

Conference on Disarmament

English

Final record of the one thousand five hundred and seventy-fifth plenary meeting

Held via videoconference on Tuesday, 25 May 2021, at 10.05 a.m. Central European Summer Time

President: Mr. Salomon Eheth(Cameroon)

The President: Madam Director-General, distinguished delegates, I call to order the 1575th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

Dear delegates, it is an honour for Cameroon to take over the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. I would like to propose that the order of business of our meeting this morning be as follows: first, the delivery of my statement as President of the Conference. Next, I would like to give the floor to Mr. Lassina Zerbo, Executive Secretary of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO), to address the Conference. Thereafter, I intend to offer the floor to any delegation that wishes to take it. Allow me now to deliver a statement on the occasion of the first plenary meeting under the presidency of Cameroon. Thank you.

(spoke in French)

Madam Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva, on behalf of the Conference, I would like to welcome you here today and to assure you of our highest consideration.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is a great privilege for me and a great honour for my country, Cameroon, to preside over this important United Nations institution, the Conference on Disarmament.

As the fourth of the six Presidents of the 2021 session, it is only natural that I should pay tribute to the work of my three predecessors. First, Ambassador Pecsteen de Buytswerve of Belgium, who had the great honour and the difficult task of being the first President of the year. He demonstrated great determination and finesse in his attempt to prepare a programme of work for 2021. Next, Ambassador De Barros Carvalho e Mello Mourão of Brazil, a gifted diplomat, following the path blazed by his predecessor, worked hard on a solid programme of work. Their admirable commitment made it possible to set the Conference on Disarmament, whose momentum had been slowing for some years, into motion. Lastly, the openness and flexibility demonstrated by Ambassador Sterk of Bulgaria, an experienced negotiator and diplomat, set the tone for these thematic discussions, and it is our responsibility to ensure that they continue and contribute to their success.

I hope, dear colleagues, that with your unwavering support and valuable advice, I will be able to stay the present course until the end of my tenure, when I will hand over the baton of disarmament to our colleague, Ms. Norton, Ambassador of Canada. And, of course, the final leg of the presidency will be in the capable hands of Ambassador Tressler Zamorano of Chile. Allow me also to acknowledge the enormous contribution of Ambassador Ambrazevich of Belarus, the outgoing President of 2020, and Ambassador Li Song of the People's Republic of China, who will take the reins in 2022.

Capitalizing on major technological advances over the past decade and aiming, understandably, to protect themselves as far as possible, a number of States around the world have acquired weapons of mass destruction. The continual improvement and, above all, the proliferation of such weapons have become serious concerns for all humanity. It would not be an exaggeration to say that, more than ever before, these weapons – whether nuclear, biological or chemical – are a source of continuous anxiety, both for those who possess them and for those who do not.

In creating this important forum for negotiation within the United Nations in the late 1970s, the international community understood that only a global organization acting in accordance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations could effectively and sustainably guarantee international peace and security. International security remains the greatest challenge of our time. I do not think it is alarmist of me to point out that our fragile existence could be ended in a matter of seconds at the push of a red button.

This global fragility is linked to the concept of a shared fate exemplified over the past two years by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, which has affected the whole of humanity. In this globalized world, the threat posed by weapons of mass destruction is a cause for common and constant concern. As I am not a specialist in the field, I would not like to venture an estimate of the power harnessed by the vast global stock of these weapons.

Since the 1970s, humankind – cognizant of the scale of the race to acquire all manner of arms – has been resolute in its attempts, through a series of treaties, agreements and other arrangements, to minimize and ultimately eradicate these potentially dangerous arsenals. If we truly share the same destiny, I would like to believe that, by drawing on the strength of the multilateralism promoted by the United Nations, the primary setting for disarmament negotiations, the world will succeed, through the joint efforts of the Conference on Disarmament, in restoring hope and serenity for all humankind. The Conference bears the seeds of hope for a peaceful and sustainable existence for all peoples and nations.

Disarmament is a cross-cutting and inclusive issue. If our collective demise – the oblivion that we most fear – has become a distinct possibility, then we must constantly ask ourselves these fundamental questions: What is the value of these technological advances that continue to terrify us? What is the point of these arsenals, if we are to remain locked in a never-ending conflict?

Ladies and gentlemen, as you know, I come from a developing country, Cameroon, and you might well wonder why I am here among you, in this position. I said earlier that disarmament is a cross-cutting issue. The United Nations is currently working to implement the Sustainable Development Goals. Has anybody imagined for a moment what the world might be like if we had taken even a few tentative steps towards establishing a clear link between disarmament and development? I know that this debate is taking place. Given the precarious situation in which a large part of humanity finds itself, and in the light of our shared destiny – a reality that we must never lose sight of – it is time to revive the debate on the relationship between disarmament and development.

The Head of State of Cameroon, President Paul Biya, known by his compatriots and many others as a staunch advocate of peace, insofar as pushing for peace, whether in Cameroon or abroad, is a major part of his platform, said before the United Nations General Assembly in 2017: “The quest for peace concerns all of us. All countries must join forces to achieve peace.” He went on to say: “Peace is our most precious asset. Without it, we cannot undertake sustainable and effective initiatives in the interest of our peoples, especially our young people.” This stance has helped to maintain stability in Cameroon, in an often turbulent regional and sub-regional environment.

In accordance with the programme before us, my presidency will be based on discussions on the following three themes: (a) the prevention of an arms race in outer space, (b) effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons and (c) new types of weapons of mass destruction or new systems of such weapons, and radiological weapons. As you can see, these are the draft themes drawn up under the aegis of my predecessors. The discussions on those themes were initiated by Ambassador Sterk of Bulgaria. Holding thematic discussions may seem incompatible with traditional negotiations, but I am sure you will agree that the expression of views by the various delegations at the Conference, reflecting the fundamental options of each State in the matter at hand, is also a form of negotiation.

Clearly, our first priority in this Conference is nuclear disarmament. The world lives in fear of the possible use of nuclear weapons. The Conference is a forum for encouraging all parties engaged in ongoing negotiations on this issue. The discussions on the above-mentioned themes will allow us to hear voices from all regions of the world and, above all, to hear the clear call for peace of all our peoples.

Today, we still have a tremendous opportunity, thanks to all the efforts made by our States and United Nations institutions to control these weapons. Imagine for a moment if we were to lose that control.

I take this opportunity, ladies and gentlemen, to reiterate the firm commitment of my country, Cameroon, to the initiatives and objectives of the Conference on Disarmament. I remain at your disposal and count on your full support and assure you of my full dedication to the successful completion of this segment of the 2021 session of the Conference on Disarmament. Thank you for your kind attention.

(spoke in English)

As I have said, I would like now to give the floor to Mr. Lassina Zerbo, Executive Secretary of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization.

Mr. Zerbo (Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization): At the outset, allow me to congratulate you, Ambassador Eheth, on your assumption of the fourth presidency of the 2021 session of the Conference on Disarmament. I would like to express my sincere appreciation to you for your invitation to address the Conference under the agenda item “introductory plenary meeting of the presidency of Cameroon”.

My dear brother, your taking this session on Africa Day – because today is Africa Day – is a sign for you. You were talking about your country and how awkward it could seem to see you chairing this meeting of the Conference of Disarmament.

It is therefore a distinct honour and pleasure to address the Conference on Africa Day in Geneva, where 25 years ago, before being adopted by the General Assembly, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty was negotiated.

Today, I wish to provide an overview of the ongoing work of the Preparatory Commission to fulfil its mandate of carrying out the necessary preparation for effective implementation of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and for preparing for the first session of the Conference of the States Parties. In particular, I will focus my remarks on the following points: first, business continuity during the COVID-19 pandemic; second, the current status of the Treaty after 25 years; and, third, strengthening international cooperation for peace and security.

On business continuity, like other organizations around the world, the Commission has been affected by the pandemic. Meetings and outreach activity have been reduced, and operational priorities have been refocused accordingly. While the COVID-19 pandemic has been a stress test, the functionality and resilience of the Organization have been repeatedly proven. We have swiftly and decisively adopted the new realities of the time and responded effectively to the challenges at hand. This has been possible thanks to dedicated efforts of staff at the Commission, who have continued to carry out their duties despite all the uncertainties and difficulties surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic.

With almost 90 per cent of the secretarial staff performing their duties while working remotely, we have made continued progress in the build-up, sustainment and provisional operation of our verification regime, particularly the International Monitoring System well known to all of you. The demonstration of the Organization’s resilience is also a testament to our States signatories’ engagement and cooperation, in particular, national authorities and station operators, who have spared no efforts to sustain operations.

The Commission also continues to strengthen its onsite inspection capabilities. The development of those capabilities includes the conduct of various types of exercise to test onsite inspection scenarios, training and other activities aimed at sustaining onsite inspection operational readiness.

Regrettably, due to the global pandemic, all in-person events have been postponed. Nevertheless, active implementation of innovative online learning technology has enabled us to maintain the efficiency of our training courses and sustain the broad participation of experts in these events, especially from the developing world. Moreover, the virtual format of our workshops, capacity-building and training activities and outreach events has made it possible to exceed previous levels of participation and expand our geographical reach.

The Commission’s business continuity plan was completely revamped and will continue to be revised as we draw upon lessons learned from our experience with COVID-19. Preservation of our monitoring capabilities and functions remains a core priority.

We are also working hard to ensure that the Organization retains its readiness to react and adapt to future exigencies, thus guaranteeing timely responses to a potential nuclear test and uninterrupted provision of services, data and data products to you, States signatories.

Now let me turn to the current status of the Treaty. As previously mentioned, this year will mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the opening for signature of the Comprehensive

Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty in Geneva. This occasion provides an excellent opportunity to take stock of our collective achievement, assess the challenges we continue to face and focus our thoughts on future priorities for the Organization that will help to lay the groundwork for the Treaty's entry into force and universalization.

There is near universal adherence to the norm against nuclear testing, and we know that. The Republic of Cuba and the Union of the Comoros, having recently joined the community of nations which have said "never" to nuclear testing, bring the number of States signatories to the Treaty to 185, out of which 170 have ratified it.

The progressive build-up of the International Monitoring System that I mentioned earlier has resulted in a level of maturity, readiness and relevance that has been demonstrated on numerous occasions and in a variety of circumstances. With nearly 94 per cent of facilities certified, installed or under construction, the International Monitoring System, which is the backbone of our verification regime, is drawing closer and closer to completion.

Signals registered at international monitoring stations are processed and analysed at the International Data Centre, which produces data bulletins that are submitted to States signatories for their evaluation and judgment. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, automated International Data Centre output continued to follow defined schedules and meet timeline requirements more than 99 per cent of the time. As a last example, we recorded the eruption of the volcano Nyiragongo in the Democratic Republic of the Congo a few days ago from our infrasound station.

The Organization is also continuing to prepare for entry into force by strengthening its onsite inspection capabilities. Another integral part of the verification regime is our brand-new technology support and training centre in Seibersdorf, Lower Austria. It serves as a hub for storage, maintenance and testing, plus a state-of-the-art training facility. Throughout the pandemic, the test centre remained fully functional. In fact, that was the centre where we could technically conduct our virtual learning.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty verification regime was designed for monitoring compliance with the Treaty. However, the system provides exceptional added value as an immense source of data that can be utilized for a wide range of civil and scientific purposes – I have just mentioned the eruption of the volcano in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The data collected by the International Monitoring System and processed by the International Data Centre can contribute to disaster risk reduction, expand knowledge on climate change research, support sustainable development and much more. This treasure trove of data is freely accessible to all States signatories and serves as one more example of the vast benefits to be gained from joining the Treaty family. There is enormous potential for these data to be utilized for advancing our understanding of the world around us. It is at the fingertips of all our States signatories. They need only reach out to grab it.

Moreover, we continue to make these data available to individual scientists and researchers through the virtual data exploitation centre. We have also worked hard to align ourselves with the standards of conduct for the international civil service and the United Nations system of salaries and emoluments to provide more opportunities for our staff and to be an employer of choice. Thus, in 2019, the Commission became a member of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund.

Now let me turn to strengthening international cooperation for peace and security. My dear brother Ambassador Eheth mentioned the current geopolitical landscape. It is fraught with tension and deeply rooted divisions. Well before the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, the international community was struggling to forge consensus on how to collectively address the multidimensional and transboundary challenges of the twenty-first century.

Where we need trust, cooperation and good faith, we are often left with mistrust and scepticism. The sphere of international peace and security, and in particular disarmament and non-proliferation, is no exception. The realities loom large not only over the Conference on Disarmament but also over nearly every multilateral forum dealing with the threat posed by weapons of mass destruction.

This is particularly true of the forthcoming Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). When NPT States parties eventually gather for the Review Conference, the tenth, the obstacles to achieving a successful outcome will be daunting. The rifts and disagreements over several substantial matters continue to hamper efforts to find common ground on core issues related to the implementation of the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

For many years, the lack of an instrument such as the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty was one of these challenges. But 25 years ago, the international community decided that the time had come. The time had come for the legally binding, verifiable and unforeseeable prohibition on all nuclear explosions, and an end to nuclear explosions by anyone, anywhere and for all time.

The international community's response to the COVID-19 pandemic has underscored simple truths that can be broadly applied to our effort to address global challenges of the day, including the threats posed by the weapons of mass destruction. In order to respond effectively and efficiently to emerging threats, we need to strengthen the multilateral institutions that serve as our front-line defence against challenges to international peace and security. We need to rely on science as the key driver in constructing and implementing our responses, and we need to promote science, diplomacy and international cooperation to build trust and confidence, establish partnerships and reinforce productive relationships among stakeholders.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is a highly relevant embodiment of these underlining truths. Our mission can succeed only when all stakeholders are united in their pursuits. We rely on science-based policymaking to achieve our verification objectives, and our shared goal of a world free from nuclear tests will be achieved only with science, diplomacy and international cooperation, with trust, with confidence-building, neutrality and partnerships – and partnering with all stakeholders on an equal footing. And this is key.

These are the components of the equation that have made the success of the Commission and enable all States signatories to benefit from international exchanges of International Monitoring System data. There is no small country and there is no big country, because stations are in small countries as well as in big countries. We need cooperation. We need effort, and these are the components of the equation that will deliver to the world a disarmament and non-proliferation success that has been on the agenda from virtually the beginning of the atomic age. Despite the difficulties involved, this goal is a worthwhile one.

The entry into force and universalization of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty will ensure that no community or environment will again suffer the disastrous consequences of nuclear testing. It will provide stability and promote multilateral cooperation in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation. It will create momentum and build bridges within the context of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. And most importantly, the Treaty's entry into force will move us substantially forward towards our ultimate goal of a world free of nuclear weapons, as mentioned by the President of the Conference on Disarmament.

This reality can be achieved if stakeholders remain committed to the cause, and if shared goals are prioritized over division and mistrust. I urge my friends and colleagues here today, and in capitals around the world, not to be distracted by difficulties and seemingly unsurmountable obstacles. Let us instead work to build bridges and find common cause. Let us finish the unfinished business of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty by finally putting an end to nuclear test explosions and thereby take a practical and consequential step towards a nuclear-weapon-free world.

Ambassador Salomon Eheth, Madam Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva, ladies and gentlemen, I thank you.

The President: I congratulate and thank Mr. Zerbo for this pertinent statement. I will now open the floor to any delegation that wishes to take it. I have a list of speakers. First, I have Portugal on behalf of the European Union.

Ms. Homolková (Portugal): Mr. President, on behalf of the European Union, I would like to thank Secretary Zerbo for his address to the Conference on Disarmament.

I would like to take this opportunity to express the European Union's appreciation to Mr. Zerbo for his leadership and tireless efforts in promoting the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty in the past eight years, as well as for his excellent cooperation with the European Union in the implementation of the decisions of the Council of the European Union in support of the monitoring and verification activities of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization. We hope to keep the same positive and cooperative relationship with his successor as well.

Mr. President, Mr. Zerbo's statement was delivered in the same forum and the very same room where the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty was negotiated more than two decades ago. Sadly, the Treaty has still not entered into force in spite of all the efforts made since its adoption by the General Assembly 25 years ago. The entry into force of and universal adherence to the Treaty is a top priority for the European Union. It is an important element of the global disarmament and non-proliferation regime and a strong confidence- and security-building measure at the international, regional and bilateral levels which, with its solid and effective verification mechanism, has already become an effective instrument.

We therefore urge all States that have not yet done so, in particular those listed in annex 2 of the Treaty, to sign and ratify the Treaty without any preconditions or further delay. In the meantime, we call on all States to abide by a moratorium on nuclear weapon test explosions or any other nuclear explosion, and to refrain from any action that would undermine the object and purpose of the Treaty. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President: I thank the representative of the European Union. The second speaker on my list is the representative of Turkey. Madam, you have the floor.

Ms. Erçelik Vandeweyer (Turkey): I would like to congratulate you on assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. We are pleased to note that you have planned substantive discussions on items 3, 4 and 5 on the Conference agenda during your presidency. You can rest assured of my delegation's full support. I would also like to thank Mr. Zerbo for his efforts and his comprehensive presentation.

Mr. President, my delegation is concerned that no agreement on the programme of work was reached in the first part of the Conference in spite of intense efforts. The thematic debates and presentations of the second half of the Bulgarian presidency on the first two items on the agenda of the Conference were very useful. We believe that the remaining time of the session should be put to good use.

Outer space is being used by an increasing number of States. We have to make all possible efforts to ensure security while preventing an arms race in outer space, especially for the well-being of future generations. In achieving this, the Conference has an important role to play.

For Turkey, protecting the right of unrestricted access to and use of outer space for peaceful purposes is of utmost importance. We thus co-sponsored the resolution on reducing space risks through norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours, which was submitted by the United Kingdom.

We attach importance to negative security assurances and believe that consensus has to be reached on this very important subject. Negative security assurances would help to improve the overall security environment and strengthen confidence in the non-proliferation regime and be another step towards the ultimate goal, which is a world without nuclear weapons. We have to take into consideration the unprecedented pace of technological developments. The Conference could contribute to addressing the impact of today's sweeping and rapid technological change on disarmament.

We should not fall behind fast-improving weapons technology. Therefore, if we could at least start to negotiate on the question of what kind of new weapons and weapons systems could or should be taken up, it would be useful. In doing so, we should refrain from duplicating the efforts which fall under the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. We hope that the dates of the Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference, to which we attach great importance, will be determined as soon as possible and that the preparation efforts to obtain substantial results at the Review Conference will continue without slowing

down. I assure you of Turkey's full support to advance the work of the Conference. I thank you.

The President: Thank you, Madam. The next speaker on my list is the Ambassador of the United States of America.

Mr. Wood (United States): Thank you, Mr. President, and congratulations on assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. Let me assure you of my and my delegation's support for you and your team. I would also like to thank you for sending out the schedule for the duration of your presidency. It is extremely helpful. Thank you also for convening this meeting.

Mr. Lassina Zerbo, thank you for your presentation today and for your 17 years of service at the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization Preparatory Commission at the end of July – including your eight years as Executive Secretary. The United States applauds your contributions to advancing the important work of permanently banning nuclear explosions.

As you know, President Biden has long been a supporter of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and this Administration appreciates the important work that the Commission does. We look forward to continuing our cooperation with the Provisional Technical Secretariat and its vital work in building up the Treaty's verification system.

In line with the goals of the Treaty, the United States continues to observe its zero-yield nuclear explosive testing moratorium and calls on all States possessing nuclear weapons to declare or maintain such a moratorium. Advanced stockpile stewardship tools enable the United States to ensure a safe, secure and effective nuclear deterrent without requiring a return to nuclear explosive testing. Maintaining the international norm against nuclear explosive testing remains in the United States' interest. Thank you very much, Mr. President.

The President: Thank you, Ambassador.

(spoke in French)

The next speaker is the representative of France.

Ms. Delaroche (France) *(spoke in French)*: Mr. President, first allow me to congratulate you on your accession to the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. France aligns itself fully with the statement by the European Union, and I would like to add a number of additional points in my national capacity.

I welcome the Executive Secretary of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO), Mr. Zerbo, whose work at the head of the Organization these past eight years is to be commended. France is deeply committed to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and its verification regime. Concluded over 20 years ago, this instrument has remained as relevant as ever. Its universalization is within reach. Only eight more States need to ratify it. We congratulate Mr. Floyd on his election to the head of CTBTO and wish him every success in his mission.

The serious threat to international peace and security constituted by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery remains a major challenge to be addressed by multilateralism. While CTBTO is a temporary organization, it has already proved its relevance and effectiveness with the accurate detection of all nuclear tests carried out by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which we call upon to sign and ratify the Treaty without delay.

France has shown its strong commitment to the Treaty since its adoption. Indeed, France was one of the first States to have signed the Treaty, in 1996, and ratified it, in April 1998. This year, we are celebrating the twenty-fifth anniversary of this signature, as noted by the Executive Secretary. Our commitment to the Treaty has been accompanied by meaningful action: in 1998 we permanently dismantled our nuclear testing site in the Pacific. We have considerably reduced our nuclear arsenal and have permanently ceased production of plutonium and uranium for nuclear weapons; I would like to recall here our urgent call for negotiations to start in the Conference on Disarmament on a high-level fissile material cut-off treaty, which is an essential adjunct to the Treaty. Lastly, we are also the first State to

have fulfilled all our obligations to the Organization, which has just certified the most recent monitoring station on French territory – in Guadeloupe.

Through its actions, France has shown that it is strongly committed to disarmament, based on a realistic, step-by-step approach, and set on tangible results in order to meet the obligations of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. The entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is, more than ever, an essential step. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of France.

(*spoke in English*)

The next speaker on my list is Ambassador Li Song of China.

Mr. Li Song (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Thank you. First, on behalf of the Chinese delegation, I would like to warmly congratulate you on your assumption of the rotating presidency of the Conference on Disarmament, especially today, on the occasion of Africa Day.

Second, I would like to thank Mr. Zerbo, the Executive Secretary of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO), for his address to the Conference today. On the special occasion of the Treaty's twenty-fifth anniversary, I think it is of special significance that he has come to the Conference to present to us the situation at CTBTO.

This has special meaning for me, because 25 years ago, as a young Chinese diplomat, I directly took part in the negotiation of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. I have personal experience of the contribution that this Conference, as the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, can make to the international arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation process. I thus have full confidence that the Conference will continue to contribute to this process.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Mr. Zerbo for his long service to CTBTO. Especially in the past eight years, he has made an important contribution to the Organization in his capacity as the Executive Secretary.

We are also looking forward to continuing our active cooperation with the newly elected Executive Secretary and to working together to promote the realization of the Treaty's objectives. Thank you.

The President (*spoke in French*): Thank you, Ambassador.

(*spoke in English*)

The next speaker on my list is Ambassador Liddle of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Liddle (United Kingdom): Thank you, Mr. President. At the outset, let me congratulate you on the assumption of the presidency and assure you of my delegation's full support as we continue our discussion of the Conference on Disarmament's substantive agenda items in the coming weeks.

Mr. President, I wanted to take the floor briefly to thank Mr. Zerbo not only for addressing us today but more especially for his eight years of service as Executive Secretary of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) Preparatory Commission, crowning his two decades at the Organization.

During that long and distinguished period, he has shown great dedication to the Organization, not least through his many efforts to bring the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty closer to both universalization and entry into force.

In that context, we welcome the two most recent ratifications, in February 2021, by Cuba and the Comoros. Each signature and each ratification takes us a step closer to our shared objective of a Treaty in force, which the United Kingdom views as a vital part of the step-by-step approach to nuclear disarmament.

We call on all States, and particularly those listed in annex 2 that have not yet signed and ratified the Treaty, to do so as soon as possible.

We particularly appreciate Mr. Zerbo's efforts to broaden the appeal and visibility of the work of the Organization and its vital verification system through substantial outreach, including the establishment and growth of the CTBTO Youth Group, which now numbers a thousand members around the world.

The United Kingdom remains one of the largest financial contributors to the Organization and provides extensive technical and political support, including hosting 13 facilities belonging to the International Monitoring System.

We congratulate Mr. Robert Floyd on his election last week as Mr. Zerbo's successor and look forward to working with him to further strengthen the Organization, building on the strong foundations Mr. Zerbo has bequeathed. Thank you.

The President: Thank you, Ambassador. The next speaker on my list is the representative of Australia.

Ms. Hill (Australia): Thank you very much, Mr. President. At the outset, let me begin by congratulating you on assuming the presidency and assuring you of the full support of my delegation.

Mr. President, Australia welcomes the opportunity to discuss the vital work of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) at the Conference on Disarmament today, and we thank Mr. Lassina Zerbo for joining us to lead this discussion.

Australia has a unique history with the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. We have strongly advocated for a comprehensive and permanent ban on nuclear test explosions since the 1980s, and in 1996 we spearheaded the adoption of the resolution to establish the Organization.

With our colleagues from Mexico and New Zealand, we lead the annual First Committee resolution at the General Assembly calling for the Treaty's entry into force. It is therefore fitting that an Australian, Mr. Rob Floyd, will be taking over as Executive Secretary of CTBTO in August this year. We are pleased that an Australian will be the first to take on this role from the Indo-Pacific region and we thank CTBTO member States for their strong support.

Importantly, we would like to take this opportunity to recognize the very valuable contribution that you, Mr. Zerbo, have made to the Organization as its Executive Secretary since 2013. In particular, we would like to pay tribute to your efforts on universalization, promotion and awareness of the Treaty among a wider audience, particularly youth, and progress towards the completion of the International Monitoring System. With 185 States having signed the Treaty, over 300 monitoring facilities and an active and engaged CTBTO Youth Group, this is an impressive legacy indeed.

Mr. President, Australia remains committed to doing its utmost towards the entry into force of the Treaty, a treaty that enjoys overwhelming international support. We will be looking for strong outcomes on the Treaty at the forthcoming Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference. We think the Review Conference needs to be unambiguous in urging all States yet to do so to ratify without delay, particularly the remaining States listed in annex 2. Further, pending entry into force, the Review Conference should urge States parties to uphold and maintain a moratorium on nuclear weapon test explosions.

The Review Conference should also encourage all States to assist the Preparatory Commission for CTBTO in its work in preparing for the eventual entry into force of the Treaty. This includes the early completion, provisional operation and maintenance of the International Monitoring System, which serves as an effective, reliable, participatory and non-discriminatory element of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty's global verification and compliance regime. I thank you, Mr. President.

The President: Thank you, Madam. The next speaker on my list is Ambassador Ogasawara of Japan.

Mr. Ogasawara (Japan): Thank you very much for giving me the floor. First of all, let me congratulate you for your assumption of the responsibility of the presidency of the

Conference on Disarmament. Let me also assure you, Ambassador Salomon Eheth, of our full support and cooperation throughout your presidency.

Personally, it is a great pleasure for me to see you again, Mr. Zerbo, even virtually, after such a long interval. I had the pleasure of cooperating very closely with Mr. Zerbo when I was posted in Vienna. We also highly appreciate the presentation delivered to the Conference on Disarmament today by Mr. Zerbo.

Japan has attached great importance to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and its early entry into force as a realistic and concrete measure to support the Non-Proliferation Treaty regime and to realize a peaceful and safe world without nuclear weapons. Although the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty was adopted at the General Assembly in 1996, it is to be recalled that it is the last multilateral disarmament treaty of which the final draft was achieved through negotiation here at the Conference on Disarmament. We value the Treaty highly, as it is making a vital contribution to the causes of nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation even though it has not yet entered into force.

Japan expresses its deep gratitude to Secretary Zerbo for his leading efforts to promote the entry into force of the Treaty and for developing the International Monitoring System and related systems of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) since he took office in 2013.

Japan would like to continue to cooperate fully with Mr. Zerbo, CTBTO Executive Secretary, for our common purposes through its Permanent Mission in Vienna, for the remainder of his term at the helm of this important international organization. Thank you very much, Mr. President.

The President: Thank you, Ambassador Ogasawara.

(spoke in French)

The next speaker on my list is the representative of the Kingdom of Belgium.

Ms. Marchand (Belgium) *(spoke in French)*: Thank you, Mr. President. Let me congratulate you on your accession to the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. Please be assured of my delegation's support for your work. I would also like to thank the executive secretary of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) for his statement. Belgium wishes to thank Mr. Zerbo for his work at and leadership of the Organization and his relentless promotion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty in recent years. My delegation also aligns itself with the statement made by the European Union and wishes to make a number of points in its national capacity.

Mr. President, our common goal is to strive to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons. However, such a world will remain a distant dream as long as nuclear weapons continue to exist. A binding universal legal instrument is essential, together with an internationally recognized effective mechanism for verification. There is only one instrument that can guarantee a complete ban on nuclear tests, and there is only one instrument that can detect secret tests. There is consequently no alternative to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, and there is no shortcut to a world without nuclear weapons.

Particular responsibility falls upon the States listed in annex 2 to the Treaty, which my delegation calls upon once more to work towards the Treaty's entry into force. Belgium has supported the Treaty since signing it and has actively promoted it in recent years through a number of initiatives. From 2017 to 2019, Belgium acted as joint Chair, in partnership with Iraq, of the process provided for under article XIV on entry into force of the Treaty. Our two countries have tried to help create conditions conducive to new accessions to the Treaty. In 2020, my country joined eight other States in submitting to the Review Conference of the Parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty a joint working document on the links between the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the Non-Proliferation Treaty, highlighting the way in which the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and its verification regime contributed to the system of non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament.

Belgium also contributes to the improved detection of nuclear tests by examining the impact on the verification regime of radioactive xenon emissions from legitimate peaceful activities. The international monitoring system developed over 20 years through scientific

cooperation by all States is essential. This system, which makes it possible to detect nuclear tests anywhere in the world, has proved its effectiveness during recent tests, and we should continue to refine its performance. Improved detection capability also means that the Treaty gains credibility. These verification techniques were developed for civilian applications, and the data enable us to, among other things, monitor our oceans and help detect tsunamis. To complement the existing cooperation mechanisms, Belgium has also stepped up its scientific collaboration with the Benelux Economic Union by cooperating with the national data centres established in accordance with the Treaty. We hope that this innovative approach will serve as an inspiration for other models of regional interaction. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President (*spoke in French*): Thank you, Madam.

(*spoke in English*)

The next speaker on my list is Ambassador Robert Müller of Austria.

Mr. Müller (Austria) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, at the outset, I would like to congratulate you on assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. I wish to assure you of my delegation's full support for your endeavours.

(*spoke in English*)

Austria fully aligns itself with the European Union statement and would like to offer the following remarks in a national capacity. Let me start by thanking you, Mr. President, for continuing the thematic debates, by prerogative of the presidency, after the regrettable failure to adopt a programme of work or a decision on the establishment of subsidiary bodies at the beginning of the year. It is indeed concerning to see a persistent lack of political will to put the Conference on Disarmament back on substantive track.

Today's topic – the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the last treaty negotiated by this forum – is of utmost importance for us. I would thus like to join others in welcoming Executive Secretary Mr. Zerbo. Mr. Zerbo, I commend you and the staff of the Provisional Technical Secretariat for your and their tireless work over the past eight years, during which you were Executive Secretary – and, before this, as Director of the International Data Centre – in promoting the entry into force of and universal adherence to the Treaty and in building and strengthening the Treaty's verification system.

At a time where the nuclear disarmament architecture is under severe strain, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) demonstrates time and again the benefits of multilateral cooperation. Even though the Treaty is yet to enter into force, CTBTO has already made outstanding contributions to regional and international security. Its global, high-tech network of monitoring stations has collected reliable and high-quality data, which is essential to verifying nuclear disarmament as well as to deterring non-compliance with the Treaty. We are pleased by the emerging new momentum towards ratification of the Treaty and welcome the Comoros and Cuba as the most recent ratifying States.

CTBTO has demonstrated without a doubt that it is ready for entry into force and for the verification mandate it is to carry out. Political will, or lack thereof, is the problem that has so far prevented this key treaty from coming into legal force. We welcome moratoriums on nuclear testing, but they are no substitute for ratification or the entry into force of the Treaty. We therefore urge all States that have not yet done so, in particular those listed in annex 2 of the Treaty, to sign and ratify the Treaty without any preconditions or further delay.

Nuclear testing is a security and a humanitarian challenge. Just in recent months, new studies on the long-standing humanitarian consequences of nuclear testing again further clarified the impact nuclear testing had and continues to have on the affected populations. The Treaty, negotiated more than 25 years ago, encompasses the strong will of the international community to end nuclear testing once and for all. In recent years, only one country has tested nuclear weapons, and the position of my country on the nuclear tests of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea remains very firm.

Beyond this, we welcome the many contributions by CTBTO to the development of synergies, with its data used in non-nuclear applications like climate modelling and tsunami

and volcano early-warning systems. The cooperation and close interaction with the scientific community has been very enriching indeed.

Let me also use this opportunity to congratulate Mr. Robert Floyd on his election as the new CTBTO Executive Secretary. Austria is looking forward to working side by side with him to strengthen the Organization and to finally bringing this vital treaty into force.

In closing, let me reiterate that Austria, as a proud host to the Organization, will continue to use every opportunity to advocate for the ratification and universalization of the Treaty. Thank you very much, Mr. President.

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

Mr. Lim Sang-beom (Republic of Korea): Thank you, Mr. President. Let me begin by offering my sincere congratulations to you, Ambassador Salomon Eheth, on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. I assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation.

I would like to join the previous speakers in thanking Mr. Lassina Zerbo, Executive Secretary of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization, for his comprehensive and thoughtful debriefing, as well as for his long service and achievements.

I well remember having the pleasure of working with Mr. Zerbo not only in Vienna but also in Seoul. I am still very much thankful, for example, for his participation in and contribution to a youth event held in Seoul in 2019 for the engagement and empowerment of youth in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation.

Mr. President, the three pillars of the Non-Proliferation Treaty – namely, nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful use of nuclear energy – are closely intertwined. And the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is an essential part in the interrelated web of the noble tasks entrusted to the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is essential to preventing the qualitative and quantitative development of nuclear weapons and holds great importance in the field of both nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. As a strong supporter of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the Republic of Korea is of the view that the earliest possible entry into force of the Treaty should be one of the top priorities among the efforts made to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons.

In this regard, my delegation once again calls on all non-parties to the Treaty, in particular those in the list in annex 2, to sign and ratify the Treaty at the earliest possible date. It is in this same context that we also support the strengthening of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty's verification regime, which will play an important role in monitoring countries' compliance with the Treaty by the time the Treaty enters into force. I thank you, Mr. President.

The President: Thank you, Ambassador. The next speaker on my list is Ambassador Norton of Canada.

Ms. Norton (Canada) (*spoke in French*): Congratulations on your presidency, Ambassador, and thank you very much for your generous words to your colleagues in the group of the six Presidents.

Canada wishes to offer its sincere thanks to Mr. Zerbo for the dedication and enthusiasm he demonstrated during his terms as Executive Secretary of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization. Over the course of the last eight years, he played a key role in the achievement of the Treaty's principal objectives, in particular with a view to a world free of nuclear testing.

(*spoke in English*)

Mr. Zerbo's efforts to establish and maintain the International Monitoring System, advance youth engagement and promote gender inclusion will have a significant and long-lasting impact. Canada is committed to building on the successes of the past several years

while exploring new and innovative ways to promote the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty's entry into force. Thank you, Mr. President and Mr. Secretary.

The President (*spoke in French*): Thank you, Ambassador.

(*spoke in English*)

The next speaker on my list is the representative of Indonesia.

Mr. Rosandry (Indonesia): Let me join others in congratulating you, Mr. President, for assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. Please rest assured of Indonesia's full support for and cooperation with your presidency and the work of the Conference. I would also like to thank Mr. Lassina Zerbo for his presentation as well as his excellent contribution as the Executive Secretary of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization. We recognize his excellent work, especially when, in the period 2012–2015, Indonesia and Hungary were co-Presidents of the article XIV conference.

Mr. President, I share Mr. Zerbo's perspective that international cooperation is key to addressing the complex challenges in international peace and security, especially in the field of proliferation and disarmament, one of which is the universalization of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Indonesia believes that the Treaty serves as a strategic and major step towards our common goal of the total elimination of nuclear weapons. It is also a core element of the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime.

Indonesia affixed its name to the Treaty on the very day it was opened for signature in 1996 and completed the ratification process on 6 February 2012. By ratifying the Treaty, Indonesia has done its part as an annex 2 State. We therefore urge other States, especially the annex 2 States, to sign and ratify the Treaty without delay. We also encourage all States to continue to use all avenues to encourage and promote the entry into force and universalization of the Treaty. I thank you, Mr. President.

The President: Thank you, Sir. The next speaker on my list is the representative of Mexico.

(*spoke in Spanish*)

You have the floor, Sir.

Mr. Martínez Ruiz (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you, Mr. President. First of all, as I am taking the floor for the first time since you assumed the presidency of Conference on Disarmament, please allow me to take this opportunity to congratulate you and express my country's readiness to work with you to ensure that your tenure is successful.

Mr. President, we are grateful to Mr. Lassina Zerbo for his presentation and wish to acknowledge the important work that he has done in building a sufficiently robust and effective verification regime for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

In particular, my delegation acknowledges the efforts made to ensure that the essential functions of the Preparatory Commission, including the International Monitoring System and the International Data Centre, have remained operational during these challenging times caused by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. Mr. Zerbo's commendable leadership as Executive Secretary has made this continuity possible.

Mr. President, my delegation notes that the Conference on Disarmament negotiated the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty on the understanding that the cessation of nuclear-weapon test explosions or any other nuclear explosions constitutes an effective disarmament and non-proliferation measure and in the firm belief that this is a meaningful step in the realization of a systematic process for achieving nuclear disarmament.

Furthermore, the terrible consequences of a nuclear detonation, and in particular the effects of the more than 2,000 nuclear tests that have been carried out since the first nuclear detonation in 1945, have been proved both during and after various humanitarian conferences.

The international community, and especially the countries that carried out those tests, is still burdened with the debt it owes to the victims of those explosions. That is why, as we commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the adoption of General Assembly resolution 50/245, we welcome the fact that the legal framework has been further consolidated with the

recent ratification by Cuba and the Comoros, taking the number of countries that have demonstrated their full commitment to disarmament and non-proliferation to 170. We nonetheless regret that a significant number of countries, particularly those listed in annex 2, have not yet acceded to the Treaty.

The progress made in the preparatory work has been significant and has proved that the verification system is already fully fit for purpose. The entry into force of this Treaty has therefore become a matter of vital importance and urgency, and we call once more for it to be signed and ratified unconditionally and without delay.

That same call has been repeatedly issued by the General Assembly through the resolutions put forward every year by my delegation and those of Australia and New Zealand, which, regrettably, have not been adopted by consensus in recent years.

The same can be said for one of the recommendations for follow-on actions of the Non-Proliferation Treaty review conferences, in which the vital importance of the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty as a core element of the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime was reaffirmed and specific actions to be taken in support of the entry into force of the latter Treaty were included.

But beyond the importance of the disarmament and non-proliferation regime, the civilian and scientific benefits of the International Monitoring System – such as preventing and dealing with natural disasters, combating climate change and other complementary benefits – must also be recognized.

Mr. President, we are thankful that Mr. Lassina Zerbo has been invited to this meeting to inform us of the significant progress made by the Preparatory Commission and to give us the opportunity to renew our commitment to this legal framework at the highest political level. This also gives us the opportunity to highlight the personal contributions that he has made to the consolidation of the system, including by promoting its universalization, strengthening the verification system and underlining the value of the system beyond its primary objectives of disarmament and non-proliferation.

Finally, my delegation would like to congratulate Mr. Robert Floyd on his election as the next Executive Secretary. We are certain that he will continue the process of consolidating the Treaty regime. Thank you very much.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you, Sir.

(*spoke in French*)

The next speaker on my list is Ambassador Baumann of Switzerland.

Mr. Baumann (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, I would like, first of all, to congratulate you on your appointment as President of the Conference on Disarmament and assure you of my delegation's full support. We are also grateful for the efforts you have made to allow us, during the course of our plenary meetings, to examine several issues related to the Conference agenda. In that context, I wish to thank Mr. Zerbo, Executive Secretary of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO), for his statement this morning. Switzerland thanks the Executive Secretary for his outstanding work over the last eight years to promote the Treaty's entry into force and the consolidation of the verification system on which it is based. We particularly commend his efforts to enhance dialogue between scientists and diplomats and to raise young people's awareness of the Treaty through the establishment of the CTBTO Youth Group.

Mr. President, 2021 is the twenty-fifth anniversary of the opening for signature of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. The Treaty negotiated by our Conference has contributed to the establishment of a global norm against nuclear testing. This norm constitutes an important element of the international non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament regime and contributes to international peace and security. Let me also stress that nuclear tests not only represent a risk to global security but also have serious short- and long-term consequences for health and the environment.

While a pandemic illustrates the numerous vulnerabilities that humanity faces, it is crucial that we work together to maintain and further consolidate this norm against nuclear testing.

A number of nuclear tests have been conducted over the past decade. We regret this state of affairs; everything possible must be done to prevent the recurrence of such actions. In that context, the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is long overdue. We are delighted that the Comoros and Cuba have ratified the Treaty in 2021 and we congratulate them on doing so. These developments represent a further step towards the universalization of the Treaty, which now has 170 States parties and 185 signatory States.

Twenty-five years after the end of negotiations, however, there is still much work to do before the Treaty will be able to take full effect. Switzerland reiterates its call for all States that have not already done so to sign and ratify the Treaty without further delay; this is directed, in particular, at the eight States mentioned in annex II that have not yet taken the plunge. We are particularly concerned by the fact that, over 10 years on from the eighth review conference under the Treaty, two nuclear-weapon States still have not ratified the Treaty, despite the commitment they made at that conference to do so as swiftly as possible. In the context of fiftieth anniversary of the Non-Proliferation Treaty and twenty-fifth anniversary of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, we call on them to renew and step up their efforts to remedy this situation.

The President: Thank you, Ambassador. We move to the next speaker on my list, the representative of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Bondarev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): First of all, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. My delegation is ready to extend its full support and all possible cooperation during your presidency. We are also ready to participate actively in the thematic debates that are planned for the follow-up meetings of the Conference. I would also like to acknowledge and thank Mr. Zerbo for his efforts during his tenure as Executive Secretary of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization.

Universalization of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is the greatest challenge facing the international community, as is its early entry into force. It is the entry into force of the Treaty that will make an important contribution to strengthening international security in the world. In this regard, we reiterate our appeal to those States that have not yet ratified the Treaty to do so in the near future.

The President: Thank you, Sir. The next speaker on my list is Ambassador Sharma of India.

Mr. Sharma (India): Mr. President, I have taken the floor to congratulate Cameroon on assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. Coming from a Group of 21 member with which India enjoys excellent bilateral relations, Ambassador Eheth, you happen to start your presidency on the very important and auspicious occasion of Africa Day, and the very heartiest congratulations to all African countries on this occasion. I assure you of the full support and cooperation of my delegation as you guide the work of this Conference in the coming weeks. I thank you, Mr. President.

The President: Thank you. It seems as if this is the last speaker on my list. Is there anybody who wants to take the floor? I have registered one right of reply. If there are no more speakers on my list, I have the right of reply requested by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Sir, you have the floor.

Mr. Ju Yong-chol (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Thank you, Mr. President. Since my delegation is taking the floor for the first time under your presidency, let me congratulate you on assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. I assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation.

I am compelled to take the floor in order to respond to statements made by some countries – namely, France and Austria – which made reference to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Singling out the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in their

statements in spite of the fact that there are other countries outside the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is highly provocative and unacceptable.

Accession to international treaties is a sovereign right of individual States, and it depends entirely on the decision of the given country. Exerting pressure in this respect is a serious infringement of sovereignty. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President: Thank you, Sir. I think you were the last speaker on my list. Nobody seems to want to take the floor. Distinguished delegates, this concludes our work for this morning. Thank you for your cooperation and engagement.

As previously announced, our next plenary meeting will take place on Tuesday, 1 June 2021, from 10 a.m. to noon. It will be a thematic discussion on agenda item 3, prevention of an arms race in outer space. More information on the next plenary meeting will be communicated through the Conference on Disarmament secretariat in due course. The meeting is adjourned.

The meeting rose at 11.45 a.m.