
Conference on Disarmament

English

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

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Thursday, 12 August 2021, at 3 p.m.

President: Ms. Leslie E. Norton (Canada)



The President: I call to order the 1588th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

Distinguished colleagues, today's plenary meeting on the occasion of International Youth Day will be dedicated to a discussion on youth and disarmament. Canada firmly believes that a diversity of views, including those of younger generations, are key to finding effective ways to move forward on our common goals of disarmament. Youth can inject creativity into this disarmament discussion and have the potential to find innovative, enduring solutions to disarmament issues.

Canada is committed to encouraging and empowering youth to develop into the next generation of disarmament and non-proliferation leaders, advocates and thinkers. The importance of involving youth in peace and security matters has been recognized by the Security Council of the United Nations in several of its resolutions and we believe that today's plenary meeting can make a contribution to this effect. It is also in line with resolution 74/64 entitled "Youth, disarmament and non-proliferation", led by the Republic of Korea and adopted by consensus by the General Assembly of the United Nations. Involving youth in disarmament affairs is also consistent with the objectives set out in resolution 54/120, in which the General Assembly established International Youth Day and called on States to consider including youth representatives in their delegations.

I would now like to give the floor to Ms. Nakamitsu, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, for her opening remarks.

Ms. Nakamitsu (Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs) (*in a pre-recorded video statement*): Madam President of the Conference on Disarmament, ladies and gentlemen, it is my pleasure to address this forum today on the occasion of International Youth Day. The international community bears special responsibility for ensuring that the perspectives of youth and their aspirations for their future, as well as their concerns about existential threats to current and future generations, are taken into account by facilitating the conditions that allow them to express their viewpoints and reach their full potential. Today's event is an example of this, and I would like to thank the President of the Conference for including a dedicated youth event within Canada's plan for its presidency, and Member States for supporting the proposal.

As in all other multilateral domains, inclusiveness is necessary to achieve the ultimate objectives of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control and for the effectiveness and sustainability of the agreements that we reach and the work that we do.

Today's world is home to the largest youth generation in history. Forty per cent of the world's population is under the age of 25. The youth, peace and security agenda has gained momentum in recent years, marking a paradigm shift in the understanding of the important role young people can and should play in peace and security.

In his Agenda for Disarmament, the Secretary-General acknowledges the tremendous force of young people in bringing about change in the world, the crucial role they play in successful campaigns and the new and innovative ways in which they interact, organize and mobilize to advance bold solutions for the future.

The important and positive contributions that young people can make in advancing peace and security was reaffirmed by the General Assembly through its unanimous adoption, in 2019, of resolution 74/64 on youth, disarmament and non-proliferation. Furthermore, last year, the Security Council adopted resolution 2535 (2020) on youth, peace and security, the third such resolution to encourage Member States to support and integrate youth into decision-making processes.

Recognizing the importance of young people to bring about change, in 2019 the Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) launched its youth outreach initiative, "Youth for disarmament" (#Youth4Disarmament), to educate, engage and empower young people with the aim of facilitating their meaningful participation in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation. We do so to enable inclusion, to build platforms and to ensure collaboration. We do so to forge a community that will thrive with an ever-increasing youth participation. These efforts are already showing positive outcomes.

I am extremely proud of a number of our recent activities, which I would like to briefly share with you. First, I would like to note that the #Youth4Disarmament initiative was recognized by the Billion Acts of Peace Awards as the best coalition building project of 2020. Additionally, last year, our “75 words for disarmament” Youth Challenge (#75Words4Disarmament), which was launched in commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversaries of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the establishment of the United Nations, called upon youth to express what disarmament means to them and their local communities in 75 words. The challenge was open to young people between the ages of 13 and 29 around the world. A total of 198 entries were received from 62 countries. The winning entries were announced during an event held during Disarmament Week.

In June of this year, with the Government of the Republic of Korea, we co-sponsored the Youth Forum on Disarmament and Non-Proliferation. The forum facilitated space for young people to present and discuss their perspectives for establishing a safer, more peaceful world, with particular focus on the linkages between disarmament and the Sustainable Development Goals, new and emerging technologies and gender equality. Twenty-five young participants formulated key recommendations to advance the disarmament agenda, which was adopted as the Seoul Youth Declaration for Disarmament and Non-proliferation.

A key programme carried out by my office is the United Nations Youth Champions for Disarmament. This is the UNODA flagship youth training programme. Some of the Youth Champions will address you during today’s session.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the Government of Germany for its financial support of this programme. In 2019, 10 Youth Champions were chosen from 6,515 applicants from 150 countries, and they represent an eclectic and geographically diverse group of youth advocates. Over the past year, the United Nations Youth Champions for Disarmament have participated in interactive webinars with UNODA staff members, exchanged ideas with disarmament experts from think tanks, civil society organizations and the diplomatic corps and completed self-paced online courses on various issues related to disarmament and non-proliferation.

Many have taken part in speaking engagements, raising awareness and imparting knowledge on issues related to disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control within their local communities and among fellow young leaders. I know that their diverse perspectives will continue to enrich the discussions taking place in the disarmament field, including here today.

Ladies and gentlemen, while I cannot be with you physically today, in closing I would like to put some questions to you and to our Youth Champions that I hope will facilitate the discussions: How can we better integrate youth perspectives and inputs into action? How can we promote and advance the participation of youth who are active at the community, national and regional levels in multilateral forums, such as the Conference on Disarmament? Lastly, what more can be done to meaningfully strengthen the interface between a sometimes insular and siloed disarmament community and young people?

I look forward to interesting and thought-provoking exchanges.

The President: I thank the Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs for her statement. I would now like to give the floor to Ms. Wickramanayake, the Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth, for her opening remarks.

Ms. Wickramanayake (Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth) (*in a pre-recorded video statement*): Distinguished delegates and United Nations Youth Champions for Disarmament, it is my pleasure to contribute to this meeting of the Conference on Disarmament which, for the first time, sets out to incorporate youth voices into its discussions. I would like to begin by thanking Canada as President of the Conference for inviting me to speak. I would also like to thank the member States of the Conference for facilitating this event and for their engagement.

Today’s dedicated session on youth signifies a tremendous step towards engaging and empowering the leaders of tomorrow. Even in the face of adversity with the ongoing global pandemic, young people have continued to rise to the challenges of our time as essential workers, innovators, leaders, advocates and partners.

In today's world, there are over 1.8 billion young people, the largest ever generation of youth in history. Ninety per cent of these young people live in developing countries. With such numbers, it is clear that sustainable development and peace cannot be achieved unless we involve and include young people in our discussions and decisions. We must facilitate the conditions that allow them to reach and unleash their full potential.

This session forms an exemplary platform in highlighting the significance and necessity to provide spaces for young people to actively participate. I am also pleased to see that today's session is building on and embracing the tenets of the United Nations Youth Strategy. This strategy, launched by the Secretary-General in 2018, aims to guide the collective efforts of the United Nations to meaningfully work with and for young people.

Young people play a significant role in shaping and securing our common future. As the Secretary-General, António Guterres, said, they are the ultimate force for change. Therefore, I encourage all member States of this Conference to create enabling platforms for all young people to participate in shaping our common future and I also encourage member States to invest in youth-led initiatives while continuing to strengthen the trust between institutions and young people.

As the Secretary-General notes in his Agenda for Disarmament, young people continuously find new ways to organize and advance bolder solutions. Innovation and imagination have and will continue to pave the way for strengthening our collective peace and security. Therefore, it is essential that we also nurture their creativity and unique potential. I look forward to hearing from youth leaders, including the United Nations Youth Champions for Disarmament, on their valuable insights and perspectives during today's discussion. I wish you all the best for the discussions ahead.

The President: I thank the Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth for her statement. Distinguished colleagues, as you are aware, and as referred to by Ms. Nakamitsu, the Canadian presidency has invited four of the United Nations Youth Champions for Disarmament to address the Conference today. Please note that due to a medical issue, the youth delegate from Turkey was not able to participate today and Ms. Barakat of Lebanon has graciously accepted to speak in her stead.

It is now my great pleasure to give the floor to Ms. Mosey of Canada, Ms. Linh Trang Phung of Viet Nam, Mr. Karekezi of Rwanda and Uganda and Ms. Barakat of Lebanon.

Ms. Mosey (Canada) (via video link): Good morning, good afternoon and good evening. My name is Kirsten Mosey, I am here representing the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs Youth Champions for Disarmament. I am joined by three of my colleagues, Linh Trang Phung, Patrick Karekezi and Christelle Barakat, from whom you will hear in the next few minutes. We are delighted to be speaking with you here today.

I first want to thank the President of the Conference on Disarmament, the delegation of Canada, for the invitation to speak at this meeting. I am a proud Canadian and it is an honour to be here as part of Canada's presidency rotation on International Youth Day. I also want to thank the Conference on Disarmament member States present today, the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs and the Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth for your statements of support.

We join you here today not only as representatives of our Youth Champions, but as representatives of this generation. Youth have an important role to play in deciding the future. We are involved in more spheres than ever before, with youth voices contributing to the crucial fight for climate action, education, racial equality, gender equity and more. Youth are the future of innovation, utilizing technologies to overcome significant barriers and create solutions for today's and tomorrow's problems. Youth are also the inheritors of our actions. They are the ones who either benefit or suffer from our decisions and our ability to collaborate with one another.

This generation and the generations to come will reckon with the choices we make, the money we spend, the crises we ignore and the crises we nurture. They will work hard to overcome challenges that they never should have had to face. Youth are the future. But we should also remember that they have an active role in shaping the present. From taking action on climate change to being involved in the fight for gender equity and education, youth are

at the forefront and it is far past time for us to be thinking about engaging youth. We must become fully invested in today's youth to empower them to solve tomorrow's problems.

One field that can benefit from further youth involvement is, of course, the field of disarmament. As a young person who is committed to disarmament, I find it baffling that anyone could consider disarmament an issue not related to youth. It is estimated that 50 per cent of those affected by war and violence are under the age of 20. Over 40 per cent of all displaced people are under the age of 18. Children and youth are affected by violence in their communities through the inability to access schools, hospitals and employment. They experienced family separation, displacement and refugee camps. Youth are not only affected by violence, but are often forced to participate in fighting and make up a significant number of the casualties of war and conflict.

Youth are deeply connected to the need for disarmament and their futures depend on it. While I have not personally experienced the effects of war and weapons, I have seen first-hand the aftermath of thousands of people fleeing for their lives. I have walked among them in refugee camps, listened to their stories, held their children and shared a cup of tea. Their stories are ones of resilience, of hope. Those affected by violence hope for a better future. They hope that their Government and the international community will step up and make a change. They hope that their actions will change their children's lives and their children's lives. Witnessing this absolute resilience of the human spirit and response to senseless violence only made worse by the proliferation of weapons is my reason for championing disarmament.

I am certain that all of you here today also have a reason for championing disarmament. Whether it be personal or simply informed by facts and realities, that purpose drives you to create change in this incredibly important forum. Even though the youth of today do not have the same access to United Nations bodies and conventions, they have the same drive for change. Recognizing that disarmament is foundational to creating a sustainable future, we can begin to make the connections between disarmament and the need for action in other movements.

Connecting disarmament to the Sustainable Development Goals is a great start, but encouraging youth to find their own touchpoint, their own *raison d'être*, is key. We know that violence and weapons affect varying groups and identities in different ways. We witness the effects of violence on LGBTQ+ people. We know that people of colour and indigenous communities have often been subject to weapons testing and the unknown effects of new technologies. We are aware that the fight for climate change and disarmament are intimately connected.

We see how coronavirus disease (COVID-19) recovery must be accompanied by a decrease in weapons spending across the world, and we recognize the disproportionate ways in which women and non-binary individuals are threatened. And as mentioned, statistics show that youth are especially vulnerable to the effects of weapons proliferation. Youth care about these issues. They care about their futures and the futures of those around them. Educating youth about the importance of disarmament to the prosperity of all people will be integral as we seek to fold more youth into the disarmament movement.

My colleagues will soon be sharing specific features of the outreach approach with the #Youth4Disarmament campaign and I hope that their words and perspectives inspire you as they highlight the power of youth in disarmament.

Ms. Phung Linh Trang (Viet Nam) (*via video link*): Madam President, distinguished delegates, my name is Linh Trang Phung. It is an honour to be here today, representing the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs Youth Champions for Disarmament, introducing the first pillar of the #Youth4Disarmament initiative, youth participation. On this special day, 12 August, International Youth Day, I am also proud to be representing my home country youth, wearing our uniform which stands for peace, solidarity and determination.

I would like to express my gratitude to the Conference on Disarmament and its President for convening us to speak at this important event and giving young people like us the opportunity to raise our voices and share our perspectives on disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control issues.

Youth contribution to disarmament affairs is of great significance today as the world is now home to 1.8 billion young people, the largest generation of youth in history. In his 2018 Agenda for Disarmament, the Secretary-General stressed that young people “have proved their power time and again in support of the cause of disarmament” and have found “new ways to interact and organize, advancing bolder solutions when the present generation has lagged behind”.

Indeed, at the international level, youth have worked at the forefront of international campaigns such as the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, while at the national level, groups of high school students have initiated projects like Wars’ Aftermath Initiative, which raised funds to contribute to clearing the many thousands of landmines in Quang Tri Province in Viet Nam.

Across the globe, we can see that youth participate in disarmament in very creative ways and in diverse aspects of life. The young generation is ready to be “the ultimate force for change” in “securing our common future”.

I would like to take this opportunity to share some thoughts about the difficulties and challenges that have impeded youth from more fully participating in disarmament efforts, and also some recommendations.

Firstly, youth need more diverse and far-reaching platforms to engage in disarmament, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. We now have in place global youth forums to connect young people, like the Economic and Social Council Youth Forum, focusing on the Sustainable Development Goals, but a similar one on peace and security is still lacking. Also, due to different social backgrounds, youth in each country have different levels and ways of interacting and accessing media platforms on disarmament. Nevertheless, even in the countries with the most active Facebook users, such as the United States of America, India, Mexico and Viet Nam, we cannot find many resources on disarmament on our newsfeeds. I therefore suggest creating more platforms at the global, regional, national and even local levels for youth to connect with each other in the fields of peace, security and disarmament.

In addition, I suggest translating the available information and reading material on disarmament for youth into different languages in order to achieve the most diverse and inclusive participation. One successful campaign is the “What If – Speterra” Youth Video Challenge, a project in which we called on youth to provide translations of information into their languages, and the result was rewarding as we received more than 20 language versions, all translated by young people.

In the midst of the present pandemic, we should promote online activities for youth, such as the activities on mine action education of the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining in some countries. From the perspective of young people in the context of the fourth industrial revolution, conducting online activities is a positive, economically effective trend.

Another of my recommendations is to include youth living in war zones in disarmament activities. Youth in war zones bear the real brunt of each crisis, so their insights and words are important for us to hear. All of their voices are very important; the most marginalized youth must be heard because representation matters.

Secondly, gender stereotypes are still holding young women back from becoming involved in arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament. There is a perception that this field should be dominated by men. While women have been proving their indispensable role in disarmament issues, and indeed, three of the four Youth Champions speaking here today are female, gender stereotypes are still alive in the mindsets of decision makers and even in those of some young people themselves. That has stopped many young women from deciding to enter this field.

Research on the representation of women in multilateral disarmament forums has shown that only a quarter of country delegates are likely to be women and less than a fifth of statements are likely to be made by women. It is therefore imperative that we encourage people to change those mindsets and prioritize female-led projects to get the benefit of diverse and inclusive youth participation. We also hope to have senior diplomats, both men and women, supporting the next generation of young male and female officers in the disarmament

field. Most importantly, we hope that the Conference on Disarmament and other relevant international forums can reach consensus on gender equality issues.

Lastly, youth are aware that many international forums on disarmament have currently reached a deadlock. It is important that we try to break the stalemate and spare no efforts in working towards our common goal for the future and paving the way for better mutual understanding, respect and cooperation. In the future, I suggest enhancing interaction and cooperation among youth from every country, so that there are new players at this forum in the next few decades.

Youth are grateful that the United Nations bodies and Member States have joined hands to create opportunities for youth, such as the #Youth4Disarmament initiative and the disarmament orientation course, which is open annually to young Conference on Disarmament officers in Geneva or in the capitals of the member States. Nevertheless, due to limited resources, such opportunities reach only a few of us; as you have heard, only 10 Youth Champions for Disarmament were chosen from among more than 6,500 applicants. Therefore, we call on Member States, international organizations and partners to increase your support for these initiatives, which aim to enhance participation and the exchange of views on disarmament issues, especially for youth. In order to ensure long-term engagement, young people would love to have internships and more opportunities to pursue a long-term career in disarmament.

I was born in Viet Nam, a country heavily affected by war. I grew up listening to my grandmother's memories of my grandfather as a soldier and his unkept promise to come back home. However, this story is not only that of my family; it is also the story of more than a million families in Viet Nam.

In other parts of the world, many young people are experiencing war directly or learning indirectly about war. In many peaceful countries, youth enjoy peace and find out about the devastating effects of war through books, newspapers, the television and social media.

However, I believe that young people, be they victims of war or the beneficiaries of peace, are well aware of the value of peace and we are eager to participate in defending it for our own future. Through effective engagement with youth – the future generation – we can build a stronger disarmament regime and contribute to international peace, security and sustainable development for all.

Mr. Karekezi (Rwanda and Uganda) (*via video link*): My name is Patrick Karekezi. "In our times, things were done differently", my father would sometimes say and so we, his children, grew up with the unfortunate legacy of that "in our time" mindset, with its guns, wars and troubles. We children have now grown up and gone out into the world, making our way without my father's "in our times" reprimand.

We are representatives of the 90 per cent of the 1.8 billion global youth now dispersed across the developing world. The number of young people is surging to more than the population economists had predicted, guns have become commonplace in society and massacres take place in broad daylight. Shame and dignity have intersected and become equal in moral value in a generation that is inclined towards a culture of violence and in which people have become detached from the lessons learned in the ruins of their history.

In Uganda, the acquisition of guns by ethnic Karamojong youth in the north-eastern region has fostered violence in these communities. For these young people, possessing guns is regarded as a strength and a means to earn a livelihood, an heirloom passed down from their nomadic grandparents to help them guard their large herds of cattle. Consequently, cattle rustling arises. This is a culturally esteemed activity to redeem a people's pride in a society that is otherwise a peace-loving one.

The Government declared that it would be making intensive efforts to disarm these communities in 2006. Sadly, in 2019, there was a relapse into unlawfulness. Communities acquired guns and ventured into the trade of raiding their neighbours' cattle. Attempts to disarm them only fuelled their appetite to arm themselves further. Disarmament was not done properly and instead of ending the war, it further propagated it.

Unfortunately, young people do not seem to be concerned about this and consequently, they remain unengaged. It is rather absurd that most preventive measures and disarmament campaigns have regrettably overlooked young people, who are likely to be recruits of and heirs to the gun-wielding cattle raiders.

It is true, this could be claimed as a disarmament victory, but what use is a triumph against an old seed that has so many scattered offspring growing wild and maturing into the violent ways they have been taught? At a time when the illegal ownership of guns is still widespread and apparent, there should be a tactical change of approach.

Young people are interested in the world and current developments. Most notably, youth-led campaigns have become increasingly familiar with the press and technological innovations, and campaigns for global causes like fighting climate change have taken the world by storm. Youth have therefore proven how capable they are of taking the world by its slippery horns.

It is thus a modest ambition that youth should become the main actors in efforts to prevent the possibility of war and bring gun-wielding communities back to peace. With millions of young people more involved now in global affairs than ever before, with their digital technology advantage, which brings them a large audience, they are the biggest potential in the bid to spread the doctrine of peace by calling for the voluntary disarmament of our people. Given the clear evidence of the relationship between poverty and war, these people should be helped out of poverty first. Wealth is the best weapon to explain that an iPhone is a better tool than a rifle or a knife.

When they are mobilized, youth can create indelible and enduring change. I suggest that we enable young people to engage their peers in grass-roots disarmament and in building peaceful societies. In the short term, they will do so by determining how law and order can be restored, how combatants can be reintegrated and how displaced peoples can be resettled. In the long term, they can take steps to devolve political power, bring about constitutional change and address social, political and economic inequalities.

Given the incentive of a peaceful future, settled families and happy homes, it is more urgent now than ever that youth are given more opportunities to help build that future. With campaigns like #Youth4Disarmament, we will surely see change come about. Social media has proved a transformative force in our time. Youth who are given the necessary support will be able to use social media to build on the success of such campaigns in Uganda and globally.

Incorporating and explaining disarmament literature and rhetoric in all youth activities will help improve comprehension and encourage young people to seek active and meaningful engagement. Once young people have understood what disarmament means and what they can do to contribute to the processes, the future will surely be a peaceful one. The building of peaceful and secure societies needs to be fostered and encouraged where there are the most resources, and those resources are young people. If their perspectives and aspirations are mainstreamed in the key decisions being made, the future will certainly be bright.

Ms. Barakat (Lebanon) (*in a pre-recorded video statement*): It is an honour and a pleasure to be addressing you today. Thank you for this opportunity. My name is Christelle Barakat and I am a Youth Champion for Disarmament from Lebanon. I will be sharing with you my thoughts and insights regarding the third pillar of the #Youth4Disarmament initiative: partnerships and empowerment.

Today's world is not what it was half a century ago or even a decade ago for that matter. In the past, countries acknowledged the importance of opening up their borders. They traded with each other and created the United Nations as well as other forums for exchange and cooperation. Back then, countries had a choice – whether to remain reclusive or to collaborate with each other. Today, collaboration is not a choice; it is a necessity.

Indeed, the information and communication technology revolution of the 2010s accelerated the pace of globalization. It made countries increasingly dependent on each other in various areas of life and governance. Nowadays, what happens in one corner of the world impacts other nation States, areas and regions. The current pandemic is an example of this. Additionally, the world has become more connected than ever before, particularly through

virtual means of communication. We are also increasingly seeing more linkages between several fields, topics and occurrences that were not visible before.

Distinguished delegates, disarmament might not be explicitly part of the Sustainable Development Goals. Nonetheless, this is because it is at the heart of the Charter of the United Nations. Therefore, it is the foundation underlying the creation and realization of all Sustainable Development Goals. Without arms, the scale of wars would be diminished. Moreover, when positive peace is achieved, a development that is sustainable can be built. Disarmament thus can be linked to various themes ranging from climate action to poverty alleviation, food security, human rights, access to education, sustainability and more.

It is estimated that States spend around US\$ 2 trillion on arms per year. Two trillion dollars! Imagine what the world would look like if a fraction of this sum were invested in profit-generating development ventures. According to the Secretary-General's "Road map for financing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: 2019–2021", US\$ 2.5 to US\$ 3 trillion are needed to achieve all 17 Goals in developing countries. This is equal to or less than the amount the world spends on arms per year.

To elaborate, US\$ 2.5 trillion can either increase States' arms stocks and inventories each year, or they can end poverty; eradicate hunger; increase good health and well-being; achieve quality education and gender equality; provide clean water and sanitation, and clean, affordable energy; secure decent work opportunities for all and economic growth; fuel industry, innovation and infrastructure; reduce inequalities; build sustainable cities and communities; ensure responsible consumption and production; reverse climate change and ocean acidification; protect ecosystems; foster peace, justice and strong institutions; and engage in partnerships for the Goals.

The #Youth4Disarmament partnerships pillar links to all of the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 17, which brings all the Goals full circle. We need the outreach of Governments, the funding and technical expertise of the private sector, and the ingenuity, talent and creativity of youth, as well as the inclusion of all segments of society, for sustainable development. Partnership in the #Youth4Disarmament initiative is about working for and with youth. It stems from a belief that youth are change-makers.

As youth, we can bring about change, particularly at the local and community levels. The 10 of us have been doing so through various initiatives. We have been speaking at events, co-moderating high-level panels, judging competition entries and developing disarmament projects, among other things. We have been empowered and are empowering others in turn. We are seeing and acting on linkages between disarmament and other endeavours. Likewise, we have met other young people who are committed to disarmament and who have developed brilliant campaigns, initiatives and equipment for disarmament.

Nevertheless, as youth, we often do not have the power to make high-level decisions regarding budgets, at least not yet, but you do. Your countries do. You have the ability to give a voice to more youth and to ensure that they are included in decision-making processes. You have the capacity to encourage society at large to listen to youth voices and to take them seriously. Lastly, you have the power to decide and influence whether money will be invested in a piece of equipment used for death and war or if that same sum will be invested in an initiative of peace, hope and life.

Ultimately, if history has taught us anything, it is that no peace and no life can come from weapons. We ask you to work with and for youth to build a more sustainable and peaceful future for all, together.

Ms. Mosey (Canada): Thank you Linh, Patrick and Christelle for your inspiring words and stories. We are all here today because we believe in the cause of disarmament. We believe that there can be a world free from weapons. In this fight to get disarmament into the mainstream, there are many battles. One of them, as we have detailed in this last half hour, is to engage, educate and empower youth. Youth need to be involved in disarmament and the efforts that initiatives like #Youth4Disarmament are making are integral to this fight. We focus a lot on why youth may not be as invested in disarmament as we would like them to be. Barriers to education, lack of opportunity and simply the general distractions of life are key reasons why it is difficult for youth to get involved. But if I may, I would suggest that

one of the other main struggles to mainstreaming disarmament is the fact that people feel it is an unachievable goal.

The reality of the current disarmament landscape is that the global community is spending more on weapons than ever before. Just 76 years ago, the world witnessed the first two nuclear weapons in existence and now there are over 14,000 nuclear weapons in circulation. Even in the midst of a global pandemic with such pressing needs, wars and weapons proliferation continue. It is indeed incredibly difficult to find moments of hope in such a bleak landscape.

But these moments of hope stick out among the rest: the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons went into effect in January 2021; measures on regulating explosive weapons in populated areas are gaining traction; recent commercial space flights reinvigorated the public's attention to the need for treaties governing appropriate use of space; and more and more people every day are awakening to the devastating realities of both nuclear weapons and conventional weapons. Perhaps there is hope.

As we move forward, deliberative bodies such as this one will become increasingly important. The hundreds of thousands of people behind this movement for disarmament look to the decision makers in this meeting. The youth who are and will be pouring their time and energy into fighting for a weapons-free world look to those who have the power to make that happen. As we gain more and more traction, the public cries out for disarmament; the public needs to have people it can trust will make the changes it so desperately wants.

This leads me to our final interventions. Firstly, this historic inclusion of youth in today's meeting represents the passionate voices who deserve a seat at the table. We invite you to consider making International Youth Day involvement in the Conference on Disarmament an annual event. As we have detailed here, youth are the future and the inclusion of their perspectives, ideas and anxieties will bolster your ability to move us towards a weapons-free world.

Secondly, we invite you to reflect on your own position as members of this body. As you well know, the Conference on Disarmament is the only multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament. As such, you have an important role to play in all of our futures. I often think of my own role as an advocate like a lighthouse. I am not invested in disarmament because I have all of the solutions, just like a lighthouse has no ability to physically tow ships to shore. I am an advocate for disarmament because I have the ability to shine a light on the issues facing my generation and point to the path forward. I invite you, the Conference on Disarmament member States, to take on that mantle and be a lighthouse for disarmament. Shine the brightest lights possible on the issues facing our time, expose the gaps and the failures of our current system and lead us safely to shore. You are well positioned and well informed to be that beacon of hope and guide my generation, and my future, into the world that we want for ourselves.

Thank you for your time today and for inviting us to be a part of this session of the Conference on Disarmament. We are incredibly grateful to be here and to have the opportunity to speak with you. We look forward to hearing your questions and engaging in a discussion about the future of disarmament and how youth have a crucial role to play.

The President: Thank you very much to the United Nations Youth Champions for Disarmament for your very insightful, refreshing and inspiring presentations today, which included a number of recommendations for all of us, as well as a challenge or two, such as becoming a lighthouse for disarmament.

I now open the floor to any delegation that wishes to take the floor to discuss the substantive issues raised by the United Nations Youth Champions, speak to their own initiatives involving youth or disarmament education, or any item they deem relevant to the topic. The first speaker on my list is the Ambassador of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Lim Sang-beom (Republic of Korea): First of all, my delegation would like to thank you, Madam President, and your team for convening this meaningful plenary on the occasion of International Youth Day. Our special thanks go to Ms. Nakamitsu, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs and to Ms.

Wickramanayake, Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth, for their strong commitment and dedication.

We convey a warm welcome to United Nations Youth Champions. We thank you for being with us and sharing your inspiring ideas and perspectives with us. We listened carefully to your voices. Indeed, we think the youth is the lighthouse.

Madam President, as an ardent supporter of the United Nations and with a firm belief in young people as the ultimate force for change, the Republic of Korea is proud to serve as a champion for action 38 of the Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament, which aims to establish a platform for youth engagement.

For our part, the Republic of Korea tabled the first resolution of its kind dedicated to youth engagement, empowerment and education at the General Assembly in 2019. It was adopted by consensus, with broad support from Member States, including 84 co-sponsors. In this resolution, we recognized youth as the key agent for social change, economic development and technological innovation.

The 2020 youth model Non-Proliferation Treaty conference held in July in South Korea represents another tangible example of the Republic of Korea's initiative in this sphere. This youth-led model conference established a timely outcome document recommending various innovative measures to further nuclear disarmament efforts. At the nineteenth United Nations-Republic of Korea Joint Conference on Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Issues, held in December last year, a special youth session took place to discuss the issue of emerging technologies and disarmament and non-proliferation from the younger generation's perspective. Youth representatives from diverse backgrounds communicated the opinions and recommendations of young people and presented their discussion to the conference participants.

The Youth Forum on Disarmament and Non-Proliferation co-hosted by the Republic of Korea and the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, held in June this year, is yet another translation of the Republic of Korea's commitment to further use empowerment, engagement and education in this field.

The Government of the Republic of Korea will continue its dedicated efforts in championing the youth and disarmament agenda and proudly supporting the more inclusive participation of youth in key discussions. We will table a resolution on youth and disarmament for the second time at the upcoming session of the General Assembly. We would like to count on the unwavering support of the international community.

For today's special plenary dedicated to the discussion on youth and disarmament, it is my pleasure to present Mr. In-tae Jang, our youth representative. Mr. Jang was born in Seoul, Korea, and he served as one of the 25 cross-regional youth representatives to the Youth Forum held in June this year in Seoul. As a member of the Working Group on Emerging and New Technologies of the Forum, he contributed greatly to the adoption of the Seoul Declaration, the Forum's outcome document.

Madam President, with your and the Conference's indulgence, I would like to give the floor to the youth representative of the Republic of Korea, Mr. In-tae Jang.

Mr. Jang In-tae (Republic of Korea) (*via video link*): Madam President, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, distinguished representatives, Youth Champions for Disarmament and fellow youth representatives, it is a great honour for me to attend this Conference and deliver this speech.

It would be an understatement to say that we, youth, as future leaders of this world, have the potential to influence international affairs and the right to voice our opinions to bring forth change to areas we see fit. The topic of disarmament is no different.

Based on those aspects, the resolution on youth, disarmament and non-proliferation, the Youth Forum on Disarmament and Non-proliferation and the Seoul Youth Declaration resulting from the Youth Forum are three major landmarks in youth empowerment and disarmament. The resolution acknowledges that youth have a vital role in disarmament affairs, while the Youth Forum and Declaration embody this idea.

At the Youth Forum, participants discussed disarmament based on the Sustainable Development Goals, new and emerging technologies, and gender. The discussions laid the foundation for the Seoul Youth Declaration for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation, which contains calls for various measures, from establishing a youth empowerment fund to integrating ethical frameworks for new and emerging technologies, and, of course, mainstreaming youth participation. These endeavours are important not only because they are the accumulation of young people's thoughts, but also because they are warnings to the international community that the threats that new and emerging technologies pose to humanity are no longer lurking in the shadows – they are in plain sight, and therefore action must be taken.

These endeavours also show that youth have “proved their power, time and again, in support of the cause of disarmament”, as the Secretary-General stated in his Agenda for Disarmament. We, youth, hope these events will take place much more frequently so our voices can be heard more loudly and clearly. Ask not for us to stop contributing, for we, youth, will continue contributing to make this world a safer and better place.

The President: I thank the Ambassador and the youth representative of the Republic of Korea for their statements and I now give the floor to the youth delegates from Czechia.

Ms. Šůsová (Czechia) (*in a pre-recorded video statement*): Madam Chair, in our capacity as the Czech Republic's United Nations youth delegates, we are very grateful for the opportunity to speak here today.

Growing up in the Czech Republic, we feel very privileged, as we have never experienced armed conflict in our country and have never felt threatened in our homes. The success of the European project protected us from insecurity and the dangers of conflict, enabling us to develop our skills and knowledge and empowering us to plan a better future for ourselves. Thus, having reaped the benefits of a peaceful life, we are certain that peace is a crucial prerequisite for prosperity and it is definitely a priority for young people starting out in life.

However, in order to maintain peace all around the world, it is necessary to educate the younger generations about the dangers posed to humankind by various types of weapons. Therefore, we consider disarmament education to be a significant stepping stone to maintaining peace and security globally. Only an educated population can make the right decisions about peace and security. Hence, we are convinced that disarmament education should become an obligatory part of school curricula in the form of, for example, a project day or week during which children are informed about the relevant issues, such as nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, military spending and the role of civil society, women and youth in disarmament efforts.

Ms. Petrů (Czechia) (*in a pre-recorded video statement*): The necessity of high-quality education is now more urgent than ever. With autonomous weapons, military cyberoperations and other new means of warfare on the rise, it is necessary that children and youth all over the world understand the link between disarmament, development and peace. They should learn that the primary purpose of weapons should be protection, that different weapons have a different level of risk, and that peace is as fragile as it is crucial and that it needs to be actively protected.

Alongside education, youth should be given a chance to have their say in disarmament affairs. The success of the idea of disarmament will seriously affect the lives of every single one of them, and therefore it is only fair to give them a chance to actively participate in the process. It should also be remembered that there are many people who contributed significantly to peace at a very young age, such as Nadia Murad and Malala Yousafzai. The more youth are given an opportunity to take part in the peacemaking processes, the more youth peacemakers will exist.

We strongly believe in the positive impact of bringing the disarmament issue closer to youth through education, youth participation and other means. The 1.8 billion young people in the world have great potential to be a generation of peacemakers, the generation which will achieve Sustainable Development Goal 16 and a truly peaceful world.

The President: I thank the youth representatives from Czechia for their statements and I now give the floor to the youth representative from France.

Ms. Maitre (France) (*via video link, spoke in French*): I am a research fellow at the Fondation pour la recherche stratégique. I would like to thank the French delegation for having given me the opportunity to participate in this discussion.

I am very honoured today to be able to speak on such an important subject since, as all the previous speakers have pointed out, it is essential to be able to familiarize younger generations with strategic concerns and disarmament issues. It was thus a very good idea for the Canadian presidency to put this topic on the agenda today.

This need has been well identified at the multilateral level with the very successful initiatives we have talked about in this area, including, of course, the #Youth4Disarmament initiative and, for example, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) Youth Group. With a view to transmitting the voices of young students, researchers and professionals, as well as to making them more widely heard, the European Union Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Consortium has organized workshops for the new generation and set up mentoring programmes to create opportunities for discussion and networking.

The Fondation pour la recherche stratégique, as a founding member of the Consortium, is fully involved in these projects for young people, as well as in projects in support of gender equality. Nationally, too, several countries, including France, have become aware of a kind of erosion of expertise in strategic and disarmament-related issues and of a need to rebuild it.

Governments have therefore deemed it essential to increase awareness of these issues among young people in the broadest sense, as well as to involve them more fully in discussions with a view to promoting diversity and encouraging a variety of perspectives. In this context, the French authorities have funded and designed a programme called the Nuclear Network and Strategy – New Generation. The Network was officially launched in 2016, but the idea for it had been around since the late 2000s.

The aim is to bring together every year around 30 French-speaking young people who are interested in strategic issues, deterrence, non-proliferation and, of course, disarmament. This group meets regularly to visit key sites related to these issues, including, of course, in France, and to participate in conferences, discussions, debates and meetings. Members are encouraged to publish and are given guidance on the preparation of papers or presentations.

The Network functions also on a largely informal basis, allowing young people to come together as well as to meet former members and have wide-ranging discussions on these topics. Former members, who today form a community of 200 people, are encouraged to stay in touch and take part in certain specialized activities, thereby fostering a kind of *esprit de corps* and a future-oriented outlook.

The Fondation pour la recherche stratégique and the Institut français des relations internationales, two important think tanks working on these issues in Paris, manage the Network. While the Network's objective is to pass on knowledge and raise awareness of these crucial issues among young people, it also has a considerable discussion and debate component. This component has been widely commented on in a feedback exercise we are currently conducting.

Discussion and debate are fostered by the diversity of Network members, who are master's or doctoral students, researchers, journalists, public servants, active duty service members and representatives of non-governmental organizations. Most of the members are French, but the network is also open to French-speaking foreign applicants, who generally account for about 30 per cent of each entering class. The average age is around 30, which makes it possible for people who are new to the field and other, more experienced people to make connections.

In addition, this Network makes it possible to form a pool of people interested in these issues who can take advantage of or create opportunities for discussion. For example, the Network funds the participation of some of its members in major conferences such as the Carnegie International Nuclear Policy Conference. Young experts are thus given the opportunity to gain experience and to become involved in major international debates,

thereby enabling them to gain a bit of a foothold in these forums. Network members are also strongly encouraged to take part in parallel initiatives already mentioned, such as the CTBTO Youth Group or specialized programmes of the European Union Consortium.

After six years of existence, the Network boasts former members who are experts at CTBTO, the International Atomic Energy Agency and the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research. Equally important, it allows young students or professionals who are less directly involved with these issues in their careers to grasp the terms of the debate and to better understand disarmament and non-proliferation issues. This aspect is particularly important in a country, France, where military nuclear issues have long been little discussed and where the discourse on deterrence and disarmament is sometimes perceived in a cartoonish way.

We are very pleased to be able to keep the Network active with the support of the French authorities, as well as to continue our efforts to diversify and open up the Network, including, of course, to international organizations, to continue creating partnerships with other similar initiatives and to continue amplifying the voices of young researchers, young students and young professionals in our publications and events. Thank you very much.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the youth representative from France for her statement.

(*spoke in English*)

I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Japan.

Mr. Ogasawara (Japan): Madam President, at the outset, Japan would like to express its sincere gratitude to you for taking the initiative of scheduling this important topic, youth and disarmament, for today's discussion in the Conference on Disarmament. I would also like to extend my heartfelt welcome to the Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth and the Youth Champions for Disarmament, as well as to the other young speakers who have taken or will take the floor today before the Conference. I am listening to their precious and inspiring views with great interest.

The Government of Japan believes that it is Japan's responsibility to all humankind to pass down the experiences of the devastation and humanitarian consequences of using nuclear weapons to the world and to future generations. For this reason, and as a champion of action 38 of the Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament on establishing a platform for youth engagement, Japan attaches great importance to disarmament and non-proliferation education, especially to encouraging the next young generation to reflect upon international security, disarmament and non-proliferation and to act on these matters.

The atomic bomb exhibition entitled "Towards a World Free of Nuclear Weapons" held at the United Nations Office at Geneva is one such initiative. I am pleased that we could agree to extend the exhibition period for another 10 years on 9 August 2021 with the United Nations Office at Geneva, thanks to the leadership of Ms. Tatiana Valovaya, the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva.

Japan has submitted a draft resolution on the elimination of nuclear weapons every year to the First Committee of the General Assembly. The resolution submitted last year was entitled "Joint courses of action and future-oriented dialogue towards a world without nuclear weapons", and was adopted with 150 votes in favour. Disarmament and non-proliferation education is presented in this resolution as one of the joint courses of action. The resolution encourages all United Nations Member States "to facilitate efforts on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation education, inter alia, efforts in which the young generation can actively engage, including through dialogue platforms, mentoring, internships, fellowships, scholarships, model events and youth group activities, as well as to raise awareness of the realities of the use of nuclear weapons, including through, among others, visits by leaders, youth and others to and interactions with communities and people, including the hibakusha (those who have suffered the use of nuclear weapons) who pass on their experiences to the future generation".

Japan also had the honour of leading the Joint Statement on Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Education at the 2010 and 2015 Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conferences.

We plan to deliver a new joint statement on disarmament and non-proliferation education at the upcoming Review Conference and hope that it leads to concrete results in this field. Further consultations will be conducted with member States on this matter in due course.

The Government of Japan has launched a programme entitled “Youth Communicators for a World without Nuclear Weapons” with a view to sharing with the world the experience of devastation and the humanitarian consequences of using nuclear weapons. Given the ageing of the hibakusha, and fully aware of the necessity to pass the experience on to the next generation, the Government of Japan has supported young people in their efforts to share the results of their activities and their research in the fields of disarmament and non-proliferation through this programme. As at the end of July 2021, a total of 482 Youth Communicators on 36 diverse occasions had been dispatched around the world. They have delivered their own messages and views to the world.

Today, I would like to ask Ms. Rio Sasaki, one of the Youth Communicators for a World without Nuclear Weapons, to express her opinions. Ms. Sasaki was born in Hiroshima and is currently a high-school student. She is the granddaughter of a woman who survived the atomic bomb in Hiroshima and she has been working as a Hiroshima/Nagasaki Peace Messenger for the elimination of nuclear weapons and for the realization of a peaceful world. With your permission, Madam President, I am proud to invite her to take the floor as a member of my delegation.

Ms. Sasaki (Japan) (*in a pre-recorded video statement*): 6 August 1945. The atomic bomb was dropped in Hiroshima for the first time in human history. Three days later, 9 August, the atomic bomb was dropped in Nagasaki.

I am from Hiroshima, which was exposed to radiation. My grandmother is an atomic bomb victim. When my grandmother was 4 years old, she was exposed to radiation at her house, situated 2.5 km away from the centre of the explosion. Violent heat rays and blasts attacked her and her house was destroyed. Nevertheless, she was alive, miraculously, because her brother carried her on his back. After that, they escaped from burned Hiroshima with their father to look for a safe place. She told me “I remember the fear clearly.” Her life was about to disappear when she was exposed to the bomb. Thanks to the fact that my grandmother survived, I can be here today. I have no choice but to feel the value of life.

Please look at this picture. This is a picture of Hiroshima when the atomic bomb was dropped. This place was the centre of Hiroshima and many people lived here. The atomic bombings completely destroyed the entire cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Between August and the end of 1945, approximately 140,000 people in Hiroshima and 70,000 people in Nagasaki lost their precious lives. Many children and young people like us were killed. Furthermore, all the survivors were harmed; some were burned, some were poisoned and others were injured. Still today, radiation continues to impair all the survivors’ bodies, even 76 years later. The physical and psychological pain has never been healed.

Each one of the victims had their own future. However, one atomic bomb took over their future and gave them lasting pain. I am a young person and have a bomb victim in my family. I am from Hiroshima. I have a strong sense of responsibility and a mission to abolish nuclear weapons. The hope of the victims is not to repeat the same suffering as they have suffered. Nuclear weapons must never be used again.

Passing on the thoughts of the victims and telling the world is our mission. Peace Messengers have been transmitting the voices of victims for 24 years. They have started a petition calling for a global ban on nuclear weapons to make a peaceful world. It has been supported by many people and to date, has been signed by a total of 2 million people. Bomb victims are becoming older and a baton for peace was handed down to us.

This year marks the seventy-sixth anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. We must take a big step towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons. We, young people, have a responsibility for the future. I hope that the world will respond to our call.

The President: I thank the Ambassador and the youth representative from Japan for their statements and I now give the floor to the youth representatives from Belgium. First, Ms. Achour, followed by Ms. Schmidt.

Ms. Achour (Belgium): Madam Chair, Excellencies, fellow young people, let us first begin by thanking Canada for organizing this very important and timely event, focused on youth and disarmament. As Belgian United Nations youth delegates for youth policy from the Vlaamse Jeugdraad and the Forum des Jeunes, respectively, we are very grateful for this unique opportunity to speak on behalf of Belgian youth and to ensure that the voice of our generation is heard on the issue of disarmament.

This event and opportunity are all the more symbolic on this day, 12 August, International Youth Day. Over the past three years, efforts have certainly been made to facilitate the sustainable entry of youth into the field of disarmament and non-proliferation. In this regard, we welcome the Secretary-General's Agenda on Disarmament and his call for the empowerment of the young generation.

This Agenda has led to encouraging developments in the area of disarmament education, thanks to the adoption of General Assembly resolution 74/64 and the #Youth4Disarmament Initiative in 2019. And today, as we are participating in the Conference on Disarmament, there is no doubt that we are going in the right direction.

Here, the positive contribution of young people to sustaining peace and security cannot be emphasized enough. Youngsters who are recognized as agents of positive and constructive change have driven humanitarian disarmament over the last decades.

Through the international campaigns to, inter alia, ban landmines, cluster munitions and nuclear weapons, young people have worked tirelessly to ensure national and human security.

As mentioned in the Secretary-General's Agenda on Disarmament, young people have proved their power in support of the cause of disarmament and have proved that they do take action continuously to foster a culture of peace and non-violence.

We have never had a bigger generation of young people in the world, yet, despite the technological means that make it easier for us to be connected, the full participation of young people with regard to securing our common future is far from guaranteed.

Advancing a culture of peace makes even more sense in 2021, as this year has been declared the International Year of Peace and Trust. In this regard, 2021 started off well with the extension of the New START. The entry into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons also illustrates the demands to make more progress in nuclear disarmament. Efforts have been made this year, but they now need to be accelerated.

Ms. Schmidt (Belgium): The existing arms control and disarmament architecture needs to be reinvigorated and better utilized, notably by strengthening partnerships. As highlighted by the Secretary-General himself in his Agenda for Disarmament: "Disarmament initiatives have been most successful when they involve effective partnerships between Governments, the expert community and civil society." We especially want to emphasize the importance of civil society, the role of women and the role of young people, particularly in decision-making processes.

With the upcoming International Day against Nuclear Tests on 29 August and the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons on 26 September, we need to bring about change in the world. In this regard, youngsters must be empowered to contribute meaningfully to the field of disarmament and, moreover, to the creation of a culture of peace and non-violence.

In this context, it is worth mentioning the youth, peace and security resolution. This resolution recognizes the crucial role young people play in preventing and resolving conflicts. In order to ensure the role of young people, one of the first steps that has to be taken relates to Sustainable Development Goal 4, namely the importance of education and training in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation.

This can be found in the General Assembly resolution on youth, disarmament and non-proliferation, but also in the resolution on a United Nations study on disarmament and non-proliferation education.

Indeed, it is imperative to impart knowledge and skills from a very early age to the largest generation of young people in history in order to achieve peace and security in the long term.

Disarmament education needs to be enhanced and barriers to youth engagement need to be addressed. Empowering youth in securing our common future means mainstreaming disarmament education at all levels and globally, everywhere in the world. Furthermore, allowing youth to participate meaningfully implies creating institutional mechanisms that allow for effective participation in decision-making, as stated by the Secretary-General during the youth plenary in 2020.

Lastly, we youngsters are inspired, but we are also drivers of change. In our role of United Nations youth delegates, we call upon Member States to further promote the meaningful and inclusive participation of young people in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation.

We call upon Member States to remain committed to pursuing their efforts to mainstream disarmament education and enhance youth engagement in disarmament.

The President: I thank the youth representatives of Belgium for their statements and I now give the floor to the delegate from Mexico.

Ms. Roa Vargas (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to express our appreciation to Canada for organizing this meeting with various youth representatives in order to have a substantive exchange about disarmament issues. It is a genuine honour for me to be taking the floor for the first time at a formal meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. It is also an honour to be assuming that responsibility at this critical juncture for international disarmament. Furthermore, it is a pleasure to be speaking on behalf of my country, which seeks to hear the voice of young people. We are grateful for the statements made at this meeting by Ms. Nakamitsu, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Ms. Wickramanayake, Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth, and Youth Champions for Disarmament Christelle, Patrick, Kirsten and Linh.

My delegation has consistently expressed the need for the Conference on Disarmament to be open to listening to other voices, whether by including States that have applied for membership or requested to participate as observers or by adopting the practices that enable active and substantive participation by civil society, as well as to the voices of future generations, as we are doing in this meeting. We believe that the lack of progress in this forum is partly due to its insular nature, which has led to circular procedural debates and the repetition of the same anachronistic arguments that, for decades, have insulated the Conference from outside voices demanding progress and results on issues that are essential to ensuring international peace and security and the very survival of humankind. Those voices that, not necessarily without reason, are frank about how irrelevant the Conference has become must be amplified.

As the United Nations has already stated on several occasions, the world is overarmed and peace is underfunded. A clear example of this are estimates by the World Health Organization, according to which investing in medical personnel, clinics, hospitals, medicine and vaccines, among other necessary elements of achieving a healthier world, would cost US\$ 58 per person between now and 2030. That is a quarter of what the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute has estimated as the current per capita military expenditures. Needless to say, as the current pandemic has taught us, such investments in the health sector can save millions of lives. As another example, the cost of a single stealth aircraft could comfortably pay for the education of 15,000 children from kindergarten through secondary school.

However, efforts in the area of disarmament are not commensurate with the current challenges. The Conference on Disarmament, the permanent forum for multilateral disarmament negotiations, is in a state of paralysis that is, frankly, unsustainable. The Conference has not adopted a programme of work for the past 24 years, making it impossible to negotiate the legal instruments that we owe to our States and to victims around the world.

The current situation is also extremely troubling. The international context is characterized by a complex set of circumstances full of uncertainty, risks and threats to

security for which there has been no precedent in the post-cold war period, with policies and doctrines that seek to justify the indefinite existence of nuclear weapons, thus putting national interests before the security of humankind. These developments, which include the modernization of nuclear arsenals, the salience of such weapons in policies and doctrines and a readiness to resort to them, are unacceptable and dangerous.

The complex and unpredictable security environment should push us to redouble our efforts to achieve nuclear disarmament and to include different actors in those efforts. It is unforgivable that despite the issue's being on its agenda for decades, the Conference still cannot agree to start negotiations on instruments to ban the production of fissile material, eliminate existing stocks and provide non-nuclear-weapon States with the legal certainty that such weapons will never be used against them.

As a result of the Conference's silence, security and defence policies and doctrines have been revised to make the justification for the possible use of such weapons increasingly vague. The Conference has not even managed to adopt a technical linguistic update of its rules of procedure to reflect the fact that it can be presided over by a woman. Moreover, we are in the midst of a technological revolution whose implications in the area of international security have not yet been fully studied – this despite the fact that we have sufficient evidence of the challenges and serious risks in terms of compliance with the basic norms of international humanitarian law that are already creating regional and international instability, driving a runaway arms race and increasing the likelihood of another use of nuclear weapons. The Conference on Disarmament necessarily has a key role to play in addressing these serious risks and challenges.

With regard to the prevention of an arms race in outer space, the Conference approaches the subject from an anachronistic and limited viewpoint, without a proper understanding of the current challenges regarding outer space, which should, by law, be used solely for peaceful purposes and the benefit of humankind. The Conference must refocus its attention on this issue, taking fully into account the challenges that the militarization of outer space and, worse still, its use as a theatre of conflict would have on its usefulness, which cannot be sacrificed, for the development of all our countries.

In this context, Mexico has supported General Assembly resolution 55/33 E, entitled "United Nations study on disarmament and non-proliferation education", in keeping with our country's commitments in the field of peace and disarmament education. This resolution seeks to establish close collaboration between experts and civil society, including educators and academic institutions, mainly in secondary and university education, with a view to assessing the current state of disarmament and non-proliferation education and training among us young people.

This is where an important question arises. What can we young people do? Although disarmament may seem to us an obscure topic, it is important to remember that young people are among the main civil society actors, especially in developing countries. The status quo will not change unless we learn about disarmament and its consequences. For example, limiting the proliferation and uncontrolled circulation of weapons in communities contributes to safe, violence-free learning environments, thereby supporting Sustainable Development Goal 4, on quality education. It also contributes to achieving Goal 5, on gender equality, as the regulation of arms and ammunition can reduce violence against women and girls in both the public and private spheres. Being armed with this knowledge allows us to speak out against misguided policies and ensure that Governments use their resources for growth and sustainable development.

Young people have always been agents of change because we are fearless, passionate and undaunted by challenges. It is we who must be at the forefront of the dialogue to promote disarmament because it is our future that is at stake. We can take the first step and raise awareness, help with outreach and increase our involvement in disarmament issues.

Mexico reiterates its commitment and willingness to promote peace education, as well as its support for efforts to include young people in disarmament discussions. In that regard, I call on the Conference to avoid pretending to work and concentrate on fulfilling its mandate and on making effective progress towards general and complete disarmament, while being

open to the participation of different actors and new voices, including those of young people, as it has done today, International Youth Day.

As the Youth Champions for Disarmament said, let us work towards making the Conference on Disarmament the beacon in the area of disarmament.

The President: I thank the delegate of Mexico for her statement and I now give the floor to the youth representative of Australia.

Ms. Rafton (Australia): Madam President, thank you for convening this meeting today. Australia welcomes Canada's initiative to host a plenary on youth and disarmament in the Conference on Disarmament, and we would like to thank the Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Ms. Nakamitsu, and the Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth, Ms. Wickramanayake, for their valuable reflections on the issue.

We also welcome the engagement of the Youth Champions for Disarmament and we thank them for sharing their insightful perspectives on disarmament with us. It is very fitting that we have been able to hear from them on the occasion of International Youth Day.

Australia firmly believes that incorporating youth perspectives in the field of disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation is essential to achieving more sustainable outcomes. We also believe that diversity and inclusion are directly relevant to this Conference's capacity to fulfil its mandate and to its strength as an institution.

Madam President, we would like to take this opportunity to welcome the efforts of the Office for Disarmament Affairs to engage youth, including through the #Youth4Disarmament initiative launched in 2019.

Australia is a strong advocate for the meaningful and inclusive participation of young people in discussions in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation and for building the capacity of youth through disarmament education and training. Australia's Ambassador for Arms Control and Counter-Proliferation, Ms. Amanda Gorely, spoke about the intrinsic benefits of the meaningful participation of youth in discussions on arms control when she was a panellist at the International Youth Nuclear Congress, held in Sydney in March 2020.

The Permanent Mission of Australia to the United Nations Office in Geneva has long provided opportunities for interns at the start of their professional careers to engage on disarmament affairs. Indeed, I am very pleased to be the beneficiary of such an opportunity myself and to have the opportunity to contribute to this discussion in that capacity.

Australia also wants to see greater efforts to promote young women's participation in disarmament and related peaceful applications, including nuclear policy, science and engineering – they will be the ones ultimately fulfilling the gender composition gaps that we are currently facing. We were pleased to sponsor the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme of the International Atomic Energy Agency. These fellowships provide opportunities for young women to pursue careers in the disarmament area. Australia believes that finding ways to attract more women in the early stages of their careers will help to bring future women leaders in these areas through the pipeline.

Madam President, COVID-19 continues to affect all segments of the population, with young people playing a key role in the pandemic recovery efforts. Notwithstanding the common challenges we face in this new COVID normal, we think this is an opportune time to take the transformative action required to achieve diverse and inclusive participation in the field of disarmament.

The President: I thank the youth representative of Australia for her statement.

(spoke in French)

I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Cameroon.

Mr. Eheth (Cameroon) *(spoke in French)*: Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, my delegation is pleased to participate in this important discussion that you have chosen to organize as part of your presidency. I would also like to commend you for your leadership and the way you are conducting our work. In addition, I welcome the participation

of Ms. Nakamitsu, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, and Ms. Wickramanayake, Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth.

Madam President, as noted during our consultations during the meetings held between the six Presidents of the session, the last President of the previous session and the first President of the next session, your decision to include this theme in your programme of activities is to be welcomed.

Coming from a country and a continent where young people account for nearly two thirds of the population, my delegation and I believe that the issue of youth and disarmament is of great interest and relevance.

The objective of the Conference on Disarmament is the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, whether nuclear, biological or chemical. We are not naive; we know that this objective is a nearly illusory plan, or at least difficult to achieve, as disarmament is in itself a complex systemic paradigm in more ways than one.

The arms race is an expression of the ambitions, consubstantial with human nature, harboured by States in their search for the greatest possible protection or for a strategic advantage.

There is, nonetheless, one thing shared by all States, whether rich or poor, developed or developing, possessors of weapons of mass destruction or not, and that is hope for a better and peaceful future. The idea, in essence, is to contribute effectively to the consolidation of international peace and security, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. Strategic choices and the means of making such a contribution are the core problem.

In this quest for an ideal of collective peace and security, the question that should be asked is what contribution young people can make or how young people can support disarmament.

That young people are our future is obvious. Safeguarding our future means envisioning a world completely free of weapons of mass destruction. It also and above all means ensuring the perpetuity of the human race. Seen in this light, the role of young people in the disarmament process is paramount.

Young people, regardless of whether they are from Europe, Asia, the Americas, Africa or elsewhere, have a role to play in building the world of the future. They therefore also have a role to play in disarmament.

A major focus of young people's involvement could be on awareness-raising and training. Weapons of mass destruction should be seen as a serious global threat that it is urgent and necessary to combat by developing a preventive strategy involving the following components: developing programmes and other courses of study devoted to disarmament in educational institutions; raising awareness through non-governmental and cultural activities; strengthening strategies by involving civil society, on a global scale, in disarmament advocacy and activism; developing systems of thought or doctrines conducive to the emergence of an international society completely committed to non-violence; humanizing scientific and technological progress; making the culture of peace and solidarity among peoples more robust; involving young people in the development of civic programmes; and developing new fields of competition that, without resort to weaponry, make it possible to minimize or do away with the traditional rivalries that are a major source of conflict.

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome all the national, regional and multilateral initiatives concerning young people and disarmament that the United Nations and many other organizations have been responsible for.

Young people must be encouraged to recreate a new world, to come up with other arenas of competition, especially those that, free of any idea of violence, centre on humankind.

My country, Cameroon, which has always made multilateralism a principal vector of its foreign policy, has faith in the Conference on Disarmament and believes in the role of young people as a vector of peace in a world where violence prevails.

Madam President, it is urgent for young people to be given guidance. A commitment to that effect would encourage all humanity to develop a multilateral vision focused on

international solidarity and promote collective security of a sort where young people will be at the centre of initiatives. Thank you.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the Ambassador of Cameroon for his statement.

(*spoke in English*)

I now give the floor to the delegate from the United States of America.

Ms. Mather-Marcus (United States of America): Thank you, Madam President, for convening this important session and for allowing me to take the floor today. I join my colleagues from Mexico in saying that it is an honour to do so for the first time in this session.

Thank you also to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Ms. Nakamitsu, to the Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth, Ms. Wickramanayake, and the excellent panellists for your remarks.

As Secretary of State Blinken says in his International Youth Day video message “This generation’s rising leaders are dazzling ... Problems that others may find hopeless or too hard, you’ve taken on with energy and with optimism.” Ms. Mosey, Ms. Linh Trang Phung, Mr. Karekezi, Ms. Barakat and all the youth representatives here today, you are exactly the type of leaders that he is talking about.

The United States strongly believes in the importance of empowering youth and the Secretary’s video outlines our many educational and other efforts to that end.

The United States also takes very seriously our efforts on disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. For that reason, your remarks here today have been particularly useful. Fresh perspectives on disarmament can help breathe life into the issues we deal with every day.

The most productive and efficient organizations in the world, both public and private, regularly solicit new ideas and outside opinions. If it is a good practice for them, it is a critical practice for multilateral organizations like the Conference on Disarmament, which has unfortunately become a stagnant echo chamber. Hopefully we all heard something either today or from one of the many other excellent speakers that we have had throughout this session, that will spur a new thought, a new angle on this enduring problem. I know it has for me and I hope it has for everyone else in the room.

The President: I thank the delegate from the United States of America for her statement and I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Algeria.

Mr. Soualem (Algeria) (*spoke in Arabic*): Thank you, Madam President. It is an honour for me to take this opportunity to extend to you my most sincere and warm congratulations on your dynamic presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. I wish to express our appreciation for your tireless efforts to help advance the work of the Conference despite the delays caused by the coronavirus pandemic, which has affected various multilateral forums.

My delegation welcomes the participation of Ms. Nakamitsu and Ms. Wickramanayake in this debate on youth and disarmament on the occasion of International Youth Day. We also welcome the participation of youth representatives, which reflects the role of this important segment of society in building a better future for all.

The important role of young people is illustrated in their participation as key agents for social change, economic development and technological innovation, as well as their important and positive contribution to building bridges of communication and promoting sustainable peace and security. The youth, peace and security agenda has gained momentum in recent years and marks a shift in recognizing the positive role this important group plays in conflict prevention and resolution, countering violent extremism and building peace, as enshrined in Security Council resolutions 22/50 (2015), 24/19 (2018) and 25/35 (2020).

The General Assembly also reaffirmed the important and positive contribution that young people can make in sustaining peace and security through its unanimous support of resolution 64/74 of 12 December 2019 on youth, disarmament and non-proliferation, which

encourages the participation of young people in discussions on disarmament and non-proliferation and calls for the development of policies and programmes related to their participation, education and capacity-building. Furthermore, there have been many initiatives to promote the positive role of young people, such as the United Nations Youth Strategy 2030, which aims to mobilize young people's efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and includes peace and security among its priorities, and the implementation plan for the Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament, action 38 of which involves promoting youth participation as the ultimate force for change.

My delegation welcomes such initiatives and expresses its appreciation for the initiative #Youth4Disarmament launched by the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs in 2019, which aims to connect geographically diverse young people with experts to learn about current international security challenges, the work of the United Nations and how they can actively participate in these efforts. The aim of placing youth engagement at the core of disarmament education efforts is to achieve identified objectives by raising awareness, improving skills and enabling young people to have access to technical support and capacity-building, while providing space for their participation in collective efforts to contribute to disarmament and peacekeeping.

My country attaches great importance to young people, who make up the majority of the Algerian population and occupy a significant position in society, which is reflected in the annual celebration of Youth Day on 5 July, which coincides with Independence Day. The position of young people in Algeria has been strengthened through the latest constitutional amendment in 2020, which provides for the effective participation of young people in the process of building and preserving the interests of future generations by ensuring quality education and the provision of the institutional and material means to develop their capabilities, stimulate their creative energies and respond to their aspirations and their determination to rise to the political, economic, social and cultural challenges that face the country. The National Youth Plan 2020–2024 was adopted with a view to developing unified government policies especially for young people that are to be implemented by all ministerial departments and public bodies concerned with the participation of civil society.

Finally, national efforts to combat violent extremism have attached great importance to young people, based on a strong will to dry up the sources of this intrusive phenomenon through a comprehensive approach based on eradicating it from society, as well as social, economic, political, religious, cultural and other factors connected with marginalization, especially among young people. This policy has been and continues to be an essential element in the sectoral policies and programmes of the Algerian State. Thank you.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Algeria for his statement and I now give the floor to the delegate of Switzerland.

Mr. Baumann (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Madam President, first of all, let me thank you for organizing this plenary meeting today on youth and disarmament. This topic is particularly important today, given the long-term challenges posed by disarmament issues in a complex and rapidly changing world.

I would now like to give the floor to my colleague Mr. Franzi. Mr. Franzi joined the Swiss diplomatic corps a few weeks ago, this spring, and his very first assignment brought him here to Geneva, to our Permanent Mission to the United Nations. In the coming months, he will have the privilege of gaining familiarity with the mysteries of multilateral diplomacy; above all, however, will also be able to learn more about various disarmament issues.

Mr. Franzi (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Madam President, allow me to begin by welcoming Ms. Nakamitsu, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, and Ms. Wickramanayake, Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth. We are also grateful for the various youth representatives who have spoken this afternoon.

Disarmament issues and the need to address them are essential for my generation and future generations. Some categories of weapons pose existential challenges to all of humanity. This is particularly true of nuclear weapons, the threat of which has persisted for too long. New categories of weapons pose new challenges. They have, in large part, been identified in

the section of the Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament entitled "Disarmament for future generations".

Young people are not simply affected by disarmament issues; they are also an important force for progress. Youth participation in disarmament-related processes is extremely important. Young people have demonstrated their influence and dynamism by playing a leading role in disarmament campaigns – for example, by being at the forefront of successful campaigns to ban landmines, combat cluster munitions and press for nuclear disarmament. I would like to add that in a world where emerging technologies are becoming increasingly prevalent, digital natives will have to be included if there are to be different perspectives at the negotiating tables where discussions of rapidly evolving digital technologies are taking place.

Young people play an important role in preventing and resolving conflict and in promoting peace. In this context, including young people is also vital to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular target 4.7 of the Goals, on the promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence.

In a rapidly changing world, including young people must continue, and, notwithstanding the many successes, this inclusion must be seen as an ongoing exercise designed to keep the channels of communication between the generations open, not as a mission accomplished. I therefore welcome the steps that have been taken and the progress that has been made in recent years in this respect.

We would like to point out that the theme youth and disarmament has been addressed by the United Nations. We particularly welcome the disarmament and youth platforms set up by the Office for Disarmament Affairs, which address one of the measures in the Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament. Of particular importance are the many facets of the youth activities organized by the Office for Disarmament Affairs, including disarmament education certification programmes, courses and resources for teachers and students.

I also welcome the activities organized by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, which, with its courses on disarmament, which I myself have taken, is at the forefront of efforts to provide training on disarmament affairs to young diplomats. I also welcome the resumption this summer, after a one-year hiatus caused by the pandemic, of the United Nations Disarmament Fellowship, Training and Advisory Services Programme.

The last point I would like to make is that there will be several opportunities in the coming months to make further progress on the issue of youth and disarmament. They include the upcoming session of the First Committee of the General Assembly, at which we will again consider the resolution entitled "Youth, disarmament and non-proliferation". The Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons is another important event at which to consider this topic. We hope that we will be able to seize these and any other opportunities that may arise to move forward on this issue. Thank you.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the Ambassador of the Switzerland. I also thank the delegate of Switzerland and welcome him to the Conference on Disarmament.

(*spoke in English*)

I now give the floor to the delegate of Pakistan.

Mr. Chaudhary (Pakistan): Madam President, thank you for convening this meeting.

On behalf of my delegation, I wish to thank the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs and the Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth for their insights and also the other young speakers.

Madam President, as a country in which over 60 per cent of the population are young people, Pakistan values their voices, aspirations and ideals. We therefore welcome youth interest and participation in and engagement with the Conference on Disarmament.

We have listened carefully to the views and perspectives, especially of the youth representatives. We appreciate their thoughts, inputs and suggestions.

My delegation wishes to draw the attention of the youth representatives, especially the United Nations Youth Champions for Disarmament, to the following questions: What is this body about? Why has it not been able to live up to its potential? How can the stalemate in this body be overcome? We ask these questions in the hope that the youth of today, as leaders of tomorrow, can bring in new ideas and solutions to long-standing challenges to regulate and reduce various categories of arms.

Madam President, further to the questions posed by the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, let me present some questions for youth to reflect upon, to critically examine and on which to raise their voices. Beginning with the larger canvas, the broad context that shapes arms control approaches, solutions or lack thereof, the first question is: What do young people understand from concepts such as strengthened multilateralism, rules-based international order and rule of law? Are these mere abstract norms or notions? How do they interface with international relations and international bodies, especially in the area of disarmament? To what extent are these phrases consistent with what States advocate and how they act? Why is respect for international law obligations and norms essential? And what can be done when States do not adhere to or deviate from international law, treaties and rules?

Nuclear disarmament, the *raison d'être* of this Conference, remains an elusive goal after several decades. Outer space continues to be militarized and there are millions of fissile material stocks that are yet to be eliminated. These are just a few of the issues that this Conference is obligated to consider and for which it needs to endorse solutions. Yet this body has been unable to develop instruments. So, what is hampering this body, preventing it from delivering on its mandate and making a real impact on the peace, security, stability and prosperity of the world?

I encourage the Youth Champions for Disarmament and other young representatives for disarmament to share their ideas and proposals and to advocate for full respect of international law and States' faithful compliance with their obligations. I am confident that Youth Champions and leaders will apply new lenses and bring in new perspectives, ideas and proposals that can benefit this Conference.

I wish the youth representatives and the Youth Champions for Disarmament all the best in their future endeavours to make this world more peaceful, more secure, more equitable and more prosperous.

The President: I thank the delegate from Pakistan for his statement and I now give the floor to the delegate of India.

Ms. Narayanan (India): Madam President, thank you for giving me the floor to share our views on youth and disarmament on International Youth Day. The Indian delegation expresses its best wishes on this important occasion to all youth.

We also thank the Canadian presidency for convening this plenary and for giving us this important opportunity to share our views. We are honoured to hear inspiring remarks from Ms. Nakamitsu, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, outlining United Nations initiatives, and Ms. Wickramanayake, the Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth, and also the thought-provoking words we have heard from the United Nations Youth Champions for Disarmament and youth representatives today.

India attaches great importance to engaging and working with the youth of today to raise awareness and to find innovative solutions to issues of disarmament and arms control to make a lasting contribution to international peace and security.

India would like to place on record its sincere appreciation for the initiative taken by the Republic of Korea in the form of General Assembly resolution 74/64 entitled "Youth, disarmament and non-proliferation", which India had the privilege to co-sponsor. In that resolution, as also explained by the Ambassador of the Republic of Korea today, the General Assembly recognized that young people are key agents for social change, economic development and technological innovation, and called upon Member States to consider developing and implementing policies and programmes for young people to increase and facilitate their constructive engagement in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation.

India accords high priority to promoting arms control, disarmament and international security education. In this regard, India's Annual Disarmament and International Security Affairs Fellowship Programme, launched in 2019, has been well received by various member States, particularly the younger generation of diplomats.

Building upon this initiative, and to further expand education and outreach, India has launched a new initiative in the framework of disarmament for youth. This global initiative, aimed at bringing disarmament and international security issues closer to the younger generation, is not limited to diplomats but involves and engages the wider community of youth interested in such issues. This initiative will help youth become better informed and enable them to relate to the current developments in disarmament and international security.

The initiative has been proposed in the form of an ongoing series of seminars on various contemporary issues on the global disarmament and international security affairs agenda, such as the Biological Weapons Convention and biosecurity, chemical disarmament, nuclear disarmament, space security and conventional weapons. The proposal is that these events will be organized at the global level with the participation of youth across the globe.

India looks forward to continuing its constructive engagement with the younger generation on these important issues of global importance that will hopefully act as a catalyst in promoting international peace and security.

The President: I thank the delegate of India for her statement and I now give the floor to the delegate of Sri Lanka.

Ms. Gunawardena (Sri Lanka): Madam President, since this is the first time my delegation is taking the floor during your presidency, allow me at the outset to congratulate you on the assumption of the presidency. You can count on our full support.

We appreciate the valuable insights of the distinguished panellists today, including Ms. Wickramanayake, Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth. Sri Lanka is proud of her leadership and proactive contribution to the United Nations Youth Strategy. We also appreciate the participation of the youth representatives and their engagement on this very important issue.

Being the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, the Conference on Disarmament has indeed provided a useful platform for the negotiation and drafting of a number of important treaties on disarmament and non-proliferation. However, as we are all aware, the Conference's role has largely been relegated to a deliberative forum since the drafting of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty in 1996.

The year 2021 marked another difficult year for the Conference as we yet again failed to adopt a programme of work. In the meantime, the international arms control and security regime continues to deteriorate rapidly, with the erosion of trust among the military powers, technological advancements in the absence of international limitations and increased reliance on nuclear deterrents.

It is in these worrying circumstances that we consider the topic of youth and disarmament as a matter of timely importance. Youth is the hope of humanity, the hope of our future. We consider youth a fundamental element of disarmament and non-proliferation for several reasons.

First, raising the awareness of youth about the importance of peace and security would be an investment in the next generation to transfer knowledge on the seriousness of this issue. This would include the development of expertise in the political, technical, scientific and legal areas of disarmament for the capacity-building and empowerment of youth to pick up the baton on the campaign for disarmament.

Second, youth have always been and continue to be an instrumental medium of bringing about change. They are passionate, fast learners and results-oriented. In today's era of global connectivity, youth could play a major role in the progressive use of technology to raise awareness of the issue and influence national and global policies. The youth of our times are native speakers of the language of computers, video games and the Internet – the digital natives. While we have, in a way, become accustomed to slow progress on disarmament, the next generation, if inculcated with the values of humanity and compassion and a substantial

knowledge of the subject, would strive for faster results, and young people's new ideas would perhaps break the stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament that the present generation has been attempting to unlock for decades.

Third, today's youth will be tomorrow's decision makers. The reality of life is such that all of us in the Conference on Disarmament today will, in a matter of years, be gradually replaced by our younger successors who constitute today's youth. They will step into our shoes and continue to shape the fate of the future world. This is why youth have to be encouraged and facilitated in the disarmament discourse so that they are equipped enough to take informed decisions at the right time.

Fourth, youth, by virtue of being a key component of the future, invariably become direct stakeholders of our work here. This is particularly so in today's context, where our warfare seems to be relying more and more on new and future-oriented technology. The Group of Governmental Experts on Emerging Technologies in the Area of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems is currently having an ongoing meeting ahead of submitting a report to the Review Conference of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, with recommendations for an operational and normative framework on autonomous weapons systems. Growing up surrounded by technology in almost every aspect of their lives, the debate on the prohibitions and restrictions on autonomous weapons systems has a direct impact on the peace and security environment of the youth of tomorrow.

Lastly, and most importantly, in discourses on sustainability, which has received a special thrust in national development processes following the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals, intergenerational equity remains a core principle in its normative architecture. In this conception, sustainability is meant to be a partnership between successive generations. Youth are therefore at the heart of the concept of intergenerational equity and disarmament is key to ensuring them a secure future with a planet whose resources are not subject to destruction by warfare or by their appropriation for non-peaceful purposes.

The importance of youth in disarmament has been emphasized in a number of General Assembly resolutions. Action 38 of the Secretary-General's Disarmament Agenda, to establish a platform for youth engagement, has also triggered responses for the inclusion of youth in disarmament education programmes across the world.

As a beneficiary of the United Nations Disarmament Fellowship Programme, I can personally guarantee the passion the programme instilled in me as a young diplomat from the global South. In this context, we also continue to highlight the importance of encouraging young women to become more engaged in and contribute to the disarmament and non-proliferation discourse and decision-making.

In conclusion, Madam President, allow me to highlight one more important element of youth involvement in peace and security. In order to reap the benefits of the next generation to expedite global disarmament efforts, it is important that young persons are provided with opportunities for constructive participation in the discussions and most importantly, led by example. Therefore, it is high time for the members of the Conference on Disarmament to demonstrate true political will and genuine flexibility to show satisfactory progress, so that the young generation is motivated, inspired and engaged.

The President: I thank the delegate of Sri Lanka for her statement and I now give the floor to the delegate of China.

Mr. Chen Zhengyang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Thank you, Madam President.

I have just listened carefully to the statements made by Ms. Nakamitsu, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Ms. Wickramanayake, Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth, the four youth delegates and many colleagues and youth representatives.

I would like to take this opportunity to share my own experiences. I was born in the 1990s and grew up in the twenty-first century, and have witnessed the tremendous changes in the world over the past 20-odd years.

Multilateralism has replaced the confrontation between armed camps that characterized cold war times and has become an inexhaustible driving force for international cooperation. Seeking development and promoting security through cooperation have become

the main themes. The United Nations-centred international multilateral system has been further consolidated, providing an important institutional guarantee for maintaining world peace and stability. Multilateralism is like a lighthouse guiding the way forward for humanity. Against this backdrop, the international arms control process has made great strides. Multilateral arms control treaties such as the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the Chemical Weapons Convention have been negotiated and have finally entered into force. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons has been extended indefinitely, and the United States and Russia signed the New START, which was renewed earlier this year, ensuring that the two countries with the largest nuclear arsenals continue to walk the path of nuclear disarmament.

At the same time, the pernicious vestiges of the cold war have not been eradicated. Murmurs of cold war thinking and zero-sum games continue to emerge, in recent years even becoming the basis for policy formulation in some countries, and ideological lines are being drawn at every turn, exacerbating the divisions and confrontations in the international community. As members of the younger generation, we should give serious thought to how the shadow of the cold war can be completely eliminated, which is the international community's expectation of us and is the mission entrusted to us by the times.

I come from China, the largest developing country in the world. The first decade of the twenty-first century was the decade in which I entered school for systematic study, and a decade in which China developed at a rapid pace. During that decade, I was aware of the material changes brought about by an annual economic growth rate of over 8 per cent on the one hand, and studied the recent tragic history of China's being colonized, invaded and oppressed on the other. Such contrasts have led me to appreciate more deeply the preciousness of peace, as well as understand the meaning of equality and mutual respect among nations. It is also on the basis of that history that I have gained a deeper understanding of why my own country has firmly followed the path of peaceful development, adhered to an independent and peaceful foreign policy and consistently pursued a defensive national defence policy; and why China has firmly upheld multilateralism, pursued win-win cooperation and advocated a new concept of common, integrated, cooperative and sustainable security.

Through my having worked in multilateralism, including the Conference on Disarmament, I have gained a more comprehensive understanding of my country's deep involvement in United Nations peacekeeping operations, its extensive participation in international cooperation and its active foreign assistance. I also firmly believe that China will continue to contribute to world peace and development.

The most important lesson and influence I absorbed from the family and social environment in which I grew up was that of respecting others and showing them kindness. Coming to Geneva to work in the Conference has deepened my understanding of the equality and mutual respect among its member States. For the Conference, the consensus rules of procedure are the fundamental guarantee ensuring that member States, great or small, participate equally in the work of the Conference and fully express their views, and are the most effective way of working to ensure the authority of the Conference to advance the arms control process. As the younger generation, it is also our mission to uphold equality and mutual respect in multilateral arms control mechanisms, including the Conference.

The twenty-first century is an era of full-speed technological development, highlighting flourishing new technologies like artificial intelligence and big data. Having grown up with many such new technologies, our generation is enjoying the huge dividends brought by their development every day. On the other hand, we are constantly confronted with the threats that new technologies bring to our daily lives and work, and the militarized development of new technologies is also bringing new challenges to the traditional arms control system. Against this backdrop, how to deal with emerging technological threats and improve global security governance in emerging areas has become an overriding issue before us.

At university, I majored in aircraft power engineering, and during my postgraduate studies I focused on human-computer interaction systems. In my free time, I enjoy computer programming and researching data mining techniques. I believe that many young people like

me are more aware of emerging technologies than their seniors in the arms control community, and also excel at learning in depth through books and extracurricular practice. We should give full play to this advantage, keep learning, maintain our integrity and innovativeness and play our due role in improving global security governance in emerging areas. Of course, having sufficient knowledge and competence is only one aspect; young people should also have a sense of the overall historical context.

The Second World War was one of the darkest pages in human history, and the nuclear bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were part of this tragedy. A proper perspective on this history requires a thorough understanding of the origins of that war, including who started it, how it developed and the cause-and-effect relationships among a series of historical events. Viewing the nuclear bombings in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in isolation from the wider context of the War is likely to lead to erroneous conclusions.

In conclusion, I am confident that, based on a full and thorough understanding of history, our young generation will be able to create a better future for the world. Thank you, Madam President.

The President: I thank the delegate of China for his statement and I now give the floor to the delegate of Kazakhstan.

Mr. Baissuanov (Kazakhstan): Madam President, first of all, I would like to congratulate you for your initiative to devote time in the schedule of the Conference on Disarmament to the issue of youth and disarmament. I believe your initiative is a success – we have heard many interesting ideas today.

Kazakhstan wholeheartedly supports initiatives involving youth and disarmament education. As you may know, field trips to the former Semipalatinsk nuclear test site have been part of the United Nations Disarmament Fellowship Programme over recent years. The Programme is an important tool to train young diplomats in the field of disarmament and security and an opportunity for them to gain first-hand knowledge of the catastrophic consequences of nuclear testing. Due to the pandemic, we were unable to welcome them last year or this year, but as soon as international travel resumes, we look forward to working with the Office for Disarmament Affairs on the implementation of this programme.

Let me also inform you that, in commemoration of the International Day against Nuclear Tests on 29 August and the thirtieth anniversary of the closure of the Semipalatinsk test site, the Office for Disarmament Affairs, in partnership with the Permanent Mission of Kazakhstan to the United Nations in New York, launched the “Step up for disarmament” Youth Campaign (#StepUp4Disarmament). It aims to raise awareness of the devastating health consequences of nuclear testing through an emphasis on physical activity, recognizing that sport plays a crucial role for many young people across the world. The #StepUp4Disarmament Youth Campaign invites young people to use their sporting passion and ability to either run 8.29 kilometres or walk 10,900 steps (equivalent to 8 km) to raise awareness of the International Day against Nuclear Tests on 29 August.

While young people will be running or walking in New York, here, the Permanent Mission of Kazakhstan to the United Nations Office in Geneva will welcome a Norwegian non-governmental organization called Bike for Peace. Cyclists are not all young but they are active and have organized peace and friendship rides in more than 115 countries since 1978. On 29 August, Bike for Peace will hold a commemoration event at the Palais des Nations with a moment of silence in honour of victims of nuclear testing.

The President: I thank the delegate of Kazakhstan for his statement and I now give the floor to the delegate of Germany.

Ms. Mikeska (Germany): We thank the Canadian presidency for today’s meaningful meeting. For all processes that need time and will go on well into the future, including the topics and processes we cover here in the Conference on Disarmament, we have no choice but to rely on motivated and qualified young people to carry these tasks forward.

It was encouraging to see some of the United Nations Youth Champions for Disarmament addressing us today. Germany also supports the United Nations Disarmament Fellowship Programme. This Programme enables 25 United Nations disarmament fellows

every year to spend 10 weeks travelling to relevant organizations in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation in Vienna, Geneva, New York and other cities worldwide.

Also, in the Declaration made at the 2020 Berlin Ministerial Meeting on the Stockholm Initiative, the ministers attached special importance to education, particularly nuclear education. All States are invited to engage with the young generations through different formats, such as dialogue, platforms, mentoring, internships, fellowships, scholarships, model events and youth group activities.

Germany supports the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization youth group. It was founded in 2016 and is aimed at revitalizing the discussion around the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty among former, current and emerging decision makers, scientists, academics, experts and the media.

In 2018, Germany hosted a Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization youth group meeting in Berlin, where the group developed concrete proposals and scenarios on the position of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty within the framework of the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Another example of our commitment is Germany's support to the Deep Cuts project. The project consists of a trilateral Commission of experts from the United States, Russia and Germany that addresses key challenges in reducing nuclear weapons arsenals. Only two months ago, in June, the young Deep Cuts Commission was launched, consisting of 12 young arms control experts from Russia, the United States and Germany. The members seek to enhance international peace and develop fresh ideas to revitalize arms control through publications and outreach activities.

The President: I thank the delegate of Germany for her statement and I now give the floor to the delegate of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Belousov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Dear colleagues, Madam High Representative, I would like to begin by thanking the Canadian presidency for holding today's meeting of the Conference on Disarmament on youth participation in multilateral arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation forums and mechanisms.

The state of affairs in this important and sensitive area of international relations is changing as we speak. Agreements that once seemed immutable, essential to international security, are falling by the wayside. New threats – whether political changes or new types of weapons – that must be given proper consideration are emerging.

We are thus compelled to think about variations on old approaches and developing new approaches to the key issues of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. And it is here that young diplomats, scholars, analysts and activists can play an important role and make a meaningful contribution. We all know how much we need a fresh perspective, which often makes it possible to find a way out of a sticky situation or even an impasse. Our expectations for the contributions of new generations of disarmament specialists are thus quite high.

Broad perspectives and new ideas must, however, draw on professional knowledge and expertise. Young, well-trained professionals with a wealth of knowledge of this complex field of ours should be called on first of all. The training of new specialists is key to ensuring continuity and the transmission and preservation of institutional memory.

It is not at all necessary for young specialists to be members of the diplomatic service. As I said earlier, new views and approaches are needed in the work of research and political science centres, non-governmental organizations and social movements.

Russia does its part to familiarize future generations with issues related to arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation, as well as to train young specialists in this field. PIR Center's Summer School, which focuses on educating young people, has been in operation for several years now. Summer School attendees regularly include representatives of the diplomatic corps in Moscow, and its instructors include experienced, high-ranking diplomats, experts from the Ministry of Defence and recognized subject matter experts from academia and political science centres.

The master's programme in arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation offered jointly by the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO University) and the Middlebury Institute of International Studies (Monterey, United States) is also worth mentioning.

Specialized courses on arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation are part of the programmes of study at MGIMO University, Lomonosov Moscow State University, Saint Petersburg State University, the Diplomatic Academy of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and several other leading institutions of higher education.

We take of a positive view of the leading role played by the United Nations and its entities in familiarizing young people with disarmament, arms control, and non-proliferation affairs.

The annual orientation courses for the incoming members of diplomatic missions offered by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research are a good example of efforts to improve the skills of disarmament diplomats here in Geneva. This initiative of the Institute, which is both necessary and useful, deserves appreciation and all support.

Highlights of these courses include the guest lectures given by experienced diplomatic practitioners with a wealth of experience in disarmament and arms control. Course participants are thus allowed not only to gain useful knowledge but also to familiarize themselves with a variety of approaches and schools of thought.

The United Nations Disarmament Fellowship Programme, a programme for young diplomats, makes a significant contribution to educating young specialists and broadening their horizons. I believe that such fellowships allow young people not only to enhance their qualifications but also to make useful informal contacts, without which it is difficult for international specialists to work effectively. Russia, whose representatives regularly participate in the Programme, has consistently supported the General Assembly resolution entitled "United Nations disarmament fellowship, training and advisory services".

I would like to give special thanks to Secretary-General Guterres and High Representative Nakamitsu for the attention they are paying to the issue of youth in disarmament. My delegation here and the Russian delegations at other specialized forums are ready to work actively on proposals to increase the involvement of young specialists in our common work. The General Assembly resolution on youth, disarmament and non-proliferation, as well as other United Nations documents aimed at increasing the involvement of young people in international security issues, provides a solid foundation for efforts in this respect.

In closing, I would like to thank the young people who spoke in this room today for their informative statements and fresh ideas.

The President: I thank the delegate of the Russian Federation for his statement and I now give the floor to the delegate of Austria.

Mr. Sternat (Austria): Madam President, Austria joins other delegations in commending you and your team for organizing this discussion on the occasion of International Youth Day and for encouraging a substantive dialogue between the member States of the Conference on Disarmament, youth envoys and Youth Champions for Disarmament.

The importance of youth participation in our deliberations has been underscored by Ms. Nakamitsu, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, and Ms. Wickramanayake, the Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth, in their opening remarks. We also heard various impressive and inspiring statements from the youth representatives present here today.

Global youth is at the forefront of many issues, such as the environment and equality, and is also a force of progress on disarmament and it is very positive to hear their voices. Over the past year and months, the world has been confronted with an extraordinary global crisis. We see the different effects of the COVID-19 crisis on the countries around the globe, but beyond the most urgent health response needs, the pandemic entails much broader economic, social, generational and security challenges, which in their impact are likely to far outlast the pandemic itself.

Additionally, multilateral disarmament efforts have been substantially impacted by this crisis. Many multilateral disarmament forums and instruments have had to be postponed, effectively pausing the engagement between States and civil society within the established instruments. This very forum, the Conference on Disarmament, could not convene for some time last year.

Madam President, I am conscious of the time and as several speakers before me have already done so, I will not speak about the deadlock that prevents us from having effective negotiations within the Conference on Disarmament. But let me say this: we hope that the disruptive nature of the crisis can serve as an inspiration to rethink whether the strategies of the past century are actually appropriate to the treaties of today or if more focus on human security is needed for the benefit of all.

We should also think more about how this crisis affects cooperation between States and all stakeholders in disarmament – youth, citizens, civil society, academia and the media.

To tackle our concerns about the current status of disarmament, we are of the opinion that an increase in cooperation between stakeholders and continued devotion to global disarmament education can only be beneficial. Therefore, we want to thank you again for providing an opportunity for dialogue and a joint exploration of possible lessons that can be learned from each other.

The President: I thank the delegate of Austria for his statement.

Distinguished colleagues, we are at the end of our list of speakers, and no other delegations seem to wish to take the floor.

As this is the final plenary meeting under the presidency of Canada, please allow me to make some concluding remarks.

I would like to express my profound gratitude to the participants in today's session on youth and disarmament, including the Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs and the Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth. My special thanks also go to the Youth Champions for Disarmament and to the youth representatives of delegations who have spoken today.

On my Twitter feed right before this session, I saw a Tweet that youth delegates in Ghana had posted in celebration of International Youth Day, saying: "Nothing about us without us". So, while I heard only support for youth participation, engagement and empowerment here today, I can only speak for myself and say wholeheartedly, I could not agree more: "Nothing about you without you".

To all youth representatives who spoke today: we need your energy, we need your passion, we need your ideas, your innovation and most of all, we need your solutions, your hope and your optimism. Thank you very much for joining us here today.

I also want to express my deep appreciation to all delegations for being here with us today for this important event. It has been a pleasure and an honour to serve as President of the Conference on Disarmament and I want to thank you all for your collaboration during these four weeks.

My particular thanks also go to the group of the five other Presidents of the 2021 session, together with the last President of the 2020 session and the first of the 2022 session and regional coordinators for their support and advice and to the wonderful staff of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs in Geneva and New York. They have done a great job in assisting us in responding to many questions, including logistical demands during this time when the COVID-19 pandemic is still with us. I also want to thank the interpreters for their services, including for their patience when occasionally we ran over time.

It is my hope that we, all of us, together, have taken a few steps forward in our shared goals for disarmament, including through the thematic discussions on agenda items 6 and 7, as well as on the issues of gender equality, strengthening the Conference on Disarmament as an institution, and on youth and disarmament.

While we have not been able to reach agreement on some of these key issues, we have started a conversation that has been respectful and will hopefully continue. We, as member

States of the Conference on Disarmament, have a responsibility to the international community, which has given us a mandate and where we are incurring significant costs to deliver on our common disarmament objectives. I take inspiration from the messages we have received today from our Youth Champion guests. We cannot, however, wait for the next generation or until disaster strikes. We must do our part now or get out of the way.

It is my pleasure now to hand over the presidency to our colleagues from Chile, and I do this with great enthusiasm and pledge to them Canada's full support. As is the usual practice, I would now like to invite the incoming President of the Conference on Disarmament, Ambassador Frank Tressler Zamorano of Chile, to take the floor.

Mr. Tressler Zamorano (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of my delegation, I wish to express my appreciation and thanks to you, Madam President, for your excellent leadership of the Conference on Disarmament over the past four weeks. I would also like to acknowledge the work done by the preceding presidencies – namely, those of Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria and Cameroon.

It is an honour for my country to once again assume the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. As we have mentioned on other occasions, Chile is of the view that our efforts in this Conference should not take place in a vacuum but should be understood within the context of an international diplomatic mission that favours multilateral processes and the strengthening of international legal frameworks as the best way to tackle international security challenges.

Allow me to outline my intentions for the upcoming Chilean presidency. As you know, the last President of each year is responsible for negotiating the annual report of the Conference, which will be transmitted to the General Assembly. This will be the main task to which our presidency will devote its efforts. I can already assure the members that we will make every effort to guide the discussions on the annual report of the Conference on Disarmament in the best possible way. Following the conclusion of negotiations on the Conference's annual report and of this year's session of the Conference on Disarmament, I will begin consultations on the resolution transmitting the annual report to the General Assembly. We also intend to organize a formal plenary meeting on the participation and role of women in international security on 26 August, from 3 to 5 p.m. Detailed information about the event and our presidency's programme will be provided in the coming days.

In the immediate term, I would like to announce that the first plenary meeting, before which I intend to circulate the first draft of the Conference's report, will be held on Tuesday, 17 August, at 10 a.m. My delegation will be conducting intensive rounds of consultations over the next week, and I thank the members in advance for their constructive participation and support.

The President: I thank Ambassador Tressler Zamorano for his statement.

Distinguished colleagues, this concludes our business for today. I thank you again for all of your engagement and cooperation throughout the Canadian presidency and I repeat, also, my thanks to the conference officers and interpreters for the support received, and my thanks also to Thomas Fetz, who is part of the Canadian delegation.

This meeting is adjourned.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.