heard. The end of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, the uncertainties over the future of the New START and the crisis in the conventional arms control regime in Europe point to the possibility, by 2021, of pure and unconstrained military and nuclear competition such as we have not seen since the end of the 1960s. It is therefore essential that the New START should be extended beyond 2021 and that, after the end of the INF Treaty, discussions should be opened on an instrument capable of ensuring strategic stability on the European continent.

Finally, France will do its bit to push for the resumption of the P5 process, to further implement the approved road map, particularly regarding an exchange on doctrines and strategic risk reduction. This discussion is intended to reinforce stability among nuclear-weapon States and reduce the risks of involuntary escalation in the event of conflict.

Thank you, Mr. President.

The President: Thank you, Ambassador, for your statement and your kind words addressed to the presidency. I will now give the floor to the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Lim Sang-beom (Republic of Korea): Mr. President, at the outset, I would like to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament presidency. I would like to assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation. I also want to thank the secretariat for organizing this meeting.

Taking this opportunity to add to what I said at the last plenary meeting, I would like to reiterate our priorities in the Conference, as stated by my Foreign Minister during the high-level segment in February this year.

First, we believe that for the Conference to be sincere and serious about advancing the cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament, which has been the first item on the Conference's agenda for decades, the priority of this august body should be given to commencing negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty at the earliest possible. We believe that the objective of our collective efforts and a sense of urgency need to guide our methodology in advancing the agenda. In support of the international efforts in this regard, my Government has decided to join other supporters of the relevant action of the United Nations Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament.

Second, we as a collective body should address the issue of the growing threat from and to outer space more proactively but in a realistic manner. I believe we may all easily agree upon the importance of the issue, but there are discrepancies on where and how to start addressing the challenges. The Republic of Korea believes that the Conference's first step forward in this regard should be the commencement of discussions on reducing space threats through responsible actions, which would gradually lead to building trust among States on this subject on which progress has long been stalled.

Third, the Conference needs to pay further attention to challenges around new and emerging technologies. We have noticed that the unprecedented coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic is accelerating the application of new and emerging technologies, and this changing trend also had certain implications for the area of security and disarmament. The Conference needs to find its relevance in our constantly changing world by getting a head start on relevant discussions.

Mr. President, I also would like to briefly touch upon the upcoming session of the First Committee of the General Assembly and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference. These platforms have been crucial to our collective international security and disarmament efforts. This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the entry into force of the Treaty, which has been the cornerstone of the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. However, we are now facing difficulty and uncertainty around these conferences. While waiting for the discussion and conclusion from New York about the logistical arrangements, we believe, in principle, that the pandemic should not stop our noble tradition of reinforcing our commitment to disarmament and international security. We must contribute to providing the much-needed momentum for the successful outcome of the upcoming Review Conference, keeping in mind the inevitable constraints caused by this pandemic. In this regard, we should be practical, and assessments of what might constitute a successful Review Conference should be realistic. In making such an assessment, the Republic of Korea will remain flexible.

Before concluding, I would like to echo the calls of support for the Australian proposal to make the rules of procedure gender-neutral. I also would like to join other colleagues on the issue of the financial situation of the Conference secretariat. In this regard, we note that the secretariat is going to provide a detailed briefing session. I believe we need a full and detailed picture of the situation before discussing what to do next.

Mr. President, once again, I appreciate your efforts to continue consultations with member States and for having successfully convened today's meeting. I thank you.

The President: Thank you, Ambassador, for your statement and for the kind words addressed to the President. I now give the floor to the representative of Morocco.

Mr. Kabbaj (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): Thank you, Mr. President. My delegation would like to thank you for the considerable efforts you have made during your presidency, which has taken place under exceptional conditions that did not prevent you from holding broad constructive consultations with the States members of our body.

The delegation of the Kingdom of Morocco is fully aware of the challenges faced by the Conference on Disarmament, particularly in the context of the pandemic, but we are also sure that these difficult times can facilitate important changes.

We all agree on one point in particular, which is that the deadlock within the Conference has never called into question the reason for this body's existence. On the

contrary, its importance on the international stage is continually being reasserted through the quality of debate shown at each of our meetings.

Our body consistently meets to debate matters of common interest with the same enthusiasm and the same ambition, despite the differences of opinion that exist and the constraints related to the political considerations of our delegations, which prevent it from fulfilling its mandate.

However, declarations of goodwill and awareness are not sufficient when action is required. The nuclear threat, the arms race, the militarization of outer space and artificial intelligence are all subjects we must examine before we are overtaken by events.

Perhaps we are in a key phase in which it is vital to show better coordination, at least for the most urgent matters and the most pressing deadlines, particularly the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference, which will be decisive in determining the overall approach adopted by States to nuclear disarmament.

Finally, my delegation once again hopes that we will adopt a consensus-based programme of work at the first opportunity, allowing us to overcome the deadlock, which has lasted too long, and return to our mandate by negotiating binding multilateral instruments on disarmament, to contribute to international peace and security. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President: Thank you especially for being very brief and helping us to proceed as scheduled and for your statement and kind words. I now give the floor to the representative of Brazil.

Mr. Dalcero (Brazil): Thank you, Mr. President. The Brazilian delegation congratulates you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. We appreciate your wide-ranging consultations prior to this meeting. Rest assured of Brazil's cooperation and support. We also thank the secretariat for its efforts during this challenging period.

In 2020, the coordinated effort of the six presidencies of the Conference confirmed the value of joint action in multilateral forums. We look forward to replicating this experience next year.

The world is going through unprecedented times, coping with a health crisis that has economic and social consequences. We should therefore take on the responsibility to make progress in the disarmament and security arena.

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has forced the postponement of the tenth Review Conference, now scheduled to take place early next year. This meeting of the Conference on Disarmament allows me to reiterate some Brazilian positions concerning the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and other treaties related to nuclear weapons.

Brazil has a long history of engagement with international initiatives aimed at eliminating nuclear weapons and securing the inalienable rights to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. The Review Conferences of 2000 and 2010 succeeded in achieving positive outcomes and offering hope that real progress was under way. The scenarios of recent years should not prevent us from adopting a bold view during the tenth Review Conference, which should be an opportunity to reaffirm and move beyond previous commitments. In this context, Brazil believes that the implementation of article VI by nuclear-weapon-States is a condition sine qua non for the future of the Treaty.

Implementing nuclear agreements presents the practical challenges of verification. The Brazilian member of the recent Group of Governmental Experts to consider the role of verification in advancing nuclear disarmament submitted a working paper proposing 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 group of scientific and technical experts. The proposal draws inspiration from the Group of Scientific Experts that reported to the Conference on Disarmament, this body, to prepare technically for negotiations on the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty between 1976 and 1996. It is important to recall that that Group was active at a time when there was no hope of a breakthrough agreement on banning nuclear testing. Still, its work was fundamental to laying the foundations for the successful negotiations of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

That is why we believe that a new group of scientific and technical experts on nuclear disarmament verification would be a positive step towards achieving the goal of nuclear disarmament. A decisive step, however, would be for the annex 2 States to ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. And we call upon them to do so.

Brazil actively supported the negotiation of 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. That Treaty complements and is consistent with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and treaties establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones. In this sense, it is the ultimate expression of all commitments in the nuclear disarmament architecture.

After it enters into force, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons will provide a crucial normative advance in international law, thereby closing a legal gap relating to the absence of a legally binding instrument explicitly prohibiting nuclear weapons and establishing a framework for their elimination. The other weapons of mass destruction, biological and chemical weapons, are banned and subject to elimination processes through international legal instruments. We should put nuclear weapons on the same footing. The entry into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons will soon constitute the new gold standard on nuclear disarmament.

Finally, Mr. President, I have to state that Brazil has to dissociate itself from the Group of 21 general statement delivered by the Ambassador of Ethiopia, as my country has problems with the wording of that declaration, for it no longer participates in the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, the regional organization that is referred to therein. I thank you.

The President: Thank you for your statement. I give the floor to Ambassador Li of China.

Mr. Li Song (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Thank you, Mr. President. The Chinese delegation and I myself would like to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference. As always, we will actively support the work you do as President and the work done by the group of the six Presidents of this session, together with the last President of the 2019 session and the first of the 2021 session.

Before elaborating on my view of the Conference's work and multilateral arms control issues, I am compelled to express my strong opposition to the vilification, accusation and attacks made against China in the statement of the Ambassador of the United States of America. Regarding the issues involved in his statement, I have on numerous occasions at this forum set out the position of China. I have no intention of starting another round of polemic exchanges with him, but at the same time I must express a principled response to his statement today.

The Conference is an intergovernmental negotiating forum. I am the Chinese Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary for Disarmament Affairs, and my mission is to work with colleagues here. If the members of the United States delegation have any concerns about China, they should come to me, in line with diplomatic protocol and rules. By what right do they slander the Communist Party of China, which is beloved, supported and respected by the entire Chinese nation? I would ask you, Mr. President, to put an end to this unreasonable practice of the United States and to call on all member States of the Conference not to entertain such practices.

For some time now, some politicians in the United States have been making ferocious attacks against the Chinese Communist Party in an attempt to sever the strong bond between the party and the Chinese people and portray China, which is under the party's leadership, as being in opposition to the rest of the world. Their purpose is to destabilize China and provoke a confrontation between ideologies and social systems. I do not know who gave them such a foul idea. Anyone who understands China and understands history would know that the party and the Chinese people are as close as fish and water. China, under the party's leadership, values principles, reason and credibility. China was not one of the two superpowers of the cold war and has no intention of becoming another United States. It is not China, but the United States that is seeking hegemony throughout the world, bullying other States and, in the South China Sea, sowing division among countries and making waves through its vigorous militarization. China has always been a

firm defender of the international order and the international system. We will continue to adhere to the path of peaceful development and will never seek hegemony or expansion. We will always be a staunch force for peace. Those United States politicians will never get their way in the face of the firm rejection of the Chinese people and the international community.

The vicious attacks by the United States Ambassador against the Chinese Communist Party are not related to the work of the Conference. On the other hand, what I am about to say is closely related to the Conference's work and to the international arms control process. What the United States is doing is rooted in a cold war mentality, a desire to bring the world back to the era of the cold war, to drag major countries into renewed conflict and confrontation and to plunge the world once again into upheaval and division. I would like to remind the United States representatives that the cold war is a thing of the past from the last century. Certain people in the United States, with their attempts to provoke a "new cold war", are swimming against the global tides of development and progress and acting against the fundamental interests of the people of the world. In the twenty-first century, such attempts will garner no support from the people and are doomed to fail.

Most of all, what should be noted is the fact that this cold war mentality is, for strategic security and international arms control, the greatest obstacle, the most dangerous enemy.

Can the United States, clinging to a cold war mentality, viewing other countries as adversaries, recklessly breaking its international treaty obligations and freeing its hand to start its own military build-up, really believe that it can secure arms control agreements that serve its own interests at others' expense and that leave it a free hand while regulating others? At the very time when the United States is busy withdrawing from existing arms control treaty obligations, it is raising a ruckus trying to drag other countries into arms control talks. It has even come up with a ridiculous arms control proposition, "distrust and verify". Are you advocating negotiations between opponents and adversaries, or between partners in cooperation? Are you prepared to address the legitimate security concerns of other States and to come to fair, mutually beneficial compromises for the sake of common security? Without trust, how can we talk about arms control?

I would also like to remind the United States Ambassador that there are just two countries that possess the largest nuclear arsenals, not three. As for the reports cited by the United States according to which China is expanding its nuclear arsenal, even I was not aware of that, and I wonder where he pulled up that information. Are there facts to back it up? China welcomes the continued bilateral arms control talks between the United States and the Russian Federation and calls on the United States to respond to the Russian proposal to extend the New START and to observe their commitment to drastically reduce their nuclear arsenals, thus creating the conditions required for multilateral nuclear arms control.

Mr. President, despite the fact that this year the world has been deeply affected by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and by viruses of a political nature, and that the Conference, for reasons beyond its control, has faced difficulty in performing its work to the full extent, the mainstream of international opinion and the will of the people still support multilateralism and advancing international solidarity and cooperation. The fact that the vast majority of member States of the Conference have attended the Conference's meetings held prior to the pandemic, on 30 June and today testifies to this. We sincerely hope that the Conference will make the best possible use of the meeting time remaining this year to consider and debate the international security situation and the multilateral arms control process so as to pave the way for the successful adoption of a balanced and comprehensive programme of work for next year. This should be objectively reflected in the report of the Conference.

This year marks the seventy-fifth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations. At a time when the future and destiny of the world is at stake, China will continue to champion and defend multilateralism, to staunchly stand for the international system with the United Nations at its core and to promote greater multipolarity and democracy in international relations. Because of the local COVID-19 situation, there is still much uncertainty surrounding the modality of the work of the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly. That notwithstanding, we all hope that all member States will

continue to have thorough, profound, frank and practical discussions on the international situation and the multilateral arms control process, leading to resolutions on important issues of common concern in this field, and making further progress of multilateral arms control in the framework of the United Nations.

We are hoping that the Tenth Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) next January can take place without disruption. Frankly speaking, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the final preparation phase is still facing a lot of uncertainty. But this is going to be a milestone conference, carrying on from the past, and forging towards the future. And it will be of great symbolic significance in consolidating and strengthening the international non-proliferation regime. China, as an NPT nuclear-weapon State, is committed to the scrupulous observance of its obligations and undertakings under the treaty. We will make our own efforts to contribute to the success of the 2020 Review Conference, which includes further promoting the P5 dialogue and cooperation mechanism. I am ready to work with the other P5 colleagues to promptly resume our institutional consultations. This will enable us to prepare for the NPT Review Conference and will also allow us to have exchanges and discussions on issues such as global strategic stability, strategic confidence-building, nuclear policies and doctrines and strategic risk reduction. We hope to turn this into a standing mechanism in the future. The stable functioning of the P5 mechanism will be of great significance to relations among the major powers, the international arms control process and the full implementation of NPT obligations.

China is engaged in bilateral talks with the P5 partners on strategic security and arms control issues. Because of actions taken by the United States, relations between the two countries are facing unprecedented difficulties and challenges. We have responded to the impulsive and impetuous actions of the United States with a cool head and a rational approach. We are always ready to develop a bilateral relationship that avoids conflict and confrontation and is based on mutual respect and win-win cooperation built upon coordination, cooperation and stability. In the meantime, as a sovereign State, we will firmly defend our interests in respect of sovereignty, security and development. We are ready to enter into candid and effective consultations with the United States. On the basis of equality, mutual respect and mutual trust, we hope to arrive at a common understanding with the United States so as to resume the dialogue on strategic stability and arms control.

Next week we will participate, for the first time as a State party, in the Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty. We will have in-depth discussions with other States parties with a view to strengthening the treaty mechanism, promoting the instrument's effectiveness and universality and improving its synergy with other international mechanisms. We will also take an active part in the Meetings of Experts of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention scheduled for early December. We are looking forward to discussing with other States parties how to further strengthen national capacity-building and to promote international cooperation for biosecurity against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic and how to strengthen the regime of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, especially by continuing to strive for the negotiation and conclusion of a verification protocol for it.

As I said at the Conference's initial plenary meeting of the year in January, no matter how grave the situation is and how many challenges we face, China will remain optimistic and confident. With a responsible and constructive attitude, China will bring positive energy to multilateral forums and make fresh efforts to push forward the international arms control and non-proliferation process with practical actions. We have done so in the past and we will continue to do so in the future. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President: Thank you, Ambassador, for your statement and for the kind words addressed to the President. We are already a couple of minutes past 1 p.m. I thank the interpreters for staying with us. There are also eight more speakers on the list of speakers before me, so we have to reconvene at 3 p.m. The plenary meeting will thus take place at 3 p.m. both in this room and on the remote platform. I kindly ask the delegations to come back to the room or connect on the platform a few minutes early, so that we may start the next meeting on time. The meeting is adjourned.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.